

a policy of ensuring that its activities are market relevant and has therefore accrued a very wide credibility. Because ISO and its strong national membership base carry with them wide recognition, and the many stakeholder voices it represents gives it built-in added value, ISO is the ideal organization to promote social responsibility.

Our modern world relies heavily on trade, trade encouraged by standards. Yet more and more this trade is characterized by a relatively new phenomenon, that of a single corporation sourcing materials in one country, manufacturing in a second and selling in a third and fourth and fifth. In recent years there has also been a growing movement to the international and remote supplying of services, and to the movement of people in the course of their work, both temporary and permanent. These developments, and the development of international real-time media, have broadened calls for social responsibility that, though it includes the local community, now also extends far beyond it. In fact, each of us, as global citizens, must examine the effects of our actions everywhere and ensure they are socially responsible.

But all the more so for businesses and other organizations. Since its founding almost 60 years ago, ISO has done much to make people's lives better. Standardization has made trade easier and made products and workplaces safer. More recently, ISO embraced the environment and sustainable development. Our challenge today is to extend our reach – to involve more countries and more organizations, and to make social responsibility integral to organizational behaviour everywhere. ■

*Reproduced Courtesy The Global Standard, Australia*

# The growth of e-services at ISO

*By Reinhard Weissinger, Manager, e-services, Standards Development and Production, ISO Central Secretariat*

**T**he Internet and World Wide Web have made a visible impact over the last decade on how business operates and how business processes are organized both inside and between organizations. This overall trend also applies to the world of standardization at all levels and, obviously, to ISO as well.

Ten years ago, ISO launched its first Web-based service, *ISO Online*, which is still today its main and most visible presence on the Web. In 1996, ISO moved on to using a document management system for the dissemination of its policy documents (via the ISODOC server) and, in 1997, for the dissemination of ISO standards and other publications (via the ISOSTD server). Since the beginning of 2004, all final publications of ISO standards and other final ISO deliverables are available only in electronic form and print-outs can only be obtained on demand.

In late 1998, ISO started – in a pilot project – to operate a server, which would specifically support the standards development process. This “ISOTC” server became over time the electronic backbone for the support of standards development and evolved towards the main hosting environment for electronic committees of ISO.

As from the end of 2000, ISO expanded the function of the ISOTC server to operate an electronic balloting application. The application supports the dissemination of Draft International Standards (DIS) and Final Draft International Standards (FDIS), and provides the functionality to vote and comment on these documents. The use of the balloting application has been mandatory for all ISO member bodies since January 2003.

## Managing all aspects of facilitating e-work

The electronic services supporting standardization committees normally comprise at the least the following four main components

- Document management;
- Features for collaboration in groups (e.g. notifications, discussion fora, etc.);
- Project management information (e.g. structured data stored in databases relating to standards development projects, their stages and stage history, dates when these stages were reached etc.);
- Data on individual users, their roles and the organization they represent (e.g. as committee secretary, ballotter, representative of a member body; member bodies, liaison organizations etc., which participate in the standardization process).

The responsibility for managing these functions in a coordinated way has now been combined in a new unit in the ISO Central Secretariat which carries the designation Project management and electronic services.

The main objective of this unit is to manage all aspects facilitating electronic work by committees and working groups in a consistent manner. The unit needs to ensure that any development projects address all the essential features required by the committees as well as by the national members of ISO and other partners in standards development. For this reason, the unit is also deeply involved in

ISO's Information Technology Strategies Implementation Group (ITSIG).

ISO e-services are developed in collaboration with the ISO/CS Information Technology Services (ITS) department. The ITS department is responsible for the technical implementation of the ISO e-services tools as well as their day-to-day operation and support. In order to keep the development and maintenance effort under control, the objective is to use as far as possible off-the-shelf solutions. Some of the IT tools are already shared (free of charge) through the ITSIG Open Source (ISource) project among interested ISO member bodies.

In the following, we give a short overview about the main projects under development and their output so far.

## Easy navigation round the new ISOTC Portal

At the beginning of June 2004, the ISO Central Secretariat has made public a new homepage for the ISOTC server, which is called the ISOTC Portal (URL: [www.iso.org/tc](http://www.iso.org/tc)). The ISOTC Portal consists of two main areas, a section for the selection of and navigation to ISO committees and a section which provides direct links to policy and reference documents as well as some of the most important tools needed in the development and drafting of International Standards.

The new homepage for the ISOTC server is intended to make it easier to navigate to ISO committees and between them. The ISOTC portal also provides information about the decisions of the Technical Management Board (in the form of the TMB Communiqué) and about activities of other strategy groups in ISO such as the Information Technology Strategies Implementation Group (ITSIG).

One of the consequences of creating the ISOTC Portal is that the Standards Developer's Information Site (SDIS) was integrated into the new Portal (see especially the sections Standards Development Processes and IT & Electronic Tools) and thus no longer exists as an autonomous site.

The screenshot shows the ISOTC Portal interface. On the left, there is a 'TCs LIST' section with a scrollable list of technical committees, including JTC 1 (Information technology), TC 1 (Screw threads), TC 2 (Fasteners), TC 3 (Limits and fits), TC 4 (Rolling bearings), TC 5 (Ferrous metal pipes and metallic fittings), TC 6 (Paper, board and pulps), TC 8 (Ships and marine technology), TC 10 (Technical product documentation), TC 11 (Boilers and pressure vessels), TC 12 (Quantities, units, symbols, conversion factors), TC 14 (Shafts for machinery and accessories), TC 17 (Steel), TC 18 (Zinc and zinc alloys), TC 19 (Preferred numbers), TC 20 (Aircraft and space vehicles), TC 21 (Equipment for fire protection and fire fighting), TC 22 (Road vehicles), TC 23 (Tractors and machinery for agriculture and forestry), TC 24 (Sieves, sieving and other sizing methods), TC 25 (Cast iron and pig iron), TC 26 (Copper and copper alloys), TC 27 (Solid mineral fuels), TC 28 (Petroleum products and lubricants), TC 29 (Small tools), TC 30 (Measurement of fluid flow in closed conduits), TC 31 (Tyres, rims and valves), TC 33 (Refractories), TC 34 (Food products), TC 35 (Paints and varnishes), TC 36 (Cinematography), TC 37 (Terminology and other language resources), TC 38 (Textiles), TC 39 (Machine tools), TC 41 (Pulleys and belts (including veebelts)), TC 42 (Photography), TC 43 (Acoustics), and TC 44 (Welding and allied processes).

