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Consortium Standards Bulletin

A ConsortiumInfo.org publication

September 2003

Vol II, No. 9

THE REST OF THE NEWS

New Consortia

Another type of grid in the news: Grid computing has been getting quite a bit of press over the last several months. This distributed architecture offers not only the potential to network vast numbers of computers to assemble awesome computing power from lower priced components, but also permits sharing of storage, applications and data as well. By its nature, such a system would benefit from standards, and its hardly surprising that the rising level of interest in this area is spawning its first commercial consortium

Oracle plots grid computing consortium By Matt Hines

CNET News.com, September 11, 2003 -- Database-software maker Oracle is building a consortium of industry players to help create standards for commercial use of grid computing, an Oracle executive said Wednesday. Addressing the crowd gathered at this week's OracleWorld conference in San Francisco, Chuck Rozwat, executive vice president for database server technologies at Oracle, said the new organization would help generate guidelines for businesses hoping to tap into the promise of grid computing.....Full Story



Dell calls for blade server standards By Ina Fried and Michael Kanellos

CNET News.com, September 8, 2003 -- "There should be a common blade architecture," CEO Michael Dell said in a keynote speech at the OracleWorld trade show here. "If we are successful, and I am reasonably optimistic we will be...I think you will see a high-volume market for these blades." However, Dell said the transition from traditional servers to blades will not happen overnight. "I think it is going to take awhile," he said... Getting a Dell-sponsored blade initiative off the ground, though, could be tough. IBM and Intel have already formed an alliance to standardize the construction of blade servers.Full Story



New Standards

Standards come of age. There has always been a deep divide between interoperably intolerant and interoperably tolerant (albeit grudgingly) systems. The former include systems such as telecommunications networks, where either you connect, or you don't. The latter, regrettably, includes your office computer network, where its accepted that you will need to underwrite an expensive IT department to assemble and maintain that network. Slowly, the gap between these two extremes is starting to narrow, as standards groups develop ways for network components to identify and configure themselves, much as PCs and their peripherals (mostly) do today. In the following article, Cover Pages reports on a new initiative by the Universal Plug and Play Forum to tame the network.

UPnP Forum Releases New Security Specifications for Industry Review

Cover Pages, August 22, 2003 -- The Universal Plug and Play Forum (UPnP) Security Working Committee has issued a call for industry review of two new XML-based specifications, SecurityConsole: Service Template Specification and DeviceSecurity: Service Template Specification. The working committee invites comments on these level 0.93 specifications, particularly with regard to the robustness of the proposed security solution and to potential security vulnerabilities. The UPnP Forum seeks to develop standards for describing device protocols and XML-based device schemas for the purpose of enabling device-to-device interoperability in a scalable networked environment.[Full Story](#)



Last step: Another consortium with a multi-step process akin to that of W3C is OASIS, but with an added twist: a committee can adopt A new specification and stop there, or it can be adopted by the full membership. Several new standards recently received full member-adopted status, as announced by OASIS at its website.

SAML v1.1, WSRP v1.0, and XCBF v1.1 Approved by the OASIS Membership at-large as OASIS Standards.

OASIS, September 2, 2003 - Members of the OASIS Security Services TC, OASIS Web Services for Remote Portlets TC, and OASIS XML Common Biometric Format TC are to be congratulated on their work in developing these specifications. Thanks also to all OASIS members who reviewed the specifications and cast ballots.



***Musical Chairs, anyone?** While the SCO suit against IBM and SCO's threats of action against the end-user community have dominated the news, realignments and reactions of note to these developments have also taken place.*

Turbolinux Joins OSDL

Internetnews.com, August 27, 2003 Japanese Linux firm Turbolinux, a founder of the UnitedLinux group and provider of one of the most widely-used Linux distributions in Asia, Wednesday added its support to the Open Source Development Labs (OSDL) consortium. OSDL is a non-profit consortium of IT industry leaders dedicated to furthering the growth and adoption of Linux in the enterprise. The addition of Turbolinux -- which helped drive the development of double-byte character support for Linux -- to its member companies strengthens OSDL's bid to become one of the guiding bodies behind the development of enterprise Linux, adding expertise in the Japanese and Asian markets. ...[Full Story](#)



