

IETF Rights in Contributions

[<draft-ietf-ipr-submission-rights-08.txt>](#)

Status of this Memo

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Abstract

The IETF policies about rights in Contributions to the IETF are designed to ensure that such Contributions can be made available to the IETF and Internet communities while permitting the authors to retain as many rights as possible. This memo details the IETF policies on rights in Contributions to the IETF. It also describes the objectives that the policies are designed to meet. This memo updates [RFC 2026](#), and, with RFC XXXY, replaces Section 10 of [RFC 2026](#). [note to RFC editor: replace XXXY with number of IETF IPR]

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[1. Definitions](#)

The following definitions are for terms used in the context of this document. Other terms, including "IESG," "ISOC," "IAB" and "RFC Editor," are defined in [[RFC 2028](#)].

- a. "IETF": In the context of this document, the IETF includes all individuals who participate in meetings, working groups, mailing lists, functions and other activities which are organized or

initiated by ISOC, the IESG or the IAB under the general designation of the Internet Engineering Task Force or IETF, but solely to the extent of such participation.

- b. "IETF Standards Process": the activities undertaken by the IETF in

any of the settings described in 1(c) below.

- c. "IETF Contribution": any submission to the IETF intended by the Contributor for publication as all or part of an Internet-Draft or RFC (except for RFC Editor Contributions described below) and any statement made within the context of an IETF activity. Such statements include oral statements in IETF sessions, as well as written and electronic communications made at any time or place, which are addressed to:
- o the IETF plenary session,
 - o any IETF working group or portion thereof,
 - o the IESG, or any member thereof on behalf of the IESG,
 - o the IAB or any member thereof on behalf of the IAB,
 - o any IETF mailing list, including the IETF list itself, any working group or design team list, or any other list functioning under IETF auspices,
 - o the RFC Editor or the Internet-Drafts function (except for RFC Editor Contributions described below).

Statements made outside of an IETF session, mailing list or other function, that are clearly not intended to be input to an IETF activity, group or function, are not IETF Contributions in the context of this document.

- d. "Internet-Draft": temporary documents used in the IETF and RFC Editor processes. Internet-Drafts are posted on the IETF web site by the IETF Secretariat and have a nominal maximum lifetime in the Secretariat's public directory of 6 months, after which they are removed. Note that Internet-Drafts are archived many places on the Internet, and not all of these places remove expired Internet-Drafts. Internet-Drafts that are under active consideration by the IESG are not removed from the Secretariat's public directory until that consideration is complete. In addition, the author of an Internet-Draft can request that the lifetime in the Secretariat's public directory be extended before the expiration.

- e. "RFC": the basic publication series for the IETF. RFCs are published by the RFC Editor and once published are never modified. (See [\[RFC 2026\] Section 2.1](#))
- f. "RFC Editor Contribution": An Internet-Draft intended by the Contributor to be submitted to the RFC Editor for publication as an Informational or Experimental RFC but not intended to be part of the IETF Standards Process.
- g. "IETF Internet-Drafts": Internet-Drafts other than RFC Editor Contributions. Note that under [Section 3.3\(a\)](#) the grant of rights in regards to IETF Internet-Drafts as specified in this document

is perpetual and irrevocable and thus survives the Secretariat's removal of an Internet-Draft from the public directory, except as limited by [Section 3.3\(a\)\(C\)](#). (See [\[RFC 2026\]](#) Sections [2.2](#) and [8](#))

- h. "IETF Documents": RFCs and Internet-Drafts except for Internet-Drafts that are RFC Editor Contributions and the RFCs that are published from them.
- i. "RFC Editor Documents": RFCs and Internet-Drafts that are RFC Editor Contributions and the RFCs that may be published from them.
- j. "Contribution": IETF Contributions and RFC Editor Contributions
- k. "Contributor": an individual submitting a Contribution
- l. "Reasonably and personally known": means something an individual knows personally or, because of the job the individual holds, would reasonably be expected to know. This wording is used to indicate that an organization cannot purposely keep an individual in the dark about patents or patent applications just to avoid the disclosure requirement. But this requirement should not be interpreted as requiring the IETF Contributor or participant (or his or her represented organization, if any) to perform a patent search to find applicable IPR.

