Microsoft backs cross-platform initiative

July 6 2006

Microsoft announced Thursday it will sponsor with its partners an Open Translator project between Microsoft Office Open XML Formats and the Open Document Format (ODF).

Pushing document interoperability, the move was in response to government requests for interoperability with ODF, which along with public institutions, seek a common standard for which to maintain, read, post and send documents. The translation tools will be developed and licensed as open source software, Microsoft said.

This is also a win for interoperability advocates who promote ODF adoption of technology standards within the arena of stored digital documents by allowing information to be available regardless of what type of client application is used.

ODF creates an open standard or cross platform documents of text, spreadsheet, or presentation that can be displayed on any OS or application, and with the project undertaken by Microsoft, it signals growing interest in interoperability -- via customer concerns -- where the PC-giant has showed lack of interest in the past.

Jean Paoli, general manager of interoperability and XML architecture at Microsoft, noted "that Open XML meets the needs of millions of organizations for a new approach to file formats, so we are sharing it with the industry by submitting it, with others, to become a worldwide standard. Yet it is very important that customers have the freedom to choose from a range of technologies to meet their diverse needs."

The company also noted that Microsoft Office Word, Excel, and PowerPoint "had built-in support of formats to enable interoperability across projects and that in addition to the default Open XML file format, the 2007 Microsoft Office system would include a new menu option dealing with add-ins for PDF and XML-based formats including XML Paper Specification and ODF," Microsoft said.

While the translational tools will be made available as free, downloaded add-ins for several older versions of the Microsoft Office system, the company also announced that a prototype version of the first translator added to Word 2007 will be posted as of July 6 on the Web site SourceForge under the open source Berkeley Software Distribution license.

Individuals may submit bugs and feedback or contribute to the project, Microsoft noted in its release.

Microsoft expects to release the free completed version of the Word translation tool by the end of 2006, along with add-ins for Excel and PowerPoint in 2007.

It also announced it would be working with France-based company Clever Age along with several independent software vendors including Aztecsoft in India and Dialogika in Germany to develop the translation tools.

"OpenXML represents a paradigm shift not only in its architecture but also in the customer needs it serves, opening organizations' existing documents to take advantage of new content management and collaboration scenarios that weren't possible even as recently as a few years ago," said Clever Age's CEO Frederic Bon. "Through the documentation Ecma International is creating and work such as the Open XML Translator project, customers will soon have the confidence that

Open XML and ODF formats can coexist and new document scenarios will flourish. We are looking forward to working with the community of developers and businesses interested in XML documents."

Citation: Microsoft backs cross-platform initiative (2006, July 6) retrieved 27 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2006-07-microsoft-cross-platform.html