



## EDITOR'S NOTE

### SO MANY STANDARD SETTING ORGANIZATIONS, SO LITTLE TIME

With hundreds of information and communications technology (ICT) standard setting organizations (SSO) to choose from, how do you decide which one to join?

That's an easier question to ask than to answer, and tends to lead to more questions. SSOs, like any other organization, vary in ability to get the job done in an effective, efficient and rapid manner. But how do you decide which is which? Often, two (or more) SSOs are working on separate standards to solve the same problem where only one standard will be likely to be adopted. How do you decide which standard will emerge victorious? When you want to find a venue in which to develop a mission critical standard, how do you decide which existing SSO – if any - is the right one to approach? Finally, even the largest technology companies would have a hard time finding the resources to join every SSO that is arguably relevant to its business, so which ones should make the cut?

Dilemmas like these are a constant in the world of standard setting, but as with many questions in the ICT space, the information needed to inform good choices is not always easy to come by, and for those new to the process, even the questions to ask are not immediately obvious.

In this issue, I focus on how to maximize the value of participating in the standard setting process, with a particular emphasis on knowing what to look for in an SSO, and on how to find an SSO that makes the grade.

I begin that task in my **Editorial**, in which I note that there does not currently exist a well-respected career track in the United States to become what might be called a "standards professional," notwithstanding the hundreds of millions of dollars spent annually in participating in standard setting, and the strategic importance of the standards that are created. Absent recognition of standard setting as a professional discipline, it is unlikely that a sufficient pool of talented and well-trained individuals will emerge to provide the management that SSOs require to execute well.

The **Feature Article** this month provides an in-depth primer on how to determine one's role relative to a given area of standard setting, how to define the goals to be achieved in that area, and finally how to find an SSO that is likely to be the right choice in which to achieve those goals.

My **Standards Blog** selection for this month uses two announcements made by Oracle last week to illustrate a less obvious, but nonetheless common reason for joining an SSO. In this case, Oracle announced that it was joining the Free Standards Group at the highest (and most expensive) level of membership at the same time that it revealed its plans to provide reduced-rate support for users of Red Hat's Linux distribution. In so doing, Oracle signaled its commitment to work with, rather than against, the Linux community.

In my **Consider This** piece for October I go off topic, providing what I hope is a provocative question with an interesting answer. The title of the piece is "The Wikipedia and the Death of Archaeology." If you happen to know Google's Sergey Brin, Larry Page or Eric Schmidt, shoot them a copy and tell them that they could provide a huge service to the future by archiving the Wikipedia of today.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

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

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