                          IETF Operational Notes

Status of this Memo

Copyright Notice

Abstract

   This document describes a new document series intended for use as a
   repository for IETF operations documents, which should be more
   ephemeral than RFCs, but more referenceable than Internet-Drafts, and
   with more clear handling procedures than a random Web page.

   It proposes to establish this series as an RFC 3933 process
   experiment.

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1. Introduction

   This document describes a new document series, called the IETF
   Operational Notes, or IONs.

   This document series is intended to capture the set of procedures
   that the IETF follows, but for which the RFC process is an
   inappropriate documentation vehicle.

   The document series defined here does not modify the IETF process
   rules that are defined in currently valid BCP documents.

   The document series is a process experiment according to RFC 3933
   [RFC3933].

2. A Description of the ION Mechanism

2.1. Properties of an ION

   An ION is a document with a certain set of attributes ("front page
   matter"). This specification does not place any limits on what else
   an ION can contain.

   An ION has the following attributes:

   o A name, which is usable as the filename of the document

   o A title

   o A date of approval

   o An identification of the body that approved this version

   The format of the document is not restricted by this document. It's
   suggested that there be an ION that describes expectations for ION
   formats.

   An ION is a versioned document. When a new ION is issued with the
   same name, it obsoletes the previous version. When one desires to
   retire an ION, one issues an ION saying "This document name is now
   obsolete".

   The ION name + the approval date forms a stable identifier for one
   particular version of an ION; once it is published, it shall never be
   changed, although it may be withdrawn (see below).

The properties list does not include a "category"; while the set of
documents that might be IONs is extremely wide, we do not know yet
which categories could make sense. The question of categories might
get revisited at the end of the experiment period.

Procedurally, an ION has the formal authority of a statement from its
approving body. This means that an ION cannot change those
procedures of the IETF that are documented via the BCP series, since
the BCP series represents a determination of IETF consensus.

2.2. ION Approval

An ION is always approved by some body. The IESG is granted
authority by this document over the practical management of the
series and the definition of detailed processes and rules associated
with it.

The IESG, the IAB, and IAOC are given the right to approve IONs by
this document. The IESG, IAB, or IAOC may decide that other groups
or roles should be given the right to approve IONs.

The ION-approving groups are expected to issue IONs related to their
own areas of responsibility, and to use common sense when IONs are
needed where it isn't obvious who's responsible for them.

An updated ION will normally be approved by the same body that
approved the previous version, or by another body with the approval
of the previously-approving body. In case of conflict, or when the
previous body no longer exists, the IESG will decide who gets to
approve an updated ION.

A decision by any other body than the IESG to approve an ION can be
appealed to the IESG, in which case the IESG can nullify the
approval. A decision of the IESG can be appealed using the common
IETF appeals procedure, except that an IESG decision to nullify an
IAB decision to approve an ION cannot be appealed to the IAB.

In the case that the IESG ceases to exist, its successors or
assignees will take over the tasks given to the IESG in this
document.

2.3. Draft IONs

There is no requirement that an ION will be published as a draft
before publication. This will, however, be desirable in many cases,
and thus, this document describes the properties and procedures for
handling draft IONs.

Draft IONs shall have, instead of an approval date and an
identification of the body that approved it, information about:

o The word "DRAFT", prominently displayed

o The publication date and time

o The approval date of the document it is intended to update (if
   any)

o The body that is intended to approve this version

o The appropriate forum for discussion of this draft (if any)

2.4. The ION Store

All approved IONs are archived, in all their versions, and made
publicly available from resources operated by the IETF secretariat.
The store should be reachable by common methods like HTTP and FTP,
and should offer both easy access to the "current" version of all
IONs and bulk download of all IONs, all versions.

This document does not constrain the form of the ION Store, but
mandates that there be a public one.

Public draft IONs are published separately from the approved IONs.
Old versions may be published in the draft store and must be kept in
a version management system for the duration of the experiment.
Experience will show what the best policy for draft retention is if
the series is made permanent.

3. Proposed Initial IONs

The following IONs should be created as soon as possible after this
document is published, to give the details of the maintenance of the
ION series, in order to bootstrap the process:

o The ION Format Guide

o The ION Store Description

The following list of documents, some of which currently exist,
provides examples of documents that could be converted to IONs. This
is not a binding recommendation, but gives examples of what IONs can
be good for.

o The I-D publishing procedure

o The checklist for I-D submission to the IESG (formerly known as
   id-nits)

o Procedures for spam control on IETF mailing lists

o Procedures for requesting a WG meeting slot

o Procedures for IETF minutes

o Procedures for IESG meeting minutes

Once the ION series is permanent, the existence of the ION series may
cause the following documents to be split into a "policy and
principles" BCP and a "procedures and boilerplate" document published
as ION:

o IETF Rights in Documents (currently BCP 78) RFC 3978 [RFC3978]

o IETF Rights in Technology (currently BCP 79) RFC 3979 [RFC3979]

o IETF mailing list management (currently RFC 3005 [RFC3005], BCP
   45, RFC 3683 [RFC3683], BCP 83, and RFC 3934 [RFC3934], BCP 94)

If someone wishes to do such a split while the experiment is running,
the BCPs cannot refer to the "procedures" documents as IONs, since
the concept of an ION may go away. In that case, any procedures
removed from a BCP must either be reinstated or otherwise stored as a
permanently available reference.

