Foreword

Jon Pyke, WfMC Chair, United Kingdom

Welcome to the 2006 edition of the Workflow Management Coalition’s official handbook.

Last year was a very exciting one for the Coalition. There were some significant changes in the standards arena, the most notable of which was the BPMI.org placing itself under the wing of The Object Management Group. This means that the Workflow Management Coalition (WfMC) is now the only standards group dedicated to the advancement of process related technologies. So I think it is worth recapping what we have done since our inception.

WfMC members established standards for software terminology, interoperability and connectivity between workflow products in 1993. The initial work of the Coalition focused on publishing the Workflow Reference Model and Glossary, defining a common architecture and terminology for the industry. The Reference Model defines five components of workflow—the five interfaces to the workflow enactment services (what BPM calls the invocation engine). The standards associated with these interfaces are listed at www.wfmc.org. Understanding the five components helps distinguish between BPM and Workflow systems.

Working closely with other standards bodies in this space, WfMC has frequently demonstrated successful interoperability of its specifications with standards emanating from other bodies, most notably:

**ASAP and Wf-XML 2.0**
- OASIS’ Asynchronous Service Access Protocol (ASAP) is a web services protocol that can be used to access a generic service that might take a long time to complete—for example services that last from minutes to months in duration. The service being invoked might be fully automated, a manual task that a person performs, or any mixture of the two. This capability to handle both automated and manual activities makes ASAP particularly suited for B2B and intra-organizational service request scenarios.
- WfMC’s Wf-XML is a protocol for process engines that makes it easy to link engines together for interoperability. Wf-XML 2.0 is built on top of ASAP which is in turn built on Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) and extends this protocol to include BPM and workflow interchange capabilities. A business process engine is a special type of asynchronous service: it has the ability to be started, to involve people in that process, and to complete some time later. One BPM engine can be easily linked to another BPM engine using Wf-XML.

**XPDL 2.0 and BPMN**
- WfMC’s XML Process Definition Language (XPDL) defines the technical representation of the process and to allow the interchange of a process description between different IT products and across different organizations. XPDL provides an XML file format that can be used to interchange process models between tools.
- The Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN) from BPMI.org (now OMG) is used for the graphical modeling of a business process. In addition to the graphical notation, BPMN incorporated a number of
specific mechanisms for process modeling that had not yet been included in XPDL; among these, events and message passing between processes. XPDL 2.0 incorporates these mechanisms as well as the graphics and offers an extended meta-model that unifies XPDL and BPMN.

Standards are of no use unless they are adopted by industry and used on a regular basis. I mentioned in the 2005 edition of the Handbook that the United Kingdom National Workflow Project had adopted the Coalition’s standards to support their project. This trend has continued, recently a significant “open source” consortium Sourceforge released the Open Business Engine which is a Java-based workflow engine that fully supports the WfMC XPDL standard. Furthermore, the Eclipse project has recently proposed a Java Workflow Tooling project that will provide graphical editing of XPDL process definitions, deployment and monitoring capabilities. The growing list of companies supporting XPDL is posted on the WfMC web site.

The WfMC continues to lead the industry in BPM and workflow process standards. Several articles on the importance of these standards have been published in the Workflow Handbook series, such as ASAP/Wf-XML 2.0 Cookbook by Keith D Swenson, Chair WfMC Technical Committee and Fujitsu VP of Research and Development and XPDL 2.0: Integrating Process Interchange and BPMN by Robert M. Shapiro, Chair WfMC XPDL Workgroup and VP Global 360 (available in the Workflow Standards section in this Workflow Handbook).

Of increasing importance is the growth in the WfMC’s educational services. The recent XPDL tutorials have been so well received that we now intend to make them more widely available via a series of Webinars—these are planned for mid-year. Allied to the expansion of the educational work is the establishment of BPM-Focus in collaboration with BPM-WARIA (formerly the Workflow And Reengineering International Association). This initiative was started during the Seoul meeting last fall. The BPMF is tasked with establishing and coordinating localized BPM Forum Chapters to handle awareness campaigns and training/lecture seminars. There are already several BPM Forums in the Pacific Rim with keen interest shown by other regions in South America and Europe.

The members of the Workflow Management Coalition hope you enjoy our Workflow Handbook 2006 and find it useful as you explore workflow and Business Process Management and their many diverse benefits.

Last, but by no means least, our thanks go to everybody who helped in the publication and to Layna Fischer, WfMC Executive Director, in particular, for her tireless efforts in marshalling the contributors, editing and publishing this important body of work.

*Jon Pyke, Chair WfMC 2006*

*United Kingdom*