



Towards an Open Document Format Standard

EU-China Symposium

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Guangnan Ni



The advantages of Open Standard

1. Help to realize fair competition.

Open standards give user the freedom of choice, ensure the interoperability between vendors, thus result in fair competition.

User will not be locked to particular vendor and market will be able to avoid monopoly.



The advantages of Open Standard

2. Help to reduce cost.

Open standards enable healthy competition. User may choose products with best performance/price ratio. It's the reason why the cost of PC hardware can constantly be reduced while its performance is constantly improving.



The advantages of Open Standard

3. Help to enhance security.

Open Standards enable users to enhance security according to their particular needs. For instance, conforming to Linux open standard some security enhancement operating systems have been developed in China.



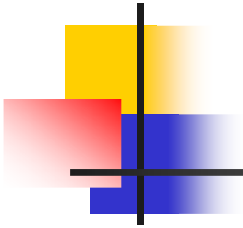
The basic criterion of an Open Standard

- Its spec and content are opened and can be used without payment or with a RAND/FRAND payment. It is made, controlled and evolved by an open organization. The technologies/products for implementing such standard may easily be obtained on the market.



The old de facto format standard is not open

- Electronic documents are the most widely used carrier of information. Since last decade its format has been dominated by the de facto standard, i.e. .doc/.xls/.ppt used in MS Office.



- Such standard is not open resulting in security concern. Users have been locked in MS Office. As the compatibility with the de facto standard is very difficult, other Office Suit is very difficult to compete with.



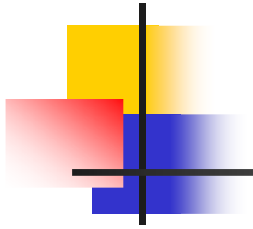
Binary format is transferring to XML format

- Due to serious drawbacks of the closed binary document format, recently it is transferring to the open XML based document format pushed by the countless application requirements.



The progress of document format standard

- The Open Document Format (ODF) has been the ISO 26300 in May 2006. China's similar standard UOF has been the national standard in April this year.
- The two standards are likely to be harmonized as a single international standard. It will be beneficial to all users.



■ In December, 2006, the organization Ecma International published a standard (ECMA-376) based upon Microsoft's OOXML. Ecma International then submitted this standard to the International Standard Organization's JTC-1 committee for fast-track consideration of its adoption as an international standard. However it was failed in the vote on 2 Sept. A ballot resolution meeting (BRM) will be held next Feb. to make final decision.



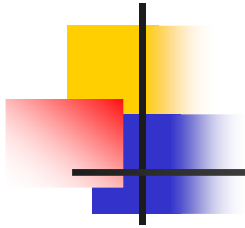
Why China voted NO?

- There are 300+ technical problems on OOXML have been raised worldwide. According to ISO's convention, if there is any problem remains unsolved, a NO vote should be adopted otherwise the comments may not be considered.

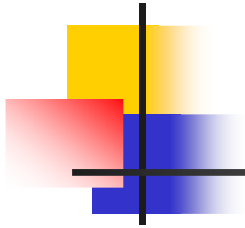


Some reasons for disapproval of OOXML

At the time being there's no full featured implementation other than MS Office 2007, which runs only on Windows platform. If OOXML becomes international standard, it will enforce the monopoly of Windows in OS domain.

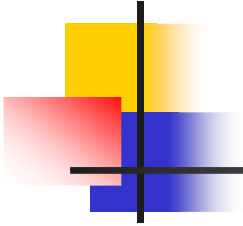


OOXML is a direct port of a single vendor's binary document formats. No other competitive product can fully implement its spec. Hence true interoperability cannot be realized. If OOXML becomes international standard, it will enforce the monopoly of MS Office.

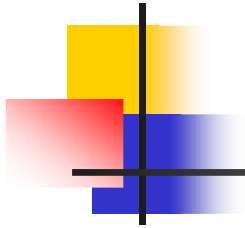


Instead of using the existing international standards OOXML uses a lot of proprietary standards and forms a formidable technical/IPR barrier for other vendors.

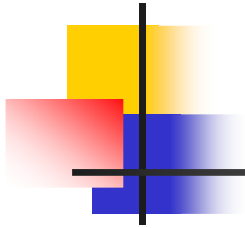
Exp: Instead of using SVG, OOXML uses VML and DrawingML, one that was rejected in 1998 by the W3C, and one that is developed in isolation.



The OOXML has 6000+ pages description (as contrast ODF /UOF has only 600 or so pages). It's beyond the real requirement of electronic document format, beneficial merely to Microsoft but not to other vendors.



Microsoft's 'Open Specification Promise' is not sufficient for others to implement OOXML without IPR risk. Things that are merely 'referenced' by the Specification are not exempt from Microsoft IP claims. Besides, Microsoft claims that its 235 patents were infringed by Linux, thus imposing IPR risk to all Linux developers.



The creation and further evolving of OOXML is mainly controlled by Microsoft itself. Others are hardly to be involved. At this moment how to deal with the 300+ technical problems raised worldwide on OOXML will be a baptism to Microsoft.