[2.](#) Introduction

Under the laws of most countries and current international treaties

(for example the "Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Work" [[Berne](#)]), authors obtain numerous rights in the works they produce automatically upon producing them. These rights include copyrights, moral rights and other rights. In many cases, if the author produces a work within the scope of his or her employment, most of those rights are usually assigned to the employer, either by operation of law or, in many cases, under contract. (The Berne Convention names some rights as "inalienable", which means that the author retains them in all cases.)

This document details the rights that the IETF requires in IETF Contributions and rights the IETF, as publisher of Internet-Drafts, requires in all such Drafts including RFC Editor Contributions. The RFC Editor may also define additional rights required for RFC Editor Contributions.

In order for works to be used within the IETF Standards Process or to be published as Internet-Drafts, certain limited rights in all Contributions must be granted to the IETF and Internet Society

(ISOC). In addition, Contributors must make representations to IETF and ISOC regarding their ability to grant these rights. These necessary rights and representations have until now been laid out in [Section 10 of \[RFC 2026\]](#). In the years since [\[RFC 2026\]](#) was published there have been a number of times when the exact intent of [Section 10](#) has been the subject of vigorous debate within the IETF community. The aim of this document is to clarify various ambiguities in [Section 10 of \[RFC 2026\]](#) that led to these debates and to amplify the policy in order to clarify what the IETF is currently doing.

[Section 1](#) gives definitions used in describing these policies. Sections [3](#), [4](#), [5](#) and [6](#) of this document address the rights in Contributions previously covered by [Section 10 of \[RFC 2026\]](#) and the "Note Well" explanatory text presented at many IETF activities. Sections [7](#) and [8](#) then explain the rationale for these provisions, including some of the clarifications that have become understood since the adoption of [\[RFC 2026\]](#). The rules and procedures set out in this document are not intended to substantially modify or alter the IETF's current policy toward Contributions.

A companion document [IETF IPR] will deal with rights in technologies developed or specified as part of the IETF Standards Process. This

document is not intended to address those issues.

The rights addressed in this document fall into the following categories:

- o rights to make use of contributed material
- o copyrights in IETF documents
- o rights to produce derivative works
- o rights to use trademarks

This document is not intended as legal advice. Readers are advised to consult their own legal advisors if they would like a legal interpretation of their rights or the rights of the IETF in any Contributions they make.

[3. Rights in IETF Contributions](#)

The following are the rights the IETF requires in all IETF Contributions:

[3.1 General Policy](#)

In all matters of copyright and document procedures, the intent is to benefit the Internet community and the public at large, while respecting the legitimate rights of others.

[3.2 Confidentiality Obligations](#)

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By submission of a Contribution, each person actually submitting the

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- a. To the extent that a Contribution or any portion thereof is protected by copyright and other rights of authorship, the Contributor, and each named co-Contributor, and the organization he or she represents or is sponsored by (if any) grant a perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, royalty-free, world-wide right and license to the ISOC and the IETF under all intellectual property rights in the Contribution:
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 - (B) to prepare or allow the preparation of translations of the Contribution into languages other than English,
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as MIB and PIB modules), subject to the requirements of [Section 5](#) (it also being understood that the licenses granted under this paragraph (E) shall not be deemed to grant any right under any patent, patent application or other similar intellectual property right disclosed by the Contributor under [IETF IPR]).

- b. The Contributor grants the IETF and ISOC permission to reference the name(s) and address(es) of the Contributor(s) and of the organization(s) s/he represents or is sponsored by (if any).

