

Consortium Standards Bulletin

A ConsortiumInfo.org publication

FEBRUARY 2004

Vol III, No. 2

NEWS SHORTS

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: <http://www.consortiuminfo.org/news/rss/> Updates are usually posted on Mondays and Wednesdays.

The following are just a few of the many stories from the past month that you can find digested at ConsortiumInfo.org.

New Standards/Specifications

***The Web becomes semantic:** For five years, Tim Berners-Lee has been evangelizing the potential for the Semantic Web. Some have applauded, while others have regretted the diversion of this vital consortium's resources from other potential opportunities. Today, the W3C announced the Recommendation (in W3C terminology, meaning the final release) of two of the cornerstone technologies envisioned by it to enable the Semantic Web. With this release, the debate can move from the theoretical to the real world. The next test will be the degree to which these new technologies are implemented and utilized.*

World Wide Web Consortium Issues RDF and OWL Recommendations Semantic Web emerges as commercial-grade infrastructure for sharing data on the Web

<http://www.w3.org/>, 10 February 2004 -- Today, the World Wide Web Consortium announced final approval of two key Semantic Web technologies, the revised Resource Description Framework (RDF) and the Web Ontology Language (OWL). RDF and OWL are Semantic Web standards that provide a framework for asset management, enterprise integration and the sharing and reuse of data on the Web. These standard formats for data sharing span application, enterprise, and community boundaries... Today's announcement marks the emergence of the Semantic Web as a broad-based, commercial-grade platform for data on the Web. The deployment of these standards in commercial products and services signals the transition of Semantic Web technology from what was largely a research and advanced development project over the last five years, to more practical technology deployed in mass market tools that enables more flexible access to structured data on the Web.

<http://www.w3.org/2004/01/sws-pressrelease.html.en>



***Many points of access, loosely connected:** Earlier in this issue we noted that one force that is reshaping the setting of standards is the desire of end-users to access all types of data anywhere, anytime, using an increasing number of device types. The result is that multiple standards must be created concurrently to address the same issues in different environments, where in the past, only issues based on a single, common platform needed to be dealt with. The following three items (out of many more that could also have been included) demonstrate how three different standard setting organizations are addressing these issues.*

*The first article reports on how the **Open Mobile Alliance (OMA)** is handling the unique technical issues that mobile devices bring to the area of illegal file sharing prevention. The OMA is meeting the need*

using two simultaneous techniques: by supplying the necessary technology to prevent actual copyright violations, and by helping with the creation of a licensing body, to facilitate the rapid implementation of the specifications themselves.

*The second article illustrates what might be called "backward compatibility" issues: i.e., new services that are primarily intended for mobile devices, but which will also need to be conceived in a way that traditional desk-top based platforms will be able to access the services as well. In this case, it is the **Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG)** that is involved, and the service is text messaging, a service that was originally launched -- and became wildly popular -- utilizing cell phones.*

*The third piece is a press release from the **OpenGIS Consortium (OGC)**, the acknowledged leader in setting geoinformation standards intended to "geo enable" the Web. Location based services present perhaps the ultimate example of the challenges that wireless technology and globalization present, as GIS capabilities are being built into ever more types of devices that are expected to operate anywhere in the world*

Industry Group Launches Wireless DRM Initiative. OMA Unveils System to Prevent Illegal File Sharing Over Mobile Devices.

By: Laura Rohde

InfoWorld.com, February, 2, 2004 -- The Open Mobile Alliance (OMA) on Monday launched its newest Digital Rights Management (DRM) system for protecting digital music, video, and software from illegal file sharing over mobile devices. Additionally, the OMA will unveil a licensing body, the Content Management License Administrator (CMLA), led by Nokia Corp., Intel Corp., Panasonic Consumer Electronics Inc. and Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. Formerly known as "Project Hudson," the CMLA will promote the OMA's enhanced version of its DRM system aimed at securing handsets and other mobile devices. The DRM system will be built into mobile handsets to allow compliant devices to receive and play encrypted files, and should also work with devices using Wi-Fi wireless networks, based on 802.11 standards.

