

To: Members of X3T10
 From: Dal Allan
 Date: May 13, 1994
 Subject: ISO Standards

In Gene Milligan's ISO Report last November, he advised the members that there would be no action at ISO SC25 WG4 on ATA or CAM.

The ballot of ISO members for the New Work Items failed because there were not sufficient countries interested in participating.

Gene suggested that there be no dark motives subscribed to this action as no country is against our standards. ISO support for an interface standard can be interpreted as a rubber stamp activity on a US standard.

The members were offered three choices:

- a) Do nothing
- b) Look for another country to support
- c) Wait for ANSI approval and then Fast Track at ISO

Several years ago, the equivalent to X3T9 was ISO SC13, which met once every 18 months. ISO processing was fairly laborious then, but a few years ago a political maneuver within JTC/1 resulted in the disappearance of SC13 to become WG4 of SC25. In effect, a demotion.

There is another alternative to making standards, and it has become the primary way for optical media standards to become ISO standards, and that is through ECMA (European Computer Manufacturers Association). While in Europe earlier this month I had a long conversation with Secretary General Jan van den Beld about whether the same principles could be applied to interface standards.

Not only has processing optical media standards become more efficient, ECMA has excellent editorial capabilities and is capable of taking over the complete role of documenting a standard for ISO publication.

ECMA holds a General Assembly twice a year, and conducts letter ballots at the request of working groups, so there is little or no lost time between completing a project and beginning its standardization.

The typical time between completing a project and having an approved ECMA standard is 6 months. The document is then forwarded for Fast Tracking to ISO, which can take another 6 months.

One of the requirements for any project at ECMA is that three member companies (note companies, not countries) support the effort. There is a large overlap between ECMA membership and X3T10/X3T11 companies.

Sixteen companies overlap with General Assembly members:

3M	Exabyte	Siemens
AT&T	Hewlett Packard	StorageTek
Bull	Hitachi	Sun Microsystems
Compaq	IBM	Unisys
Conner Peripherals	Maxoptix	
Digital Equipment	Ricoh	

Although ECMA has European in its name, meetings are not restricted to being in Europe and holding meetings in the United States is a consideration. Many many years ago, during SCSI-1 development there was a joint meeting of ISO (then under Dara Hekimi) in Washington DC.

It would be possible for every member to become more involved with ISO standards, if ECMA met once per year with X3T10 (in an odd month) and once with X3T11 (in an even month). We would need an International Representative to attend the General Assembly meetings in Geneva twice a year.

This approach would give each committee three opportunities a year to take action on standards under development.

At the present time, every member company is being levied \$300 per committee per year to cover ANSI support for ISO activities. There have been efforts in the past to have ANSI become the Secretariat for SC13 (and later SC25 WG4) but they have been rejected. We get virtually nothing for \$300/year because all of ANSI's efforts are directed towards support of activities other than interfaces.

Jan indicated that ECMA would be interested in supporting our activities, which raises the question of why. First, ECMA supports itself by membership fees, and there is a strong possibility that more companies will join ECMA if interface activities were included in its scope of ISO standardization. Secondly, I suggested that the direct costs for holding meetings in the United States that we can all attend be covered by the members (this cost is estimated to be in the ballpark of \$100/member/year).

In a nutshell, benefits to this program are higher efficiency at lower cost:

1. More meeting opportunities to take action on international standards.
2. Participation in international activities available to all members.
3. Direct editorial support from the ECMA support organization.
4. Lower costs for processing of ISO standards.

I do not propose that the members accept working with ECMA as a direct substitute for the process we understand through ANSI because this system is new to most of us.

I do propose that we conduct a trial by forwarding one of our pending standards to ECMA, and try out the system that succeeded for optical media.

With the knowledge gained, we can make a decision at the end of this year on whether we want to withdraw from processing ISO standards through ANSI (this removes the \$300 annual fee). The \$100 levy to collect funds to cover the direct ECMA costs is within our control, just like the editor's fund which is maintained for us by CBEMA.

