

The Roadblocks in Implementing Open Standards in the Indian Context

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Outline

Political message!
Fundamental right to interpretation (to read)
Preserving cultural assets
Road blocks in India
Dangers of eGovernance

A non digital document

can be used by any one, who learnt the language in which the document is encoded (written).

A digital document

can be used only by those who have access to the **decoder**.

Primary purpose of a digital document is to **use** it in future.

It should be readable and interpretable as long as possible ideally forever.

If the decoder is proprietary (written
in a private language)

your own ideas encoded in a digital document
are at the mercy of the owner of the decoder;

**you have lost your right and access to read your
own documents in future.**

this possibility is dangerous to a digital society.

a lesson from the caves



Code without interpretation is a stone in the cave.

Our ancestors inscribed on a hard stone, with the hope of preserving thier expression.

They managed to preserve the code, but not its interpretation.

Lesson: un used language becomes a stone, and using language means interpreting it over and over again.

How to preserve

Cultural assets like documents, languages, music, science, mathematics and databases?

If we want to protect material assets

we can keep them in lock and key somewhere in a museum, and take measures to ensure that they are not lost.

For protecting cultural assets including digital documents

lock and key will be a disaster.

The only way is to publicize the **syntax and semantics** in every possible corner of the world.

cultural assets are preserved by distributing (diffusion) and by using.

the best way of diffusion is by **using a standard practice**, such that it becomes a culture and remains with us for a long time.

Therefore

if we want to preserve documents, whether digital or whichever media, **publish** the syntax and semantics of the document's language and make them **accessible as free standards using free software**.

Let us all gettogether to declare all

private (proprietary) languages should be declared criminal by all civil societies.

The purpose of this message is to convince the policy makers and all those who do eGovernance to declare proprietary software and document formats a **crime**.

else large companies will become '**mafias**' of the future digital society

Isn't mafia a strong word?

What else can one call when they are asking us to pay them fee for using **our own documents**?

Who is part of this mafia?

proprietary software companies
industry organizations
and
most governments (with a few exceptions.)

Who are protecting the interests of the companies
against the interest of the people.

Are companies always bad

Not if they use and provide service for using
free software.

Are governments always bad?

not if they use and promote free software.

What are the road blocks for making open standards mandatory?

In the case of India

An expert committee

recommends open standards for public
administration (eGovernance)

The committee recommends

Single standard for one application
Completely Royalty free

Among several other nice recommendations.

Indian industry bodies reject these recommendations and want amendments to include

multiple standards for one application and they want RAND

NASSCOM and MAIT (e.g.)

Are the industry bodies who are supporting Microsoft and other proprietary companies.

What is their argument

for multiple standards:

Source

<http://www.openxmlcommunity.org/multiple.aspx>
RETRIEVED ON 24TH August
2009.

HTML, PDF, RTF, ODF, OOXML

They argue are multiple standards for performing a single task, namely, to represent complex documents.

Since they exist, and all of them declared standards, govts must allow multiple standards.

Their argument runs like this:

“Most governments have the need for vehicles to carry out government business. Whether it's fire engines, ambulances, police cruisers, prisoner transport vehicles, mass transit vehicles, snow plows, or others needs, the sheer variety of tasks and needs of the populace require a government to have the flexibility to use the right vehicle for the job. *Similarly, open file formats mean many things to many people, and one document format cannot address the list of needs that arise in the multitude of scenarios in which documents are created and used.*

“Just as an ambulance isn't the optimal choice to clean streets and a snow plow isn't useful to transport commuters to work, the reality of software usage today suggests that many, many file formats exist to satisfy the incredible diversity of needs in software applications.”

They are confusing us.

They are providing misleading metaphors to convince the need for multiple formats.

It is indeed possible to write a paragraph, an essay, book or an encyclopedia.

They also talk of freedom, but whose?

- Freedom to choose a format that suits the needs of the task at hand. *Sounds nice, but ...*
- Freedom from dependence on specific applications, vendors, or platforms to exchange documents.

