



What Have We Been Up To?

“2008 has been yet another busy year for the ITSC. The establishment of the international standard for disaster recovery services ISO/IEC 24762 marks a milestone in our participation in international standardisation, as the project was led by Singapore, and uses the Singapore Standard for Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery SS507 as a base. The scope of the ITSC has continued to evolve to meet the needs of the industry, a case in point being the formation of a new Technical Committee for information organisations such as libraries. Furthermore, the ITSC has stepped up its efforts to promote greater awareness on the use and value of standards to the industry and student community through organising talks, seminars and even a programming competition.

So what were our key achievements for the past year? Read on...”

Ong Chih Hsing
Secretariat, IT Standards Committee

This has been another busy year for the IT Standards Committee (ITSC), and 2008 is not even over yet!

So what exactly have ITSC been up to in 2008?

1 A NEW TECHNICAL COMMITTEE IN ITSC

With the advent of the information age, the management of information and the means to measure the performance of information organisations have become ever more important. To address these needs, the ITSC has established a new Technical Committee (TC) focusing on standardisation in this particular area.

This national committee mirrors the work of ISO Technical Committee 46 (Information & Documentation), and in particular the work of its Sub Committee 8 (Quality - Statistics and performance evaluation), which deals with the standardisation of practices relating to the collection of statistics and performance indicators for information organisations and content providers, such as libraries, archives, museums, and publishers.

The new Technical Committee is chaired by the National Library Board, and comprises representatives from the Council of Chief Librarians in Singapore.

2 A FIRST ISO STANDARD FOR ITSC

ITSC and the international standards community worked together to establish ISO/IEC 24762 Guidelines for ICT Disaster Recovery Service under the auspice of JTC 1 SC 27 (IT Security Techniques) Working Group 4 (Security controls and services) with Singapore leading the effort as the Convenor of WG 4 and the Project Editor. This international standard was developed based on Singapore Standard SS507:2004 Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery for Service Providers established by the ITSC.

The internationalisation of SS507 has helped to spur the growth of our local business continuity/disaster recovery (BC/DR) consultancy services, training and certification industry, and will further enhance Singapore's position as a trusted hub and its leadership in BC/DR operations in the region.

More information on this project is available in the article 'SS507 Went International - The Release of ISO/IEC 24762' in this journal.

3 ITSC CONTINUES TO DEVELOP NEW ICT STANDARDS FOR SINGAPORE

Notwithstanding this successful international standardisation milestone, our TCs continue to champion and lead the standardisation in their respective technical domains by establishing new Singapore Standards and participating in the international standards forums.

The Singapore Standards currently being developed by the various TCs in ITSC include QR Code (a two-dimensional bar code), a framework for the development and sharing of digital content, and guidelines for securing wireless networks. In addition, our TCs proactively promote ICT standards locally by organising seminars and participating in industry events such as the Govware.

4 NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAY TO SHOW THAT STANDARDS MATTER

Another major focus of the ITSC's activities this year was to create more awareness of the value and importance of ICT standards for efficiency and competitive advantage. As part of this effort, we organised the code::XtremeApps:: programming competition to raise the profile of programming standards and to cultivate more interest in computer programming in Singapore. We hope this will lead to the development of more innovative applications with the potential for commercialisation.

This is the second time the ITSC is organising the competition, following the success of the first competition in 2007. To broaden the outreach of this year's event, we have included a new 'Junior Category' for children aged 12 years and below. We also partnered with the National Infocomm Competition (NIC), an annual inter-school competition spearheaded by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), for the 'Open Category' of code::XtremeApps:: 2008 to be one of the challenges under the Polytechnic/ITE circuit of the NIC.

Targeted at both students and industry professionals, the 'Open Category' of code::XtremeApps:: 2008 is an 24-hour competition which requires contestants to develop innovative Web 2.0 mashups and Rich Internet Applications (RIAs) using development tools such as IBM Project Zero and Adobe AIR. The platform used for the 'Junior Category' is ALICE, a 3D interactive environment developed by the Carnegie Mellon University to teach programming concepts to students. Training sessions on these tools were organised to get the contestants up to speed prior to the actual competition.

If numbers are anything to go by, we have seen a substantial increase in the interest and participation in code::XtremeApps::. A total of 211 contestants from 65 teams took part in the 'Open Category' in 2008, an increase of more than 33% over the previous year. Additionally, the 'Junior Category' attracted a total of 18 teams with close to 50 participants.

We were pleasantly surprised at the overwhelming interest in the competition and are glad to see many creative and high quality applications submitted by the contestants.

The competition owes its success to the sponsors and partnering organisations who have provided financial and logistics support, and the many dedicated organising committee members and helpers who have volunteered their time to run the event. We certainly look forward to organising code::XtremeApps:: again in the near future.



Participants from the 'Junior Category'.

Participants from the 'Open Category'.



Figure 1: Participants of code::XtremeApps:: Programming Competition 2008

5 PROMOTING INFOCOMM STANDARDS TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Another new outreach activity by the ITSC is a series of talks to the students from the Electrical Engineering Faculty and School of Computer Science of the National University of Singapore. Between August to November 2008 various members of ITSC will share their insights on the value and economic benefits of ICT standards as well as the standardisation efforts of the various Technical Committees under the ITSC.

By proactively reaching out to the tertiary students through such talks, we hope to educate more students on the value of standards and to encourage them to become developers and users of standards when they enter the workforce.

6 LOOKING AHEAD

The fast moving nature of the ICT industry and the increasing pervasiveness of IT in all aspects of our lives require organisations to continually adapt or face obsolescence, and the ITSC is no exception. Moving forward, the ITSC will continue to evolve to keep up with the times to remain relevant. We invite you to join us in this journey.

For more information about the ITSC, please visit our website at www.itsc.org.sg or contact us at nitsc@ida.gov.sg.