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STANDARDS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

STANDARDS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In this issue, we consider what responsibilities information and communications standard setting organizations should have regarding social concerns. Our choice of this theme is inspired by a number of recent developments in this area.

While the accredited standards organizations of the world have long been open to all stakeholders, their traditional purpose has been to create standards that are implemented by commercial entities. Perhaps as a result, consumer and civic groups have historically had little interest in participating in the standard setting process. Consortia have been even more dominated by commercial interests, and have promoted membership only to supply-chain participants such as vendors, commercial customers, universities and government agencies.

The result is that ICT standards have to date largely been created in order to serve the goals of vendors. This may be about to change, however, occasioned by the success and potential of the Internet. And so we are dedicating this issue to a review of some of the efforts that are in play today to bring social responsibility to the top of the Internet standard setting agenda.

In our Editorial, we consider the inevitability of increasing government involvement in the "governance" of the Internet and the Web, and conclude that standard setting organizations must embrace, rather than resist, this trend in order to ensure that technical excellence, as well as social responsiveness, will continue to enable the further evolution of these vital global resources.

In our Feature Article, we report on the status of the ongoing World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which is charged by the United Nations with developing a plan for ensuring that all of the world's peoples have equal access to the educational, economic and other benefits that Internet access can provide. The results of the WSIS may have a significant impact on the future governance of the Internet and the Web.

Our Trends Article focuses on social responsibility in an even broader context, reporting briefly on the decision of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) to develop an international guideline for social responsibility -- its first venture outside the technical standard setting arena.

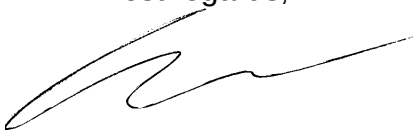
Finally, our Standards Blog selection for this month reflects on the fact that social standards must sometimes be interpreted flexibly through the perceptions of the times rather than mechanistically, if they are to continue to be useful.

Underlying each of these articles is the recognition that standards, by their very nature, are consensual agreements to voluntarily conform for the common good. Thus, while technology standards are in the first instance commercial in nature, they are nonetheless based upon a fundamental belief that only through cooperation can competitors and related parties secure a mutual benefit. While admitting non-commercial stakeholders into the existing process will result in new strains and

sometimes unwelcome compromises for traditional participants, the good news is that the fundamental concepts of the standard setting process are compatible with these new challenges.

Acknowledging that the standard setting process is first about consensus, and only secondarily about technology, leads to the realization that standard setting organizations are inherently able – if they choose to -- to lead the way in meeting the needs of a global society. The alternative is for them to be ignored by larger societal and political forces, and perhaps to be replaced by new organizations that will be less responsive to historical stakeholders, and less capable to do what needs to be done for the benefit of old and new parties alike.

Best regards,



Andrew Updegrove
Editor and Publisher

EDITORIAL

STANDARDS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Andrew Updegrove

Do information and communications technology (ICT) standard setting organizations (SSOs) have social responsibilities? If so, which SSOs? And just as importantly, who is entitled to answer these questions?

Many of those who spend their lives in the very commercial trenches of ICT standard setting might view the first question with surprise, the second with puzzlement, and the third with outright hostility, to the extent that it implies that others besides themselves are entitled to impose rules on the technology standard setting process. And if those same individuals are immersed in highly technical and deeply embedded standards, their reaction would be understandable.

But what about the technology standards that enable the Internet and the Web? On the one hand, much of the standards activity in these areas focuses purely on technical issues. But other initiatives involve more fundamental matters, such as deciding which languages the Internet will support, and whether there will be equal access to domain names among all countries.

Today, the Internet and the Web are demonstrating their promised potential of providing a means of instant communication between all of the world's peoples, conjoined with universal freedom of expression and access to knowledge. The possibility for good to come from these new technologies is enormous. But will the immediate future present a widening digital divide, with First World users enjoying pervasive broadband access and ubiquitous wireless devices, while Third World residents languish in an ICT-deprived backwater? Or will the further evolution and deployment of the Internet and the Web be managed with the aim of narrowing, and even eliminating such a disparity?

It is not surprising that the wider world, and particularly the United Nations, has begun to take an active interest in ensuring that the latter alternative will be realized. As noted in our Feature Article in this issue, a multi-year initiative is in process that will culminate in a report to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2005. That report will contain recommendations for initiating a degree of global and national control over the "governance" of the Internet.

It is certainly true that the Internet and the Web are emerging from an age of innocence, after a heady and free-form youth. In fact, the Internet has come full circle, having been launched by The Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), and supported throughout its early years through the largesse of the United States federal budget. Over time, and especially with the advent of the World Wide Web, commercial entities, consumers, education and government have all enthusiastically climbed on board.

How could the Internet not begin to attract the attention of local, national and international government? Increasingly, the Internet is becoming the "enabler of everything," from telecommunications (Voice over IP), to financial transactions, to emergency response, to wide area networks of every conceivable nature and use. In a very real sense, the Internet and the Web have become as essential to the conduct, and even the existence, of society as are clean water supplies and adequate electricity. Ten years from now, the Internet will likely be categorized in anyone's mind as simply another utility. For better or worse, complete resistance by the technical community to government intervention is doubtless futile.

But if the involvement of government in the "governance" of the Internet and the Web are indeed inevitable, what does "governance" entail, and who will make that call?

At the moment, there is little consensus, but some unease in high-tech quarters over how these questions will be answered. Will United Nations bureaucrats be able to differentiate between what is purely technical and what has the potential for societal impact? And will the organizations that have served so well to date to provide the standards for the Internet and the Web be left to themselves, or will they be regulated – or worse yet – replaced?

Moreover, unlike other utilities, which are most often regulated only at the national level, the Internet and the Web will be subject to pressure to satisfy the disparate opinions and circumstances of all of the world's peoples (not to mention the kind of horse trading that goes on in any political arena). How will consensus be achieved among such a diverse constituency, and how disruptive will the process be to the ongoing technical evolution of the Internet and the Web?

Such prospects inevitably lead one to ask, is international "governance" of the Internet and the Web inevitable? We think it is, although the degree and nature of such governance remains to be determined. The lessons of history are far too clear to assume that resources with such enormous potential to favorably affect the future of humanity will escape an increasing level of attention from government.

If this proves to be the case, some level of frustration and regrettable comprises will lie ahead as the Internet and the Web are increasingly subjugated to the will of government, just as more traditional utilities have become regulated in the past. The Internet and the Web are about to become victims of their own success, in the sense that engineering experts may no longer have the freedom of action that they enjoyed when a fully deployed and popularly utilized Internet was just a dream.

But at the same time, it is important to recognize the differences between the creation of the Internet and the Web, and the building of the infrastructure that underlies traditional utilities. Those that built the first telephone and telegraph lines, the oil fields and the railroads were the founders of joint-stock companies that were unabashedly and solely concerned with making a profit. Indeed, standard setting bodies did not even come into existence until most of these areas of commerce were well established.

