ECMA

Standardizing Information and Communication Systems

Excerpts

Minutes of the 73rd General Assembly held in Knutsford, UK, on 26th - 27th June 1997

President:	Mr. P. Trudgett (BT)
Secretary:	Mr. J. van den Beld (SG ECMA)
Attending:	Mr. Bermange (Rank Xerox), Mr. Cargill (Netscape), Mr. Fujisaki (NEC), Mr. Gass (Alcatel), Mr. Gotoh (Hitachi), Mr. Hartmann (Siemens Nixdorf), Mr. Heil (Panasonic), Mr. Hofmann (IBM), Mr. Hermann (TC38/NCR), Ms. Horsnell (Digital), Mr. James (NEC), Mr. Kondoh (Hitachi), Mr. Ksar (HP), Mr. Laurens (HP), Mr. Lloyd (ICL/Fujitsu), Mr. Munden (Kodak), Mr. Narita (Fujitsu), Mr. Norén (Ericsson), Mr. Robinson (Sun), Mr. de Ruyter van Steveninck (Philips), Mr. Spix (Microsoft), Mr. Statt (Lucent and NCR), Mr. Theis (Bosch Telecom), Mr. Völzke (TC32/Siemens), Mr. Willingmyre (Microsoft), Mr. Yazawa (Sony)
Guest:	Mr. van Haegenbergh (EACEM)

1 Opening by the President

Mr. Trudgett, President of ECMA, opened the 73rd General Assembly and welcomed all attendants, in particular those attending for the first time.

Mr. van Haegenbergh attended on behalf of EACEM.

A roll call was held.

2 Call of representatives (GA/97/49)

Mr. van den Beld proceeded to the call of the Ordinary Member Companies' representatives, present or represented by proxy (GA/97/49).

22 out of 28 Ordinary Member Companies were represented:

Alcatel	Mr. Gass
Bosch Telecom	Mr. Theis
BT	Mr. Trudgett
Digital	Ms. Horsnell
Ericsson	Mr. Norén
HP	Mr. Laurens
Hitachi	Mr. Gotoh
IBM	Mr. Hofmann
ICL/Fujitsu	Mr. Lloyd
Kodak	Mr. Munden
Lucent Technologies	Mr. Statt
Microsoft	Mr. Spix
NCR	Mr. Statt
NEC	Mr. Fujisaki
Novell	by proxy
Panasonic	Mr. Heil
Philips	Mr. de Ruyter van Steveninck
Rank Xerox	Mr. Bermange

6.12 TC39 - Scripting Languages

See report: TC39/97/27.

Mr. Robinson, Chairman of TC39, expressed appreciation for the spirit of co-operation shown by TC39. See also attachment A to these minutes. Some final editorial corrections have been made to the document under ballot.

Very recently the issue of the name of the language has come up. This name appears also in the title of the standard. TC39 had agreed to use the name LiveScript for the language and has taken the approach of officially registering this name in several countries in order to safeguard a free use of the name by all stakeholders. The registration process is ongoing under supervision of the ECMA Secretariat.

However, registration of the name as a trademark by ECMA does not imply that

- ECMA is going to defend the trademark,
- ECMA is going to do certification/branding,
- ECMA is going to spend money on these two activities which are normally associated with trademarking.

TC39 has NOT been fully aware of all the possible ramifications of trademarking but has only been seeking a viable way to use a name commercially and to put all stakeholders/companies on equal footing with respect to the name of the language.

Besides the possibility that trademarking may not be a viable way to arrive at this TC39 objective, recently the problem has come up that the name LiveScript is NOT available because Netscape has decided not to formally transfer their rights with respect to the name LiveScript to ECMA.

Mr. Cargill explained that the issue of the commercial value of a name only recently has come up, in the Java/PAS process.

The GA further discussed the two issues - trademarking and using a name for a standard - separately.

With respect to the **name** the GA did not arrive at an immediate conclusion and, therefore, did not make use of its prerogative to decide over TC39. No agreement was achieved, neither on a name nor, as an alternative solution, on an acronym. The GA also did not want the naming issue to become a 'showstopper' at this moment in time.

The GA agreed on the following course of action:

1) A vote is taken on the contents of the draft standard.

2) TC39 is requested to come forward with a name (or an acronym) for the language which is agreed upon **unanimously** by TC39.

3) The name of the language and the title of the Standard, agreed by TC39, will be reviewed by the CC meeting in September 1997.

4) The Standard will be submitted to JTC 1 (SC22) for adoption under the fast-track procedure, either with the new title or with the current (provisional) title (in case TC39 cannot agree unanimously on a name), immediately after the September CC meeting. It is recognized that the name ECMAScript may not be acceptable to JTC 1.