http://www.infoworld.com/article/04/02/02/HNwirelessdrm_1.html

The CoverPages January 30, 2004 The Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) has approved the "Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol (XMPP): Core" specification as an IETF Proposed Standard. XMPP is a real-time communications protocol which allows people, devices, and applications to instantly communicate and exchange streaming XML data, based upon dynamic presence and availability information. XMPP is designed mainly for building instant messaging and presence applications. [...Full Story](#)

OGC Members Adopt Implementation Specification for Location Based Services

New York, New York, January 20, 2004 -- At meetings held at United Nations Headquarters, OGC members approved the OpenGIS(R) Location Services (OpenLS(TM)) Specification for public release. The OpenLS Implementation Specification can be found at http://www.opengis.org/specs/?page=specs_. The OpenLS Implementation Specification defines a set of core interfaces for implementing interoperable location service applications. The core interfaces are for accessing directory services (such as yellow pages), route determination, location determination gateway, geocoding, reverse geocoding, and portrayal services using standard Web protocols. The interfaces allow telecommunications companies, telematics service providers, traditional GIS technology companies, and location-based services (LBS) providers to efficiently implement interoperable LBS applications that seamlessly access multiple content repositories and service frameworks that work across the world's many different wireless networks and devices.



Identifiers everywhere: An increasingly important area of standardization involves identifiers of all types: based on geography (down to the specific loading dock or desktop within an organization), product categories, for purposes of identity management, and so on. The press release below announced a system that is representative of the increasing number of standardization efforts being launched and completed in this area.

NISO-Sponsored INFO URI Scheme is Information Gateway to the Web

NISO, Bethesda, MD, January 14, 2004 – Working under the auspices of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO), a joint task force of the publishing and library communities has developed and published a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) scheme aimed at the identification of information assets. Information assets should be interpreted rather broadly to include, for example, documents and terms from classification schemes. The INFO URI scheme is a consistent and reliable way to represent and reference such standard identifiers as Dewey Decimal Classifications on the Web so that these identifiers can be "read" and understood by Web applications.

http://www.niso.org/news/releases/pr-NISO_URL.html



How Standards Are Set

Standards for standard setters: While those who live exclusively in the consortium space may have only dim awareness of ANSI and its role, the great majority of standard setting outside of the ICT world (as well as many standards that are in the ICT space) are subject to the process rules and other requirements that are promulgated by ANSI (the American National Standards Institute). Occasionally, those rules are updated, and when they are, some 200 standard setting organizations that deal with products as diverse as swimming pools and aeronautics must adapt, and certify their compliance as well.

ANSI Announces Revised American National Standards Process Procedures

ANSI, New York, NY, February, 2, 2004 – The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has announced recent changes to the American National Standards (ANS) process and issued the 2004 Compliance Form required for all organizations seeking to maintain ANSI accreditation. The deadline for completion and return of the Compliance Form is March 15, 2004.

http://www.ansi.org/news_publications/news_story.aspx?menuid=7&articleid=600



Just What We Need: Ah, here we go again. The oldest saw in standard setting goes something like this: "Standards are great - that's why there are so many of them (for the same purpose)." The following describes and assesses the launching of two new, competing standards, noting that sometimes starting two interoperability horses can be a good thing, providing that the best of both bloodlines ends up in the final specification sired by the two groups. If there's a photo finish, of course, then no one wins the race, and you're back to the old saw about too many standards (and no implementations).