Advocacy

***Where were you when the standards went out?** As you might expect, there are standards that address various aspects of power transmission, including reliability. Like most standards, these are created through the voluntary consensus process and, unlike government regulations, cannot be enforced by those that create them. The following article from the ANSI site explores the question of whether this should change, in light of the massive August blackout.*

Voluntary Utility Standards Face Post-Blackout Scrutiny

ANSI, New York August 19, 2003 "Reliability" is becoming the catchword of the public after the worst blackout in U.S. history spread over 9,300 square miles on August 14, 2003. Over the last several days, utility officials and politicians have pointed to various sources as to where the problem began. As scrutiny descends on the nation's power grid and indeed the entire energy infrastructure, an ANSI member has been on the front lines of a barrage of questions, attempting to answer the "why" and "how." The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) says it needs more authority to enforce the standards the guide the utilities market. ...[Full Story](#)



Certification and Branding

Consumer Fault Intolerance: *Another interoperability "fault intolerant" area of technology is consumer products: for commodity electronic items like television sets, purchasers are slow to purchase items that do not offer pure plug and play performance. Now, new standards provide the ability to bypass the need for set-top cable-access boxes (and thus avoid the headaches related to those devices). CableLabs, the research and development consortium where such standards are developed, has seized on this opportunity to make life easier for consumers. Not surprisingly, vendors have been quick not only to implement, but to gain certification of compliance to these new standards as well. The following press release announces the latest product line to clear certification.*

Panasonic Notches Digital Milestone: Four Models Of Integrated Digital Television Sets Achieve CableLabs® OpenCable™ Certified Status

Louisville, Colorado, August 14, 2003 – The cable industry achieved a digital video milestone when CableLabs announced that it had awarded certified status to Panasonic for four models of integrated digital television sets (DTVs) that will connect directly to cable television systems and receive digital services without requiring set-top boxes. The announcement followed completion of a wave of certification testing conducted as part of the CableLabs OpenCable project. Panasonic's four certified DTVs will be able to directly receive High Definition (HDTV) and other one-way digital programs via cable, including premium services, on cable systems throughout the United States without the need for a set-top box....CableLabs Certified™ means that the device has passed a series of tests for compliance with the indicated version of the specification and has thus demonstrated interoperability with multiple cable distribution networks. Founded in 1988 by members of the cable television industry, Cable Television Laboratories is a non-profit research and development consortium that is dedicated to pursuing new cable telecommunications technologies and to helping its cable operator members integrate those advancements into their business objectives. Cable operators from around the world are members. CableLabs maintains web sites at <http://www.cablelabs.com>; <http://www.packetcable.com>; <http://www.cablemodem.com>; <http://www.cablenet.org>; and <http://www.opencable.com>.



Miscellaneous

Another British Invasion? *While US mobile phone owners continue to be largely oblivious to text messaging, use in countries such as Great Britain continues to grow exponentially. With the offering of additional services designed to wed owners ever more tightly to their cell phones (such as popular polls and voting), the adoption of text messaging in the US may be even more rapid once the craze begins to take serious hold.*

MOBILE DATA ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 1.6 BILLION MESSAGES SENT DURING JULY 2003

The Mobile Data Association, August 28, 2003 The MDA today announced that the total number of chargeable person-to-person text messages sent across the four UK GSM networks in July 2003 totaled 1.68 billion, compared to 1.3 billion in July 2002 and 992 million in July 2001....Over the last four years

text.it (<http://www.text.it>) has witnessed text messaging grow from a popular craze to becoming an essential communication tool..."Text messaging is continuing to rise in popularity and diversity," comments Mike Short, Chairman of the MDA. "As well as person to person text messaging we are seeing an increase in interactive text with programmes such as Fame Academy and Pop Idol providing people with the opportunity to vote via a short code across all networks." ...[Full Story](#)