The comments of DOD of US

- DOD's comments: 1) Binary information in the standard that would lead to security concerns. 2) The referencing of unexplained backward compatibility modes that might pose a problem for third party implementers. 3) The use of proprietary file formats within the open standard appear to cause potential intellectual property ownership concerns.



OOXML makes reference to proprietary (closed) behaviors and formats

- footnoteLayoutLikeWW8
- mwSmallCaps
- suppressTopSpacingWP
- truncateFontHeightsLikeWP6
- useWord2002TableStyleRules
- wpJustification
- uiCompat97To2003
- useWord97LineBreakRules
- LineWrapLikeWord6
-

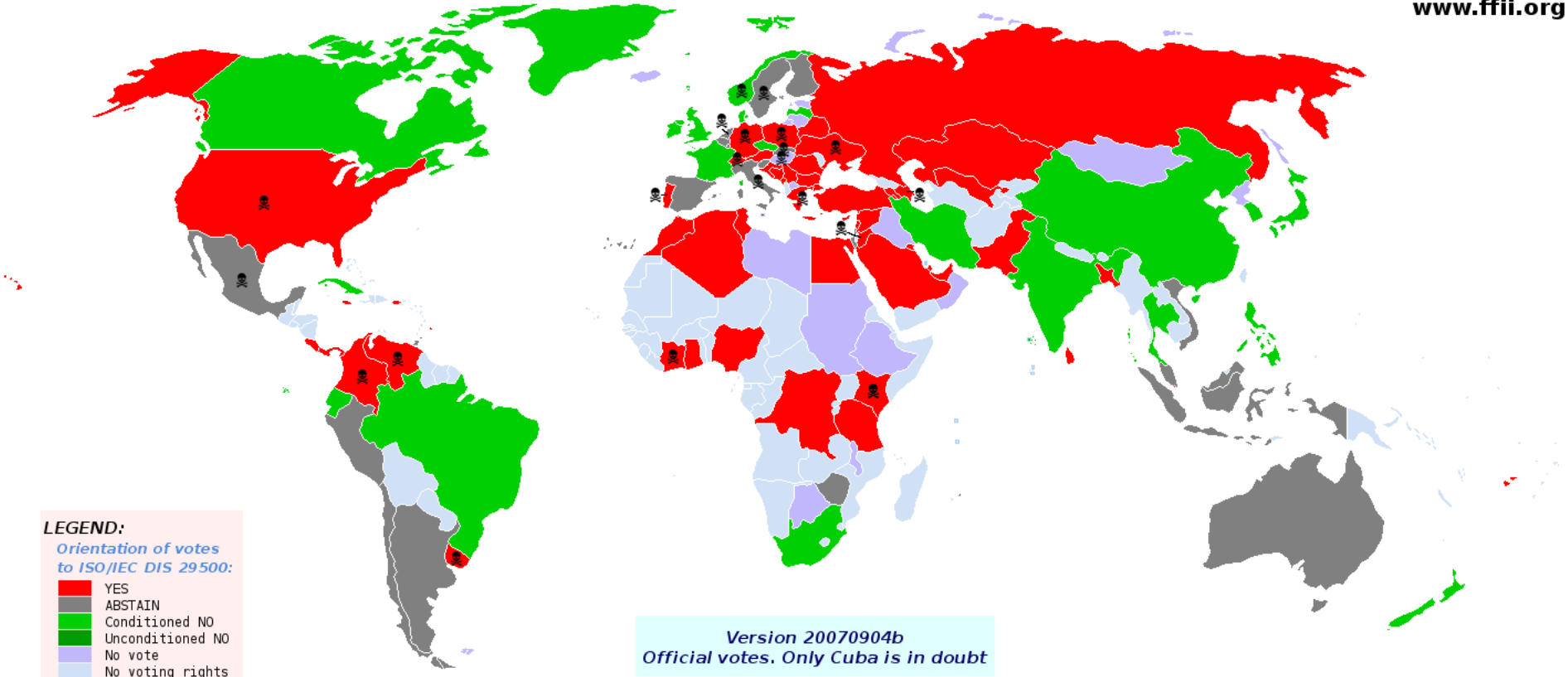


The vote result of ISO JTC1

- Approval requires at least $2/3$ (i.e. 66.66 %) of the votes cast by national bodies participating in ISO/IEC JTC 1 to be positive; and no more than $1/4$ (i.e. 25 %) of the total number of national body votes cast negative. Neither of these criteria were achieved, with 53 % of votes cast by national bodies participating in ISO/IEC JTC 1 being positive and 26 % of national votes cast being negative. Thus OOXML was failed.

The vote situation

www.ffii.org



LEGEND:
Orientation of votes to ISO/IEC DIS 29500:

- YES
- ABSTAIN
- Conditioned NO
- Unconditioned NO
- No vote
- No voting rights

Serious irregularities

Note: the orientation of the votes doesn't imply that the official vote has been already emitted by the country.

The 1st World Wide Format War (at ISO/IEC)

Note: Some territories in conflict are shown in grey.