*Isn't that the reason why we need a standard?
how is this a reason for multiple standards is not clear though!*

Standards according to them are for the vendors

They forget that standard is a constraint to enable free document exchange, and enhance the life of a digital document.

They talk about freedom of vendors

forgetting the freedom of users

For example:

Let us take the case of why they say ODF is not enough for digital office documents.

They say ODF does not allow

Custom defined data-languages within the document format?

When they are talking about “custom” they are talking about again customization of the vendor/developer, not the user.

ODF was made to

Eliminate custom data formats by developers and vendors, and they say that is what ODF prevents.

This prevention is the reason why ODF exists.

Let us now talk about RAND

Reasonable and Non Discriminatory Licensing

Do we have a definition of
reasonable?

No.

Then who defines it?

They will decide from case to case, they want that
freedom.

One of the conditions of an open standard is

To keep it completely royalty free,

Among others Jomar Silva listed in the morninig.

They are opposing this basic requirement as well

So all they want is a standard, and not a Free/Open document standard.

They are an enemy of open standards.

Therefore

they are mostly working against the basic principle of standardization process.

How can we therefore say they want to do business by developing technologies that endure.

They want freedom to make more and more money. And they work with Govt agencies to ensure thier freedom.

If we want to understand them

Better, we need to know how to make proprietary software.

how proprietary software is made?

by separating the code from the decoder

a proprietary vendor keeps the decoder with them, protected by a lock and key.

and allows you to keep only the code, which is sterile without the decoder.

Creating proprietary code

is neither an invention nor an innovation,
because code is arbitrary.

Proprietary code is a cheat.

And a language which cannot be read by public
cannot be used for public administration.

Let me therefore repeat:

A private (proprietary) languages should be declared criminal by all civil societies.

The purpose of this message is to convince the policy makers and all those who do eGovernance to declare proprietary software and document formats a crime,

--

else large companies will become **mafias** of the future digital society

your intervention is required for

keeping the interpretation and code as close as possible.

and not

to keep them separate.

using swatantra (livre) software is the answer.

Our freedom struggle

is to declare proprietary software **criminal**.

Since we have to eliminate crime from society,
let us eliminate proprietary software!

This struggle is between the two camps

those who are innovating to **preserve** cultural assets (free software community),

and those who are innovating to **control** the cultural assets (proprietary software community).

public bodies and governments should decide who they want to support in this war.

unfortunately

the first camp is a minority

the second camp is the majority.

why?

The governments are not with the free software camp in all states of the world.

Most Govts. Do not have policy to support and use **exclusively** free software.

In the absence of a policy, the proprietary software is polluting human culture.

Most public documents

are encoded in the proprietary format currently.

Which means we have no freedom from the
proprietary companies

Public documents belong to each one of us,
therefore we must **urgently** do something about
it.

Obvious choice

is to adopt free / open document standards.

And to adopt free software for all major consumer products and public utilities.

That is what makes today a special day

Brazil, Venezuela, South Afrika, Paraguay and others announces their committment to move away from the evil. India is getting there, but not yet.

In India the state Govt of Kerala is in the forefront supporting our cause.

But, it is just the beginning, we have a long way to go.

eGovernance can be dangerous

yes, if you use proprietary software.

yes, if it replaces people.

yes, if it is intransparent.

yes, if it gives more power to the system and not to the people.

no, if you use swatantra (livre) software.

no, if you reduce the workload of workers.

use digital technology with care, else it can disrupt the society.

Be the change you want to see

Mahatma Gandhi

Next time some one sends you an
Ultrarock™ Rockument™
send the following message:

I refuse to read digital documents written in a private language. So I request you and your organization not to send attachments in such formats. Please use open standards for all your digital communication. Text documents encoded in ASCII/Unicode, html, rtf, pdf, odf are open standards. Similar open standards exist for all other multimedia formats.

Please join us to clean up the already polluted digital environment for a cleaner digital society.

Read: <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/no-word-attachments.html>

Freedom is expensive!

because we have to spend time and energy to give our public departments the desired freedom and self-reliance.

using swatantra software is incidentally inexpensive

but, even if it is expensive, run for freedom.

Thank you

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