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With respect to each Contribution, each Contributor represents that to the best of his or her knowledge and ability:

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- b. No information in the Contribution is confidential and the IETF, ISOC, and its affiliated organizations may freely disclose any information in the Contribution.
- c. There are no limits to the Contributor's ability to make the grants, acknowledgments and agreements herein that are reasonably and personally known to the Contributor.
- d. The Contributor has not intentionally included in the Contribution any material which is defamatory or untrue or which is illegal under the laws of the jurisdiction in which the Contributor has his or her principal place of business or residence.
- e. All trademarks, trade names, service marks and other proprietary names used in the Contribution that are reasonably and personally known to the Contributor are clearly designated as such where reasonable.

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Contribution. The IETF reserves the right to withdraw or cease using any Contribution that does not comply with the requirements of [Section 3.4](#) and [Section 3.3](#) or 4.2.

[3.6](#) Trademarks

Contributors, and each named co-Contributor, who claim trademark rights in terms used in their IETF Contributions are requested to state specifically what conditions apply to implementers of the technology relative to the use of such trademarks. Such statements should be submitted in the same way as is done for other intellectual property claims. (See [IETF IPR] [Section 6](#).)

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The following are the rights the IETF, as the publisher of Internet-Drafts, requires in all RFC Editor Contributions:

[4.1](#) Requirements from [Section 3](#)

All RFC Editor Contributions must meet the requirements of Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6.

[4.2](#) Granting of Rights and Permissions

By submission of an RFC Editor Contribution, each person actually submitting the RFC Editor Contribution, and each named co-Contributor, is deemed to agree to the following terms and conditions, and to grant the following rights, on his or her own behalf and on behalf of the organization the Contributor represents or is sponsored by (if any) when submitting the RFC Editor Contribution.

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5. Notices Required in IETF Documents

The IETF requires that certain notices and disclaimers described in this [Section 5](#) be reproduced verbatim in all IETF Documents (including copies, derivative works and translations of IETF Documents, but subject to the limited exceptions noted in [Section 5.2](#)). This requirement protects IETF and its participants from liabilities connected with these documents. The copyright notice also alerts readers that the document is an IETF Document, and that ISOC claims copyright rights to certain aspects of the document, such as its layout, the RFC numbering convention and the prefatory language of the document. This legend is not intended to imply that ISOC has obtained ownership of the IETF Contribution itself, which is retained by the author(s) or remains in the public domain, as applicable.

Each IETF Document must include the required notices described in this [Section 5](#). The required notices are the following:

- a. The IPR Disclosure Acknowledgement described in [Section 5.1](#) (required in all Internet-Drafts).
- b. The Derivative Works Limitation described in [Section 5.2](#) (for specific IETF Documents only).
- c. The Publication Limitation described in [Section 5.3](#) (for specific types of Internet-Drafts only).

- d. The Copyright Notice described in [Section 5.4](#) (for all IETF Documents).

- e. The Disclaimer described in [Section 5.5](#) (for all IETF Documents).

[5.1](#) IPR Disclosure Acknowledgement (required in all Internet-Drafts only)

"By submitting this Internet-Draft, I certify that any applicable patent or other IPR claims of which I am aware have been disclosed, and any of which I become aware will be disclosed, in accordance with RFC XXXY."

[5.2](#) Derivative Works Limitation

If the Contributor desires to eliminate the IETF's right to make modifications and derivative works of an IETF Contribution (other than translations), one of the two the following notices may be included in the Status of Memo section of an Internet-Draft and included in a published RFC:

- a. "This document may not be modified, and derivative works of it may not be created, except to publish it as an RFC and to translate it into languages other than English."
- b. "This document may not be modified, and derivative works of it may not be created."

In the cases of MIB or PIB modules and in other cases where the Contribution includes material that is meant to be extracted in order to be used, the following should be appended to statement 5.2 (a) or 5.2 (b):

"other than to extract section XX as-is for separate use."

Notice 5.2(a) is used if the Contributor intends for the IETF Contribution to be published as an RFC. Notice 5.2(b) is used along with the Publication Limitation in [Section 5.3](#) when the Contributor does not intend for the IETF Contribution to be published as an RFC.