On the right side, there are several sections: 'TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT BOARD (TMB)' with links to Business Plan, Communiqué, and Strategic Plan; 'STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES' with links to Development Procedures, Writing Standards, Special Procedures, and Parallel Projects; 'ISO CENTRAL SECRETARIAT CONTACTS' with links to Technical Programme Managers, Information Technology Task Force, and Specialized Helpdesks; 'ISO CATALOGUE & WORK PROGRAMME' with links by ICS, by Technical Committees, and Search for Standards; 'ISO MEMBERS' with links by Country, by Acronym, and Participation; 'HORIZONTAL ISSUES' with links to Conformity Assessment, Consumer Issues, Developing Country Issues, and Reference Materials; 'OTHER PROTECTED AREAS' with a link to Access to other protected areas; 'NEWS' with a link to a 2004-08-30 work programme; 'COMMUNICATION BY ISO/CS' with links for secretaries, chairs, and balloters; 'IT & ELECTRONIC TOOLS' with links to eServices Guide, Server Guides, Templates, Forms, and Balloting Tools; 'TRAINING COURSES' with links to Project management, ISOSTD template, Writing standards, Preparing graphics, and e-services; and 'USEFUL LINKS' with links to ISO Resources and external sites.

The ISOTC Portal consists of two main areas, a section for the selection of and navigation to ISO committees and a section which provides direct links to policy and reference documents as well as some of the most important tools needed in the development and drafting of International Standards.

## Work programme for all committees

The work programme is one component of a more comprehensive project management framework which is currently under development.

Since July 2004, the Central Secretariat provides information about the work programme of each ISO technical committee and subcommittee inside the working environment of that committee on the ISOTC server. The work programme is generated daily from the project management database of the ISO Central Secretariat. In addition to the information already available on ISO Online, the work programme includes information about upcoming deadlines for a project (resulting from the maximum time frames for the development of projects defined by the Technical Management Board), and provides thereby alerts regarding actions expected by a committee. It covers the full history of a project (all previous project stages and the dates when these stages were

reached). All projects which have been cancelled within the last year because they exceeded maximum time frames defined by the TMB are included, which provides for the possibility of a re-introduction of such projects in case of sufficient support expressed in a committee ballot.

The work programme is one component of a more comprehensive project management framework which is currently under development. One of the main developments for the future is to allow committee secretariats to update information remotely for project stages under the responsibility of their committee.

## Monitoring a project's progress

The next step in the development of the project management framework is to provide member bodies with information on the status of all projects being processed by committees of which they assume the secretariat. This member body view of the

ISO committees' work programme is intended to facilitate the monitoring of the project's progress by the management in ISO member bodies and to provide the management with the possibility to support the development of projects whenever appropriate.

The layout and the type of information contained in the member body view will be very similar to the committee-internal view. The information will be made accessible from the ISOTC server. As the committee-view, the information will be updated once a day from the database of the ISO Central Secretariat.

As mentioned, ISO's balloting application as from late 2000 supports so far only the DIS and FDIS balloting stages. A project is underway to facilitate balloting inside committees and to enable committee secretaries to launch ballots remotely for their committees (and thus not rely on the ISO Central Secretariat to do so).

Tests of the first prototype of the committee-internal balloting application in which five committees took part were concluded by the beginning of August 2004. The comments received by the test participants are being evaluated and a revised version of the application is currently under development.

### The big picture of the ISO Global Directory

The ISO Global Directory (GD) can be considered a large database with data on users, their roles and the organizations they represent. The user data and their assignment to roles will be under the responsibility of the ISO member bodies. Registration in the GD will soon become a prerequisite for the access to any electronic committee or other electronic working area of ISO.

So far, the GD is already in use for the current balloting application on DIS and FDIS. Some ISO member bodies use the GD to register their representatives as DIS- and/or FDIS-balloters.

The main objectives of the development of the Global Directory are as follows:

- Management of all users, groups and permission settings ("roles") in ISO;
- Consistent definitions of business roles;
- Decentralized management of the registration of users and their assignment to roles by ISO member bodies;
- Possibility of delegating permission for user registration and role assignments to other organizations (for certain committees);
- "Ownership" of user data is with one organization (member body) only;
- Maintenance of user data may also be undertaken in a member body database and then submitted in an agreed file format to the Global Directory.

The GD is further expanded and the objectives of the current phase of development are:

- to increase the privacy protection for personal data;
- to support all business roles related to standards development;
- to improve the performance and user-friendliness of the application.

It is planned to roll out the new version of the GD by the end of 2004 to all ISO member bodies in order to facilitate the "decentralized" maintenance of user data and assignment to business roles by the member bodies.

### Less reliance on physical meetings

As ISO's working methods are increasingly electronic, with less reliance on physical meetings, electronic services play an ever-increasing role in the functioning of the standards development process. This change will not only contribute to higher efficiency and shorter standards development time frames, but also facilitate wider involvement of stakeholders, including those from developing countries. ■

