

My Standards Education

I started to respond to a recent error filled (both factual and analytical) post at [Groklaw](#). But, to correct every error, honest or otherwise, on even the major blogs would be a full time task. I have better things to do with my time. Like editing the OpenDocument Format (ODF) standard, one of the objects of contention in the current debate.

And, readers would have to rely upon my responses, rather than making up their own minds. You may have heard the parable that if you give a person a fish you feed them for today but if you teach them to fish, they can be fed everyday. This is the first in a series of articles to teach people how to “fish” with regard to standards.

The first step is to join a standards organization. I am only familiar with a few standards organizations personally so I will mention those in this post and will list others in the future. That means there are many fine standards organizations that I won't mention here.

JTC 1 – The home of much of the controversy over document format standards. In order to participate here you need to join your local national standards body. The website at JTC 1 is about as unhelpful as any you will find so for now use the [ISO](#) site to locate your national body. You will have to contact your local body about requirements for joining.

OASIS – The home of the OpenDocument Format TC and numerous other XML based standards. Membership information can be found <http://www.oasis-open.org/join/>. The good news is that a personal membership is \$300 per year. To put that into perspective, that is less than cable TV for a year in Atlanta, Georgia. OASIS doesn't offer the “F” word network but it does sponsor the [Cover Pages](#).

W3C – The home of the XML standard, Semantic Web work and other standards. Rather pricey corporate memberships. It is possible to participate as an invited expert. If you or your company has a lot of cash see the [W3C membership page](#). Or try to arrange to participate as an invited expert.

A good place to get started with standards and cheaper than the others would be OASIS. You will need to decide which technical committees you want to participate in after you join. The various mailing list archives are open to the public so look at current discussions as part of choosing which technical committee to join.

Personally I would also check into membership in your local organization that has committees that are “mirror” committees for JTC 1. Membership requirements vary widely and you may find it possible to join both a “mirror” committee and OASIS at the same time.

I will wait for a month to allow everyone to find a standards organization to join (if you join one other than the three I list, please send me a note) and then continue this series with: My Standards Education: Learning the Rules.

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