ISO/IEC JTC1/SC22/WG9 N 431

Meeting Report
ISO/IEC JTC1/SC22 (Programming Languages, Operating Systems and Environments)
15-19 September 2003, Oslo, Norway
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I attend the annual plenary meetings of SC22 because I am the convener of SC22/WG9 (Ada). Although the US delegation typically consults me, I am not a member of the delegation and have no formal rights of representation beyond speaking up for the interests of my working group.

Items of Specific Interest to SC22/WG9

SC22 granted the request of WG9 for concurrent NP[1] and PDTR registration[2] balloting of "Guide for the Use of the Ada Ravenscar Profile in High-Integrity Systems". The point of concurrent balloting is to accelerate progress of the item while still providing one chance to update the draft. Completion of the guide will formalize an existing de facto agreement on a definition of a subset of Ada run-time services that support real-time execution while preserving properties needed in high-integrity systems. It is notable that Ravenscar has had a large influence on the definition of the Safety-Critical Real-time Specification for Java.

I was reappointed to a new three-year term as convener of WG9.

Two WG9 standards about to reach their five-year review point were recommended for "confirmation" (reaffirmation without change). They are ISO/IEC 15291, Ada Semantic Interface Specification, and ISO/IEC 18009, Conformity Assessment of Ada Compilers.

Items of Interest to SC7

At my request, SC22 terminated its liaison with SC7. (I had served in this role for several years and noted that no liaison questions had arisen since the liaison was originally formed. On my recommendation, SC7 had already ended the liaison relationship.)

Roger Scowen (a UK delegate and convener of WG19) will make recommendations for SC22 activity regarding ISO 2382, a multi-part standard for vocabulary. Due to lack of maintenance, the documents have become obsolescent.

Items regarding Linux

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[1] NP is a New Work Item Proposal. An NP ballot approves starting work on a new project.
[2] PDTR is a Preliminary Draft Technical Report. The "registration" ballot for a PDTR moves it from the working group level of consideration to the subcommittee level.

A previous "Linux Study Group" had met with the Free Standards Group (FSG) and other organizations to consider Linux standardization. SC22 updated the results of this study group and took additional actions. Nick Stoughton attended the meeting as a representative of the Free Standards Group.

The Free Standards Group was encouraged to become a PAS[3] submitter and to submit both the generic Linux Standards Base (LSB) specification and at least one architecture-specific LSB specification via the PAS process. (The FSG application for PAS submitter status is currently under ballot.)

FSG and SC22 were encouraged to form a Category A liaison[4] relationship. (This is currently under ballot.)

SC22 national bodies and working groups were encouraged to participate in the public review of LSB 1.9 in the anticipation that it will become the subject of a PAS submission for approval as an ISO/IEC standard.

The UK has submitted an NP to produce a Technical Report enumerating the "conflicts" between the existing ISO/IEC standards for POSIX and the LSB. (This is currently under ballot.)

ISO Central Secretariat has looked at the Gnu Free Documentation License and sees no obstacle to ISO standardization of the LSB.

SC22 is encouraged to pursue harmonization of existing and new work related to POSIX and Linux.

A Linux Rapporteur Group[5] was created reporting to SC22. It will initially be chaired by the Chairman of SC22. Normally an RG exists only until the next meeting of its parent, but this group is expected to continue. Participation in this RG will be relatively open to organizations both internal and external to JTC1. The RG has the following objectives:
- Identify the technical requirements for Linux distribution.
- Identify publicly available technologies for the components of Linux distribution and identify the "control bodies" for standardizing them.
- Recommend the scope of standardization for Linux distribution in SC22 or JTC1.
- Identify the issues and risks of standardization of Linux distribution and a mitigation plan for the risks.
- Recommend direction and mechanisms for standardization.

Items of General Interest

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[3] PAS refers to "Publicly Available Specification," a process permitting organizations outside of JTC1 to submit existing specifications for fast-track approval as ISO/IEC standards.
[4] A liaison relationship permits an outside organization to participate in meetings and other technical work, but without voting status. Various types of liaison situations are designated with letters.
[5] A Rapporteur Group is a subcommittee of its parent body created for a specific purpose. It normally has a brief life.

The COBOL working group was authorized to begin work on two new Type 2 Technical Reports[6]. One of them provides native syntax supporting XML.

SC22 developed a statement of its "value proposition." In support, it is requesting "success stories" that will be publicized.

SC22 expressed interest in organizing workshops on the value of IT standards in education at venues such as the Conference on Software Engineering Education and Training.

The SC22 web site will soon be moved to the ISO LiveLink site. I expressed concerns regarding performance of the site, noting that there have been problems in the past.

SC22 politely objected to the new time limits for the development of standards that have been imposed by ISO.

Next year's plenary meeting will be in Korea (6-10 September 2004) and the following one is tentatively schedule for Baddeck, Nova Scotia, Canada (29 Sep – 2 Oct 2005).

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[6] A Type 2 Technical Report is a "trial balloon" for a standard. It is a published document on a subject where standardization work continues.