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Public Cloud Customer Service Agreements

What to expect and what to negotiate? Claude Baudoin and three of his co-authors gave a webinar to present the revised version of the white paper on this subject from the Cloud Standards Customer Council. The hour-long webinar can be replayed here.

Safecast

At the intersection of the Internet of Things crowdsourcing and the open source movement lies the Safecast project. It is described as "a global volunteer-centered citizen science project working to empower people with data about their environments." Safecast collects data about air quality and radiation levels, and publishes the data under a creative commons license, allowing everyone to use it. Some sensors are fixed, others are installed on cars that volunteers drive around to map certain areas, such as the surroundings of nuclear power plants (Safecast insists that it is not pro- or anti-nuclear, it is "pro-data"). Maps of the collected data can be viewed on the Web site (click on the Data/Vis tab; the map opens with its center on Fukushima, Japan).

OMG Approves 3 New Standards

The Board of the Object Management Group just approved three new standards:

- Automated Enhancement Points is a metric that can be used to size software maintenance projects.
- Structured Assurance Case Metamodel 2.0 standardizes the way claims and evidence about the design of safety-critical systems can documented and exchanged.
- Languages, Countries and Codes enhances ISO standards 639 and 3166 by providing a standard machine-readable set of codes to designate countries and human languages.

SIGGRAPH 2016

The annual computer graphics event took place last week near Los Angeles. The emergence of 3D printing has made its mark on the conference, with a shift from pure visualization and animation to techniques that help design manufacturable 3D objects. It is interesting to see how the designer community views the event -- as opposed to computer scientists -- and this is what this extensive article on the Fast Company's Co.Design web site, suitably full of pictures and videos, offers.

A New Twist on Sentiment Analysis

When the phrase "sentiment analysis" emerged, it was mostly about studying what consumers liked or disliked in order to improve the design of products or to correct service deficiencies. In the times we live in, however, the technique has found a darker but very relevant use: detecting the chatter among violence-prone groups. Researchers at the University of Salamanca (Spain) have shown the ability to detect violent speech on Twitter in six languages, analyze who the leaders or influencers are (as opposed to the followers), and derive the location of the authors without requiring the original geolocation data.

→ Smart Farm

It's easy to think of agriculture as an old profession left mostly untouched by the digital revolution. It's also easy to ignore this sector entirely because it occupies a small percentage of the population of western countries, even though it is so vital to our lives. The Internet of Things, however, is very aware of agriculture, and vice versa. For example, geolocation helps optimize the path of planting and harvesting equipment, and moisture sensors can improve irrigation while conserving water.

An IoT-based application developed at the University of California at Santa Barbara, SmartFarm, was just featured in an agricultural news magazine. The creators plan to make it available for free, and "the hardware is inexpensive" -- an important consideration if SmartFarm is to help not only US farmers, but those in developing countries as well.

→ Seen Recently...

"Bureaucracy, in some ways, defines the United States from an organizational perspective. [...] From a research perspective, it appears bureaucracy is actually a lot worse - and more common - than we actually thought."

-- from Ted Bauer's blog, " The Context of Things," in a post containing detailed analysis of how bureaucracy is getting worse over time