

## Editor's notes

### *Metadata is key - the most important data after data*

Welcome to the second issue of volume 42 of the IASSIST Quarterly (IQ 42:2, 2018).

The IASSIST Quarterly has had several papers on many different aspects of the Data Documentation Initiative - for a long time better known by its acronym DDI, without any further explanation. DDI is a brand. The IASSIST Quarterly has also included special issues of collections of papers concerning DDI.

Among staff at data archives and data libraries, as well as the users of these facilities, I think we can agree that it is the data that comes first. However, fundamental to all uses of data is the documentation describing the data, without which the data are useless. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the IASSIST Quarterly is devoted partly to the presentation of papers related to documentation. The question of documentation or data resembles the question of the chicken or the egg. Don't mistake the keys for your car. The metadata and the data belong together and should not be separated.

DDI now is a standard, but as with other standards it continues to evolve. The argument about why standards are good comes to mind: 'The nice thing about standards is that you have so many to choose from!'. DDI is the de facto standard for most social science data at data archives and university data libraries.

The first paper demonstrates a way to tackle the heterogeneous character of the usage of the DDI. The approach is able to support collaborative questionnaire development as well as export in several formats including the metadata as DDI. The second paper shows how an institutionalized and more general metadata standard - in this case the Belgian Encoded Archival Description (EAD) - is supported by a developed crosswalk from DDI to EAD. Both these DDI papers originated from the European DDI conferences (EDDI). Based on an agreement between EDDI and IQ, EDDI18 mentions the possibility to publish articles in the IQ. See the entries on "Full Paper" and "Communications (Short Paper)" and the author guidelines of the Call for Papers at <http://www.eddi-conferences.eu/ocs/index.php/eddi/eddi18/schedConf/cfp>.

IQ 42:2 is not a DDI special issue, and the third paper presents an open-source research data management platform called Dendro and a laboratory notebook called LabTablet without mentioning DDI. However, the paper certainly does mention metadata - it is the key to all data.

The winner of the paper competition of the IASSIST 2017 conference is presented in this issue. 'Flexible DDI Storage' is authored by Oliver Hopt, Claus-Peter Klas, Alexander Mühlbauer, all affiliated with GESIS - the Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences in Germany. The authors argue that the current usage of DDI is heterogeneous and that this results in complex database models for each developed application. The paper shows a new binding of DDI to applications that works independently of most version changes and interpretative differences, thus avoiding continuous reimplementation. The work is based upon their developed DDI-FlatDB approach, which they showed at the European DDI conferences in 2015 and 2016, and which is also described in the paper. Furthermore, a web-based questionnaire editor and application supports large DDI structures and collaborative questionnaire development as well as production of structured metadata for

survey institutes and data archives. The paper describes the questionnaire workflow from the start to the export of questionnaire, DDI XML, and SPSS. The development is continuing and it will be published as open source.

The second paper is also focused on DDI, now in relation to a new data archive. 'Elaborating a Crosswalk Between Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and Encoded Archival Description (EAD) for an Emerging Data Archive Service Provider' is by Benjamin Peuch who is a researcher at the State Archives of Belgium. It is expected that the future Belgian data archive will be part of the State Archives, and because DDI is the most widespread metadata standard in the social sciences, the State Archives have developed a DDI-to-EAD crosswalk in order to re-use their EAD infrastructure. The paper shows the conceptual differences between DDI and EAD - both XML based - and how these can be reconciled or avoided for the purpose of a data archive for the social sciences. The author also foresees a fruitful collaboration between traditional archivists and social scientists.

The third paper is by a group of scholars connected to the Informatics Engineering Department of University of Porto and the INESC TEC in Portugal. Cristina Ribeiro, João Rocha da Silva, João Aguiar Castro, Ricardo Carvalho Amorim, João Correia Lopes, and Gabriel David are the authors of 'Research Data Management Tools and Workflows: Experimental Work at the University of Porto'. The authors start with the statement that 'Research datasets include all kinds of objects, from web pages to sensor data, and originate in every domain'. The task is to make these data visible, described, preserved, and searchable. The focus is on data preparation, dataset organization and metadata creation. Some groups were proposed a developed open-source research data management platform called Dendro and a laboratory notebook called LabTablet, while other groups that demanded a domain-specific approach had special developed models and applications. All development and metadata modelling have in sight the metadata dissemination.

Submissions of papers for the IASSIST Quarterly are always very welcome. We welcome input from IASSIST conferences or other conferences and workshops, from local presentations or papers especially written for the IQ. When you are preparing such a presentation, give a thought to turning your one-time presentation into a lasting contribution. Doing that after the event also gives you the opportunity of improving your work after feedback. We encourage you to login or create an author login to <https://www.iassistquarterly.com> (our Open Journal System application). We permit authors 'deep links' into the IQ as well as deposition of the paper in your local repository. Chairing a conference session with the purpose of aggregating and integrating papers for a special issue IQ is also much appreciated as the information reaches many more people than the limited number of session participants and will be readily available on the IASSIST Quarterly website at <https://www.iassistquarterly.com>. Authors are very welcome to take a look at the instructions and layout:

<https://www.iassistquarterly.com/index.php/iassist/about/submissions>

Authors can also contact me directly via e-mail: [kbr@sam.sdu.dk](mailto:kbr@sam.sdu.dk). Should you be interested in compiling a special issue for the IQ as guest editor(s) I will also be delighted to hear from you.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen - June, 2018