

DDI Alliance Executive Board Meeting

17 November 2020

Present: Bill Block, Cathy Fitch, Maggie Levenstein, Jared Lyle, Steve McEachern, Dana Mueller, Barry Radler, Joachim Wackerow

Draft Letter of Collaboration with CODATA

The Board reviewed a draft Letter of Collaboration with the Committee on Data (CODATA) of the International Science Council. The letter had been discussed in several earlier Board meetings this year and was reviewed and edited by a University of Michigan lawyer. The letter of collaboration formalizes an existing collaboration between the DDI Alliance and CODATA.

The Board discussed the benefits of entering into a more formal collaboration. It was noted that this partnership formalizes the intent of the cooperation, which can be shown to others and is a good way to market DDI and the Alliance as a membership organization. It was noted that partnership with CODATA can have valuable input on what kinds of specifications are used in other areas, and also with the hope that more organizations would become members of the DDI Alliance.

Concern was expressed that the letter enables CODATA to vote without becoming a dues-paying member or obtain a perpetual seat on the reorganized Scientific Board without going through the standard nomination and election process. Both cases would be a violation of the DDI Bylaws. It was noted that this was not the intent of the letter. CODATA would become a full member, and any Scientific Board seat would need to be secured through the standard nomination and election process. A suggestion was made to add "dues-paying" to the sentence "Each of the organisations intends to become a member of the other organisation"). Jared will make that change and send the updated letter to the Board.

Scientific Board Restructuring

Jared updated the Board on efforts to restructure the Scientific Board. In September and October, DDI members voted on proposed amendments to the DDI Bylaws about a restructuring of the DDI Scientific Board, which is the scientific and technical body of the Alliance. Twenty-one of the 28 eligible voting designated member representatives voted "Yes", one voted "I formally decline to vote", and six did not respond. The vote passed with a two-thirds majority, which means the Bylaws amendments are adopted.

Nominations are being accepted through 7 December for the restructured Scientific Board. In early December, the Alliance membership will elect the members of the Scientific Board. The restructured Scientific Board will be composed of seven voting members elected by the Members of the Alliance. For the initial election, three will be elected for two-year terms and

four for four-year terms; all terms will start 1 January 2021 and run through 30 June of their respective term periods. The Executive Director and Chair of the Technical Committee shall serve as ex-officio members, without internal vote, of the Scientific Board. Representatives from Members and Associate Members of the Alliance are eligible to serve as elected members of the Scientific Board. A majority of the elected members of the Scientific Board must be from Member Organizations.

SDTL Vote

Jared updated the Board on the vote to accept the Structured Data Transformation Language (SDTL) as part of the DDI standard. The voting period was scheduled to close at the end of the day.

Maggie indicated George Alter, chair of the DDI SDTL working group, is seeking new grant funding for SDTL. It was suggested that a part of that funding goes toward the DDI Alliance for SDTL maintenance and development.

ISO Certification

Jared informed the Board about recent communication with the ISO TC46/SC 4 Technical interoperability committee confirming the Alliance is a category A liaison and stating the Alliance may proceed with submitting DDI-Codebook and DDI-Lifecycle for vote as ISO enquiry drafts. Publishing DDI-Lifecycle and DDI Codebook as ISO standards was a goal of the previous strategic plan and would give DDI-L and DDI-C additional visibility and credibility. Jared will proceed with the ISO submission.

ANSI Certification

Related to the ISO certification efforts, Dan Gillman, who has been involved with other ISO certifications, suggested in an email that it might be useful to try to get ANSI certification for the DDI Alliance as a standards development organization. The process of seeking accreditation may uncover gaps or weaknesses in the DDI bylaws. Arofan Gregory responded by noting that ANSI is well-respected, which can carry weight with government agencies, especially.

ANSI accreditation can be costly (almost \$9,000 initially, and \$4,000 yearly thereafter), and it was suggested that a cost-benefit analysis should be completed before proceeding. Would ANSI accreditation add weight to organizations considering joining the Alliance?

It was suggested to hold off seeking ANSI certification until the ISO process is completed.

Membership Retainment and Recruitment

The Board discussed membership retainment and recruitment, especially the benefits of membership. It was suggested that for anyone who makes good use of metadata, there is a moral obligation to joining and renewing membership.

It was suggested to look at different classes of membership groups. Are there cheaper membership options for members who may not need voting rights?

As a next step, Steve will organize a sub-group to review a tiered structure of membership. Interested volunteers should contact Steve. The sub-group will likely include representation from the Training and Marketing groups.