

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: The Web Services Stack, and the Myths of Interoperability

Jon MacLaren

There is much talk in the Grid and Web Services community about interoperability, and how vital it is. However, opinions differ on how this should be achieved, some favoring the universal adoption of emerging standards and platforms, while others take the view that only well-established, widely-deployed and adopted standards should be used. This talk looks at what these communities mean by interoperability, and argues that the focus of the discussion - which is usually on technology, rather than methodology - is mistaken.

A technology-neutral approach to building services is outlined that advocates and encourages a simple software stack. Here, the focus is on thinking about message exchange patterns, and thinking about how to behave when remote services fail, or become unavailable. We show, by example, that this approach leads to services that are easy to build clients for.

This talk makes heavy use of the distributed systems literature, much of which is 10-20 years old, but is very relevant.