

DDI Alliance Executive Board Meeting

8 May 2018

Present: Bill Block, Cathy Fitch, Jared Lyle, Steve McEachern, Dana Mueller, Barry Radler

Funding Request

The Board discussed Jay Greenfield's request for funding at IASSIST. (The Alliance asked Jay to speak at IASSIST.) The Board unanimously approved Jay's request for funding. Jared will notify Jay.

During the discussion, the Board highlighted the need to spend wisely going forward. The Board noted that this request deserves approval and the Marketing budget this year has room to cover the costs, although the overall proposed budget runs a deficit.

Voting Procedures

A Board member raised a question about procedures for voting. The Board Chair indicated that the Bylaws are silent on this matter and that it is up to the Executive Board to decide voting procedures.

Strategic Plan

The Board discussed the draft strategic plan document and began by reviewing specific input one Board member provided by email (pasted directly below).

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Re "Create an NSO advisory committee"

NSOs and GSIM are important regarding DDI especially regarding DDI 4 (aligned with GSIM). I'm a little hesitant to create an additional committee, especially advisory committee with the background of the DDI Alliance resources.

I suggest to create a mechanism for Special Interest Groups where members (maybe also non-members) can channel their interest and voice. A NSO SIG seems to be very important. But the activities should come more from the users. DDI Alliance can help with this regarding the frame of SIGs and in the case of NSOs with DDI Alliance people which are already involved in work with NSOs like Jay Greenfield who represented the DDI Alliance in a recent UNECE workshop. But doing general advice to specific user groups could overstrain the resources of the DDI Alliance. The idea of using community resources is built into the SIGs.

Re "Global Digital Research Infrastructure"

I added the paragraph 1d

"Fostering usage of DDI with other metadata specifications. Promoting cross-domain usage of DDI (therefore identifying suitable parts of DDI for this purpose)".

Background: Single metadata specifications operating in isolation are a concept which was followed in the past (10-20 years ago). A vivid specification of today has only a chance to survive if it is enabled to be used together with other metadata specifications.

Large parts of DDI 4 are developed in a way which is independent from the social science area but these parts are nevertheless very suitable for this area. With this background there is the hope that software development for this generic use – especially in the Semantic Web – benefits the DDI community in the social science.

A background note on existing DDI specs and DDI 4.

No major changes to DDI Codebook (2.5) and DDI Lifecycle (3.2/3.3) should be made. They are not necessary and would push the boundaries for which these specs were intended for. Furthermore, major parallel development of DDI 3 and 4 would overstrain the resources of the DDI Alliance and confuse the DDI community.

- DDI Codebook was already improved in the step to version 2.5.
 - XML Schema, addition of world-wide unique identifiers, etc.
- DDI Lifecycle 3.2 is a mature and comprehensive specification. The version of 3.3 adds improvements and eases the migration to DDI 4.

Both specifications are realized in XML Schema and therefore bound to XML.

DDI4 has major improvements which makes it a robust and sustainable specification.

- Views enable the creation of subsets of the whole model for a specific perspective of user groups and/or use cases. The views are created on the model level and are immediately available on all binding levels. This approach makes the complex specification approachable and usable for specific user needs.
- DDI 4 has strong and forward-looking data description functions. It is based on a single datum or cell. By this approach, data lakes can be described but also any traditional data forms like rectangular microdata or aggregate data.
- DDI 4 can describe workflows which are built on multiple process steps. This enables i.e. the description and also replication of data transformation.
- DDI 4 is strongly aligned with GSIM. This way DDI 4 is ready for the use in the official statistics.
 - DDI 4 has a model in UML which is independent of the technical representation or binding like XML Schema/XML or OWL/RDF. By this way DDI 4 is open to future technical developments (additional representations). It can be connected to other metadata specifications on the UML level or a specific binding level. It enables DDI 4 to play an important role in the Global Digital Research Infrastructure.

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The Board discussed whether the Alliance should focus our efforts on DDI 4 and standards maintenance or on the other two lines (DDI-Codebook and DDI-Lifecycle). The Board discussed the need to listen to what the community says, but that the Board should also provide input and help steer the discussion.

The Board discussed how the first section of the proposed strategic plan is about standards and then nothing else is about standards. It was suggested to let the community and training drive DDI and move standards to the end, which may help determine where to place resources and result in bringing new members, building capacity, and training users. It was suggested that engagement, promotion, and training are critical to the success of the Alliance's mission, and that moving community engagement to the top will help bring new users, support existing users and drive the standard. It was suggested that this is important since the Alliance is a non-profit with a largely volunteer base in charge of developing and supporting the standard.

It was recommended that the Alliance focus on our users and tap into the community using DDI. The World Bank presentation at the North American DDI user conference was provided as a powerful example of DDI being used around the world.

The Board discussed framing each of the major strategic goals in terms of problem statements: what is the long-term problem, and how do strategic goals address it? The Board discussed the

problem statements for each of the strategic plan areas and directly edited the strategic plan draft document.

A Board member requested that we address sustainability issues. How is DDI set up as a technology to be sustainable, not just the organizational and financial? How robust is the technology so it is sustainable?

As a next step, Steve will revisit the strategic plan, review the problem statements, look at the budget lines we propose, and figure out how they align. He will then edit the document.

Next Meeting

The Board will meet next week (15 May EDT). During that call, the Board will review and prepare the budget for the meeting of members. Questions to consider include: What is the appropriate level of the reserves? To what extent do proposed expenditures meet the goals of the strategic plan going forward? How to expand our revenue base?