These notices may not be used with any standards-track document or with most working group documents, except as discussed in [Section 7.3](#)

below, since the IETF must retain change control over its documents and the ability to augment, clarify and enhance the original IETF Contribution in accordance with the IETF Standards Process.

Notice 5.2(a) may be appropriate when republishing standards produced by other (non-IETF) standards organizations, industry consortia or companies. These are typically published as Informational RFCs, and do not require that change control be ceded to the IETF. Basically, documents of this type convey information for the Internet community.

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A fuller discussion of the rationale behind these requirements is contained in [Section 7.3](#) below.

[5.3](#) Publication Limitation

If the Contributor only wants the IETF Contribution to be made available in an Internet-Draft (i.e. does not want the IETF Contribution to be published as an RFC) then the Contributor may include the following notice in the Status of Memo section of the Internet-Draft.

"This document may only be posted in an Internet-Draft."

This notice can be used on IETF Contributions that are intended to provide background information to educate and to facilitate discussions within IETF working groups but are not intended to be published as an RFCs.

[5.4](#) Copyright Notice (required for all IETF Documents)

(Normally placed at the end of the IETF Document.)

"Copyright (C) The Internet Society (year). This document is subject to the rights, licenses and restrictions contained in RFC XXXX and except as set forth therein, the authors retain all their rights."

[note to the RFC Editor - XXXX above to be replaced with the number of this document]

Additional copyright notices are not permitted in IETF Documents except in the case where such document is the product of a joint

development effort between the IETF and another standards development organization or the document is a republication of the work of another standards organization. Such exceptions must be approved on an individual basis by the IAB.

[5.5](#) Disclaimer (required in all IETF Documents)

(Normally placed at the end of the IETF Document after the copyright notice.)

"This document and the information contained herein are provided on an "AS IS" basis and THE CONTRIBUTOR, THE ORGANIZATION HE/S HE REPRESENTS OR IS SPONSORED BY (IF ANY), THE INTERNET SOCIETY AND THE INTERNET ENGINEERING TASK FORCE DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY WARRANTY THAT THE USE OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN WILL NOT INFRINGE ANY RIGHTS OR

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ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE."

[5.6](#) Exceptions

Notwithstanding the provisions of this [Section 5](#), in certain limited cases an abbreviated notice may be placed on certain types of derivative works of IETF Documents in accordance with this [Section 5.6](#).

- a. in MIB modules, PIB modules and similar material commonly extracted from IETF Documents, except for material that is being placed under IANA maintenance, the following abbreviated notice shall be included in the body of the material that will be extracted in lieu of the notices otherwise required by [Section 5](#):

"Copyright (C) The Internet Society <year> . This version of this MIB module is part of RFC XXXX; see the RFC itself for full legal notices."

When the MIB or PIB module is the initial version of a module that is to be maintained by the IANA, the following abbreviated notice shall be included:

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version of this MIB module was published in RFC XXXX; for full legal notices see the RFC itself or see:
<http://www.ietf.org/copyrights/ianamib.html>."

Substitute "PIB" for "MIB" in the statement for PIB modules. In the case of MIB and PIB modules this statement should be placed in the DESCRIPTION clause of the MODULE-IDENTITY macro.

Variations of these abbreviated notices are not permitted except in cases where the material to be extracted is the product of a joint development effort between the IETF and another standards development organization or is a republication of the work of another standards organization. Such variations must be approved on an individual basis by the IAB.

[note to RFC Editor - leave the "XXXX" in the above]

- b. short excerpts of IETF Documents presented in electronic help systems, for example, the DESCRIPTION clauses for MIB variables, do not need to include a copyright notice.

6. Notices and Rights Required in RFC Editor Contributions

Since the IETF acts as publisher of Internet Drafts, even for Internet Drafts that are not intended to become part of the Standards Process, the following are required in all such drafts to protect the IETF and its processes. The RFC Editor may require additional notices.

