History

The idea to develop a software standard and then implement it started from the current confusion within Orthodontic Software. In 2000, while studying Biomedical Engineering at Case Western Reserve University, a Greek friend of mine asked me how much time it would take to write an orthodontic software that would work around the current disorganization and incompatibility between softwares that was present at the time.

Alexandros Moullas

Dr. Moullas was getting his degree in the Orthodontics Department. He was soon to graduate and didn't really know which software package to install in his father's practice in Greece. There was none, he felt, professional enough to meet his needs. He couldn't find a *global* solution, one that could fully meet his demands. He liked some elements of the one package, but other elements were better handled by other packages. If just he could take the best of each software... He soon realized, though, that mixing and matching software would cause more headaches than benefits.

And one evening, with his usual Greece nostalgia, he come over my apartment, and said: "Listen my man: How much time does it take to write a program?". That's how it all started.

I began to think about how I could solve this issue. I started brainstorming, I figured the program had to be a platform independent but especially modular. On the other hand, I knew I couldn't, by my self, write a software that would be better then everybody else's.

My vision was to create an open source core, which includes all basic scheduling functionality and development libraries, and then letting third party software vendors write commercial modules for it. This would allow for copyrighted ideas to be included into the solution, while at the same time it would greatly benefit academic research.

The idea stalled until after I crossed Africa and finally got to Brazil. I figured Brazil would be a good place to actually start writing code, and found the University of Brasília to be pretty friendly. But when I sat down and started designing the software, I realized I had to define a data structure. This is when I first started thinking about sharing the information, and how each software developer invests time to design a data structure similar to the one already designed by another developer. I thought it would have been good to have one rule set for the data structure such that other software developers could implement it, without having to reinvent the wheel. Besides, the advantages of having a standardized data structure go well beyond cutting down development time.

And so here I go, in 2004, faced with the task of having to chose a topic for my master's thesis. After having revised various very interesting project with different professors, I decided to work on my own idea, and propose the "developing a standard for orthodontic informatics data" as my master's thesis. This was particularly exciting also because it would allow me to work close to my father, a genius in his field. Needless to say, I was very happy when my advisor accepted my project.

During my initial stage, I was trying to contact as many orthodontists and developers as possible by attending conventions and personal meeting that my father helped to set up. Eventually I was lucky enough to hear about somebody who started a very similar project at the same time, contacted them, and joined them.

At this stage, I am co-chair of an ADA SCDI working group. I am responsible for leading the group called *Integration of Orthodontic Standards* with dr. Carla Evans. This is a very exciting project! Thank you, Dr. Moullas, for getting me started on this!