



Attorneys at Law

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### GOVERNMENTS, SSOS AND SOCIETY (PART II)

This month, I present the second in a three-part series of issues on the interplay of government and the private sector organizations that develop standards and open source software.

In the last issue, we looked to the past, exploring both the discrete as well the overlapping domains in which the public and private sectors have historically been active, and noted the lack of overall coordination and cooperation between these independent but parallel processes. In the Editorial to that issue, I called for greater collaboration between these too-often disconnected processes (requests to republish that editorial in both public and private sector publications have been granted).

In this issue, we look to the present. Governments have often been the developers or early adopters of important new standards, often because their unique needs lead them to place a higher value on certain requirements than does the private sector. A current example of this phenomenon is the decision by the Information Technology Department of Massachusetts to mandate the use of an important new type of information technology resource - open data formats - by its Executive Agencies. Massachusetts is the first government in the world to impose this requirement on itself. The decision of the Commonwealth has the potential to inspire other governments in the United States and throughout the world to follow its example, and provides the focus for all of the articles that we bring to you this month.

My analysis begins in the **Editorial**, which places the role of government in accelerating the adoption of valuable new capabilities in historical perspective. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the federal governments of both the U.S. and Great Britain accelerated the proliferation and interconnection of many private railways into infinitely more valuable national networks by imposing railway gauge standards. Absent such action, the process of seamless integration would have taken far longer. Similarly, the decisions by multiple governments around the world today to adopt (and sometimes mandate) the use of open source software and open standards can be expected to drive even proprietary vendors to adopt strategies consistent with the new requirements of this enormous market sector.

In the **Feature Story**, I provide a detailed review of the amendments to the Enterprise Technology Reference Model of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that became effective on September 21, 2005. These changes will require the saving of all Executive Agency documents in either the OASIS OpenDocument Format or Adobe PDF after January 1, 2007. My report is based on interviews with representatives of the Commonwealth, OASIS, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems and the Association for Competitive Technology, as well as the amendments themselves and a variety of comments submitted by interested parties.

In my **Consider This** offering for September, I follow the challenges of information preservation further, noting a troubling paradox: while the modern information age has made great strides in

augmenting the ease of inputting and saving data, clay tablets, handwritten records, the Gutenberg printing press, and Edison's wax cylinders still represent superior modes of long term archiving when compared to any modern technology-based solution currently available.

And finally, in my ***Standards Blog*** entry for this month, I compare the role of Massachusetts in becoming the first government in the world to require OpenDocument compliance with another challenge, this one taken up by the Puritan colonists that founded the Commonwealth hundreds of years before.

Finally, a note about next month, when I will offer the third and final issue in this series on the interplay between the private and public sectors. In that issue, I will examine some as-yet unappreciated and vital challenges that we will face in the future, which will demand an unprecedented degree of public and private collaboration in order to do what will need to be done. Look for that issue -- "***Standards for a Small Planet***" -- to arrive in October.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Best regards,

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