ISO/IEC JTC 1
Information Technology

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REPLACES

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Other document (Defined)

TITLE:
Request to Place Various JTC1/SC34 Standards on the WWW

SOURCE:
SC 34 Chairman

PROJECT:

STATUS:
This document is circulated to JTC 1 National Bodies for review and
consideration. Unless the JTC 1 Secretariat receives written
notification by the due date as to way this request should not be
granted, the secretariat will request that ISO and IEC take appropriate
action to place these documents on the WWW.

ACTION ID: ACT

DUE DATE: 2000-05-14

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Subject: JTC1/SC34 Standards proposed for distribution on the WWW

SC34 has requested in Resolution 2 of its December 1999 meeting that the following standards be made available on the World Wide Web.

ISO/IEC 10179:1996 Information Technology-Text Composition-Document Style Semantics and Specification Language (DSSSL)

ISO/IEC 10743:199X Information Technology-Standard Music Description Language (SMDL)

ISO/IEC 10744:1997 Information Technology-Hypermedia/Time-based Structuring Language (HyTime)

ISO/IEC 13673:199X Information Technology-Conformance Testing for SGML Systems

ISO/IEC 15445:199X Information Technology-ISO-HTML

ISO/IEC 13250:199X Information Technology-Topic Maps

ISO 8879:1986 Information Processing-Text and Office Systems-Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) as amended

The basic justification behind our request is that almost all of the user community for SC34 standards is now operating online, and the user community expects the standards to be available online. The standards in question are being used as the basis for W3C Recommendations or are being considered as the potential basis for Recommendations by groups proposing work to the W3C. It is very difficult for W3C work to make normative reference to SC34 work if it is not available for direct access.

The most obvious case for making a standard available on line involves ISO/IEC 15445, ISO-HTML. This standard, which is derived from the W3C's HTML 4.0, was developed with their assistance and with their expectation that it will be made available online. Since its completion, the W3C has released the XHTML specification, and members of their committee have indicated to our editors that they would like for the ISO standard to be updated to reflect the W3Cs conversion of the recommendation to an XML base. SC34 has made its desire and intention to publish this standard openly on the Web quite public throughout its development history and balloted it at every stage with the understanding that the result would be online publication. Because HTML is used almost exclusively for online publishing, there is little reason to publish this standard unless it is itself online.

The next most important standard to put online is ISO 8879, SGML, which is SC34's core standard. It is also a core standard for the W3C's XML activity area. XML 1.0 states in its introduction:

Extensible Markup Language, abbreviated XML, describes a class of data objects called XML documents and partially describes the behavior of computer programs which process them. XML is an application profile or restricted form of SGML, the Standard Generalized Markup Language [ISO 8879]. By construction, XML documents are conforming SGML documents.

XML is one of the most active areas in electronic document distribution and electronic commerce. XML is widely supported by companies such as Microsoft, Sun, and IBM. It is very significant for JTC1 that it is an outgrowth of a JTC1 standard. Putting the base standard on the Web will facilitate and indeed encourage its continued use as a base. Failure to put the standard online will only serve as reinforcement to those in the user community who wish to sever the relationship between the W3C's recommendations and ISO standards. While there may be some debate about whether a restatement of XML (and related recommendations) without reference to ISO 8879 (and related standards) would be to the detriment of the W3C's work, there can be little doubt that such a change in basis would be a great blow to the credibility of JTC1 and ISO as

future sources for standardization for document interchange, electronic commerce, and other online activities.

ISO/IEC 10179, DSSSL, and ISO/IEC 10744, HyTime, have a symbiotic relationship with ISO 8879 in that both are based on the older standard and both contain extensions and expansions to SGML concepts that are necessary in the online environment. Although some of the material that originated in DSSSL and HyTime has been incorporated in the WebSGML TC to ISO 8879, all three standards need to be used together. The two latter standards have influenced the design of the W3C's Recommendations for XSL, XPath and XLink. That they are not normative references in the Recommendations is due in part to their unavailability online.

ISO/IEC 13250, Topic Maps, is essentially a profile for the use of HyTime. Some developers in the W3C are now investigating the use of Topic Maps with XPath and XLink technology. It will be extremely difficult for them to develop a W3C Recommendation based on ISO/IEC 13250 unless it is openly available.

ISO/IEC 10743, SMDL, is likewise a set of conventions for the use of HyTime. Although the development of this standard gave rise to the creation of HyTime, it is now primarily of significance to researchers rather than to commercial developers. Except that the standard has passed all its ballot stages and awaits only the delivery of a revised text for publication, it might be better served by becoming a technical report if it were developed today.

ISO/IEC 13673, Conformance Testing for SGML Systems, is likewise primarily of research interest. Though it has had a tortuous path to publication, it has been implemented (most noticeably in open-source software), and it influenced the design of DSSSL, HyTime, WebSGML, and several W3C projects.

JTC1/SC34 has an unusual position because so much of its user community is involved in online activity; indeed, many of the core XML developers in the W3C got their start in SC34 and its predecessors. In JTC1, perhaps only SC24 has so close a relationship to the online community. Particularly since the rise of the W3C, the online community has come to expect that their standards will be available online. Things that purport to be standards but are not online tend to be ignored by the user community. Therefore it is imperative to the future of SC34 that its standards be published online.

These recommendations respond to the criteria set forth in JTC1 N5448, resolution 32:

1. Standards that are merely references (pointers) to other documents e.g. developed outside JTC1;
2. Standards for which authorized identical documents are freely available in electronic format elsewhere;
3. Technical Reports type 1,2 and 3;
4. Technical Corrigenda

ISO/IEC 15445, ISO-HTML, fits under criteria 1 and 2 because the bulk of the technical content is derived from the counterpart W3C recommendation and what has been added in the ISO development has been primarily to adapt the W3C content to the conditions under which the project was accepted for development.

ISO/IEC 10744:1997 is entirely a Technical Corrigendum to ISO/IEC 10744:1992. The changes that were balloted were relatively simple, but they were so pervasive that it was easier to republish the standard than to release the TC on its own as a list of changes to the 1992 publication. Thus there should be no question about releasing HyTime online.

WebSGML is likewise a TC (the combined effects of TC2 and TC3) to ISO 8879 and should be released for publication.

ISO/IEC 10743 and ISO/IEC 13673 both have now the effect of Technical Reports and should be released on those grounds.

ISO/IEC 10743 and ISO/IEC 13250 are profiles of the TC which is ISO/IEC 10744:1997 and so should be released as under the TC rubric.

ISO 8879 and ISO/IEC 10179 have effectively been supplanted by open standards, so criteria 1 and 2 would apply. Releasing them would establish their source as being JTC1 and promote more awareness of ISO standardization efforts in the online community.