



Consortium Standards Bulletin

A ConsortiumInfo.org publication

MARCH 2006

Vol V, No. 3

Attorneys at Law

EDITOR'S NOTE

In the last issue I wrote about a number of "unruly" areas of standards development focused on digital home technology. In this issue, I return to the theme of conflict, in order to explore when energetic competition in standard setting is good, and when it is destructive.

This month's **Editorial** begins by examining the extreme case – the all-out effort to set a *de facto* standard in order to wrest the maximum rewards possible from a market niche. As with traditional war, the risks can be as formidable as the potential rewards are great, providing a cautionary example that leads most stakeholders to pursue the less-risky course of participating in group standard setting instead.

The **Feature Article** in this month's issue takes a broader approach, reviewing the situations in which standards competitions can be beneficial, the ways in which skirmishes and escalations can help parties to eventually achieve consensus (albeit through clenched teeth), and the situations in which a standards war is likely to succeed or fail.

In the **Standards Blog** entry for this month, I look at a different type of conflict – between vendor rights and the public interest, as it is seen (in this case) by the French legislature, which has decided that no American company (e.g., Apple) has the right to prevent a Frenchman, through the use of digital rights management software, from deciding on what type of device he will listen to *La Marseillaise* (or Eminem, as the case may be). But if a legislature can decree that music data must be open, why stop there? And what may come next?

I continue on a similar theme in my **Consider This...** piece for March, noting several examples where the private sector is extending the open source concept to other areas of endeavor besides software development.

As usual, I follow with a selection of what struck me as the most interesting and important standards news of the past month.

Finally, a correction to the Feature Article of the January issue, in which I mistakenly referred to [ThinkFire Services USA](#) as an example of a company that has been "formed for the sole purpose of purchasing, and asserting, patents against operating companies" (often pejoratively referred to as a "troll"). That statement was based on a characterization found in a story in the *Wall Street Journal* that was misleading. In fact, ThinkFire does not purchase patents, but acts as a service provider to operating companies that patent their technology, and I apologize for the error.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Best Regards,

Andrew Updegrove
Editor and Publisher
2005 ANSI President's
Award for Journalism