

## **ODF Alliance Update: State of ODF & Outlook for 2010**

The OpenDocument Format (ODF) has become widely recognized and increasingly accepted by public sector authorities who increasingly understand and appreciate the value and utility of open formats.

Thanks in large part to the members of the ODF Alliance, government adoptions of ODF continued to grow steadily in 2009; even more governments made open standards-based solutions an essential feature of their eGovernment strategies. As a result, ODF is today an integral part of the global open movement.

Looking forward, 2010 is shaping up to be another strong year for ODF, with additional government adoptions already taking place and several other major developments pending. To help our members and supporters continue to be engaged in the support of ODF and the efforts of the ODF Alliance, following is a brief summary of the state of ODF and the outlook for 2010.

### ***ODF Government Adoption***

Government adoption of ODF – – has continued at a steady pace. To date, [Twenty-five governments](#) – seventeen national and 8 provincial – have now adopted pro-ODF policies. These adoptions have occurred through laws, executive decisions, interoperability frameworks, or policy initiatives requiring or recommending the use of ODF between and among government agencies and in their interactions with the public. Recent highlights include:

- **Denmark Affirms Support for ODF:** 2010 began on a high note. As of 1 April 2011, governmental authorities in Denmark will be required to send and receive documents in formats designated in a list now including ODF. ODF is unique as the only editable document format listed in the agreement of the Danish Parliament.
- **United Kingdom Reiterates Support for Open Standards, ODF:** In a refresh of the “Open Source, Open Standards and Software Re-Use: Government Action Plan,” part of the Government’s ICT Strategy, the UK reiterated its support for open standards and ODF.
- **Slovakia Mandates Use of ODF:** Slovakia approved amendments to a decree on the use of standards for information systems in the public administration. Government bodies in Slovakia must now be able to receive text documents in ODF, PDF 1.3, RTF and HTML.
- **U.S. Open Government Directive:** U.S. federal government agencies will soon be required to make information available in open formats. According to the Open Government Directive issued by the Obama Administration on 8 December 2009. Under the Directive, each agency

will be required to “take prompt steps to expand access to information by making it available online in open formats.....To the extent practicable and subject to valid restrictions, agencies should publish information online in an open format that can be retrieved, downloaded, indexed, and searched by commonly used web search applications.”

- **Australian Task Force Endorses Open-Standards Approach:** Starting with the premise that "public-sector information is a national resource, and that releasing as much of it on as permissive terms as possible will maximize its economic and social value and reinforce a healthy democracy," the Australian Government 2.0 Task Force, in its report “Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0,” has recommended that public-sector information should be free, based on open standards, easily discoverable, machine-readable and freely reusable.
- **Hungary to Make Open Standards Mandatory:** The use of open standards in public-sector infrastructure will now be mandatory in Hungary. According to an amendment passed by the Hungarian Parliament on the law governing electronic public services (Act LX of 2009), open standards are now required in electronic communication conducted through the central governmental system between public administrative bodies, public utility companies, citizens, and private entities, who may comply on a voluntary basis.
- **Spain to Propose Government-wide Standards for Interoperability:** Spain’s national interoperability framework for eGovernment (“Esquema Nacional de Interoperabilidad en el ámbito de la Administración Electrónica”), published 29 January 2010 by decree in the country’s official journal, encourages public administrations to use open standards and, where appropriate, standards that are widely used by citizens to ensure freedom of choice from competing technologies. It is recommended that documents and other electronic administrative services be made available via open standards under conditions satisfying the principle of technological neutrality.

In summary through the beginning of 2010, “open formats” have become commonly-accepted wisdom in the public sector and, with it, the demand for and adoption of ODF continues to advance steadily.

### ***ODF Implementation / Application Support***

ODF is widely implemented and available on all major platforms, including traditional desktop editors, as well as web and mobile applications. At this time, leading office suites support ODF as do an increasing number of mobile devices. The rise of ODF and demand for open formats has coincided – not coincidentally in our view – with a proliferation of new word-processor applications not seen since the PC was first introduced in the 1980s. Further, the proliferation of mobile devices, applications and platforms highlight the need for a standardized format for editable documents.