Gartner.com, January 26, 2004 – The note discusses WS-Notification and the WS-Resource Framework (Akamai, The Globus Alliance, HP, IBM, Sonic, and TIBCO) together with WS-Eventing (BEA, Microsoft and TIBCO). 'Web services have lacked a standard for event notification. Now, two proposals for just such a standard have emerged within the space of two weeks. But unless the two vendor camps get together, users won't benefit much. If the two groups can converge the basic publish-and-subscribe specs, it would provide a foundation to later standardize more advanced aspects of event-driven computing. For now, neither of the new specs includes durable subscription or complex event processing features. Nor are either of the specs as complete as JMS, the Java Message Service specification, which

does not cover Web services but which, up to now, has been the only multivendor standard available for publish-and-subscribe messaging. ...Full Story



***Is this is, or is this ain't a standard?** SDO purists will tell you that only a specification issued by an accredited standards development organization can be called a "standard." Consortium folk, of course, disagree. The pragmatic among us will say that a standard is anything that's useful and universally adopted, no matter where it comes from. We tend more towards the pragmatic than the academic point of view, while also acknowledging that process values and openness are unquestionably important as well. Nomenclature aside, given the proponents of the following specification, we include the announcement below in the belief that it merits (at least pragmatic) attention:*

Web Services Notification and Web Services Resource Framework.

TheCoverPages.com, January 20, 2004 -- An announcement from Akamai, The Globus Alliance, HP, IBM, Sonic Software, and TIBCO describes three new specifications which provide a scalable publication/subscription messaging model and the ability to model stateful resources using Web services. The "WS-Notification," "WS-Resource Properties," and "WS-Resource Lifetime" specifications describe a common, standards-based infrastructure for business applications, Grid resources, and systems management. ...Full Story



Open Source

***Mozilla soldiers on:** Ah, think back to those heady days of the 1990s, when Netscape was going to conquer Microsoft, when the Web would free us all forever from the threat of dominance by any single company, and when every liberal arts graduate could score a job as a VP at a VC-backed startup and become an IPO millionaire before their 22nd birthday (providing they flipped their shares -- quick). One of the first indications that this was not to be was when Netscape converted its previously for sale, proprietary, flagship browser into a freely available open source licensing model. That project is still in operation, and the faithful dutifully continue to support and extend the prototypical browser's features. The following is an update from the **Mozilla Foundation** , which is the current umbrella under which these activities continue.*

Mozilla 1.6 Ready For Release

eWEEK.com, January 16, 2004 -- The Mozilla Foundation has released the next version of its open-source Web-browser suite. The Mozilla 1.6 release, out in a beta version since December, includes expanded authentication support that is particularly useful for enterprises as well as greater integration with the GNOME desktop that is popular among Linux users. Mozilla 1.6 is available for download through the Mountain View, Calif.-based foundation's Web site and runs on Linux, Mac OS X, and Windows. With Version 1.6, Mozilla adds support for a Microsoft-specific NTLM (NT LAN Manager) authentication mechanism into its Linux and Mac OS X versions in addition to the Windows version. Another new capability is support for GNOME MIME-type associations, allowing Mozilla to adopt the same associations as the GNOME desktop for determining which application to launch for particular file types. ...Full Story

Story Updates

Openness v. sponsorship: *Standards (unless they are de facto standards, like Windows, established as a result of unusual opportunity or market power) rarely achieve success unless they are perceived to be "open." One attribute of openness is perceived freedom from undue influence by a single vendor or group of vendors. In 2003, we tracked the decision-making within Eclipse.org, an organization heavily supported by IBM. The following article describes the end result of that process, as Eclipse has completed a deliberately public separation from the economic and other ties that bound it to IBM.*

Eclipse Reorganizes Into Independent Entity

By: Darryl K. Taft

eWEEK, Anaheim, CA, February 3, 2004 – The Eclipse Board of Stewards Monday announced Eclipse's reorganization into a not-for-profit corporation known as the Eclipse Foundation. The organization initially formed after IBM released the Java-based Eclipse Platform into the open-source community, Eclipse is now an independent body that will drive the platform's evolution to benefit the providers of software development offerings and end users. McGaughey, executive director of Eclipse, said the new organization will work and look a lot like the Apache Foundation. Members of the organization will have to commit to providing a commercial product that supports Eclipse within 12 months of joining.