In contrast, the Internet and the Web were born in a largely non-commercial setting, and the standards that make each possible have been developed by well-established, open, consensus-driven processes. In the case of the World Wide Web Consortium especially, social responsibility has been a core value since its inception, as demonstrated by its manifest commitment to universal access. Similarly, the Unicode Consortium exists for the sole purpose of ensuring that as many languages and character sets as possible (240 and 50, respectively, at this time) are supported by the Internet.

In short, there is already in existence a means by which socially responsible goals may be pursued and secured. But only if those now involved in standard setting embrace, rather than resist, the inevitable intrusion of government will they be likely to maintain an ongoing seat at the governance table.

If one assumes – and we do – that the frontier days of the Internet and the Web are coming to an end, then it is incumbent on all of those that are active in standard setting in this area to join in the WSIS and similar processes. Only by engaging and fully participating as this process evolves will it be possible to state as plainly as possible what is fair game for political influence, and what is technical and should be decided on technical merit alone. Those that are best equipped to make that distinction must engage – for the good of us all.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

WHO SHOULD GOVERN THE INTERNET?

Andrew Updegrove

Abstract: *In its first decade, the creation of the Internet and the World Wide Web were solely the province of consortia, their institutional members, and individual engineers. But after ten years, these new tools had not only become vitally important to a bewildering number of aspects of modern life, but their potential to change the lives and future of those in the third world became equally evident. As a result, in late 2001 the United Nations convened a multi-year effort called the "World Summit on the Information Society." One of the unresolved questions the WSIS has charged itself with answering is the important query, "Who should govern the Internet?" Besides the importance of that question, there are general concerns over whether societal and technical priorities will be properly balanced. In this article, the author reviews the specific text of the WSIS "Plan of Action" for indications of how the United Nations and the WSIS participants believe these questions should be answered.*

> **"We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, assembled in Geneva . . .** declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society . . ." [Declaration of Principles A.1, WSIS, 12 December, 2003]

Introduction: On December 21, 2001, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed Resolution 56/183, that endorsed convening a "World Summit on the Information Society," or WSIS. Meeting that goal would involve raising millions of Swiss Francs in cash and in-kind support from interested nations; the accrediting of participants from government, the private sector, NGOs, and other interest groups; and the planning of not one, but two, major international conferences. The first was held on December 10–12, 2003, in Geneva, Switzerland, with 11,000 participants from 175 countries participating. The second, and final, meeting will be held in Tunis, Tunisia, on November 16–18, 2005.

The Geneva meeting resulted in a number of decisions, as well as the ratification of a detailed Declaration of Principles and a related Plan of Action. These two formal documents contain a multitude of laudable affirmations and goals, recognizing the vast potential that information and communications technologies (ICTs) have to benefit humanity. But, the documents also express concern that these benefits will not be equitably shared by all absent coordinated action on the part of the United Nations and national governments to ensure that result.

Most of the implementation goals contained in the Plan of Action are neutral or positive with respect to the work plans of the standard setting organizations (SSOs) that enable the Internet, the Web, and related telecommunications services, devices, and software. But some strike closer to home, with one in particular catching the attention of many. That goal claims the right for world government to become involved in "the governance of the Internet."

> *We recognize that education, knowledge, information and communication are at the core of human progress, endeavour and well being. Further, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have an immense impact on virtually all aspects of our lives. . . . The capacity of these technologies to reduce many traditional obstacles, especially those of time and distance, for the first time in history makes it possible to use the potential of these technologies for the benefit of millions of people in all corners of the world. [Declaration of Principles A.8, WSIS, 12 December, 2003]*

New Goals: To date, the Internet and the Web have been driven by SSOs that are mainly concerned with conquering technical challenges. True, the motivations of some of the most influential visionaries behind these new technologies, such as Tim Berners-Lee, have been informed by the good that could be

achieved through creating royalty-free knowledge and communications resources. However, those motivations have been at a high and generalized level. In contrast, consider the more specific goals embodied in the WSIS Declaration of Principles:

> . . . [T]o harness the potential of information and communications technology to promote the . . . eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; achievement of universal primary education; promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women; reduction of child mortality; improvement of maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability; and development of global partnerships for development for the attainment of a more peaceful, just and prosperous world." [Declaration 1.2]

Clearly, more will be needed than additional flavors of web services specifications to meet such ambitious goals.

Arguably, no governmental involvement at the technical level at all may be needed to achieve such goals, given the more immediate and daunting challenge of providing millions of new Third World access points to the Internet as a first step in achieving any social goals. But, the Declarations also include language that touches on technical decisions, such as the following: "We agree that to meet these challenges, all stakeholders should work together to. . . . create an enabling environment at all levels; develop and widen ICT technologies; [and] foster and respect cultural diversity." [Declaration B.19] Even leaving technical decisions aside, this type of goal could lead to the types of mandatory, multiple translations that bog down the operations of some existing world and regional governmental structures.

Other goals are clearly technical in nature:

> Strengthening the trust framework, including information security and network security, authentication, privacy and consumer protection, is a prerequisite for the development of the Information Society and for building confidence among users of ICTs. A global culture of cybersecurity needs to be promoted, developed and implemented in cooperation with all stakeholders and international expert bodies. [Declaration B.35]

Such goals are central to the work of many SSOs. However, to date, government involvement in these organizations has been relatively light. Greater, more determined involvement at the national and international level by governments and the United Nations would hold the promise of more effective and consistent controls of abusers who hide behind international boundaries, while also changing the dynamics of existing SSOs.

There is also a reassuring affirmation of the vital role that standards play:

> Standardization is one of the essential building blocks of the Information Society. There should be particular emphasis on the development and adoption of international standards. The development and use of open, interoperable, non-discriminatory and demand-driven standards that take into account needs of users and consumers is a basic element for the development and greater diffusion of ICTs and more affordable access to them. . . . Declaration B.44]

The Plan of Action contains similar language: "Governments . . . should promote the development and use of open, interoperable, non-discriminatory and demand-driven standards." [Plan of Action C6.13.p] But with the recognition of the importance of standards, will there be a greater incentive on the part of governments to become involved in governing what those standards enable?

The answer, according to the Declarations, is clearly "yes."

> *The Internet has evolved into a global facility available to the public and its governance should constitute a core issue of the Information Society agenda. The international*

> *management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. It should ensure an equitable distribution of resources, facilitate access for all and ensure a stable and secure functioning of the Internet, taking into account multilingualism. [Declaration B.48]*

The Plan of Action: Perhaps it is not surprising that a conclusion such as that expressed above should be included in the Declarations. The Internet and the Web are undeniably of vital world importance, and the world is daily becoming more dependent on them. True, the Internet governance structure that has evolved to date has been technically effective. However, that structure does not have a democratic basis in the traditional sense of being subject to broad public supervision, or being managed under an all-inclusive, democratic, representative process. In fact, there have been inequities of administration and access that have often been noted by those adversely affected, such as the assignment of more domain addresses to Stanford University than to all of China.

