

**DDI Alliance Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada – Simon Fraser University**  
**May 31, 2011**

**Participants**

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

Bill Block, representing the International Association of Social Science Information Services and Technology (IASSIST) [attended brief follow-up meeting on June 1, 2011]

Sami Borg, Finnish Social Science Data Archive, representing the International Federation of Data Organizations (IFDO)

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

Hans Jørgen Marker, Swedish National Data Service (SND), representing the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA)

Marc Maynard, representing the Roper Center

Mary Vardigan, ICPSR, DDI Alliance Director

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

**Background**

The Steering Committee was briefed on the Expert Committee meeting that had taken place the day before and then proceeded to discuss key issues facing the Alliance in the context of the recent External Review report undertaken by Breckenhill Inc. to examine issues of IP protection and governance.

**Governance – Bylaws Task Force**

The Steering Committee was informed that in the Monday meeting the Expert Committee had issued a call for volunteers to participate on a Task Force to rewrite the DDI Alliance Bylaws. Eight people had signed up and the Steering Committee thought this was an excellent list. Chuck Humphrey volunteered to work with the Task Force on various issues when needed.

**Financial Status**

The Steering Committee reviewed the financial position of the Alliance, looked at estimated expenditures for Fiscal Year 2012 (beginning July 1, 2011), and discussed various mechanisms to increase revenues. It was pointed out that the External Review report had suggested that the Alliance investigate a tiered membership model, which has the potential to provide additional revenues. The Bylaws Task Force is the logical group to address the membership structure. That group has about a year to complete their work, so this means that any additional revenue is a couple years out because members will need a year's notice before their fees can be changed.

The appropriate size for the Alliance reserves was discussed with the conclusion that a reserve equal to about one year of member dues was adequate for now. If we spend out the reserves, it would not be possible to undertake special projects like the recent External Review.

## **Training**

The External Review report indicated that the community viewed current DDI training as not adequately addressing all audiences and levels; there is also a sense that the current training team is too small. The Expert Committee emphasized training as an important topic and specifically requested that the Steering Committee issue a formal response and set up a task force to look into it.

To address this request, the Steering Committee discussed a new model for training that would be similar to the Data Liberation Initiative (DLI) training in Canada and would be based on these core principles:

- Regional
- Peer-to-peer
- Not for profit
- Self-sustaining with train-the-trainer activities

Representatives from CESSDA and IFDO pledged support for this new model, which would be cosponsored by the Alliance. The current training model could continue, but this would provide an alternative.

Materials would be developed to meet the needs of different audiences, various levels of expertise, and use of DDI Codebook or Lifecycle. Some introductory or overview training could be provided online.

It was decided that the Alliance should issue a call for volunteers to take part in a Training Curriculum Task Force. This group might be supplemented with additional people if needed. The mandate to the group would be to:

- Set Alliance norms for training
- Define the content needed across the dimensions of audience, level, and DDI specification
- Develop train-the-trainer materials

It was suggested that the Training Curriculum Task Force might meet the week before EDDI 2011 in Gothenburg to launch the effort. This group would organize the first train-the-trainer session to take place in 2012. The Task Force would receive support to attend the meeting from the Alliance, CESSDA, and IFDO.

The Director was tasked with developing a proposal to CESSDA and IFDO for this project.

## **Membership**

The Steering Committee discussed opportunities to bring in new members and to widen the reach of the Alliance. Institutions need a motivation to join, so we need to articulate the value of membership and develop a convincing business case. Some promising areas and audiences for potential new members:

- Metadata Librarians
- Special collections librarians
- Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and especially its Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)
- Medical librarians
- Digital repository community
- E-science community

To pique the interest of those working with nonsurvey data, we might disseminate the paper from Dagstuhl on this topic.

## **Intellectual Property**

The committee discussed the recommendation from the External Review report that the Alliance register a Collective mark to protect its intellectual property. We need to clarify how the mark can be used. Because one of the goals is to keep the standard open, copyright may not have the effect we want. It is also expensive to defend.

If we do pursue a strategy of certifying or licensing those using DDI, we could consider three models:

- The W3C model, which is essentially self-certifying
- The Data Seal of Approval model, a lightweight process that would involve self-assessment and having instances vetted by the Alliance
- The “Intel Inside” model, which would be a way to signal that an implementation uses DDI

We need to first get clarity from the University of Michigan on appropriate uses of the mark. It would be helpful to re-express the problem we are trying to solve and then communicate why the mark is a good choice. The Director is tasked with bringing a clarifying document back to the Expert and Steering Committees on this topic.

## **Succession Planning for the Director**

As the Alliance grapples with revising the Bylaws and its governance structure, we need to work on clarifying the role and tasks of the DDI Director in order to understand what this position should look like

in the future. It was pointed out that having the Director at the same location as the Secretariat offers the greatest efficiencies.