

THE DIGITAL RESOURCE INSTITUTE

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Dr. Lawrence D. Eicher
Secretary-General
International Organization for Standardization
1, Rue de Varembe
CH-1211 Geneve 20
Switzerland

Dear Dr. Eicher:

It was a pleasure meeting you and Mr. Smith yesterday. I believe it was useful to discuss the ITU experiment to distribute the CCITT Recommendations over the global network infrastructure. I was able to learn quite a bit about the needs of ISO and your member organizations in the area of electronic document handling.

As we discussed, the ITU experiment which my organization has been conducting has been quite successful. In the space of one month, we have been able to increase greatly the number of people who have received copies of the CCITT recommendations. The response to the ITU initiative has been very positive and has been technically quite successful.

Access to standards by a wider population will mean quicker acceptance of those standards. More public domain and experimental implementations will help to spur the market and access by universities will help train a new generation of programmers.

While these goals are important, I also understand the vital role of document sales in helping to drive the standards process. ISO and its member organizations must be very cautious in any moves that might jeopardize such an important source of revenue.

I believe that our discussion of low resolution distribution of standards over the network, coupled with high resolution sales of paper copies might prove to be a system that will meet both goals. Free distribution of low resolution copies means that the market for standards is greatly increased. Our estimates are that the number of people who access standards over a network are an order of magnitude or more over paper sales in the ITU environment. I believe that the numbers would be even higher for OSI standards.

If, in fact, ten times as many people access standards over the network, the total market for standards has greatly increased. Many of those people, especially those who want to implement the standards, will want to purchase a paper copy through the existing channels.

This two-prong approach would help defuse any criticism about the inability to access standards, but would still maintain (and possibly greatly increase) your revenue stream.

I would like to volunteer the services of the Digital Resource Institute to carry out such an experiment for you. We would either work off of paper copies or with your Information Systems group to put the standards on our server. We would then maintain detailed records of who accesses the documents and prepare an analysis of this data for ISO and your member organizations. This experiment would be conducted at no cost to ISO or your member organizations and we would obtain no intellectual property rights in the documents.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal again with you, your staff, or any of the member organizations. I believe our conversation yesterday was a frank and productive exchange of views and I look forward to the continuation of this dialogue.

Sincerely yours,

Carl Malamud