

OVAL Board Meeting (10/20/2008)

Attendees

Jonathan Baker – MITRE
Andrew Buttner – MITRE
Bob Martin – MITRE
Bryan Worrell – MITRE
Melissa Albanese – DoD
Jay Graver, nCircle Network Security, Inc.
Alex Quilter, Hewlett Packard

Agenda

- Welcome
- Status Update
 - OVAL Language
 - OVAL Repository
 - OVAL Interpreter
- 5.5 Release Recap
- Improving the Release Process
 - Board approval of a release before it becomes official
- Release Road Map
 - Long range planning of OVAL Language releases
- Version 6.0
 - Progress update
- OVAL Compatibility Update
 - Progress update and discussion of transition timeline
- Questions/Concerns

Meeting Summary

Welcome

After introductions the group was welcomed to the 3rd quarter OVAL Board Meeting. There was a quick discussion about the unusually low attendance. Attendance may have been off in part due to the rescheduling of the event. The meeting was originally scheduled for Columbus Day. It was moved to the following Monday one week in advance. All future board conference call dates will be checked to ensure that there is not another holiday conflict.

Status Update

A brief status update of the OVAL project as a whole was delivered. The following items were covered:

- OVAL Language
 - Upgraded to 5.5
 - Internal tracker items for future work now replicated to OVAL Web Site
- OVAL Repository
 - Upgraded to 5.5
 - Current for windows, active Sun, HPUX, AIX content contributions
- OVAL Interpreter
 - Upgraded to 5.5
 - Increasing number of code contributions
 - Support for several new windows tests
 - Added support for Red Hat EL5
 - Received requests for support for several other windows and Linux tests
 - NIST and others are requesting Solaris support.

5.5 Release Recap

Version 5.5 of the OVAL Language was released on October 1st after a summer of work with version 5.4. Version 5.5 contained numerous community contributed enhancements and addresses several documentation issues discussed on the OVAL Developer list. A brief list of changes for version 5.5 was reviewed for the board's awareness and it was mentioned that a complete list of changes can be found on the release page on the OVAL web site. The opportunity was taken to thank all of those that contributed to the development of version 5.5.

Improving the Release Process

For the release of version 5.5 we called on the board to approve the release before it became official. We appreciate the timely review of the release candidate. Thanks to the efforts of the board several minor issues were corrected. In the future we plan to solicit board comments and feedback on all release candidates before the release becomes official. Calling on the board for release approval is discussed in the review process for the OVAL Language (http://oval.mitre.org/language/about/index.html#review_process). We plan to refine this process as we work to improve the quality and consistency of future releases.

The following discussion followed this introduction to topic:

- Jonathan Baker: Was the amount of work called for by the reviews acceptable for the window of time?
- Alex Quilter: The HP developers were able to run tests on the new network and server schemas.

Jay Graver: The nCircle developers performed a visual review of the schemas.

Alex Quilter: The process model seemed to work well and he would like NIST to develop something similar for SCAP.

The Board members present agreed that adequate time was allotted for review process but that a motivating factor to get the feedback into the Board was lacking. What could be done to provide some motivation? Perhaps letting users know that there will not be subsequent patch releases?

Jay Graver: A release should not need to be changed based on feedback that is received outside the response time frame. That might give vendors some impetus to actually look at the release.

Alex Quilter: Why do 2-3 revs of OVAL when the requirements change once a year?

The team discussed whether or not OVAL should tie itself to the release schedule for the SCAP Validation program.

Jay Graver: Holding off revisions to align with the SCAP Validation program will lead to a flurry of activity around the publication of new drafts of the SCAP Validation requirements.

Jonathan Baker: NIST and MITRE must continue to work closely in order to keep in sync with versioning requirements on subsequent DTRs.

Alex Quilter: Recommended that content requirements should be developed first and then the requirements for the languages should be developed. This will allow us to ensure that the languages can support the content needs.

Jonathan Baker: Once challenge we face is that content may be updated at different intervals and it is no easy to drop old versions of the language. Not all content sources can migrate to the newest version like the OVAL Repository. This leads to tools needing to support multiple versions of the language.

Jay Graver: If content in the older version of the language remains available, the process should be manageable, but that "potential for chaos" is there.

Jonathan Baker: The language should not be held up by this huge use case (FDCC); it should be evolving. Awareness of the FDCC use case is critical, however, as some of the vendors are trying to sell into that market.

Alex Quilter: An early release vehicle could be in place so that there is no need to resort to patching.

It was clear from the discussion that OVAL must evolve with close coordination with NIST to ensure that the SCAP Validation program can support its revisions and minimize the impact of new revisions on vendors that develop tools that use OVAL.

Release Road Map

The release road map discussion focused on the idea of shifting the current process for revising the OVAL Language from being based on demand and reacting to requests for change to a more prescriptive approach. Currently we wait until a release is needed and then determine a release date. The proposal being made was to define a set of releases and add bug and feature requests to the releases as they arise. This change in approach would hopefully allow vendors to more reliably plan their own development efforts around the release schedule for OVAL. The following road map was proposed:

- Version 5.6 - Jan 29
- Version 6.0 - Jul 30
- Version 6.1 - Sep 17

Alex Quilter: A matrix roadmap would be preferable for the content and the releases. This is something that might come from NIST, but there should be a bit better synergy between MITRE and NIST.

Jonathan Baker: Developing a complete matrix will be difficult since the level of maturity of the standards varies, and the standards are not all maintained by the same organization. It is not clear that the less mature efforts will be able to plan more than a year in advance

Version 6.0

Work on version 6 is currently focused on the improvement of infrastructure. The 6.0 summary of changes is being developed. Request for comments on this will be sent to the board list shortly.

OVAL Compatibility Update

This was an update on the progress of the transition of the OVAL Compatibility program into the new OVAL Adoption program and complementary NIST run SCAP Validation Program for OVAL.

Grandfathering

MITRE has sent NIST the list of OVAL Compatible products. NIST is currently reviewing the list. Any product that is currently compatible for a capability that will be testing the new NIST program will be grandfathered into the new program for one year. NIST will let us know when the list of products being grandfathered is complete and we will reach out to all participating vendors at that point and let them know how the changes in the validation program will impact them.

Proposed Timeline

The conversation then focused on the transition timeline that had been sent around to the OVAL Board list for consideration. At this point MITRE is looking for the board's input and approval of a final timeline to complete the transition. The following time line was discussed:

Week of November 17th, 2008

MITRE may offer one last round of correctness testing for organizations that are ready. If a vendor is not ready for correctness testing MITRE will encourage them to contact NIST for testing through the new validation program.

December 1st, 2008

December 1st, 2008 will be the start date for the grandfathering. All compatible products that align with tested capabilities in the NIST run Validation Program will be grandfathered into the NIST program.

January 1st, 2009

The SCAP Validation Program will begin offering validations for OVAL specific capabilities.

December 1st, 2009

All grandfathered validations will expire. Products will need to be revalidated through the SCAP Validation Program

The following discussion was had in response to the timeline:

Melissa Albanese: Inquired about the cost of the new testing under the new program.

Jonathan Baker: The cost is negotiated between the labs and the vendor seeking testing. MITRE does not know how much testing will cost.

Once we have agreed to a timeline we will update our web site with the timeline and announce it on the appropriate mailing lists.

Questions/Concerns

Alex Quilter: What is the status of the release sandbox idea discussed at OVAL Developer days?

Jonathan Baker: This is still up for discussion. We have not had a chance to really look into this yet, but it is something we would like to be able to do.