# *Standards in Government: Innovation, Equality, Access*

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# *Overview*

- Definition of Terms

- Problems and Opportunities

- The Present Dilemma

# *Understanding & Communication*

## Definition of Terms

# *Definition of Terms: Standards*

- A rule or model, by the authority of public opinion, or by respectable opinions, or by custom or general consent  – *Noah Webster, 1828*

- A measure of conformance, or value, or commonality; with general public acceptance.

- A model of authority or excellence.

# *Definition of Terms: Government*

- The system of polity in a state; that form of fundamental rules and principles by which a nation or state is governed, or by which individual members of a body politic are to regulate their social actions; a constitution, either written or unwritten, by which the rights and duties of citizens and public officers are prescribed and defined; as a monarchial government or a republican government. - *Noah Webster, 1828*

# *Definition of Terms: Innovation*

- Change made by introduction of something new; change in established laws, customs, rites or practices; *Innovation* is expedient, when it remedies an evil, and safe, when men are prepared to receive it.

  Often used in an ill sense, for a change that disturbs settled opinions and practices without an equivalent advantage. 		*- Noah Webster, 1828*

# *Definition of Terms: Equality*

- An agreement of things in dimensions, quantity or quality; likeness; similarity in regard to two things compared. …

  The same degree of dignity or claims; as the *equality* of men in the scale of being; the *equality* of nobles of the same rank; an *equality* of rights.
  Evenness; uniformity; plainness.
  *- Noah Webster, 1828*

# *Definition of Terms: Access*

- A coming to; near approach; admittance; admission; as to gain *access* to a prince.

  Means of approach; liberty to approach; implying previous obstacles. The result of which is an increase in wealth or territory, together with a right to the thing added or to the improvement thereof.                          *- Noah Webster, 1828*

# *Topic Summary: Standards in Government*

- Authoritative rules that regulate the rights and duties of public officials in respect of change of law, custom or practice to remove an evil; to which are attached the same degree of dignity, or rights, in liberty to approach with a right to the thing added.
- Examples:
  - Public documents - created to inform the public today and perpetually in respect of that information.

Problems & Opportunities

# *Overiew*

- Standards
  - General Attributes
  - Polarization Concerns
  - Open Standards Definition
    - Creation Process
    - Implementors
    - Beneficiaries
- Impact
  - Past
  - Present
  - Future

# *Attributes of IT Standards*

- Adopted uniformly
  - by those who govern for the well being of the public in general and without prejudice or condition.
  - Protected and managed with due public process
- A safe-guard against potential risk and exposure
  - Requirements:
    - Risk analysis and review
    - A long-term perspective
    - General public acceptance
    - General and broad-spread adoption
    - Maintenance: auditing, review and development

# *Problem of Polarization*

- Must NOT consider the debate in terms of being against or for something

  - Open Public Royalty-free Standards
    - NOT anti-Microsoft
    - NOT pro software socialism

- We must get back to the technical issues
  - AND their Implications
  - Avoid emotions – focus on facts

# *Open Standards Defined*

- What does **OPEN** mean?
  - There must be agreement about this, otherwise there will be nothing but opinion and emotion

- Three key players / areas of influence (AoI)
  - Standards creators
  - Implementors
  - Consumers / users

  What are the key issues for each?

# *Conditions of Open Standards*

- **Open participation** throughout the process
- **Consensus** without dominant forces
- **Due process** used to resolve issues
- **Open IPR** – available to all implementors
- **Globally deployable**

- **Open to change** through due process
- **Open specification** so everyone can use it
- **Open interface** – supports migration, no secrets
- **Open use**
- **On-going support**

# *AoI: Standards Creators*

- Drivers
  - Market development
    - Incentives to invest in new markets
  - Market control
    - Share-holders demand predictability in the business
    - Competitors erode predictability and profitability
    - Change of competitive landscape is uncomfortable: **FEAR** seeks control as a security mechanism because competitors **LACK TRUST** in each other
- **Cooperation & Trust are better than control**
  - Non-discriminatory so all benefit

# *AoI: Implementors*

- Drivers
  - Need to produce a working product
    - Standardization expedites development
  - Governed by production/distribution cost efficiency
    - Standardization reduces costs and helps interoperability
      - Larger market potential for the resulting product
  - Avoidance of technical obstacles
    - Easier to resolve with an open standardization process
  - Political agenda plays no key role
    - Duplicity has no place in standardization!

# *AoI: Consumers*

- Drivers
  - Cost reduction through increased competition
  - Increased competition provides greater choice
  - No vendor lock-in
    - Critical factor in public information
  - Political efficiencies
    - One proprietary size NEVER fits all
      - Thailand – can not afford software priced at USA levels
        - Microsoft released a cut-down version of Windows XP priced to meet Thai market capabilities
      - Peru – need to reduce export of domestic product
      - Europe – anti-USA sentiments

# *Impact on the Past*

- Sorry, we can not change the past, but we can make a smarter decision today.
  - Old office files will require conversion a new format.
    - If the right format is chosen it should not be necessary to repeat this exercise within the next decade or two.
- The problem:
  - There was no office file format standard
  - Microsoft changed the DOC format repetitively as new enhancements to MS Office were released
    - A means of coercing updates and upgrades

# *Impact on the Present*

- The Web is moving from HTML to XML
- Office formats are moving to XML
  - OpenDocument Format is an XML wrapper around standard XML file format data
    - Is open for all to use
  - Microsoft Open XML is an XML wrapper around a proprietary binary data format (like DOC)
    - Is not open for use in free software (see next slide)

- It makes sense to choose an open XML format that will be used by all – except Microsoft!

