

DDI Alliance Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Ithaca, New York – Cornell University
June 2, 2010

Participants

George Alter, representing the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) – Host Institution

Chuck Humphrey, University of Alberta -- DDI Alliance Expert Committee Chair

Mari Kleemola, Finnish Social Science Data Archive -- DDI Alliance Expert Committee Vice Chair

Marc Maynard, representing the Roper Center – Host Institution

Mary Vardigan, ICPSR, DDI Alliance Director

Matthew Woollard (United Kingdom Data Archive – UKDA) – Participating as an observer

Melanie Wright, United Kingdom Data Archive (UKDA), representing the International Association of Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) – Host Association

Introductions

After introductions, an update on Monday’s Expert Committee meeting was provided. The group also reviewed the financial position of the Alliance and the template for reporting conflict of interest.

Evolution of the Alliance

The group discussed possible changes to the governance structure of the Alliance and its Bylaws prompted by changes in the membership composition of the Alliance and a new focus on intellectual property rights. As discussed in the Expert Committee, the Alliance may want to revise its Bylaws to address these issues or it may want to consider becoming a member of an organization that supports a large family of standards, like OASIS or ISO. There is a need for research by an external consultant to define the possibilities for the future of the Alliance.

In terms of the host institutions described in the Bylaws, it is important to be clear about what the expectations are for the hosts. The choice of the two host institutions – ICPSR and Roper Center – reflect the political situation of the time during which the Alliance came into existence and the Bylaws were drafted. The Alliance may want to make changes to the host institutions or at the very least design a mechanism to bring in additional hosts. A suggestion was made that the Alliance consider a system of two open seats on the Steering Committee for which member institutions could apply. These open seats could rotate.

The Steering Committee itself is a trustee model rather than a delegate model and is not intended to be representative of the membership. This may still make sense given the composition of the Expert Committee. However, it is important for the Alliance to have a flexible model that ensures periodic review and renewal. There should be a formal way to review the hosts, the Steering Committee, the Director, etc. The Director and the Steering Committee manage operations, and the membership needs to have continued confidence that the Steering Committee is in fact steering. The Alliance needs to develop a more complete definition of what it means to be a host institution. It was decided to table the discussion of the directorship position, its term and possible renewals, and other Bylaws changes until the consultants submit their report.

It was pointed out that the Alliance may want to consider having a Constitution that does not change often, if at all, and a related set of Bylaws that are easier to change. In revamping the organizational documents in this way, the Alliance could also make the information on process (how to change the specification) a separate document so that the process is more easily amended.

Action Items

- The group accepted the recommendation of the Expert Committee that the Alliance commission a review and report on IP issues from a consultant so that we can identify risks in terms of IP vulnerability, and possible directions for the evolution of the Alliance.
- The group also recommended that the Alliance look at how other metadata standards have solved these issues. The clinical trials metadata standards body may be a good organization to investigate. Matthew Woollard volunteered to look into how JISC deals with these issues in the UK.
- The group accepted the recommendation of the Expert Committee that the Alliance support the attendance of Dan Smith at the OdaF conference in July.
- The group decided in favor of supporting the cost of a URN system to fully implement the DDI infrastructure.
- The group agreed to support possible small-group meetings next year, including the TIC and the implementers group.