

TO: Computer and Communications Professionals

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SUBJ: FYI, ANSI Petition Drive

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You will find enclosed a copy of a petition recently sent to the ANSI Secretariat as well as to the trade press and relevant members of the congressional and executive branches. The purpose of the petition is to underscore the growing concern among the technical community about the pricing and availability policies for key technical standards documents.

Over 500 people have signed the enclosed petition, signifying their feeling that technical standards documents are a key input to the products and services that are made in the computer and communications industries. Open access to standards documents in an electronic format has an immediate and noticeable impact on the ability of these organizations to compete internationally. In addition, open access to standards documents in electronic format has an immediate effect on the training of engineering students and of young professionals.

This issue has received increased visibility among U.S. policy makers as underscored by a recent study by the Office of Technology Assessment. This study emphasized that "standards will need to be made available to producers in a timely and efficient manner. Failure to understand the implications of international standards can have serious consequences for U.S. industry."

A recent project under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union to distribute 19,000 pages of the key recommendations known as "the Blue Book" illustrates that on-line, free distribution of standards is a viable proposition. The ITU gave permission to a group of volunteers to post the Blue Book on the global Internet. Within 90 days, over 500,000 files had been transferred to thousands of computers in 40 countries. Clearly, on-line distribution of standards documents is technical feasible.

An argument frequently made by standards bodies is that document sales at high prices are necessary to fund the process. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed. It is important to remember, however, that there are two sides to a budget and that expenses as well as revenues can be cut by on-line distribution of documents. In particular, the massive mailings of working group documents for committees could benefit by an on-line distribution effort for a significant cost savings.

In addition, it is important to remember that standards that are not widely known become irrelevant. Wide distribution of technical standards is the goal of the process, and is important not only for the progress of the industry but for the survival of the standards bodies themselves. While it is possible that revenues would decrease by wider dissemination, it is equally likely that the massive increase in the reading public for the documents would create a larger potential market. One compromise, for example, would be to distribute ANSI standards in a low-resolution format on the global network but sell high-resolution versions of the documents, either electronically or on paper. One would be hard-pressed to argue that increasing the reading public by a factor of 1,000 would, without any empirical evidence, necessarily reduce the revenues of the standards bodies.

On behalf of the people who have signed the petition, I am hopeful that ANSI and other standards bodies can begin the process of constructive dialogue that will result in more progressive policies of standards distribution.

For more information:

To purchase copies of the OTA study, ask the Government Printing Office for *Global Standards: Building Blocks for the Future*, S/N 052-003-02177-4. Voice to (202) 783-3238, fax to (202) 512-2250, and postal requests to New Orders, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.

To learn more about the *ITU Bruno Project*, contact Tony Rutkowski, Director of Technology Assessment at Sprint International and the former Counsellor to the Secretary-General of the ITU. Voice calls to (703) 689-5080, e-mail to amr@media-

We, the undersigned, believe that all technical standards documents should be freely available in electronic form. Open, on-line access to technical standards documents is an important factor in the success of my organization, is a key component to increased productivity in the U.S. computer and communications industries, and is vital for the initial and continued training of scientists, engineers, and other professionals.

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Dick Locke	Software Engineer	WilTel
John Stidd	Manager, Standards Development and Planning	Xerox Corporation
Stephen Deering	Member of Research Staff	Xerox Corporation
Julian Onions	Director	Xtel
James David Carlson	Software Engineer	Xylogics, Inc.
Barbara A. Fox	Senior Software Engineer	Xyplex
Joe Barisa	Analyst/Programmer V	
Scott Barvick	Software Engineer	
Lincoln Baxter		
Larry Bennett		
Michael Bower		

Name	Title	Affiliation
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Erik Brown	Systems Designer	
Jordan Brown	Consultant	
Ross W. Callon		
Jerrold T. Carter		
Vinton G. Cerf		
Michael Chernick	Computer Scientist	
Richard Colella	Computer Scientist	
David Cornell	Technical Consultant	
Anthony B. Czajkowski		
James A. Davis	Network Administrator	
Antonio DeSimone	Member of the Technical Staff	
Scott Dickson		
Robert Doolittle	Data Communications Engineer	
John Doyle		
Andrew E. Ellis	Member of Technical Staff	
Joan Eslinger	Software Engineer	
Bill Exley	President	
Roger Fajman	Computer Scientist	
Michael L. Fidler	Associate Department Head	
Robert Finn	Software Engineer	
John J. Garguilo	Computer Scientist	
Andrew J. Gill		
Steven N. Goldstein	Private Individual	
Steven Green	Computer Scientist	
David Hardin		
Gary Heston		
Fred Heutte		
Aldon Hynes		
Matthew W. Jonson	Network Systems Engineer	
Mark Kepke	Software Engineer	
David George King	Computer Support Person	
Lak Ming Lam	Senior Software Developer	

Name	Title	Affiliation
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Bengt Larsson	Programmer	
Benjamin J Leon		
Pierre Lewis	Software Developer (Networks)	
Rob Logie	Host Administration Manager	
David MacMillan		
Mike Maish		
Carl Malamud	Mister	
Russell McGuire	Staff Analyst	
Charles E. Mather	Telecomm Analyst	
J. Mesina	Engineer	
G.A. Michael		
Cyndi Mills	Senior Engineer	
Joshua L Mindel	Senior Analyst	
Sanjay Pol		
Ann E. Pugh		
Joseph E. Ramus	Senior Computer Scientist	
Jon Saperia	Network Technology Consultant	
Steven J. Schaeffer	VAX Systems Manager	
Raj Sharma	Member of the Technical Staff	
S.J. Skinner	Electrical Engineer	
Lansing Sloan	Computer Scientist	
Joe Soriano		
David A. Staudt	Private Individual	
Skip Steuart		
Michael Yi Sung	Senior Firmware Engineer	
Debra Tang	Computer Scientist	
John Tebbutt	Computer Scientist	
Susan Wu	Chief Computing Scientist	
Dave Wuertele		
Yuk Yung		