5) The CC will prepare a guidance paper on trademark registration. Probably the use of trademarking should be avoided for standards because 'only products and services' can be formally registered as trademark. TC39 has to understand that the name LiveScript may not be available. All current registration efforts for LiveScript as name of the language will be put on hold.

6.12.1 Vote on:

- ECMAScript Language Specification (GA/97/36 - TC39/97/28).
- Submission of the Standard for adoption under the JTC 1 fast-track procedure.

In favour: 28
Against: None
Abstain: None

This Standard will be published as **ECMA-262.** The GA agreed unanimously to submit this ECMA Standard to JTC 1 (SC22) for adoption under the fast-track procedure.

The President thanked TC39 for their excellent efforts.

ATTACHMENT A

By Gary Robinson:

In my first column in the IEEE Bulletin I said I would use my experiences with multiple standards developing organizations (SDOs) to explain and compare the various organizations. As a columnist for an IEEE publication, I should logically start with the IEEE, but something happened recently that caused me to change my plan.

I again heard an old criticism.

The critics

For the past few years I have repeatedly heard the criticism that SDOs are too slow. Then they launch into a litany of complaints about why consortia are better, or why the market can't wait for a standard. I usually don't respond; I have the disadvantage of knowing what I'm talking about.

I'll explain why I disagree with this criticism, but first let's consider one standard that was produced in a very short time.

Speedy resolution

In November of 1996, Netscape decided that it would be a good thing to make JavaScript into a formal (de jure) standard. I'll leave all that went into that decision for another time; suffice it to say that this was a major decision for Netscape. JavaScript was both wildly popular and had a large market presence. Netscape also has only one standards person to deal with factors such as time to market, strong competition, and multiple competing implementations, which formed part of the decision equation. In the end, Netscape decided to submit JavaScript to ECMA (www.ecma.ch). ECMA agreed to accept the contribution as a starting point, and formed Technical Committee 39, TC39.

ECMA, previously known as the European Computer Manufacturers Association, has international membership encompassing Europe, the US, and the Pacific Rim. Its membership used to be limited to vendors that had manufacturing plants in Europe. Now, membership is open to any interested company that the rest of the membership approves. ECMA's main goal is to generate a tightly written, disciplined standard and then fast-track the ECMA standard through ISO/IEC JTC1.

ECMA typically works in three main areas: telephony, media, (optical/magnetic disks, tapes), and networking. Since the membership belongs to companies, company views--not personal or academic ones--are the norm.

TC39 held three meetings and about 10 face-to-face and teleconferenced editing meetings. In April 1997, the committee sent a draft standard to the ECMA General Assembly for final approval. The GA meeting in June will probably approve the document as an ECMA standard and contribute it to ISO/IEC JTC1 for fast-track processing.

Why did it work?

Skeptics might say that it is easy to produce a standard from a completed document like JavaScript, and that anyone could massage the contents for a few months and then forward it to another committee for a vote. Again, since I was there, I have to deal with the facts.

The contributed document was sufficient for Netscape's internal use; it was not an international standard. Microsoft and Borland also had implementations and submitted specifications derived from their JavaScript implementations.

Competition between designs and documentation was very keen. None of the participants knew each other, and time to completion was very important to the committee and the market. The group quickly agreed upon the objectives. But, because there was a significant lack of standards experience within the membership, it took a couple of months to build trust among the players and define roles.

However, because there was a common set of objectives, everyone contributed to achieving the end goal. They completed the project on schedule and unanimously agreed on the final product.

TC 39 completed a highly contentious standard, got agreement between all parties, and produced a complete open specification between November 22, 1996, and April 22, 1997--five months that included Christmas and New Year's.

How it worked

First and foremost, this standard passed quickly because it was processed in ECMA. Not every standard lends itself to ECMA's process, but this one fit in perfectly. ECMA prefers a small group of dedicated representatives from companies willing to keep a set of product objectives in mind. Politics, petty competitions, and academic puffery are kept to a minimum. ECMA also provides professional, experienced support to move the work along and to keep it from slowing down over minor issues.

As a standardization venue, ECMA best suits companies that have to produce a quality, on-time product based upon international standards. Projects must be reasonable in size, and should be focused on the short or medium term, with ISO as the final target. Also, IPR issues must be kept to a minimum. Meetings are held anywhere in the world that is convenient to the participants.

The key to making a standard move quickly through a process--any process--is illustrated here. Proponents have to know what they want, how to manage the process, and when they're done. The formal process is not slow in itself. Often, participants in the process who are there to "help" the standard, or who are just there, slow things down. If we view standards as a study in project management, we can make them much more efficient and much more productive.

It's not the process that's slow; it's the people and their motivations.