Still, the following words from the Plan of Action are enough to raise the concern of any engineer in an SSO working group:

> We ask the Secretary-General of the United Nations to set up a working group on Internet governance, in an open and inclusive process that ensures a mechanism for the full and active participation of governments, the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries, involving relevant intergovernmental and international organizations and forums, to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of the Internet by 2005. [Declaration B.50]

The goals that such a working group would pursue are "to put the potential of knowledge and ICTs at the service of development…" [Plan of Action B.4] But what, precisely, would that mean? And what technical concessions or other compromises might be entailed in placing "ICTs at the service of development?"

The Declarations of Principle and the Plan of Action are less specific in this regard. Most of the detailed activities in the Plan involve setting "e-strategies" that would serve goals such as development, or calling for programs to stem illiteracy. Other items in the Plan, however, call for studies by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to explore the feasibility of more diverse and pervasive broadband services [Plan of Action C2.9.d] and fostering "increased awareness, assessment and evaluation of different software models and licenses." [Plan of Action C3.10.j]

In areas such as these, will governments defer to technical experts on technical issues, or will the types of interconnecting compromises that blur other international decisions affect standard setting as well? And will involving governments in governance inevitably result in new and more intractable delays on the process of standard setting than already exist?

> *The ability for all to access and contribute information, ideas and knowledge is essential in an inclusive Information Society.* [Declaration B.24]

What Does "Governance" Entail? Although very detailed in many respects, the Plan of Action offers few clues about what the "governance" of the Internet might entail. In fact, one of the first tasks of the new working group is to "develop a working definition of Internet governance". Its other tasks include:

> ii) identify the public policy issues that are relevant to Internet governance;
>
> iii) develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, existing intergovernmental and international organizations and other forums as well as the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries;

iv) prepare a report on the results of this activity to be presented for consideration and appropriate action for the second phase of WSIS in Tunis in 2005. [Plan of Action C6.b]

In short, to paraphrase Georges Clemenceau, the participants in the first phase of the WSIS have concluded that the Internet is too important to be left to the engineers. It is somewhat discomforting, however, to learn that the decision has been taken to assume the right to govern, first, and determine what that means only second.

How big a genie is out of the bottle? It is hard to say at this time. However, United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has singled out ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) for criticism over its control of domain names. It has not helped that Verisign sued ICANN last year, alleging contract violations and antitrust abuses. Nor has it gone unnoticed in the wider world that the United States, Canada, Japan, and Europe have a disproportionate interest in controlling domain names specifically, and Internet standards generally.

More disturbing are statements such as that of Khalid Saeed, Pakistan's secretary of the Ministry of Information Technology, who stated that Pakistan must "play an active role in all layers" of the organizations that control the Internet. Given that representatives from any country are already entitled to participate entitled to take part in all such organizations, there is a danger that the situation could become sufficiently politicized to engender artificial—and harmful—"solutions."

At the same time, of course, it should be noted that the United Nations embarks on many activities, and adopts many resolutions, that are roundly ignored by nations whose cooperation is essential to give them meaning. Therefore, it may be more useful to view the WSIS process as emblematic that a milestone has been passed, beyond which the Internet and the Web will increasingly become the focus of active government interest.

At this time, no one can guess what impact social concerns may have on the Internet and the Web. Perhaps the future will hold nothing more than the type of regulation that other telecommunications services and standards have encountered. Or, perhaps, the concept of "governance" will take hold, and something far different may lie ahead. Given that uncertainty, the standard setting organizations involved in enabling the Internet and the Web would be wise to prepare for either contingency.

Conclusions: Where is the WSIS process likely to lead? While it is more common in journalism to be an alarmist than a pragmatist, following the latter path is usually more productive. It could hardly be assumed that anything as important and enabling as the Internet and the Web would escape significant government attention forever. As observed by the W3C's Danny Weitzner in a CNET News.com piece posted on April 6, 2004: "Simply put, the era in which the Internet technology design can pretend to be neutral as to public policy and social needs is over."

And in fact, the Internet needs government involvement in any event. Current cybersecurity threats and spam can doubtless only be curtailed (if they can be countered at all) through worldwide coordination at the government level. And recently, there have been a number of new advocacy groups formed by technology companies for the specific goal of involving government more directly in solving cybersecurity issues.

We believe the way forward is clear: organizations such as the W3C and the IETF need to embrace, rather than resist, the inevitably growing interest that governments will take in the Internet and the Web. Happily, the W3C (in particular) has a history of engaging and involving government, as well as a culture of social responsibility in its activities from its inception. SSOs will serve their goals best by establishing themselves as essential partners in the WSIS process and whatever else may follow.

The time for securing a seat near the head of the Internet governance table is certainly now, while the definition of governance is still being worked out. Respect for engineering principals will need to be as important as social values if we are to have a robust, as well as a socially responsible, Internet to serve us in the future.

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Relevant Links:

The ITU maintains an extensive website supporting the WSIS at **http://www.itu.int/wsis/.** The site hosts copies of the Declaration of Principles, Plan of Action, and other relevant documents; press releases; meeting schedules; funding details; a FAQ document; and much additional data.

Daniel J. Weitzner: "Governments and Governance," CNET News, http://att.com.com/Governments+and+governance/2010-1028_3-5185845.htm

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TRENDS

ISO TO SET GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Andrew Updegrove

ISO, the International Organization for Standardization, has decided to break new ground in its standard setting activities. While its preexisting scope has been broad indeed, its historical mission has been limited to the world of technical standards. Its new initiative will move in a very different direction, seeking to set out guidelines for the exercise of social responsibility by organizations.

In a press release dated June 30, 2004, ISO announced that the decision had been made at a meeting held in Stockholm in late June that drew representatives from equal numbers of developed and developing countries (with 33 countries in each category). Participants represented business, government, labor, consumers, international and nongovernmental organizations.

The decision taken at the meeting to establish a working group to address the topic of social responsibility followed on the report of an Advisory Group formed in early 2003 to recommend whether or not ISO should become involved in this area, and if so, what the nature and scope of any resulting standard should be. The Advisory Group's activities included surveying the social responsibility guidelines established by numerous other organizations in reaching a decision.

Following the endorsement of the Advisory Group's recommendations and the input of those attending the meeting, the new Working Group was tasked with creating a "guidance document, written in plain language which is understandable and usable by non-specialists, and not for a specification document intended for conformity assessment."

The resolution authorizing the new Working Group also charts a deliberate course among the work products already released by other international bodies.

Specifically, the Working Group is instructed to supplement, rather than seek to supplant, intergovernmental agreements such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and those adopted by the International Labour Organization (and indeed, the Working Group is instructed to actively cooperate with the ILO).

