

Astro-CC meeting 2025-10-09

IVOA document standards and processes

Marco - what do we want to discuss ?

Markus - If people have concerns with current processes this would be a good place to raise them

Petr- Can you give us a run through of the current processes ?

A basic note doesn't mean the IVOA endorses what you are saying.

- Anyone can start a document
- Ideally a group work together to develop the initial draft.
- When the group are happy with the initial draft, then the note is brought to the community for discussion
- By this stage you should have prototypes and/or demonstrators.
- When you have working code that demonstrates interoperability, the proposal can be taken further
- Request For Comments phase - lasts ~6week
- Subject to general public review
- Working group review
- TCG review
- Voting on accepting the working draft
- Checking for conflicts
- When the TCG accepts the working draft
- It can be accepted as a recommendation

Problems

- 6 week RFC period focuses too much on the time
- Chicken and egg situation
- Needs projects to develop prototypes to make it from proposed to recommendation
- but projects won't implement it until it is accepted as a recommendation
- we end up with documents reaching the end of the process without enough implementations

Suggestion - relax the requirements

- When the standard is in RFC, now is the time to take it up and add implementations
- When it has enough valid implementations, then it becomes accepted
- Feedback from implementations informs the RFC period

Evaluation of the prototype needs to be done by someone who understands the problem it is trying to solve

Sometimes a working group will reply "this has no overlap with my group domain, so as far as I am concerned it is fine" - "yes because I can't really comment"

RFCs in the W3C are

Our RFCs actually are requests for comments

Mark A - Danger is that we will open it up to minute comments about the text

Some cases where the reference implementations come at the end tend to be thrown together

Other cases where the reference implementations come early in the process are much more mature and relevant

Marco - The review process only starts when you have a recommendation ready for review, which takes more than 6 weeks available. Need to start the implementation earlier.

If we have 6+ documents ready for review at the same time, it limits how much effort the reviewers can contribute to the process

Marco - goal is to try to solve the challenge of take-up. Take up during transition period is important

SimDM is an example - we have a standard proposal without any take up, because no one else picked it up.

Mark T implementations are really important.

Differs a bit between standards

If someone writes a standard and then tries to implement it they find the problems.

Best case is to write standard and implementation at the same time.

Other participants will not be keen on implementing if it is liable to change.

In some things, like data models, might be possible to review without technical implementation.

In which case it might be OK to approve or accept the draft without implementations.

Maybe there is argument for an extra stage in the process, where we say this is mostly stable, and ask for (initial) implementations.

Marco - one solution is to open up the stage between proposed and accepted recommendation

Maybe this opens up space for more take up before it is

Vocabulary process is example of this ?

Proposed terms can be added even if no one is using them yet

Marco - In the case of protocols, is a demo of interoperable client/server generated code enough to accept the proposed protocol ?

Scige - Will a tap-lint equivalent that helps us to test/validate the standard ?

Scige - Is it allowed to have an implementation that implements parts of different versions of a standard ?

Marco - If you have v1.2, v1.3, and v1.4, you can use any (whole) version but a new document should reference the latest version of other standards. Better not to rely on previous versions.

Marco - We are not at the level of dependency that software has where we can say $x \geq \text{version} \geq y$.

Scige - If I have to update my prototype to match the latest version, we would need to continuously update our code to meet a moving target ?

Petr there should be proof of two interoperable implementations - does one server and one client meet that requirement ?

Marco - if it is only one client and one server, it is a not proof of interoperability

Marco - EPNTAP is a good example of take up by the community - multiple instances, even though they all (mostly) use DaCHS as the server, they are implementations of the model.

Mark A - with the evolution that is happening - with w3c inspired thing, trying to think of how other projects are doing this, do they have a more platform based approach ?

MarkA - What happened in ESCAPE - I'm going to build my plugin for a platform.

Marco - perhaps we should look at what other projects with their standardisation process

Marco - Other projects have a more limited domain, so they are looking compatibility between platforms rather than a federated open

MarkT - When we try to present what the IVOA is, a common criticism is

- Where is the front door ?
- Where do you start ?
- Where do point them - to a registry of registries ?

Marco - do we need a visible entry point to the registry ?

Stefan - When we give demonstrations of using the VO we start with something like TopCat with examples.

Marco - possibly a portal to a full registry can be an entry endpoint

MarkT - There is the Gavo wurr that we can point people at

Marco - yes, but you need to understand how the registry works

MarkT - There isn't something that shows an overview of where everything is.

Marco - sustainability issues with maintaining it

Dave - perhaps a portal using AladinLite that can demonstrate the available services in a common way

MarkT - being able to go to other communities in EOSC and be able to say here is where to start with the VO

Stefan - Vespa portal is an example - it is a way to demonstrate the capabilities

MarkT - Aladin is a pretty good starting point

How about a small set of entry points, Aladin, Vespa Portal, to demonstrate just how much data is available.

When you send new users to the IVOA website - a common question is *“yes, but where is the data ?”*

Looking at this from the other side of the desk, do we need experts in other technology domain involved in the review process ?

Dave - do you mean a security expert to help in the review process ?

Marco - If someone has expertise in a domain, they are welcome to raise an issue with the standard.

Marco - OpenAPI is an example of this - a new project joining the community raised issues with the way we were describing our services

Sara - Perhaps we need a way to involve an external expert in the process ?

Marco - I agree there is no easy way to involve people from outside

Marco - Do we need to bring back outreach new-comer sessions

Stefan - should we have a presence at key community meetings ?

MarkT - I agree we probably should have a focus session at the IAU in Rome