Society of Archivists Data Standards Group

A Guide to Archival and Related Standards
Standards applicable to archives; for the digital delivery of repository guides, finding-aids, and images of material from collections.

**Title:** Open Document Format for Office Applications (Open Document) - ODF

**Name of Standards Developing Organisation**
OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards)

**Current versions**

The current version of ODF is 1.2, which was approved as an 'OASIS Committee Specification' by the OASIS Open Document Format for Office Applications (OpenDocument) Technical Committee in March 2011. ODF 1.2 will soon be subject to an official OASIS vote, which will see it formally adopted as an OASIS standard. While ODF 1.2 has yet to be rubber-stamped by OASIS, it is cited here as the current version because it is already used in numerous office applications.

**Replaces**
- Open Document Format for Office Applications (OpenDocument) Version 1.0, 1 May 2005

**Abstract**
ODF is a widely adopted standardised format for the storing and sharing of office productivity suite documents. Support for ODF has been implemented in widely used word processors, spreadsheet and presentation applications.

**Description**
Open Document Format describes an XML format for office documents as well as the characteristics of software applications which read, write and process such documents. The ODF standard is therefore applicable to document authoring, editing, viewing, exchange and archiving, including text documents, spreadsheets, presentation graphics, drawings, charts and similar documents commonly used by personal productivity software applications.

The origins of the ODF format lie with a company called StarDivision, which began to develop an XML format for office documents for use with its

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1 ISO/IEC 26300:2006 is less up-to-date than ODF 1.2 and is amended by corrigendum.
StarOffice software in 1999. The goal was to create an open interoperable file format that could be easily implemented by others. StarDivision was acquired by Sun Microsystems later that same year, and in 2000 Sun released the StarOffice codebase creating the openoffice.org productivity suite. The first draft ODF specifications were made available to users through this release.

Although ODF's genesis is linked with the openoffice.org community, responsibility for development and maintenance of the standard has long been transferred to a higher-level body, a requirement for the ODF standard to be considered a vendor-neutral format suitable for use in any office application. Since 2002, the OASIS Open Document Format for Office Applications (OpenDocument) Technical Committee has overseen development of ODF. The Committee includes representatives from IBM, Microsoft Corporation, Nokia Corporation, Novell, Oracle Corporation and The Boeing Company. OASIS is also the designated maintenance body for ISO/IEC 26300:2006 liaising with ISO/IEC JTC1 SC34, which is the international standardisation subcommittee for Document Description and Processing Languages standards and technical reports related to structured mark-up languages (specifically the Standard Generalized Mark-up Language (SGML) and the Extensible Mark-up Language (XML)) in the areas of information description, processing and association.

Important characteristics of the ODF standard, from a record-keeper's perspective, include the following:

- ODF is XML-based
- ODF is an open standard
- ODF is application-independent
- ODF is platform-independent
- ODF is vendor-neutral
- ODF makes use of existing standards (e.g. HTML, SVG, XSL, SMIL, XLink, XForms, MathML, and the Dublin Core)
- Software components for processing ODF are freely and widely available.

Improvements to ODF in version 1.2 include: support for Resource Description Format (RDF) metadata, advanced digital signatures and enhancements to key areas of ODF such as formulae.

**Documentation**

Specifications for each of the ODF versions are published on the OASIS website in a number of formats. The ISO/IEC standard document for ODF 1.0 may also be downloaded freely.

**Adoption**

A number of public sector organisations worldwide are encouraging the use of open format solutions to avoid vendor lock-in of data. For example, the Danish parliament have decreed that from April 2011 governmental authorities
in Denmark must be able to send and receive documents in formats included in a reference list of open standard formats, including ODF.

**Implementations**

A number of office applications provide native support for Open Document; these include: Corel WordPerfect Office X4, IBM Lotus Symphony, KOffice, LibreOffice, Microsoft Office 2007 Service Pack 2 (Windows only), Microsoft Office 2010, NeoOffice, Okular, Oracle Office and StarOffice. Additionally, a number of plug-ins are available to provide ODF support for office software, such as earlier versions of Microsoft Office. As web-based office applications increase in importance it is also worth noting that ODF support is widespread in this environment, for example: Adobe Buzzword, Google Docs and WebODF.

**Next month**

Next month we will look at UKAT (The UK Archival Thesaurus), a subject thesaurus created specifically for UK Archivists.

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