In keeping with the subject matter of the initiative, an effort will be made to provide funding assistance to those whose participation might not otherwise be possible.

Whether or not this new initiative marks a new direction that will expand within ISO, or whether this new focus will inform or affect the activities of ISO in technical areas as well remains to be seen.

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Relevant Links:

For the full text of ISO Resolution 35/204, establishing the Social Responsibility Working Group, see: www.iso.org/iso/en/info/Conferences/SRConference/resolution.htm

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From the Standards Blog

▯▯ July 4, 2004

#17 STANDARDS, THE CONSTITUTION AND (IM)MUTABILITY The 4th of July offers an appropriate opportunity to ask an intriguing question: Must standards evolve in order to remain unchanged?

Whether you regard that question to be absurd or important will depend upon your view of what a standard actually is. Looked at purely from a mechanistic point of view, the question is inherently contradictory. After all, does not the concept of a "standard" necessitate a fixed reference point against which something else may be measured?

In fact, no. How can that be? Because, as so often is the case, obtaining a useful answer is dependent on completely understanding the question itself. If one (appropriately) takes a utilitarian approach, a standard is a tool that is used to meet a specific need. It exists only for the purpose of satisfying that need, and not because it possesses any intrinsic meaning or value. If the need that gives rise to the standard changes due to extrinsic factors, then so also must the standard change, if it will continue to be useful.

The better question to begin with, then, is not "what is a standard?" but rather "why is a standard?" The answer to that question not only permits, but indeed requires, that a standard be permitted to evolve.

Consider, for example, the concept of a speed limit on a highway. Surely, as we all "know," this is a safety standard. But in fact, speed limits in the United States have at times had nothing to do with safety issues at all. During World War II, the speed limit on all open roads in the United States was 35 miles per hour, neither more nor less. The reason? 35 miles an hour was the most fuel-efficient speed for automotive engines of that era, and gasoline was in short supply, given the competing demands of the armed forces. Moreover, a faster speed would have resulted in increased tire wear, and the Dutch East Indies were no longer supplying the United States with natural rubber.

In a more current sense, consider this: What (and "why"?) is a valuable wireless laptop standard? From an end-user point of view, it is not 802.11a, 802.11b or their successors (or, necessarily, an 802.11 family standard at all), but whatever the best currently available standard may be that permits reliable, easily configured, inexpensive, secure wireless communication with optimal bandwidth.

Significantly, the successive versions of the 802.11 "Wi-Fi" standard have not been intended simply to increase performance, but to address other evolving needs as well. The forces driving those needs have even been geopolitical. Witness, for example, the push to add enhanced security features to Wi-Fi not only to address technical needs, but to counter China's contention that it had no choice but to create a home-grown wireless standard that, incidentally, would also permit it to erect a significant trade barrier to non-domestic manufacturers.

Which finally takes us deep enough into the issue to reflect on the mutability of standards on this U.S. Independence Day.

In the 216 years since the United States Constitution was ratified, it has been the standard against which all new laws enacted in the U.S. must be tested. But like the many IT standards that fall short of guaranteeing immediate interoperability, it not only needs to be periodically amended (as it has been -- 26 times to date), but it must be interpreted as well. The Architecture Board that hears the disputes, of course, is the United States Supreme Court.

Amending and interpreting a constitution, like amending and interpreting an IT standard, is a devilishly tricky business. Every IT standard (and a political constitution is no different) is the product of multiple compromises, often painfully derived, that eventually lead to the final consensus decision. By the time that most standard have been approved, a delicate balance between competing interests has been achieved, and no one looks forward to upsetting that result.
Still, without the ability to evolve and to be interpreted in light of current circumstances, a standard remains static, and eventually often becomes useless. Such a standard – or constitution -- will eventually fail to meet the need for which it was created (as the United States learned, at great cost, in the run up to the Civil War).

At the end of the day, whether one is attending a standards meeting or evaluating the decisions of the United States Supreme Court, one must ultimately focus on the need that is being addressed by the tool at hand, and not invest an inflexible and totemic value in the tool itself.

Notwithstanding the strong emotions that constitutional discussions often evoke, the United States has not done too badly in that regard. After all, its Constitution is the longest-serving written standard of its type in the world today. Without judicious amendment, the independence wisely granted by the founders of the Republic to the court that interprets it, and the wisdom of those who have served on that court, the Constitution's capacity to remain immutably effective would never have been possible.

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The opinions expressed in the Standards Blog are those of the author alone, and not necessarily those of Gesmer Updegrove LLP

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Useful Links and Information:

For the full text of the Constitution, highlighting those portions that have been affected by subsequent amendments, and linked to the text of those amendments, see:
www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/constitution_transcript.html

For an image of the Constitution, see:
www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/constitution_zoom_1.html

For additional information on the U.S-China Wi-Fi standard face off, see the May, 2004 issue of the Consortium Standards Bulletin in general…
www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins/may04.php

…and this article from the same issue in particular:
www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins/may04.php#trends

Postings are made to the Standards Blog on a regular basis. Bookmark:
www.consortiuminfo.org/blog/

THE REST OF THE NEWS

Every day, we scan the web for all of the news and press releases that relate to standards, and aggregate that content at the News Section of ConsortiumInfo.org. For up to date information, bookmark our News page, or take advantage of our RSS feed: www.consortiuminfo.org/news/rss. Updates are usually posted on Mondays and Wednesdays. The following is a selection of the many stories from the past month that you can find digested at ConsortiumInfo.org.

Story Updates

Good News/Bad News: *In our May issue of the* ***CSB****, we focused on the role of standards in erecting trade barriers generally, and on the face-off between China and the United States over the Wi-Fi standard (see* ***Breaking Down Trade Barriers: Avoiding the China Syndrome*** *<www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins/may04.php#trends> The following two items demonstrate the one halting nature of the situation. The first article below appears on the China Economic Net, and takes a different view of China's motivations for creating its own domestic standards, rather than adopting international ones. In China's view, domestic manufacturers are "being forced to pay foreign patent magnates billions of US dollars of patent fees". Ideally, the solution would be to create standards that do not generate royalty obligations at all, but this has not been the case in the video market space since Betamax and VHS duked it out. While progress has been made recently in the Wi-Fi space, the DVD arena remains an open contest. On a happier note, the second item reports that China and the United States have settled a complaint brought by the U.S. against China before the World Trade Organization, following more high-level meetings during this fast-waning U.S. presidential election year.*

China's EVD Standard becomes the industrial one
By: Zhong Jing

China Economic Net, July 22, 2004 -- China's traditional DVD player industry with overwhelmingly cruel competition is now approaching its end. As the so-called substitute for DVD players, high definition disc players, such as EVD, HVD, HDV and the like, are launched successively. However, without exception, their appearance in the market incurs various questions from both inside and outside the industry circle. Meanwhile, market feedback further manifests obviously that the substitute for the traditional DVD player does not appear in fact. ...Full Story