More standards pull from Wal-Mart. *Wal-Mart's on-again/off-again love affair with Radio Frequency Identity (RFID) Tags isn't the only news that its making in the standards world. This month, we highlight another article from CNET, which reports on a new vendor requirement (effective in October) announced by Wal-Mart. This time, the retailer is seeking to facilitate the electronic exchange of "paperwork" using Electronic Data Interchange-Internet Integration, or EDI-INT, a protocol for moving data across the Internet that incorporates Extensible Markup Language (XML). Two aspects of this news are worthy of comment. The first, upon which the article focuses, demonstrates the profound economic impact that IT decisions made by the largest companies can have -- in this case, on the software marketplace, which will reap tens (if not hundreds) of millions of dollars in sales from vendor purchases motivated by the need to meet the new Wal-Mart requirement. The second aspect, however, is subtler: the ability of a single company to guarantee the broad utilization of a standard, as a result of its market power. Most standards initially struggle for acceptance, while companies haggle over the exact form of the specification and assess whether they will gain or lose from the uptake of the standard in its final form. But in a situation like this, the adoption by a single company with vast purchasing power can guarantee the broad use of a standard. It is at this point that the two aspects of the story touch: given the investment that multiple vendors will need to make in standards-compliant software to meet the requirements of this single customer, they will have a strong economic incentive to support its utilization by all of their customers. In this dynamic, we see the same result, in a more benign way, that results from the imposition of a proprietary, de facto standard from a vendor. But instead of a push from the top of the supply chain to the advantage of a single vendor, we see a pull from the opposite end, motivated simply by Wal-Mart's desire to use the most effective standard available to facilitate its operations and boost its profits. The result should be the rapid uptake of a standard to the ultimate benefit of all retailers that choose to follow in the wake of the retail giant.*

Wal-Mart project boon for software makers

CNET News.com, August 14, 2003 -- Black & Decker and drugmaker Abbott Laboratories are among a handful of major companies that this week said they have purchased and installed special software to help meet new requirements for doing business with Wal-Mart, the world's largest retail chain, with more than 4,700 stores around the globe. The software is designed to shuttle a daily flow of electronic purchase orders, invoices and shipping notices between companies by using the Internet rather than private networks...Although Wal-Mart declined to specify the dollar value of the various projects, one analyst estimated Wal-Mart suppliers are collectively spending tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars on software to comply...Specifically, many Wal-Mart suppliers must be equipped to exchange paperwork electronically using Electronic Data Interchange-Internet Integration, or EDI-INT, a protocol for moving data across the Internet that incorporates Extensible Markup Language (XML). ...[Full Story](#)



Bombs, Lights and Standards: *Rebuilding the critical infrastructure of an entire country has many challenging aspects. The fact that the U.S. Department of Commerce placed the re-establishment of the Iraqi standards system on its action list literally before all of the lights were back on in Baghdad is another indication of the essential role that standards play in society.*

Need for Testing and Certification Services in Iraq

ANSI, Washington, DC August 8, 2003 The U.S. Department of Commerce (DoC) is seeking organizations interested in providing testing and certification services in Iraq. Mr. Susan Hamrock, a DoC employee in Baghdad, has been assigned to help the Iraqis re-establish the Central Organization for

Standardization and Quality Control (COSQC). The COSQC has primary responsibility for ensuring standards for goods, both domestic and imported, are met. ...[Full Story](#)



What's Up/What's Down

What's in a Name? When IBM helped found Eclipse.Org two years ago, playing the dominant role seemed like a good idea -- good enough to invest \$40 million in, as a matter of fact. Now that the project has made progress in creating its open source, single graphical interface "framework" for development, however, IBM has decided that its time to take a step backwards. How big a step? Big enough that the open source organization hopes to convince IBM arch-rival Sun Microsystems (which promotes NetBeans, its own open source tool initiative) to join the party, and help stabilize the Java community by building a path of interoperability between the Eclipse and the NetBeans code. If the organization really wants to let Sun shine in, though, word has it that Eclipse's perhaps too-clever name will have to go - interoperability bridges aren't built on efforts to Eclipse the Sun initiative.