- a. An IPR Disclosure Acknowledgement, identical to that specified in [Section 5.1](#).
- b. One of the following two copyright release statements:
 - A. "By submitting this Internet-Draft, I accept the provisions of [Section 3](#) of RFC XXXX."
 - B. "By submitting this Internet-Draft, I accept the provisions of [Section 4](#) of RFC XXXX."

[note to RFC Editor - replace XXXX above with the number of this RFC]

7. Exposition of Why These Procedures Are the Way They Are

7.1 Rights Granted in IETF Contributions

The IETF/ISOC must obtain the right to publish an IETF Contribution as an RFC or an Internet-Draft from the Contributors.

A primary objective of this policy is to obtain from the document authors only the non-exclusive rights that are needed to develop and publish IETF Documents and to use the IETF Contributions in the IETF Standards Process while leaving all other rights with the authors.

The non-exclusive rights that the IETF needs are:

- a. the right to publish the document
- b. the right to let the document be freely reproduced in the formats that the IETF publishes it in
- c. the right to let third parties translate it into languages other than English
- d. except where explicitly excluded (see [Section 5.2](#)), the right to make derivative works within the IETF process.
- e. the right to let third parties extract some logical parts, for example MIB modules

The authors retain all other rights, but cannot withdraw the above rights from the IETF/ISOC.

7.2 Rights to use Contributed Material

Because, under the laws of most countries and applicable international treaties, copyright rights come into existence whenever a work of authorship is created (but see [Section 8](#) below regarding public domain documents), and IETF cannot make use of IETF Contributions if it does not have sufficient rights with respect to these copyright rights, it is important that the IETF receive assurances from all Contributors that they have the authority to grant the IETF the rights that they claim to grant. Without this assurance, IETF and its participants would run a greater risk of

liability to the owners of these rights.

To this end, IETF asks Contributors to give the assurances in [Section 3.4](#) above. These assurances are requested, however, only to the extent of the Contributor's reasonable and personal knowledge. (See [Section 1](#)(l))

[7.3](#) Right to Produce Derivative Works

The IETF needs to be able to evolve IETF Documents in response to experience gained in the deployment of the technologies described in such IETF Documents, to incorporate developments in research and to react to changing conditions on the Internet and other IP networks. In order to do this the IETF must be able to produce derivatives of its documents; thus the IETF must obtain the right from Contributors to produce derivative works. Note though that the IETF only requires this right for the production of derivative works within the IETF Standards Process. The IETF does not need, nor does it obtain, the right to let derivative works be created outside of the IETF Standards Process other than as noted in [Section 3.3](#) (E).

The right to produce derivative works is required for all IETF standards track documents and for most IETF non-standards track documents. There are two exceptions to this requirement: documents describing proprietary technologies and documents that are republications of the work of other standards organizations.

The right to produce derivative works must be granted in order for an IETF working group to accept an IETF Contribution as a working group document or otherwise work on it. For non-working group IETF Contributions where the Contributor requests publication as a standards track RFC the right to produce derivative works must be granted before the IESG will issue an IETF Last-Call and, for most non-standards track non-working group IETF Contributions, before the IESG will consider the Internet-Draft for publication.

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Derivative Works Limitation described in [Section 5.2](#) and the Publication Limitation described in [Section 5.3](#) in their IETF Contribution. A working group can discuss the Internet-Draft with the aim to decide if it should become a working group document, even though the right to produce derivative works or to publish the IETF Contribution as an RFC has not yet been granted. If the IETF Contribution is accepted for development the Contributor must then resubmit the IETF Contribution without the limitation notices before a working group can formally adopt the IETF Contribution as a working group document.

The IETF has historically encouraged organizations to publish details of their technologies, even when the technologies are proprietary, because understanding how existing technology is being used helps when developing new technology. But organizations that publish information about proprietary technologies are frequently not willing to have the IETF produce revisions of the technologies and then claim that the IETF version is the "new version" of the organization's technology. Organizations that feel this way can specify that an IETF Contribution can be published with the other rights granted under this document but may withhold the right to produce derivative works other than translations. The right to produce translations is required before any IETF Contribution can be published as an RFC to ensure the widest possible distribution of the material in RFCs.