<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,4149,1498992,00.asp>



The IP Shuffle: *In our November, 2003 issue ([Do IT Patents Work ?](#)) we focused on the patent-related issues roiling the ICT industry, and whether there was something fundamentally flawed in a system that is subject to so much uncertainty. One of the cases that we highlighted was the success of a one-person company, Eolas Technologies, in suing industry giant Microsoft, and the efforts that have followed aimed at invalidating the patent claims at issue.*

The last thirty days started badly for Microsoft, as the first article below reports. But by the end of the month, Microsoft was feeling more confident. As the second article reports, Microsoft is beginning to feel more hopeful that the PTO, urged on by the W3C and others to reexamine the Eolas patent, will indeed rescind the patent claims in question. In consequence, Microsoft has announced (to the relief of web developers everywhere) that it will not be issuing the fix that it had earlier announced it was developing in order to work around the infringement ruling handed down by a court last year.

Eolas Browser Verdict Against Microsoft Stands Despite Patent Review

eWeek.com, January 14, 2004 – A federal judge on Wednesday upheld a jury's \$521 million verdict against Microsoft Corp. in the high-profile Web browser patent infringement against it despite an ongoing reexamination of the patent's validity. Judge James B. Zagel, in an order issued in U.S. District Court in Chicago, found that Microsoft had infringed on Eolas Technologies Inc.'s patent on the embedding and invoking of interactive applications, such as plug-ins and applets, in Web browsers. He denied Microsoft's motion to suspend a decision until the U.S. Patent and Copyright Office complete a reexamination of the patent. ...Full Story

Microsoft says US Govt may cancel Eolas Patent

SEATTLE (Reuters), January 29, 2004 - Microsoft Corp. said on Thursday that the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office may come to its rescue and cancel a patent that could force the world's biggest software company to rejig its most popular product. Microsoft, of Redmond, Washington, said it was suspending plans to make changes to its Windows operating system and Internet Explorer Web browser, sparing users headaches caused by tweaking how mini-applications run on its software. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office said in November it would reexamine the Eolas patent after Internet advocacy groups including the World Wide Web Consortium raised claims that preexisting inventions may invalidate

Eolas's patent claims. "Given these circumstances, and after consulting industry colleagues and developers, Microsoft, for now, will not be releasing an update to Internet Explorer," it said, adding that Microsoft also would not release a planned update to its latest Windows operating system known as Windows XP Service Pack 2. ...Full Story



Picking up steam: *The RFID express rolls on. As shown in the next two articles, the major IT vendors are hard at work building out the technical infrastructure needed to meet customer requirements. The next six months should give a strong indication as to whether a tipping point has indeed been passed, or whether the "Wal-Mart Effect" will wear off, with RFID adoption slowing dramatically before it begins to rise again (as suggested by the third article, reporting on a new IDC report). The key indicator will be whether other major buyers begin adding RFID requirements to their purchasing. If this doesn't happen, then other vendors will be unlikely to buy the new technology that companies such as Microsoft, IBM, Philips and Oracle will be offering.*

Microsoft, IBM, Philips to Back RFID. Inventory Tracking Technology Gains Speed

InfoWorld, January 27, 2004 -- RFID (radio frequency identification) tagging technology continues to gain in inventory tracking uses, as Microsoft Corp., IBM Corp. and Koninklijke Philips Electronics NV announce projects for developing and promoting it as a cost-saving tool for retailers. RFID chips, computer chips equipped with miniature antennae, store data for transmission to nearby receivers, and are increasingly being used as wireless tags to track goods. One advantage to the wireless tags is that, unlike bar codes, RFID tags can be read at any angle and from a distance. Large retail companies such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Tesco PLC of the U.K. and Germany's Metro AG, have been using the RFID technology and are already planning to push the technology beyond the pilot stage. ...Full Story

Oracle to Add RFID Support to Warehouse Application

eWEEK.com, January 27, 2004 -- Oracle Corp. said it plans to release a new version of Oracle Warehouse Management in the summer season that will support radio frequency identification (RFID) and electronic product code (EPC) features. The application server will include built-in RFID middleware to provide the connection-control and filtering features required to process RFID data. The warehouse management module will be able to produce and process RFID labels that are required for commodity tracking. ...Full Story

