Dear Sirs,

I have spent the past 25 years in the software development industry. During that time, I have needed to rely on many standards documents and the most useful ones are freely available on the Internet. Examples are the IETF's RFCs that define how the Internet operates.

The worst standards are the ones that are under a restricted access copyright (as opposed to a standard that is copyrighted but freely available). I would go so far as to say that a restricted access standard is not a standard at all but a proprietary specification.

The most recent example I have personally encountered was while working as the Chief Technology Officer of eLifeCare Solutions where we developed an integration and automation platform for the healthcare industry.

The standards that regulate the exchange of information between those systems are documented in the ASC's X12N EDI standards which are not freely available.

That restriction has several negative effects.

One is that it wasted several weeks of my time to determine exactly what needed to be purchased and arrange for that purchase to be made (which also wasted the time of someone in Purchasing).

Another is, once we had the copies we needed, we then needed to institute procedures to control access to the standards which slowed development and prevented comment from people who may have had a useful insight.

A general negative effect is on Open Source and Free Software projects, which benefit all of humanity from the efforts of volunteers, but are particularly hurt by controlled access standards. Those projects rarely have a budget capable of paying for standards but they are some of the most beneficial efforts in the world. The entire Internet and World Wide Web are examples of what can be done when standards are freely available.

To summarize: controlled access copyrighted 'standards' have no place as legal requirements. The law must be freely available to all if we are to live in an open society and, if a standard is mandated by law, that standard must also be freely available.

Sincerely,

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LINKS

http://www.ietf.org/rfc.html

http://www.x12.org/

http://opensource.org/

http://www.fsf.org/