Chapter VIII
Conclusion

[in regard to the caucus process] ...rhetoric of inclusiveness is actually exclusive; who has the time to kill—all the action is after midnight.

—John Durham Peters, 2002

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers the conclusions of the study, briefly summarizes the entire study, and then presents the results and their relevance to the study’s theoretical perspectives. Recommendations are also provided about how the discourse on standardization might be clarified and employed more fruitfully by those exploring policy alternatives, including academia, government, and industry. The limitations of the study are assessed and some suggestions are made about possible areas for further research, both theoretical and practical. Finally, observations are included that relate this work to the larger context of global economic, political, and social change.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Questions Revisited

This study began by establishing the following research questions: How public has standardization been in the past and how does that compare with the standardiza-
tion process of today? What is meant by terms such as “public,” “private,” and “open,” and how are their meanings constructed and applied? If the process is now undergoing increasing enclosure, what are the roots of such enclosure? What are the responses to arguments that enclosure is occurring? What are the institutional responses to the perception of enclosure?

The study has sought to explain the concept of standards in the context of American, European, and global industrial policy (e.g., what are “standards”? What is “open”?). Initially, the study examined a discourse about the enclosure of ideas to establish a vocabulary and basic framework for its hypothesis of enclosure. Also included was an analysis of the discourse on standards and standardization. An historical review of several of the most established standardization institutions followed with attention to how terms and concepts of openness and the public were applied, and what were their structural basis (i.e., what interests were they structured to serve). The study then examined the discourse on standards and standardization and considered what enclosure might imply for the future of open standards. A taxonomy of arguments was established to aid in the analysis. Next, the study considered specific case studies to find the application of the arguments and their relevance to the enclosure hypothesis. Finally, it examined institutional responses, and proposed policies and remedies to enclosure.

As the study proceeded, the basic research questions, revisited previously, suggested the following operational questions: What is the meaning of “open” and how is its meaning constructed and applied? Can a standard developed in a closed committee be an open standard? What are the views on the effects of open/closed processes of standards-making?

Conclusions

The conclusion reached is that open is a multidimensional term universally embraced, but never adequately defined. This ambiguity is used to rhetorically construct and legitimate a wide variety of activities. The most common problem in the use of the term is confusion between open process and open result. Claims for legitimacy of consortia involved in standards-setting are frequently based on defining an open standard as a completed standard that is then openly available, whether or not it was developed in an open process. The claim is made, on behalf of consortia, that process is irrelevant and the defining criterion for establishing legitimacy is market relevance. Traditional SDOs claim superior legitimacy because of open processes, even though they often fail to meet many of their own criteria for openness. This question of open is entwined with similar confusion over the meaning of public and private. As a result, standardization, as a quasi-public function, lacks recognition and support from both government and industry, in spite of its economic importance,
Foundations and Future Prospects of Standards Studies: Multidisciplinary Approach
[www.igi-global.com/article/foundations-future-prospects-standards-studies/2592?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/foundations-future-prospects-standards-studies/2592?camid=4v1a)

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