U.S., China settle semiconductor trade row

FXStreet.com, Washington, D.C., July 8, 2004 -- The United States and China have agreed to settle their long-standing row over China's tax policy on semiconductors, just four months after the Bush administration brought its complaint on the matter to the World Trade Organization, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said Thursday. The agreement, worked out bilaterally between officials in Washington and Beijing, cut short a trade dispute that could have lingered for another few years if it had been left to be resolved through the time consuming process of the WTO China agreed to stop giving preferential tax treatment to new Chinese chipmakers and phase out by next April the rebates for those companies already receiving the tax break, which the U.S. said unfairly discriminates against non-Chinese producers ...Full Story

Many phish bite if you got good bait: *In our June issue, we focused on the various public and private initiatives being launched to curtail the multiple types of abuse being unleashed over the Internet (see:* ***Standards and Security*** *http://gcn.com/vol1_no1/daily-updates/26674-1.html The following article reports on efforts by a frustrated FTC to urge fast action on one particular front: authentication.*

The good news is that at least three different efforts are underway to satisfy that need. The bad news is that three different specifications might result, and only one is the effort of a standards body: the IETF (the other two are sponsored by Microsoft and Yahoo).

FTC wants to encourage e-mail authentication standards
By: William Jackson

GCN.com, July 21, 2004 -- The Federal Trade Commission is responsible for policing the Internet for online fraud such as phishing, but keeping up with the onslaught of new schemes is a major challenge. But that is hardly a drop in the bucket. According to a study by the Anti-Phishing Working Group, 1,125 new phishing schemes were identified in April, a 180 percent increase over the month before. "We've had three phishing cases," Sana Coleman, counsel to FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, said during a panel discussion about phishing on Capitol Hill today. "All of the cases were settled." Settlements included forfeiture of $125,000 in illegal profits. ...Full Story

Another "prebaked" standard: *In the March 2004 issue of the* ***CSB*** *(see* ***Maintaining Process Quality*** *www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins/mar04.php), we reported on the increasing tendency of one company, or a group of companies, to create a specification and then offer it to a consortium for approval and maintenance, rather than proposing that a new working group be chartered to create such a standard. While such a practice can save valuable time to market when a company offers existing work for the benefit of all, it can also serve to limit the input of others, and convey a decided advantage to the company(ies) that offer the technology. This puts a burden on the standards body to which the offer is made, to ensure that no strings are attached, and that the offered technology is as valuable and appropriate as could have been created through the normal consensus process. While this dynamic has been most prevalent in the area of Web Services in the last year, the following article reports on a similar offer in another technical context.*

IBM pursues software installation standard
By: Paul Krill

ComputerWorld, July 19, 2004 -- IBM is unveiling technology intended to reduce complexity in software installation and packaging and has submitted it to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) for consideration as an industry standard. Dubbed Solution Installation for Autonomic Computing, the technology enables software developers and software vendors to improve the installation and support experience and simplify the software packaging process, according to IBM. Developers would be able to build packaged software for installation on a variety of platforms. "One of the observations is that half of the problems that are surfacing in today's IT environments are stemming from configuration issues," director of autonomic computing at IBM, David Bartlett, said. ...Full Story

Spam abatement and optimism (?): *When was the last time that you saw these seemingly oxymoronic words in the same phrase? In all likelihood, this is the first. The cause for the optimism is the agreement by an international group of standard setting organizations that only the assemblage of a world-wide alignment of governments, standard setting organizations, consumer groups, and industry players can eradicate the scourge of spam. Given that spammers can hide nearly invisibly anywhere in the world, the challenge of eradicating spam is not unlike the reality that which confronts world health leaders when they seek to eliminate an infectious disease: until the last enclave of infection is inoculated, ongoing outbreaks are inevitable. The conclusion appropriately reached at the meeting reported on in the following press release is that a global Memorandum of Understanding must be entered into by world governments, supported by the cooperation and efforts of standard setting bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN), and the Internet Society, in order to achieve peace from spammers in our time. Whether or not the degree of optimism espoused at the meeting (those in attendance foresaw a solution to the spam problem*

within two years) is warranted, one must applaud the realism of the first steps proposed for solving what was rightly recognized as "this inherently global problem."

Wave of optimism as ITU WSIS meeting on countering spam closes

ITU Press Release, Geneva, July 9, 2004 -- Participants at the ITU WSIS thematic meeting on countering spam which concluded its work today agreed on a series of actions needed to curb spam. The watershed meeting was designed to launch a global effort that can ultimately lead to the eradication of spam. Based on a fruitful exchange of views and experiences, the meeting gave an opportunity to identify where priority action was needed. "Spam has grown into a major plague affecting the digital world," said Dr Robert Horton, Acting Chair of the Australian Communications Authority and chairman of the meeting. "We are facing a global epidemic which can only be combated through a global and concerted action," he said. "What is at stake is no less than the protection and preservation of the Internet as we know it. I am convinced that we can curb spam within the next two years if we act on a number of fronts simultaneously and make sure that there are no havens for spammers anywhere in the world", Horton said. Despite the enactment of anti-spam legislation in about thirty countries and the introduction of technical solutions by Internet service providers and end-users, there has been so far no significant impact on the volume of spam with spammers sending hundreds of millions of messages per day. ...Full Story

Going it alone (together): *In our March 2004 issue of the* ***CSB****, we noted the increasing trend by individual companies, or groups of companies, to create specifications on their own that they then offer to the industry as purportedly "open standards". In some cases, the specification is offered to an existing, respected standards organization for ongoing maintenance, while in others, the developers license directly to interested vendors under a public, but non-enforceable, assurance that they will continue to license the technology to all interested parties. The reasons given for taking such an action include a desire for a faster result, the lack of an interested standards group, or the desire to have a greater degree of influence over the outcome than the same companies could expect were the effort to be launched from the beginning within a standards body. The following press release from Nokia, together with a related article for the EE Times, describe such an effort by two companies (Nokia and STMicroelectronics) to "leapfrog" (in the words of EE Times) a similar effort already in progress by a consortium of which the same companies comprised two of the four founders. The reason publicly offered by Nokia and STM in this was that the existing consortium was moving too slowly to set a functional and optical specification for the type of modular cameras that handset vendors would like to purchase in volume on the open market for installation into their camera phones. Nokia and STM have also set up a website, under the name "SMIA Forum" where comments can be offered regarding future development.*

Nokia, ST offer their own camera phone spec
By: Junko Yoshida

EE Times UK, Paris, France, July 1, 2004 -- Leapfrogging a stalled industry standards effort, Nokia and STMicroelectronics on Thursday (July 1) introduced a Standard Mobile Imaging Architecture (SMIA) 1.0 spec that defines the mechanical design, high speed serial interface, performance characterizations and functions of camera modules used in mobile handsets. Janne Haavisto, a director with Nokia Technology Platforms, called SMIA the first industry attempt to set design parameters for camera modules. The announcement also appears to be a partial end-run around the Mobile Industry Processor Interface (MIPI) group, an industry forum seeking to standardize electrical interfaces for mobile handsets. ...Full Story

