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June 27, 2007

Subject: Annual Report: INCITS Accessibility Study Group (ASG)

From: Don Deutsch, (Acting) Chair

1. Executive Summary:

At its January 2005 the INCITS Executive Board approved the proposed charter for the INCITS Accessibility Study Group (ASG) to develop the US contributions and recommendations to JTC1 Special Working Group on Accessibility (SWG-A). The SWG-A met semi-annually in 2005 and 2006 locations selected to encourage broad participation. Meeting locations included: England, Canada, Japan, and the United States.

Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act became effective June 2001; the US Access Board commissioned Federal Advisory Committee is currently developing recommendations regarding possible updates and changes to 508. W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative is also developing revisions to their web guidelines. Harmonization of these and other regional and country specific accessibility standards is a key factor impacting IT vendors.

ASG members have diverse experiences, skills and interests related to accessibility and standards. ASG members perform in leadership roles in SWG-A Task Groups and Ad Hocs and develop detailed contributions that are publicly posted. The following sections describe highlights of ASG activities since the last ASG Annual Report was submitted in June 2006.

2. Significant Accomplishments:

- a. The ASG sent delegations representing the US to two SWG-A meetings: Brussels, BELGIUM in September 2006; and Hamar, NORWAY in April 2007. In all SWG-A meetings up through and including the September 2006 gathering in Brussels, US position were well received and accepted as presented.

The US submitted contributions to the Hamar meeting proposing that the SWG-A effort be completed, its products publicized, and any follow-on efforts be handled by JTC 1. When it became clear that many participants were reluctant to disband SWG-A in 2007,

compromises were reached that are acceptable to the U.S.

Supporting a proposal from and cooperating with Japan, the US got SWG-A to agree to focus on completing the work underway so that JTC 1 could publish it – thus making it widely available for use by national and regional accessibility activities. The group also agreed to meet twice via teleconference rather than holding a second face-to-face meeting prior to the 2007 JTC 1 Plenary meeting in Australia. This largely addressed the US concern about the cost in dollars and time for a second face-to-face meeting.

- b. The SWG-A has two Task Groups: (1) User Needs Requirements and (2) Standards Inventory and Gap Analysis. ASG members hold leadership positions in both TGs and in their Ad Hoc activities.
- c. Document Registers for US and JTC 1 Groups
 - i. [INCITS ASG Document Register](#)
 - ii. [JTC1 SWG-A Document Register](#)

3. Significant Challenges:

Resource constraints make it difficult for consumer and user group participation. ASG members continue to reach out to these constituents.

With the aggressive, resource and time consuming effort to refresh US Section 508 Accessibility Guidelines underway, many ASG participants are spending much of their time on that activity; therefore, they have fewer cycles to spend on ASG/SWG-A activities.

4. Expected Challenges:

Along with US Section 508 refresh, W3C/WAI's pending WCAG 2.0, and newly invigorated regional initiatives in Japan and Europe, there is increasing need for harmonization of global accessibility standards.

With the retirement of the incumbent, Connie Myers, a call was issued to fill the position of ASG Chair. The first call closed without a response; a second call was immediately issued closing on 26 July. It is imperative that someone step-up to lead this US TAG to the US initiated SWG-A activity to ensure that US interests are considered and to drive convergence of accessibility standards globally.

5. Committee Activities:

a. Previous Year's Meetings:

The ASG met 9 times since June 2006; all meetings were teleconferences:

- i. 14 July 2006
- ii. 28 July
- iii. 18 August
- iv. 6 October

- v. 23 February 2007
- vi. 2 March
- vii. 14 March
- viii. 2 April
- ix. 22 June

b. Planned Meetings:

- i. ASG will meet via teleconference on 10 August 2007. Additional meeting will be called if needed, but are not anticipated at this time.
- ii. SWG-A will hold teleconferences on 9 July and 29 August.

6. Liaison Activities:

The ASG does not conduct formal liaison activities.

7. Membership and Officers:

a. ASG Officers:

Chair: Don Deutsch (Acting), Oracle

b. ASG Membership:

See membership list attached ([ASG membership](#))

8. Future Trends

Accessibility pertains to both disabled and aging populations. Accessible IT has become a global concern, as the populations and workforce in many developed countries are growing older. A declining birth rate is one factor. As we age, the likelihood of incurring impairment increases. With the explosion of eGovernment services, it behooves governments to ensure that all citizens have access to information and services. Employers need to retain valuable experienced employees.

US Federal and State IT purchases are required to meet accessibility standards. Country requirements for government IT purchases in Europe, APAC, North and South America include similar accessibility requirements. It is challenging for IT vendors to address a proliferation of varying accessibility standards. ETSI and CEN are engaged in developing responses to EU directives and communiqués related to standards opportunities, one addressing certification.

9. Other Administrative Information

The ASG does not collect or retain funds.

Attachment:

Accessibility Study Group Participants ([ASG membership](#))