4. Success Criteria and Sunset Period

   This experiment is expected to run for a period of 12 months,
   starting from the date of the first ION published using this
   mechanism. At the end of the period, the IESG should issue a call
   for comments from the community, asking for people to state their
   agreement to one of the following statements (or a suitable
   reformulation thereof):

   1. This document series has proved useful, and should be made
       permanent

   2. This document series is less useful than the equivalent
       information in RFCs and informal Web pages, and should be
       abandoned

   3. We cannot decide yet; the experiment should continue

The author believes that establishing objective metrics for the
success or failure of this experiment is not a worthwhile exercise;
the success or failure will be readily apparent in the community's
attitudes towards the series.

If the feedback reveals a community consensus for keeping the series,
the IESG may choose to create a new BCP RFC containing the
information herein, suitably modified by experience.

If the IESG decides that the feedback warrants terminating the
series, the repository will be closed for new documents, and the
existing ION documents will be returned to having the same status as
any other Web page or file on the IETF servers -- this situation will
closely resemble the situation before the experiment started.

5. Background and Motivation

The IETF is an open organization, which means (among other things)
that there are always newcomers coming in to learn how to perform
work; this places a requirement on the organization to document its
processes and procedures in an accessible manner.

The IETF is also a large organization, which means that when
procedures change, there are a number of people who will like to know
of the change, to figure out what has changed, and possibly to
protest or appeal the change if they disagree with it.

At the present time (spring 2006), there are three kinds of documents
used for IETF documentation of its operations and procedures:

o BCP and Informational RFCs, which require an IETF consensus call
   for BCP, approval by the IESG, and usually a great deal of debate
   and effort to change, and which bind up editing resources in the
   final edit stage, as well as being limited (in practice) to ASCII.
   The BCP number forms a means of having a stable reference for new
   versions of a document, but an updated Info RFC has a completely
   different identifier from the RFC that it updates; "updates/
   obsoletes" links can give some of the same information, but can
   also be quite confusing to follow.

o Web pages, which can be changed without notice, provide very
   little ability to track changes, and have no formal standing --
   confusion is often seen about who has the right to update them,
   what the process for updating them is, and so on. It is hard when
   looking at a Web page to see whether this is a current procedure,
   a procedure introduced and abandoned, or a draft of a future
   procedure. For certain procedures, their informal documentation

in the "IESG Guide" wiki has partially clarified this situation
but has no official status.

o "floating" Internet-Drafts, which are frequently updated, in a
   trackable manner, but have no approval mechanism, are limited (in
   practice) to ASCII format, and whose use as semi-permanent
   documents clutters up their use as 6-month temporary working
   documents.

This note introduces a new series that seems to fulfil the
requirements for "something in between":

o Unlike RFCs, they can be produced without a post-editing stage,
   they can be in any format the controllers of the series choose
   (allowing web pages with hyperlinks, which is an advantage for
   newcomers).

o Also unlike RFCs, they can be produced by any body that the IESG
   gives the right to use the mechanism; this allows certain
   procedures to be updated without having to wait for the IESG
   approval cycle.

o Unlike Internet-Drafts, they have an explicit approval step --
   this allows a reader to easily see the difference between an idea
   and an operational procedure.

o Unlike Web pages, there is an explicit mechanism for finding "all
   current versions", and a mechanism for tracking the history of a
   document.

The "author" attribute has quite deliberately been omitted from the
required property list. While there may be many cases where
identifying an author is a Good Thing, the responsibility for an
approved ION rests with the approving body.

Note: This proposal is NOT intended to affect the standards track in
any way -- a side effect may be to reduce the number of "process
BCPs" emitted, but this has no direct bearing on the IETF's technical
specifications. It is therefore not within the scope of the NEWTRK
working group.

6. IANA Considerations

IONs will not include protocol specifications, so IONs will make no
requests for IANA actions. IANA will not need to review all IONs.

This document makes no requests of IANA either.

7. Security Considerations

   IONs will not include protocol specifications, so shouldn't have much
   need to talk about security the way RFCs do.

8. Acknowledgements

   Many people have contributed over the years to the ideas that I have
   tried to express here.

   I'm in particular indebted to John Klensin for his work on trying to
   find a balance between formalism and flexibility in the IETF process,
   and for his earlier attempts at creating such a document series as an
   adjunct to the "ISD" effort, and for his many valuable comments on
   this document.

   In addition, Dave Crocker, Spencer Dawkins, Jeff Hutzelman, Sam
   Hartman, and David Black (gen-ART reviewer) provided valuable
   comments at Last Call time.

9. References

9.1. Normative References

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9.2. Informative References

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   [RFC3934] Wasserman, M., "Updates to RFC 2418 Regarding the
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   [RFC3978] Bradner, S., "IETF Rights in Contributions", BCP 78,
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