

Adobe Director of Open Source and Standards discusses “Open” Part 3

The Open Government Initiative

The Open Government Initiative that Obama and his organization have put together has been really fascinating. I actually am also on the W3C's eGovernment group. So I tend to watch this from a worldwide basis as well. Open Government is important because we do need to know where the decisions came from, what the data is, and how we can make use of that data. We also need to be careful and make sure that what's usually called authentication and authorization - Did the person say that? Was it taken out of context? And those things become really important when you start looking at verification aspects. So, did someone pull something from a document and present it as just that excerpt or do you have the rights to look at the whole document and see if it has been “changed” or not? Things that become really true representations of that documentation become increasingly important. And that's where international standards, like PDF, need to play a role – absolute, trustable, verifiable representation. Then we start moving into other categories where the governments need to be open. Who said what? When did they say what? What's the impact on social media? How do all of these things fit together? And again, Adobe has been in this space for a long time, and we have tools that provide this functionality without blocking anyone else from making use if that same basic data interchange. This is unique from many companies. There's no lock-in. You can go wherever you want to. Therefore, the Open Government Initiative and Adobe's own offerings are well combined to provide the best experience for today's informed citizen.

Open Source, Standards and Open Government

There are a few things that we need to be careful about, thinking particularly about open government when it comes to standards, specifications and source. First of all, Adobe itself is an international company and therefore we do need to make sure that we always have an international focus. We work with lots of governments around the world and their interchanged needs may vary as well for this. There's always a risk, and something that our teams here at Adobe are constantly trying to make sure don't happen in standards body is that standards become a way for a company to actually generate lock-in – build a standard to which they are the only person who supply that specific implementation. We think that standards are for everyone and by consensus. And therefore, if you're not building a standard by consensus then there is a risk that an Open Government Initiative can be hijacked in its own right as well. So we make sure, once again, that when we work in standards bodies, when we give technology away, that we step aside and make sure everyone's voice is heard. So those are the two things I really see: international focus and make sure that a standard is truly a standard and is truly consensus based.

What's next for Adobe?

This is one of those things that always come up in these discussions. But before I get to that let me step up a step higher from this and point out that openness is one of the

key initiatives being driven by our CTO. Openness pervades every different aspect and every product across our company, and we constantly are looking at the best ways of being “open” around these pieces. Right now, for instance, one of the things we have recently done is launch Open@Adobe, which is a portal that allows anyone to take advantage of our technologies - source, standards, specs – and be able to expand them freely and easily. That’s one of the steps we’re going to. We’re going to be looking at and working, specifically for instance in open source, in technologies to which Adobe is massively well known that need open source initiatives. Again, we are well known for the font space. An open source, high-quality font would make sense for us to go inside of here. And we will be expanding and extending our open environments for the Flash Platform as well as for the other tools as we evolve and bring them more closer in line with both open source practices and principles and open standards and open specifications.