In addition, IETF Documents frequently make normative references to standards or recommendations developed by other standards organizations. Since the publications of some standards organizations are not public documents, it can be quite helpful to the IETF to republish, with the permission of the other standards organization, some of these documents as RFCs so that the IETF community can have open access to them to better understand what they are referring to. In these cases the RFCs can be published without the right for the IETF to produce derivative works.

In both of the above cases in which the production of derivative works is excluded, the Contributor must include a special legend in the IETF Contribution, as specified in [Section 5.2](#), in order to notify IETF participants about this restriction.

[7.4](#) Rights to Use Trademarks

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[7.5](#) Who Does This Apply To?

Rights and licenses granted to the IETF under this document are granted to all individuals noted in [Section 1\(a\)](#), irrespective of their employment or institutional affiliation. However, these licenses do not extend broadly to the employers, sponsors or institutions of such individuals, nor do they authorize the individuals to exercise any rights outside the specific context of the IETF Standards Process.

[8.](#) Contributions Not Subject to Copyright

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[9.](#) Security Considerations

This memo relates to IETF process, not any particular technology. There are security considerations when adopting any technology, but there are no known issues of security with IETF Contribution rights policies.

[10.](#) References

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10.1 Normative references

[RFC 2026] Bradner, S.(ed), "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", [RFC 2026](#), October 1996

[RFC 2418] Bradner, S. (ed), "Working Group Guidelines and Procedures", [RFC 2518](#), September 1998

[IETF IPR] Bradner, S. (ed), "Intellectual Property Rights in IETF Technology", work in progress: [draft-ietf-ipr-technology-rights-11.txt](#)

10.2 Informative references

[Berne] "Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Work", <http://www.wipo.int/treaties/ip/berne/index.html>

11. Acknowledgements

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14. change log

note to RFC Editor - remove this section before publication

ver 00 to ver 01

- misc grammar changes throughout text
- sec 2.2 - add note about automatic disclaimers
- sec 2.3a - add "or is sponsored by" remove "unlimited"
- sec 2.3 B - reword to 'of a scope no wider than the license'
- sec 2.4a - add deff of major contributor
- sec 2.6 - 2nd paragraph from sec 5.4 moved here

sec 3 - truncate heading
sec 3.1 5th pp - add OR IS SPONSORED BY
sec 3.1.2 - new section with copyright notice for use where
derivative works right are withheld
sec 3.2 - added usage guidelines for boilerplates
sec 4.1 - add "intended by the contributor"
sec 4.6 - add "actual" before lifetime
sec 4.8 - reword
sec 5.3 - insert "standards" in front of "process" last pp -
add "with permission" phrase after "republish"
sec 5.4 - change "we require" to "the IETF requires"
sec 7/a - add PIBs
sec 8 - redo security considerations
sec 9.1 - remove IPR ID as normative reference
sec 9.2 - add IPR ID as informative reference

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sec 12 - add changes section

ver 01 to 02

abstract - add note about updating 2026
sec 3.2 - add patent pledge

ver 02 to 03

misc copy edits throughout document
sec 4 - "personally and reasonably known" - remove detail

ver 03 to 04

sec 4 - added note to the definition of Internet-Draft

ver 04 to 05

added ToC
moved definitions to front
change "Submissions" to "Contributions"
change MIBs & PIBs to "MIB modules" and "PIB modules"
fixes to make sure MIB & PIB modules etc could be extracted
misc grammar edits through out document
sec 1 - rearranged definitions split IETF and RFC Editor
Documents & Contributions changed "Contribution" in rest of
document to be consistent with new definitions - added
section XX and YY as part of this split
sec 3.3 - (a) (B) break out translations from other derivative
works add (a) (E) remove (b) as redundant

sec 5 - reorganized

ver 05 to 06

sec 5.6(a) - fix text

ver 06 to ver 07

misc typos

ver 07 to ver 8

IESG editorial tweaks