EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Lego Approach to

Consortium Formation

An ongoing topic area of *Standards Today* since its inception has been the practical side of consortium formation, participation and management. Many of the Feature Articles on these topics have been compiled into the Essential Guide to Standards section of ConsortiumInfo.org, which comprises a free, book length manual for anyone seeking to launch, operate, evaluate, or participate in such an organization.

The first issue of *Standards Today* this year continued that trend, providing an overview of the different ways in which the very flexible consortium structure has been adapted across a variety of collaborative efforts. This issue picks up where that one left off, explaining how consortia can best be constructed to support different types of standards related endeavors. The Feature Articles from both issues will later be added to the *Essential Guide*, which I hope to offer in eBook and printed form later this year.

In this month's **Editorial** I open by asking whether there are too many consortia in existence already, and note that the real question has more to do with whether the consortia launched in prior years are the right ones to take up the new technical challenges that continue to emerge. If not, then there are by definition too few.

In my **Feature Article** I carry this line of inquiry further, identifying the reasons why a new consortium should – and as importantly, should not – be created. I then identify particular programs that are needed to support specific goals, and finally match these programmatic modules to a list of typical consortium roles to illustrate what a given consortium should offer to its members in order to efficiently achieve their goals. A Lego approach, if you will, to designing and assembling a new organization destined for success.

Turning to the **Standards Blog**, I offer two entries this month instead of one. Together, they illustrate the continuing, but slow, evolution of best practices in an area of collaborative activity that is closely associated with standards development in the information technology industry: the creation of open source software. Despite the fact that there are now untold thousands of open source projects, from

very large and influential to very small and barely known, the state of the art in designing supporting infrastructure for this increasingly important process has advanced very slowly.

In the first entry, I comment on the impact of the lawsuits launched by the SCO Group against Linux, the most successful of all open source software, and the lessons that have been learned along the way. In the second, I provide my observations on the negative impact of corporate mergers on influential open source projects that are hosted by single companies, rather than controlled by stand alone, legally independent organizations.

The conclusion of the first blog entry is that the open source community and the marketplace ultimately benefited and grew stronger from SCO's attacks. But the central lesson of the second is that the communities and users relying on corporate controlled open source projects would have been better off had they taken advantage of the lessons learned long ago by standards development organizations. I once again follow with a chapter from my now-completed cybersecurity-focused thriller titled **The Alexandria Project**. If you enjoy it, there's no need to wait until the next issue of *Standards Today* to see what happens next, as you can find the following chapters beginning here.

The **Consider This** essay that as usual closes this issue is timely in a different sense, and focuses on the plummeting standard of civility voters are settling for on the part of those vying for office in the current U.S. Congressional campaign.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue. But either way, it's always great to hear what you think. Let me know, why don't you?   My email address is andrew.updegrove@gesmer.com

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2005 ANSI President's
Award for Journalism

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