# *MS Office 12 XML Schema Policy*

- Was recently submitted their Office 12 Open XML specification to ECMA for certification as a standard
  - They now assert a "not to sue" covenant on open source use
    - However, according to several experts who have reviewed the proposed standard, there are many MS-specific elements in the specification that make it almost impossible to fully implement in any application other than MS Office itself.

# *Impact on the Future*

- As more data is stored in open public royalty-free standards compliant XML formats
  - The cost of data conversion will drop dramatically
  - No vendor will be locked out of the market unless they choose not to play
  - Competition will increase with resulting reduction in the cost of office automation
- Vendor lock-in will be a thing of the past
- Consumers have more choice
- Consumers possibly get a better IT solution

# *What About Assistive Technologies?*

- I glad you asked:
  - AT is orthogonal to the file format question
- But since you asked:
  - Let's look at the costs of the solution heralded by some in the Massacusetts debacle:

  Windows XP Pro                   $  299
  MS Office Standard              $  350
  JAWSNT/S                          $1295
  Magic SM/S                        $  210
  
              Total:    $2154

# *Novell SUSE Linux Desktop Cost*

- For comparison with the Microsoft Windows what does the same solution cost for Linux?
  - Let's see:
    Novell SUSE Linux 10.0           $59.95 USD

    Includes:
    OpenOffice 2.0, Screen magnifiers, Screen readers, speech to text, text to speech, on-screen keyboards, high contrast screen facilities, color enhancement facilities, much more – all fully integrated.

# *Which AT Solution is Affordable?*

- Remember:
  - Those who need AT solutions are not affluent
    - Lower cost solution means more people CAN benefit
  - The lower cost solution does not require specialist installation and support
  - The lower cost solution already implements the ODF document format standard

- What are you waiting for?
  - A permission note from your mother?

# *Nota Bene – Note Well*

- Assistive Technologies are specialty programs that interface with other application software to provide a means of enhancement on-screen, via voice, or via touch sensitive means to help those who have visual, voice, and/or physical impairment

- This does NOT affect the data file format for office applications

# *Comparing Office Products*

- Microsoft Office is not free
- OpenOffice is free

- Both products will require periodic updating to permit access to current document formats

- Continued provision by government (public) officials of documents in Microsoft formats thus compels citizens to be Microsoft customers!

# *Summary: The Opportunity*

- The OASIS OpenDocument ODF file format standard for office automation products will reduce costs for all consumers

    - Reduced costs means that governments can provide better and more timely information services

- Open public royalty-free standards are a most important community interests safe-guard

# The Present Dilemma

# *About Baking An Omelet*

- The saying goes:
  <span style="color:green">"You can not bake a good omelet without breaking a few eggs!"</span>

- It is not possible to introduce a much needed document format standard without causing change
  - After all that is the purpose of doing it.

# *Public Concern*

- Microsoft will be affected by the acceptance of the OpenDocument ODF file format standard
  - They will either support it in MS Office, or suffer loss of business – that is their choice
  - It will increase consumer choice and lower costs
    - Microsoft Office revenue will decline

- This is NOT anti-Microsoft any more than the introduction of the motor vehicle was against the horse and buggy!

# *Is the Present Solution the Best?*

- I have experience with supporting a visually impaired PC user who has Windows XP Home, JAWS and Microsoft Office Standard
  - It crashes his machine regularly causing loss of work
  - He has a Linux system that is stable and has AT support that works well most of the time
    - Sound fails once in a while – requires logout/login only
    - But it has never crashed, and has not lost any work in over 15 months - It took 1 hour to get used to OpenOffice

- Conclusion: Windows is NOT the Ideal Solution

# *Is Linux Best for Everyone?*

- Assistive Technology on Linux desktops
  - KDE 3.4 is not as good as it is under Gnome 2.12

- OpenOffice does not suit all users for all tasks
  - But it does meet the needs of most users rather well
  - Clearly, one size shoe does not fit all feet!

- No-one is forced to use Linux
  - No-one should be forced to use MS Windows either
  - Also no citizen should be forced to buy MS Office

# *Reflection Time*

- Standards in Government means:
  - Authoritative rules that regulate the rights and duties of public officials in respect of change of law, custom or practice to remove an evil; to which are attached the same degree of dignity, or rights, in liberty to approach with a right to the thing added.

- At what cost does the continued use of MS Office and it's proprietary file format meet the demands of Standards in Government?

# What will you do?