

## JTC 1 Reform

Rob Weir (IBM) gets it right when he notes that the JTC 1 Directives are in serious need of repair. Those rules are the results of twenty plus years of effort by IBM and others. Whatever brought about the sudden realization at IBM that the JTC 1 Directives are deeply defective (post ODF approval apparently) isn't as important as the shape of the needed reform.

Any discussion of reform is going to have to occur in the context of a pluralistic standards universe. I think there are unique roles to be fulfilled by *de jure* standards organizations, such as national standards bodies as by more narrowly focused standards consortia. What is needed is a solution that enables a pluralistic universe of standards development that captures the strengths of the various standards organizations.

ISO is different from other types of standards organizations because its members are representatives of nations. (I recognize that IBM has lusted after “nation” status for years but lusting, as Jimmy Carter would put it, isn't having.) Nations have broader concerns than vendors or even agencies within a national government. While technology standards have gotten a lot of press recently, ISO and its member bodies establish standards ranging from process (ISO 9000) to beach safety flags (ISO 20712).

Standards consortia fulfill a very different role in the standards world than ISO and national standards bodies. Rather than the broad coverage of an ISO or national standards body, a standards consortium tends to be more narrowly focused on some particular area for standardization. A consortium generally has broader membership than ISO, which by its very nature is limited to members that represent nations.

What is needed in JTC 1 is a replacement of the current PAS and fast track submission processes with a single unified process that draws on the respective strengths of ISO/IEC and standards consortia. Both have critical but different roles to play in the development of standards. To prefer or promote one over the other will simply result in poorer standards, which won't benefit anyone.

Some of the values that should be at the forefront of reform include openness of process (public discussion lists and all documents, from drafts to final versions being freely available), broad participation (consortia can provide important avenues for participation), representation of national interests (national bodies do constitute a different class of participant and properly so), and similar values. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Reform of JTC 1 is coming. The only question is whether the reform will create a pluralistic model that captures the strengths of many participants or will it continue the current model of modern narcissism?

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