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Nations that vote against OOXM have population of 3.2 billion

| Country | Pop. million | Country | Pop. million |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Brazil | 186 | Ireland | 4 |
| Canada | 33 | Japan | 128 |
| China | 1320 | S. Korea | 48 |
| Cuba | 11 | Libya | 5 |
| Denmark | 5 | New Zealand | 4 |
| Czech Republic | 10 | Norway | 4 |
| Ecuador | 12 | Philippines | 86 |
| France | 60 | South Africa | 47 |
| India | 1120 | Thailand | 61 |
| Iran | 71 | United Kingdom | 60 |

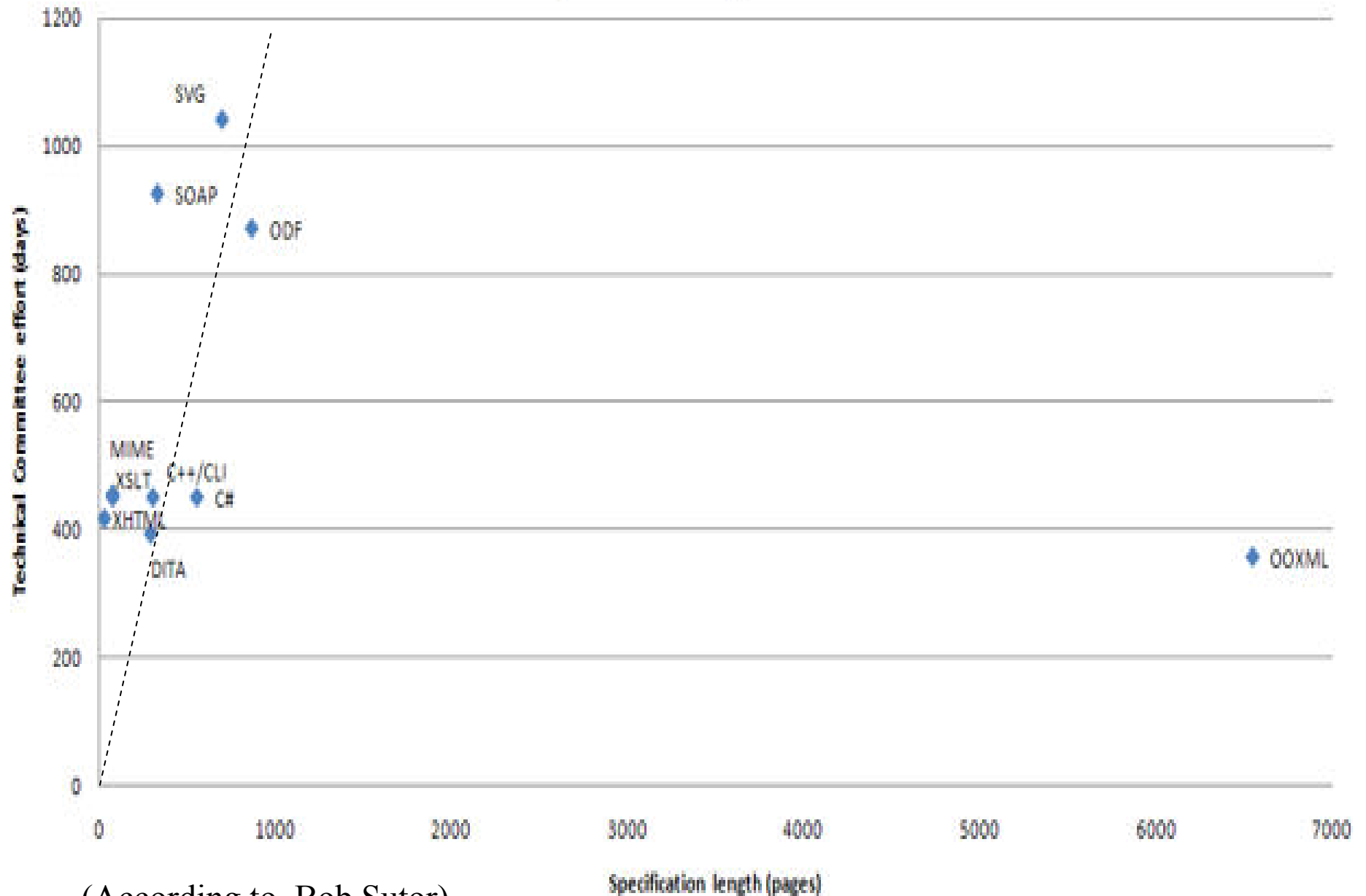
Total: 3275



The BRM to be held next February

- ISO will organize a ballot resolution meeting (BRM) on the week 25-29 February 2008 and countries will come back to the table to come to agreement. It is impossible to discuss all technical problems raised within a few days in BRM. Therefore, it is difficult to predict what will happen in the BRM.

Specification Speed



(According to Bob Sutor)



Summary

- It is desirable to have an open XML document format standard. ODF and UOF are likely to be harmonized. OOXML should be improved significantly before it can become an open international standard.

Thank You!