- **ODF Achieves Near Universal Support:** As documented in the the [February 2010 ODF Alliance newsletter](#), the last three months alone saw no fewer than 20 releases of new or improved [ODF-supporting applications](#). They include a dramatic improvement in both the quality of existing support and its expansion into new areas with the emergence of ODF-supporting mobile device and web conferencing applications, document management systems,

wiki editors, viewers, converters, accessibility tools (ODT-To-DAISY Digital Talking Book), database software, and programming libraries for developers.

- **Beyond the Desktop – ODF in the Cloud**: With the continued migration of word processing to the web, 2009 saw continued expansion and improvement in the quality of support in collaborative, web-based applications, including Google Docs, Adobe's Buzzword, Zoho Office Suite and Oracle's expected “Cloud Office” offering.
- **ODF Support on Mobile Devices**: ODF is now supported on the Symbian, iPhone, Blackberry and Android mobile operating systems. With the proliferation of mobile devices, applications and platforms, the need for a standardized format for editable documents has never been greater. Despite this proliferation of new applications and devices, office file format lock-in remains the single strongest obstacle to real customer choice. The ODF-supporting community has, however, made enormous advances to address this problem.

### ***ODF Innovation***

While ODF 1.1 resulted in a few minor changes to the specification itself to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities were addressed, the first major update, ODF 1.2, offers a host of new performance-enhancing features. A further boost to innovation comes from the development of libraries now available for manipulating ODF content via programming languages such as Java, Python, C# and PHP.

- **Towards Meaningful Documents**: The new metadata support in ODF 1.2 and the XForms support from ODF 1.0 make it simple to produce “smart” documents with advanced searchability and application interaction that can be integrated into electronic work-flows and web services. The metadata support in ODF 1.2 is based on the W3C standards RDF/XML and OWL which dramatically simplify and enable the reuse of ODF metadata by other applications. The RDF standard is at the core of the W3C's “Semantic Web” project and central to initiatives in support of open government data.
- **Open Formula**: Although spreadsheet formula for ODF 1.0 and 1.1 were implementation-defined, ODF implementations have nevertheless converged on increasingly interoperable spreadsheet formula, allowing users to choose from a range of ODF-supporting spreadsheet applications. ODF 1.2's proposed *OpenFormula* specification, based on actual spreadsheet practice and consensus from a large number of spreadsheet applications, promises to bring about a new level of interoperable spreadsheet support.
- **Digital Signatures**: Up to now an application-specific feature, digital-signature support in ODF 1.2 is based upon the W3C XMLDSIG specification.
- **ODF Toolkit Union Provides a Repository for ODF Programming Languages**: The [ODF Toolkit Union](http://odftoolkit.org) (<http://odftoolkit.org>) provides a home for libraries that accelerate the development of ODF-supporting applications.

## **ODF Interoperability**

There are already many ODF implementations – desktop and web-based, both proprietary and open source – with very good if not 100% perfect interoperability. The “plugfest” initiative illustrates the strong commitment on the part of leading vendors for continuous improvement with regard to ODF interoperability – not just in word but in actual deeds.

- **ODF “Plugfests” Iron Out Differences:** So-called “plugfests” bringing together ODF implementers to fine-tune their interoperability capabilities and develop test scenarios, recommendations and best practices were held in Orvieto, Italy, and The Hague. An initiative of the Dutch government program *Netherlands in Open Connection* and the OpenDoc Society, the ultimate aim of the “plugfest” is to achieve full seamless interoperability for the entire feature set of ODF across all suppliers, platforms and supported technologies. An ODF plugfest series is planned for 2010, the first on April 15-17 in Granada, Spain.
- **OASIS ODF Interop Technical Committee Formed:** A new technical committee, the OASIS ODF Interoperability and Conformance (OIC) Committee, was formed to help improve interoperability and conformance to the ODF specification. The OIC Committee will analyze the state of ODF interoperability, make recommendations, compile a corpus of ODF interoperability test documents, and host multi-vendor interoperability demonstrations showcasing products that conform, among other activities.