Eclipse revamp to forge path for Sun By Martin LaMonica

CNET News.com, September 3, 2003 -- Skip McGaughey, chairman of Eclipse and an IBM executive, said the organization is revamping its membership model to gain independence from IBM, which invested \$40 million in seed funding to start the open-source tools project. By freeing itself from IBM's sponsorship, Eclipse hopes to attract other Java supporters--namely Sun Microsystems--that have been wary of joining a forum dominated by Big Blue. The changes will take place over the next three months, McGaughey said. For the full press release, see: http://www.etsi.org/pressroom/Previous/2003/2003_10_lpra1.htm



Standards in the World

Teleworkers of the World, Unite! Not so very long ago, working at home involved reliance on the "sneaker net," and if you tucked the wrong floppy disk in your pocket, well, you might as well head back to the office -- or just take the night off. With the advent of wide area networking, serious home office use became more technically feasible, but it was still frustrating and expensive, not to mention limited by slow telephone line modem speeds. Today, through the interplay of diverse internet, cable, modem, wireless and other standards, it is possible to work from virtually anywhere, any time, at a low cost. Of course, this means that you can't take the night off anymore, and blame it on grabbing the wrong floppy disk

HOME-BASED TELEWORK BY U.S. EMPLOYEES GROWS NEARLY 40% SINCE 2001

BALTIMORE – Sept. 4, 2003 – Today ITAC, the association for advancing work from anywhere, revealed significant increases in home-based telework in the United States, as uncovered by the 2003 American Interactive Consumer Survey conducted by the Dieringer Research Group...According to the survey, the number of employed Americans who work from home during business hours at least one day per month has increased by nearly 40 percent since 2001; for the self-employed, the equivalent increase is almost 18 percent. The report also found that 42 percent of the employee teleworkers work from home at least one day per week, and 22 percent of the employees work at home daily or nearly every day.



Was that a cell phone I heard? One reason that standards have a higher profile today is because standards-enabled consumer products have become so ubiquitous and noticeable. Today, there are well over one billion mobile phone users - a fantastic number by any measure. In the following press release, the GSM Association, which promotes the interests of operators offering services based on GSM, GPRS (General Packet Radio Services), EDGE (Enhanced Data for GSM Evolution) and 3GSM wireless

communications platforms, announces the arrival of its 200th member: Djibouti. Other recent arrivals include the Bahamas, Kiribati, Comoros, Guatemala, Timor Leste, Honduras, and Guyana. The reach and breadth of the GSM membership also underlines the way that standards-enabled technology can help emerging countries avoid capital intensive infrastructural investments (in this case, to enable wire-line transmission of voice and data) to bring first world services to third world countries.

GSM Celebrates 200 Country Milestone

London, UK: 2nd September 2003: The GSM community celebrated another milestone in August as membership of the GSM Association (GSMA) broke through the 200-country barrier. The Association – the global trade organisation for GSM operators – now numbers some 592 operator members in 203 countries with more than 909 million customers worldwide. New countries joining the GSM community recently include the Bahamas, Kiribati, Comoros, Guatemala, Djibouti (the 200th country), and Timor Leste (the 201st), Honduras (202) and Guyana (203). 99.7% of the world's population lives in countries that have selected GSM. ...Full Story



Intellectual Property

A disturbance in the force: *One of the truly remarkable things about the World Wide Web is that it has avoided running aground on blocking (or almost as seriously) royalty-bearing patents directly affecting Web users. Recently, a verdict was handed down in a long running-patent suit involving the technology underlying Web-page embedded applets. The damages -- as well as the implications -- of this verdict caught everyone's attention. Now the industry is trying to unravel the implications of the decision for vendors and end-users alike. Meanwhile, if the verdict stands, even industry-giant Microsoft will feel the impact of the \$512 million award on its legendarily enormous cash balances.*

Microsoft's Patent Loss Rattles Tech Community By Paul Roberts

IDG News Service, September 3, 2003 -- Companies with products that work on the Internet are slowly waking up to the broad implications of a recent judgment against software behemoth Microsoft Corp. in a patent infringement case. The \$520 million award to Eolas Technologies Inc. of Chicago and the University of California (UC) stemmed from a 1999 lawsuit in which Eolas and UC charged Microsoft with infringing on a 1998 patent owned by the university and licensed to Eolas. However, the verdict could spell trouble for a wide range of popular Web-based products and services, experts agree. ..In response to the judgment against it, Microsoft said last week that it will be making changes to Internet Explorer (IE) that may affect a "large number of existing Web pages," according to a statement by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).