

Guest Editorial

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In the computing and communications sectors, standards provide interoperability between implementations, enable a division of labor along the value chain, and facilitate the decentralized third-party supply of complementary goods and services. While the importance of standards in IT industries is self-evident to readers of *JITSR*, this is certainly not true for many IT researchers. Therefore, we were happy to be able to chair a Minitrack on Standards and Standardization at the 38th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences (HICSS-38), an interdisciplinary conference held each January in one of the neighbor islands of Hawaii. This minitrack follows a similar one organized by Kai Jakobs at HICSS-34.

After a double-blind review process, six papers were selected for presentation at the conference. Interestingly, all of these touched on the standards creation process in some way. The presenting authors were invited to publish their papers in this journal, and, of those submitted, three were accepted for publication in this issue. We believe that the following articles demonstrate the hard work of the authors after working with us for five rounds over a 13-month period.

The first paper is a historical case study on the development of Unix-related standards from 1983 to the present. The author, Jim Isaak, was able to write this story of POSIX standardization using his own long-term involvement in this standards development process. He offers behind-

the-scenes evidence of how individuals and their collaboration play a decisive role in setting standards and shaping the associated technology. The case is also interesting in and of itself as one of the most important multi-vendor computer standards of the 1980s. At the same time, Isaak shows how constraints on the standardization effort ultimately limited the attractiveness of the POSIX standard in competing with proprietary *de facto* standards — notably, Microsoft Windows.

For those researchers who study IT standards, most of us begin our study with a focus on the standards or standardization aspect of a given phenomenon. In the second paper, Lynne Markus and Ulric Gelinus turn this approach on its head in a case study of Collaborative Planning, Forecasting and Replenishment (CPFR), a supply chain management innovation. They contrast the standards conceptual approach to three other approaches to research the innovation—as a business philosophy, as a methodology, or as a set of technologies—and to identify the unique value of using the standardization approach. We hope that their findings trigger more IT researchers to study IT innovations from the point of view of standardization.

The third paper by Ken Krechmer discusses an important topic: what constitutes an *open standard*? Although the paper did not fit the form of an academic research paper, between Krechmer's industry knowledge and the insights he pro-

vides, we felt the paper was important to publish as a *JITSR* position paper. Krechmer shows how the term *open* may be used to address the needs of various stakeholders during the creation of standards, their implementation, and the use of these implementations. By listing and discussing these needs, he provides a basis for standards development organizations to assess and reconsider the way they address the requirements of their stakeholders. Researchers may use it as a starting point to investigate further the various dimensions of openness in standardization.

Finally, we are pleased to note that a fourth paper from the HICSS-38 Minitrack is being published in another journal. Martina Gerst and Raluca Bunduchi's paper, "Shaping IT Standardisation in the Automotive Industry—The Role of Power in Driving Portal Standardisation," is forthcoming in *Electronic Markets*, Vol. 15, No. 4. They use a Social Shaping of Technology approach to describe interorganizational collaboration in standards development.

We hope that the entire process has produced a collection of valuable research for our colleagues in the IT standards community. We know that we found the process enjoyable and productive—particularly dis-

cussing standards in Hawaii in January—and believe our authors would agree. While there may not be enough of a supply of conference papers to repeat this on an annual basis, we are exploring alternatives to meet more frequently, perhaps with submissions in the years that the SIIT conference is not held. Further information on the HICSS minitracks and the papers can be found at <http://www.joelwest.org/HICSS>.

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