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private language for a public
operation is a crime

why ODF is a free document format

and

why OOXML is not.

where is India in this game?

outline

- who is the owner of a digital document?
- what constitutes using a document?
- what makes reading and interpretation possible?
- how to make proprietary documents?
- is the government with us?
- should India vote in favor of OOXML?

who owns the documents
written by you?

whether digital or not?

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

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 document in future.

this possibility is dangerous to a digital society.

therefore

a private (proprietary) digital encoding
should be declared criminal by all civil
societies.

the purpose of this campaign is to
convince the policy makers to make
proprietary document encoding a crime.

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

what makes reading and
interpretation possible?

known syntax
and
known semantics

syntax and semantics

as shared grammar and meaning, are essential for using code.

code as an asset loses its value once we forget the syntax and semantics.

civil society's responsibility is to protect it so that its endurance is assured.

a lesson from the caves



Chalked Wyoming County Petroglyph. Credit: Gerald Ratliff http://cwva.org/wwvrunes/wwvrunes_3.html

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 code becomes a stone, and
using code means interpreting it.

how to preserve?

cultural assets like documents, languages,
music, science and mathematics?

endurance of physical assets

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 the endurance of cultural assets

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 encoding and make them
accessible as free standards.

and

we should preserve interpretation along
with the code.

XML technology helps us to keep code and
its interpretation together.

well, as close as technically feasible.

how to make proprietary code?

the idea is not to encourage proprietary documents

but to understand the enemy's mind

so, here is the secret.

private encodings are 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.

we keep sterile code

thinking that we are in possession of our
work.

we forgot or did not realize that the
decoder of our work is not in our
possession.

creating proprietary code

is neither an invention nor an innovation,

because code is arbitrary.

proprietary code is a cheat.

technical innovation is required
for

keeping the interpretation and code as
close as possible.

and not

to keep them separate.

the war therefore 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

they have no policy to support **exclusively**
free document standards

in the absence of a policy, the proprietary
encoding is becoming a 'defacto
standard'.

most public documents

are encoded in the proprietary format.

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.

Open Document Format

currently ODF provides the answer for
office documents

word processing
presentation
spreadsheet
web publication

or should it be ooxml?

that is the current debate.

should India vote against ooxml?

Why ooxml is not an open
standard?

and why ODF is an open standard?

comparing the two

ODF and OOXML

decodability

on the face of it ooxml is decodable,

because it uses XML.

ODF also uses XML.

abusing xml

- user defined custom/arbitrary markup
- possible to reference documents in proprietary format
- embedded objects
- terse tags

any XML document is not a free
/ open document standard.

a common misconception

the tags must have free accessible
definition

therefore

use of XML does not mean a document encoding will become an open standard.

use of preexisting standards

- ODF uses

- XML

- XHTML

- MathML

- SVG

- ...

- one of the reasons why OOXML is 7000 pages, while ODF is 700 pages

terseness or obfuscation?

```
<i>  
  <a>Donald</a>  
  <a>Knuth</a>  
  <a>Computer Science</a>  
  <a>USA</a>  
</i>
```

this is valid XML, but its interpretation is arbitrary.

no private language
components

implementation independence

ooxml's objective is tied to reencoding existing MS documents into XML serialization.

in ECMA's own words

“OpenXML is designed to represent the existing corpus of documents faithfully, even if that means preserving idiosyncrasies that one might not choose given the luxury of starting from a clean slate. In the ODF design, compatibility with and preservation of existing Office documents were not goals. Each set of goals is valuable; sacrificing either at the expense of the other may not be in the best interest of users.”

(p.6 Ecma Response)

ooxml is a ploy to preserve
monopoly

almost impossible that another vendor can
support ooxml in full.

ODF on the other hand

is implementation independent.

the objective is to evolve an enduring encoding for all office documents.

transparent collaboration

MS boycotted the ODF collaboration process.

freedom to implement

most important of all.

where is India in this game?

well, it is almost hopeless.

BIS uses proprietary format for their work when they had the option to use an ISO standard.

warning: we are not in safe hands.

governments in India

are yet to announce the policy

far from implementing free document
standards

because we know policy is merely a first
step.

we did not even take the first step.

Indian language encoding

in a very bad state.

unicode or ISCII is still not enforced

governments are responsible for this
hopeless situation

is govt protecting the proprietary
interests?

in a way, yes.

by considering that proprietary and open
standards can exist together

it is time to decide!

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

let us not convert digital
documents into stone
engravings to be deciphered



Thank you

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