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ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 21

Open Systems Interconnection, Data Management and

Open Distributed Processing

Secretariat: U.S.A. (ANSI)

TITLE: Reaffirmation of retention of 1990 version of ASN.1

SOURCE: SC21

PROJECT:

STATUS: Request for contributions

ACTION: Distribution to National Bodies and Liaison Organisations

DISTRIBUTION: P and L Members
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To: SC21 National Bodies and Liaison Organisations

From: SC21

Date: 23 May 1996

Re-affirmation of retention of ASN.1 (1990)

SC21 WG8 has been recommending, and SC21 has been resolving, re-affirmation of retention of ASN.1 (1990) on an annual basis.

WG8 recommends reaffirmation this year (1996) (and this has been confirmed my SC21), but it believes that in future reaffirmation should be based on consideration of input from National Bodies and Liaison organisations.

Input is therefore requested to the SC21 HOD/C meeting in 1997 on whether there should be another annual reaffirmation.

It is normal practice in ISO that a revised standard replaces earlier versions, and at some point in time the block on this process for ASN.1 should be removed.

It is clear that active groups developing ASN.1-based standards need time to make a transition, but it may be that most such groups are now close to achieving the necessary changes to their texts.

In other cases an existing standard may be complete, the Rapporteur Group may have been disbanded, and it may never be changed. In these cases new purchases or implementors of that standard (once the 1990 versions were withdrawn) would need to work from ASN.1 (1994) in order to understand the requirements of the standard and how to encode its PDUs.

In this context it is important to understand that there is NO technical content in ITU-T X.208|ISO 8824(1990) that is not also present in the 1994 versions. The difference is between normative text in the 1990 version, permitting new work to use the 1990 features, and informative text in the 1994 version, enabling people to read and understand old specifications, but not permitting new work to use the 1990 features.

In the case of X.209|ISO 8825 (1990), it is possible to deduce the encoding of ANY (the only item withdrawn in 1994 that affects coding) from the 1994 text, although it is not explicitly stated. The addition of a one-sentence note to the 1994 version as a Technical Corrigendum could rectify this defect, so that here again there would be no information contained in the 1990 version that was not in the 1994 version.

It is for these reasons that WG8 considers that withdrawal of the 1990 version in the near future would be unlikely to cause serious difficulties, and would bring administrative gains.

23 May 1996