Nokia and STMicroelectronics Introduce New Camera-Module Standard For Mobile Devices

Yahoo.com, Helsinki, Finland, July 1, 2004 -- Nokia and STMicroelectronics today announced that they are releasing a comprehensive specification for camera modules, aimed at standardizing this increasingly important component in mobile devices. The specification, dubbed Standard Mobile Imaging Architecture,

or SMIA, will cover all aspects of the modules, including their electrical, mechanical, and functional interfaces, and also address other key areas such as characterization, optical performance, and reliability. The SMIA specification is offered for free to the mobile imaging industry and is available at http://www.smia-forum.org. .. Full Story

New Standards

It may be BioIT, but its still IT: *While the medical arena has not been as active as some other areas of IT standard setting, interesting activity does continue. The following article highlights a new standard developed by the Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium (CDISC), which will permit the standardized submission of clinical trials data supporting FDA approval of new drugs. As a result, errors will be reduced, costs will be lowered – and new drugs may more speedily and assuredly be brought to the marketplace. For lists of other consortia active in the BioIT space and the medical and healthy areas, see www.consortiuminfo.org/links/bioit/ and www.consortiuminfo.org/links/health/ respectively.*

FDA Announces Standard Format That Drug Sponsors Can Use to Submit Human Drug Clinical Trial Data

Medical News Today, July 22, 2004 -- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced a standard format, called the Study Data Tabulation Model (SDTM) developed by the Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium (CDISC), that sponsors of human drug clinical trials can use to submit data to the agency. It is expected that this step will lead to greater efficiencies in clinical research and FDA reviews of New Drug Applications (NDAs). The announcement was made at the Secretarial Summit on Health Information in Washington, D.C. ...Full Story

Standards and the home: *With the convergence of information technology and communications technology, and the increasing penetration of networked and wireless-enabled products into the home, more and more standards bodies are setting standards targeted at consumer products. From cell phones, to Wi-Fi networks, to digital cameras to home theaters, off-the-shelf consumer products are dependent on an ever-growing swarm of standards. Every month brings a fresh batch of announcements that are as important as increasing security to Wi-Fi for home offices and family financial transactions over the Web, and as mundane as reducing the clutter of remotes for all those new electronic toys. The following items focus on two standards that will enable consumers to enjoy increasingly rich ways to experience an even wider variety of the same old video drivel.*

Samsung HD AV Standard Adopted By CEA

Designtechnica.com, July 13, 2004 -- The new standard signals the ability for Samsung and the digital audio/video industry to deliver pure high definition audio/visual entertainment for the home network. In the next phase, an open consortium of consumer electronics manufacturers and service providers will be assembled with the aim of establishing a working group focused on advancing the standard. All interested parties will be welcomed. Samsung's home network initiative developed for CEA-2027 is known as eXpandable Home Theater (XHT). ...Full Story

SCTE Standard on CableLabs(r) OCAPTM Specification Achieves ANSI Approval

CableLabs Press Release, Exton, PA, July 1, 2004 -- The Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE) announces that SCTE 90-1 2004 has achieved American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approval yesterday. SCTE 90-1 was based on CableLabs' submission of the OpenCableTM Application Platform (OCAPTM) specification. OCAP defines a set of common application interfaces, data

formats, and protocols for interactive cable devices. As such, OCAP allows cable operators, content providers, and consumer electronics manufacturers to write applications one time that will run on all OCAP compliant devices. OCAP is a key element of two-way interactive cable devices and is a requirement for OpenCableTM devices. The major cable operators have announced that they will deploy OCAP, and support OCAP applications, in their networks. ...Full Story

New Initiatives

What last mile? *For many years, the metaphorical "last mile" challenge has slowed the roll out of broadband services to the consumers of America. While dramatic overinvestment in fiber optic cable during the heyday of the Internet bubble resulted in a vast oversupply of big fat "pipes" over long distances, telephone companies were slow to make the investment in the additional localized infrastructure that DSL demands to actually reach the end user, and broadband Cable has only gradually been offered to the home desktop as well. Now, the IEEE proposes to not only solve the "last mile" problem in a way that would theoretically enable broadband access to anyone with a power company willing to offer the service, but eliminate home wiring issues as well. Of course, once the service is widely deployed, it will not only bring broadband access to those who currently have no alternative to dial-up service, but will impose new price competition to the benefit of those that do as well.*

IEEE Starts Standard to Support Broadband Communications over Local Power Lines

Business Wire, Piscataway, N.J., July 20, 2004 -- The ability to send high-speed digital data over the power lines between substations and homes and offices is attracting increasing attention because it can make every wall outlet a portal to the Internet. In seeking to help realize this potential, the IEEE has begun to develop IEEE P1675(TM), "Standard for Broadband over Power Line Hardware." When finished, IEEE P1675 will give electric utilities a comprehensive standard for installing the required hardware on distribution lines, both underground and overhead, which provide the infrastructure for broadband-over-power-line (BPL) systems. It also will include installation requirements for the protection of those who work on BPL equipment and to ensure such systems do not place the public at risk. The standard is targeted for completion in mid 2006. ...Full Story

For a related press release by the HomePlug Alliance, see:
http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20040719005340&newsLang=en

Standards: Too many or to few? *One common complaint about standards is that there are two many of them. All too often, it seems that it's easier to start a new effort than work with an old one. The reasons can vary from the advantage that some players may reap from starting a new racehorse on the track if your first bet isn't paying off, to simple problems of gaining consensus over new directions. The following press release reports on one situation where those involved worked together to reconcile and merge, rather than perpetuate, two related chip design standards into a new, more versatile and useful business tool.*

IEEE Takes Steps To Unify Work On Verilog HDL Standard With A Single Working Group

Business Wire, Piscataway, N.J. July 13, 2004 -- The IEEE has formed a working group within its IEEE Standards Association (IEEE-SA) Corporate Initiative that intends to unify the development of two Verilog(R) standards efforts: an update of the IEEE P1364(TM), "Standard for Verilog Hardware Description Language," and the creation of IEEE P1800(TM), "Standard for SystemVerilog Unified Hardware Design, Specification and Verification Language." By bringing the two projects together in a single industry body, the IEEE will work towards a single Verilog language specification for use by the electronic design automation (EDA), semiconductor and system design communities. The new working

group is sponsored by the Design Automation Standards Committee (DASC) within the IEEE Computer Society and the IEEE-SA Corporate Advisory Group. ...Full Story