### **ODF Alliance: David LeDuc Replaces Marino Marcich for Coordination of Alliance Activities**

Effective 1 March 2010, David LeDuc has taken over coordination of Alliance activities. David is not new to ODF or the Alliance. As the Senior Director of Public Policy for the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), David was instrumental in helping to launch the Alliance in 2006 and recruit the initial group of 36 member organizations. David has been highly engaged in the operations of the Alliance since its inception and is looking forward to increasing his role in the ODF community and within the Alliance.

David will replace Marino Marcich, who stepped down from his position at the end of February. During Marino’s four-year tenure, the Alliance became a globally recognized community and leading voice in support of ODF and open standards. Notably, during his tenure as the Managing Director, Marino successfully oversaw the following major accomplishments of the Alliance:

- ODFA growth into an entity of more than 550 members in 68 countries;
- Development of eight national and two regional chapters that preside at the forefront of global ODF advocacy efforts;
- Support by 25 governments around the world in their adoption of pro-ODF policies;
- ODF implementation by myriad applications available on all major platforms, including traditional desktop editors, as well as web and mobile applications.

We sincerely thank Marino for his great work and dedication and look forward to his continued involvement with ODF.

## ***What's Ahead in 2010?***

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2010 and beyond, there are both significant opportunities and challenges.

- **Approval of ODF 1.2:** The approval of ODF 1.2 as an OASIS Standard and subsequent submission to ISO/IEC JTC1 for approval is a key objective in 2010. The Alliance will continue to work within OASIS towards this goal, and we look forward to working with you and other supporters in the following necessary steps:
  - - 1) Complete OASIS ODF Technical Committee review and approval;
    - 2) Response to all public review comments
    - 3) OASIS member implementation/certification of ODF;
    - 4) OASIS approval ballot ratification;
    - 5) OASIS Interoperability Demonstration of at least three implementations of ODF interoperating; and
    - 6) Successful ballot in ISO/IEC JTC1!
- **Continued ODF Adoption:** The 25 governments that have adopted ODF as their exchange format is quite an achievement for the ODF-supporting community, yet there is considerable room for growth. "Open formats" have fast become conventional wisdom in the public sector; it is essential that governments choose ODF as their exchange format for editable documents. Not only is this trend towards openness expected to continue in 2010, but the ODF Alliance seeks to help more governments begin using ODF as their exchange format by providing additional guidance on how to move to all-ODF.
- **Plugfests and Interoperability:** ODF is the file format that you can open, write, and edit using any brand of software, anytime, on any application, platform or device. That was the vision when ODF 1.0 arrived on the scene in May 2005 as an approved standard under the stewardship of the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS). With ODF's increased adoption and nearly universal support in a growing variety of applications and tools, "plugfests" and other interoperability initiatives are essential to translating the vision into reality. We look forward to the next plugfest on 15-17 April 2010, in Granada, Spain.
- **Microsoft Support for ODF:** Microsoft Office 2010 is now in beta and is likely to be released in the June time frame. Will [Microsoft's ODF support](#) be better than the support it provided in ServicePack 2 for Office 2007, especially in areas like spreadsheet formula? The hints we've received so far suggest that Office 2010 will not be much better, but that Office 2010 SP1 might have some improvements. The so-called "ballot screen" prompting users upon the first boot of Office 2010 to choose between OOXML and ODF does signal Microsoft's general disposition to ODF. As the ODF Alliance has [pointed out](#), not only does the ballot screen offer OOXML as the first option, more significantly, it provides what is essentially a warning – OOXML is designated to support "all the features" of the software, while ODF is explained to enable "many features," but "some content or edit-ability may be lost." MS Office is the dominate player in this market, with over 90 percent market share, so

how they implement ODF is obviously critical. Continued pressure on Microsoft from its customers, including the many ODF-supporting governments, to implement support for ODF in a way that plays well with the software of other vendors is essential.

## ***Conclusion***

In closing, the ODF Alliance thanks you for your support and looks forward to your continued engagement in the months ahead. If you have any questions or would like to become more active in the Alliance, please contact David LeDuc at [dleduc@odfalliance.org](mailto:dleduc@odfalliance.org)