



Attorneys at Law

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EDITOR'S NOTE

GOVERNMENTS, SSOS AND SOCIETY (PART III)

This issue is the third in a series exploring the evolving relationship between the private and public sectors, as they confront the increasingly intractable challenges of a modern world.

This series began in August, with an examination of the poor coordination that too often characterizes the standard setting partnership between the government and private-sector in the United States. That issue included a call to optimize that relationship to national advantage. The September issue focused on a current drama unfolding in the Massachusetts state government, involving both open standards and open source software. The current experience of the Commonwealth highlights the importance of these tools in the modern world, as well as the significant role that governments can play in accelerating their adoption by society at large.

In this issue, I look to the future, and ask whether we will be able to meet new challenges (such as global warming) that are of a type and magnitude that our existing political systems seem inadequate to address, and which will require a variety of standards solutions.

This examination begins in the **Editorial**, which contrasts the current need for universal cooperation to solve global issues with the slow progress achieved to date towards that goal, and asks whether the consensus based standard setting process might provide a better model for the future than historical treaty negotiations.

This month's **Feature Article** looks far into the future, suggesting what a long-term approach to solving global environmental issues might resemble, as we become better able to monitor the effects of regulations, and to utilize the resulting data to refine such restrictions directed at environmental preservation and enabling sustainable development. The result would be the need for dynamic rather than static standards, capable of adjusting to new information as it becomes available.

The **Trends** piece this month looks back to the September issue, and provides a timeline of the ongoing developments in the OpenDocument saga. As these events demonstrate, some of the largest technology companies in the world are continuing to press their standards-based advantage in an effort to break Microsoft's dominance in office productivity software, providing a unique opportunity to observe how a single standard can profoundly affect the marketplace.

My **Standards Blog** selection for this month looks in on the status of a different global governance story relating to standards: the World Summit on the Information Society that will conclude its originally contemplated work at a meeting in Tunis in November. Going into that meeting, the United States stands alone regarding the control of the root directory of the Internet, and in this post, you can learn how you can log on and tell the U.S. Ambassador to the process who you think should "govern the Internet."

And finally, this month's ***Consider This*** tries to answer the question of "why standards matter" in the greater context of the societal concerns that have been the subject of this series of issues.

Next month, we will conclude this series on the intersection of standards, government and society with an in-depth of review of what happens at Tunis in the final WSIS meetings, and what the decisions made there may portend for the future.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Best regards,

Andrew Updegrove
Editor and Publisher
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Award for Journalism