The Lingua Franca of the Web: *Perhaps the most versatile of current standards is the eXtensible Markup Language, or XML, maintained by the World Wide Web Association, and utilized by scores of different, independent standards efforts. The ability to add onto this base tool has led to a rainbow of efforts within single organizations, such as OASIS, as well under the aegis of a broad range of smaller organizations that target everything from financial reporting to human resources data management. The following press release reports on one such effort as it takes another step towards even finer XML standards granularity (in this case, addressing regional needs within its already-discrete chosen domain).*

HR-XML Europe to Focus on Integration across National Initiatives and on Driving Standards Adoption in Europe

Sourcewire.com, Brussels, July 12, 2004 -- The HR-XML Consortium today announced the formation of a European chapter chartered with driving the development and adoption of HR-XML standards by employers, HR services companies, software developers and government agencies across Europe. The HR-XML Consortium is dedicated to the development and promotion of a standard suite of XML specifications to enable e-business and the automation of human resources-related data exchanges. HR-XML Consortium Europe is a locally based organization chartered with ensuring that standards fully meet the needs of organizations in Europe and promoting them across all areas of the HR industry. ...Full Story

We've got to talk: *Sometimes the problem isn't that there are too many standards or too few, but that the standards that do serve well for specific purposes are not universal enough in their applicability, or that they cannot interoperate with similar standardized transactions in a different environment. The effort described in the following press release from the Object Management Group (OMG) is being launched to address this problem in the area of electronic payments, where there are a variety of existing standards serving areas as diverse as smartcards and back-office transactions. If successful, some of these disparate standards will become able to "talk" to each other.*

OMG's Electronic Payments Interoperability Working Group Issues Request for Information

OMG Press Release, Needham, MA, July 6, 2004 -- The Object Management Group(tm) (OMG(tm)) today announced that its Electronic Payments Interoperability Working Group (EPI-WG) has issued a Request for Information (RFI) to the finance industry and other users and processors of electronic payments. Seeking information about the payment methods they use today and the architecture and standards they would like to see in the future, the RFI is the EPI-WG's first step in standardizing a worldwide electronic payments framework that will bridge interoperability gaps that separate multiple payment models, protocols, and data and message formats. Taking advantage of OMG's Model Driven Architecture(r) (MDA(r)), EPI-WG members will use the information they receive to shape a standard electronic payments framework that lets institutions everywhere interoperate without replacing existing systems. Any company or organization, OMG member or not, can respond to the RFI. Each e-payment constituency - payments processor, transfer agent, or user - has its own set of priorities. The EPI-WG hopes to hear from members of each, allowing it to scope and prioritize the set of standards that will comprise the interoperable payments framework. If your company processes or uses electronic payments, or has an interest in this area, the group would like to hear from you. ...Full Story

Soon, it will even make excuses for you: *A host of efforts are continuing to make your wireless phone the most diverse device ever devised. Some efforts, like those reported in the first article below,*

relate to behind-the-scenes efforts of which most users will be unaware, but which will allow your cell phone to interoperate as easily and effectively with the home office server as your laptop. The second article focuses on a standard that will be welcomed with open arms by a certain type of traveler: the ability to play blackjack on their phone, even after the plane has taken off. Both efforts are indicative of the fact that the industry has concluded that the tiny keypad and screen of a cell phone have an intrinsic commercial beauty capable of launching a thousand apps. And with expected annual sales in the hundreds of millions of handsets annually, everyone wants a piece of the action.

Nokia sees progress next year for mobile apps
By: James Niccolai

CPILive.net, July 5, 2004 -- Nokia expects work to be wrapped up early next year on a new Java standard that should make it easier to manage business and consumer applications on mobile phones and other wireless devices, Nokia's chief technology officer said. The standard, which is being developed by Nokia, Motorola and others, includes new management capabilities that should make it easier to deliver applications and software updates to mobile phones, troubleshoot problems remotely, and set access policies for corporate users, said Pertti Korhonen, Nokia's CTO, in a speech at JavaOne. ...Full Story

CEA looks to standard to allow phone use on airplanes
By: Emily Motsay

RCR Wireless News, July 2, 2004 -- Use of wireless devices may soon be allowed during commercial airline flights if the Consumer Electronics Association's recently announced standardization project goes as planned. The group this week launched a project to create a new industry standard to help manage the use of wireless services onboard aircraft. CEA said it has established a working group that includes more than 35 representatives of wireless device and component manufacturers, airlines, pilots and flight attendants to develop a "recommended practice" to provide a standard way of showing that a wireless device's transmitter has been disabled, which would allow for the use of certain features of wireless devices. ...Full Story

Standards and Your Business

Global outsourcing and process standards: *The ISO 9000 series of quality control standards has been around for some time now, and these standards have become widely adopted (especially in Europe). But are they able to perform the same function for which they were developed with the advent of widely distributed, globally outsourced development projects? Some of the largest IT companies in the world think that there's a need to upgrade them, and have asked ISO to fast-track the process, as reported in an article in the business press of a country with a reason to take an active interest in the outcome: India.*

ISO standard for IT services soon
By: Parvathy Ullatil

Mumbai, Business Standard, July 8, 2004 -- An ISO standard for IT service management, along the lines of BS 15000, is expected to be in place by 2005-06....The information technology service management forum (ITSMF), a UK-based non-profit organization with over 1000 member companies including Hewlett Packard, Microsoft and IBM, approached the International Organization of Standardization with a proposal to fast track the ISO certification for IT service management.... The standardisation will have a special relevance for India which has emerged as a global offshoring hotspot. "With the coming of the 24-hour, follow the sun global delivery model, it is necessary that people are equipped to speak the same language and understand the same value propositions," said Peter van der Fluit, vice president, software global business unit, Hewlett Packard. The country which is riding the IT

wave even in the domestic industry with computerisation of its banking systems, e-governance etc is now combating qualitative problems like failed projects, overshooting budgets or running out on time....Full Story

What price (a lack of) standards? *The larger and more complex a system grows, the more difficult it becomes to know what is going on. When knowledge about the state, operations and attributes of the system degrades, so does efficiency. Meanwhile, costs go up. Supply chains are among the most complex of business systems, and the following report notes that the absence of certain types of standards for supply chain management leads to dramatically higher costs.*

Lack of Supply Chain Standards Costing Billions of Dollars

NIST Tech Beat, July 2, 2004 -- Inadequacies in managing inventory, scheduling and accounting information cost the automotive and electronics industries a combined total of almost $9 billion annually, according to a newly released study commissioned by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Almost all of these costs could be eliminated with optimally integrated systems for exchanging information throughout supply chains, the study concludes....An underlying problem, according to the study, is the lack of universally accepted and implemented standards for the format and content of messages that flow between supply chain partners. This reduces opportunities for cost savings and leads to duplication of effort, maintenance of redundant systems, and investment in inefficient processes such as manual entry of data when machine sources are available....Full Story

