Annual Report of the Data Documentation Initiative

Projects Using DDI

Nesstar Ltd.
http://www.nesstar.com/

Harvard-MIT Virtual Data Center
http://www.thedata.org/

Survey Documentation and Analysis
http://sda.berkeley.edu/

Census Bureau's DataFerrett
http://dataferrett.census.gov/TheDataWeb/index.html

Cultural Policy and the Arts National Data Archive (CPANDA)
http://www.cpanda.org/

DAIS Nesstar System at Health Canada
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/

California Digital Library's "Counting California" Project
http://countingcalifornia.cdlib.org/

National Survey of Family Growth, Wave VI

National Historical Geographic Information System
http://www.nhgis.org/

CESSDA Integrated Data Catalog
http://www.nsd.uib.no/cessda/IDC/

ICPSR Data Catalog
http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/

ICPSR Social Science Variables Database (SSVD)
http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/SSVD/basicSrch

Social Science Research Services (SSRS) and Social Science Libraries & Information Services (SSLIS) at Yale University
http://ssrs.yale.edu/
http://www.library.yale.edu/socsci

Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) Denominator File Project
http://www.resdac.umn.edu/

<ddi>

Data Documentation Initiative
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Highlights and Accomplishments

The DDI Alliance had a successful and productive first year of operation. This report briefly describes some of the year's highlights.

First Meeting Held

The Expert Committee of the DDI Alliance met in October 2003 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with 36 individuals in attendance. An important outcome of this productive meeting was that the Committee established a structure of Working Groups focused on special topics:

- Usability and Outreach
- Structural Reform
- Substantive Content
  - Aggregate Data, Time, and Geography
  - Complex Files
  - Instrument Documentation
  - Comparative Data/Families of Datasets

The Alliance has made several communications mechanisms available to the Working Groups, including telephone conference calls, email listservs, and a Web-based bulletin board, to facilitate their work.

Membership and Finances

In its first year of operation, the DDI Alliance had 25 paid memberships, providing a funding stream to support the administrative structure, meetings, and an XML consultant. The balance sheet of the Alliance shows that revenue for the fiscal year totaled $62,500 (25 members x $2,500 membership fee). Revenues exceeded expenditures for the year and a positive balance will carry forward into the next fiscal year.

New Products

In Summer 2003 the Alliance published a *Strategic Plan*, which was developed by the Alliance Steering Committee. The Plan sets goals for the Alliance in the areas of organization and membership, funding, standards, outreach, and technical development.

To provide guidance in how to revise the DDI specification, the Structural Reform Working Group wrote a *Procedures Manual*. The Manual clarifies the procedures specified in the Alliance Bylaws and lays out the processes to follow depending on the type of change proposed — minor or major.

Also prepared during the fiscal year was a *Timeline* to assist the Expert Committee in planning and managing activities to meet the goals and milestones on the path to a new Version 3.0 of the specification.

The Complex Files Working Group submitted a proposal to optimize the DDI for handling linked files and systems of files. This *Complex Files proposal* will be tracked over the course of the next fiscal year on its path to becoming part of the standard.

All products of the Alliance are available on the DDI site at www.ddialliance.org.

Why Join the Alliance?

Through membership in the Alliance, you and your organization can have a vote in the development of this important social science standard. Membership means that you have the opportunity to participate with colleagues in shaping the format, content, and delivery of social science information.

Because the DDI is a project of the larger social science research community, we all need to play a role in moving it forward to become an official standard. Members can lend their unique talents and expertise to the Working Groups, ensuring that the standard meets the needs and expectations of the community.

"The DDI, begun as a way to electronically document archived data, now has the potential to become a next generation Internet protocol for distributed data access in the same way the HTML has become the protocol for distributed Web document access."

Cavan Capps, U.S. Census Bureau

"The DDI is a strategic component of the infrastructure necessary to support the exchange of structured social science research survey data."

Stuart Weibel, Dublin Core Metadata Initiative

Become a Member

To join the Alliance, you will need to complete a membership form and obtain appropriate signatures at your institution. Please send the form from the DDI Secretariat:

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PO Box 1248
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Benefits of the DDI Approach

- **Interoperability.** Codebooks marked up using the DDI specification can be exchanged and transported seamlessly, and applications can be written to work with these homogeneous documents.

- **Richer content.** The DDI was designed to encourage the use of a comprehensive set of elements to describe social science datasets as completely and as thoroughly as possible, thereby providing the potential data analyst with broader knowledge about a given collection.

- **Single document - multiple purposes.** A DDI codebook contains all of the information necessary to produce several different types of output, including, for example, a traditional social science codebook, a bibliographic record, or SAS/SPSS/Stata data definition statements. Thus, the document may be repurposed for different needs and applications. Changes made to the core document will be passed along to any output generated.

- **On-line subsetting and analysis.** Because the DDI markup extends down to the variable level and provides a standard uniform structure and content for variables, DDI documents are easily imported into on-line analysis systems, rendering datasets more readily usable for a wider audience.

- **Precision in searching.** Since each of the elements in a DDI-compliant codebook is tagged in a specific way, field-specific searches across documents and studies are enabled. For example, a library of DDI codebooks could be searched to identify datasets covering protest demonstrations during the 1960s in specific states or countries.