

Empowering Financial Professionals for the Future

By Eric Cohen

One important area I focus on is that of information standardization. As one of the founders of XBRL – the Extensible Business Reporting Language – I work with experts from around the world to streamline the business reporting supply chain, with a personal focus on enabling businesses themselves through the use of XBRL for internal efficiencies, with XBRL’s Global Ledger specification, XBRL G L.

My work is not limited to the XBRL organization. I work with other standards organizations to contribute to their efforts that support and overlap. In particular, I am active in the ISO – the International Organization for Standardization.

The ISO is a world leader in international standardization on a wide variety of topics. The accounting profession is looking to some of their legacy work, such as the areas of Sustainability and ESG, as developed by their technical committee TC 207 in Environmental Management. More recently, ISO committees have looked at new issues such as sustainable finance, circular and sharing economies, and assurance on artificial intelligence and blockchain systems.

For XBRL, there are two efforts that are important to note: the ISO works with its member bodies – representational governmental standards bodies in each country – to introduce new projects. There are two XBRL new work items (NWIPS, or NPs) currently circulating.

The first relates to my own interests, and XBRL GL. I have previously been part of the ISO technical committee seeking to develop a specification for audit data collection. That group, TC 295, has a specification detailing the files in an ERP system. They have also published details on how to represent that information using XML and JSON. The new proposal would formalize representing the content with XBRL GL. Known as ISO/NP TS 25388, they seek participants to help map the data fields and tables from their audit data collection standard to XBRL G L.

The second relates to a methodology used in European banking and assurance to create XBRL taxonomies, known as data point modelling. It would be to establish a group to oversee the maintenance of ISO 5116.

Standards are important for many reasons, and financial professionals taking part in the standardization process can both help expedite their development and help make sure the standards facilitate, rather than complicate, our work.

In Canada, you can participate by contacting the Standards Council of Canada. In the United States, the American National Standards Institute is responsible for oversight. In other countries, contact your national standard setting body to keep up with the latest and contribute.

To follow these and other emerging accounting and audit technology issues, follow my blog on *ThinkTwenty20* (<https://thinktwenty20.com/erics-blog/>) and follow me on LinkedIn.