Open Source

China, Linux and future trade deficits: *China's government is not alone in becoming interested in Linux as an operating system. But while countries like Germany are focusing primarily on purchasing decisions, China is also examining Linux as a leveler of national trade advantages, and a lever to exploit in order to gain easier access to global markets for its indigenous software products. The China Electronics Standardization Institute (CESI) and Linux National Standard Workgroup are already working hard to foster development of Linux standards in China, by creating national standards to adapt Linux to local character set and encoding needs. As the following article notes, China is also reaching out to international open source groups in order to increase its competitive skills in this rapidly growing global marketplace.*

China opens up
By: Tony T. Arambulo

CNETChina News & Technology, July 7, 2004 -- If concerted efforts being exerted by the Chinese government and other independent local Linux groups are indications to go by, the country might transform into one of the largest markets for open source computing. Earlier this year, the Open Source Development Labs (OSDL), a global consortium working towards increased adoption of Linux worldwide, accepted membership of Beijing Software Testing Center (BSTC), China's largest software testing organization. Founded two years ago by the Beijing Government Science and Technology Commission and Beijing Products Quality and Inspection Institute, BSTC plans to focus on Linux testing and development of internationalization features for Linux.... Prior to signing in BSTC, OSDL also accepted early this year membership of another Chinese software organization -- the Beijing Co-create Open Source Software Company -- which is one of China's leading open source software development firms. Founded by 10 other Chinese software vendors, the company plans to focus on Linux kernel development and the promotion of the Linux desktop in the country....Full Story

Linux, OSDL and evolution: *One of the interesting things about observing the spread of Linux is watching what the open source community decides to do differently, as well as the same, as the traditional accredited standard setting organizations and/or consortium communities. While SourceForge and other organic open source environments continue to flourish, more structured, traditional organizations such as Eclipse are also producing useful work product for the business community. One of the most interesting hybrids is the high-budget, industry supported Open Source Development Labs (OSDL). Its latest evolutionary step is to launch an affiliate program intended to enlist the involvement of the academic community.*

OSDL Creates New College and University Affiliate Program

PR Newswire, Beaverton, OR, June 30, 2004 -- The Open Source Development Labs (OSDL), a global consortium of leading technology companies dedicated to accelerating the adoption of Linux, today announced a new Lab membership initiative dedicated to supporting qualifying institutions of higher education. The new program is designed to attract affiliates among colleges and universities interested in Linux research and deployment. The first institutions joining OSDL under the new program are Marist College, Oregon State University, Stanford University, Tokyo University of Technology and Waseda University in Japan. ...Full Story

Miscellaneous

It's about time: *For many years the United States has often been slow to embrace new wireless telephone technologies, trailing years behind regions like Europe. Well, its happening again. The following press release reports on the first roll out of 3GSM in the United States. 3GSM, also known as UMTS, is the 3G-upgrade for GSM developed jointly by standards bodies from the United States, Japan, Korea, China and Europe. It delivers substantially enhanced capacity for voice and data traffic, data transmission speeds and quality management, and has already been deployed in Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium…(you get the idea).*

America Embraces 3GSM

GSM Association Press Release, July 20, 2004 -- 3GSM makes its debut in the United States today as AT&T Wireless announces the successful rollout of its initial third generation broadband mobile communications offering in Seattle, Phoenix, Detroit and San Francisco. The new US service, launched ahead of schedule, brings the number of live 3GSM networks to more than 50 worldwide. AT&T Wireless' 3GSM customers will enjoy a rich multimedia mobile experience, with access to high-speed download of content and advanced features such as streaming audio, streaming video, picture messaging, and video messaging… 3GSM fulfils the vision of the world phone by combining the high-speed data and multimedia capabilities of 3GSM with the established …international roaming of GSM. Japan and Korea are both deploying 3GSM to connect with the global GSM community in order to deliver roaming services to their own mobile customers and visitors to their countries from overseas. ...Full Story

Standards and Society

Your tax dollars at work: *What can we say about this one, other than that we thought you'd want to know about it?*

NIST Standard Adopted for Across-the-Road Radar

NIST Tech Beat, July 15, 2004 -- Researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have developed a new performance standard for "across-the-road" radar speed-measuring device systems to help law enforcement agencies to purchase and use with confidence this relatively new

method for catching speeders. Unlike conventional “down-the-road” radar speed-measuring devices, across-the-road radar systems do not require an operator and can be programmed to detect and record vehicles traveling above a predetermined speed. In addition, these devices can be set to look selectively for cars, motorcycles or trucks. The newer systems are also less likely to be detected by speeders because the radar beam used is pointed across, rather than along the road. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has adopted the new across-the-road radar standard along with two other updated NIST standards for down the road radar and for lidar, a speed enforcement technology that uses laser pulses rather than radio waves. ...Full Story

Standards are ***Serious*** (aren't they?)

With this issue, we introduce a new topical heading, underlining the fact that standards need not be so serious that they can't still make us smile, or at least shake our heads. Herewith, the first two offerings.

And don't forget gazundering: *Alright, this isn't an IT standard. But how can you resist reporting on a new Working Group just formed by the Irish Government to fight the invidious effects of "gazumping" (abandoning an accepted offer to buy your house when a better one comes along) and "gazumping" (threatening to walk after agreeing to buy a house unless the seller accepts a lower offer, after the seller is already on the hook to buy another house). Without enforceable standards, either practice can -- and in the United Kingdom currently does -- exist.*

New Working Group Will Probe Gazumping

Business World, July 6, 2004 -- Rising house prices have lifted percentage fees earned by estate agents to unacceptable levels, according to a member of a new working group on the sector set up by the government. Agents are earning "huge" fees out of proportion with the amount of work done for their clients, the Director of Consumer Affairs Carmel Foley has claimed. Fees should be based on an estimate of the amount of work needed or by the hour, or type of transaction," she says. "If a house is sold for 10 m euro as opposed to 1 m euro," she tells the Irish Times this morning, " why should they get 10 times the amount of money? ...Full Story

What hit me? *In extraterrestrial news this month, we note that standards do indeed cover a broad topical range. Some cover matters as complex as calculating orbital trajectories and as elemental as being careful about what to do with your garbage -- sometimes all in the same standard.*

New FCC Orbital Debris Ruling: ISO TC20/SC14 to Develop Standards for Orbital Debris Mitigation

U.S. Newswire, Reston, VA, July 1, 2004 -- On 21 June, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published a ruling that called for every U.S.-licensed satellite launched after 18 March 2002 to be placed into a disposal orbit at the end of its useful life. The new ruling is based on guidelines developed by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordinating Committee (IADC), a group of 11 international space agencies whose goal is to minimize the growth of the space debris population. The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) currently manages an international committee that is developing technical standards to help satellite operators implement the IADC guidelines and comply with the new FCC rule. Worldwide members of Technical Committee 20/Subcommittee 14 (TC20/SC14) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) are currently at work on a set of standards based on the IADC guidelines. ...Full Story