IDC Forecasts RFID Bubble, Burst, Boom

RFID Journal, January 12, 2004 -- The author of a new report sees the RFID market for the retail supply chain growing to \$1.3 billion in 2008, and then declining before the real growth starts. IDC, a technology market research and advisory firm, has published the new report, "U.S. RFID for the Retail Supply Chain Spending Forecast and Analysis, 2003-2008." The report focuses only on the retail supply chain and tries to quantify the impact of Wal-Mart's mandate -- and to a lesser degree, the U.S. Department of Defense's -- on RFID sales within the CPG industry. It also covers retailers that will follow in Wal-Mart's footsteps and issue their own tagging requirements for manufacturers, wholesalers and logistics providers. The bulk of the \$1.3 billion will comprise sales of hardware, including RFID tags, readers and antennas, plus spending on servers to run those readers and network equipment to handle the data. The remainder will come from spending on middleware and services related to business consulting, systems integration and maintenance and support. ...Full Story

Miscellaneous

Doing well by doing good: *There are three reasons for doing the right thing: because its the right thing (too infrequently the reason that motivates commercial behavior), because the government or some other source of pressure makes you do the right thing, and because you decide that its in your best interests to do the right thing. While the first motive is intrinsic to the concept of an SDO, at least to the extent that SDOs are required to welcome all interested parties and to make a commitment to consensus, only recently have a limited number of consortia begun to embrace similar concepts. The following article illustrates how the third motive is influencing one set of commercial players setting commonalities (in this case, Linux) as a result of the prior effect of the second motive on a single, dominant, commercial player (Microsoft). Over 10 years ago, Microsoft found it necessary to begin to address the fact that moving to a graphical user interface made it far more difficult for the blind to use a computer. Now, the Linux world is deciding to address the same issue -- in this case, the author suggests, for commercial rather than equitable or other reasons.*

Silicon Valley.com, January 21, 2004 Linux is chasing Microsoft's Windows into every market where the two operating systems can compete. A case in point: Today, an Oakland organization will announce it is developing standards to make Linux accessible to people with disabilities. The Free Standards Group has created a task force to establish the standards. In doing so, it is playing catch-up to Windows, which has offered add-on features available for the disabled since the mid-1990s. The non-profit group will encourage Linux developers to make their software work with a standard version of Linux. That standard version in turn will be compatible with software and hardware developed for disabled people. ...Full Story



From Postal Runners to Email: *Many third world and emerging countries in Africa and Asia are opting to go directly to wireless technology and cell phones, thereby skipping the old-fashioned (and expensive) land-line evolutionary stage of telecommunications. That may work very well where electricity is already available (or at least batteries), but what about email? Not only is a cell-phone screen and numeric keypad ill-equipped for much more than text messaging, but what if you have no computer, no cell phone, no electricity, and no ready access even to batteries? [For more, see the full entry at [The Standards Blog](#)]*

ITU, India and UPU Partnership Helps Bhutan Bridge the Digital Divide

ITU, Geneva, 16 January 2004 -- The Government of India, in partnership with two UN agencies, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU), will help boost the delivery of e-post services to citizens in the least accessible parts of its south Asian neighbour, Bhutan with a package of equipment, satellite capacity and training resources worth some USD 450,000. The resulting e-post service will allow people without computers in remote areas to send e-mail between post offices for printing and delivery....The E-Shabtog project seeks to create a network of telekiosks in 38 post offices throughout Bhutan for affordable and practical access to email. Letters normally take 5 to 8 days to be delivered by postal runners between remote mountain districts. E-mailing letters cuts home delivery time to 1 night. The long-term goal is to make the post office a one-stop shop that will deliver a wide range of eservices such as bill payment, government information, and commerce. To date, 17 post offices in Bhutan have been equipped for e-post. By the end of 2004, it is planned that 38 post offices, or one-third of all post offices in the country, will be e-service ready. ...Full Story