Editor's Notes

Revolution in the air

Welcome to the second issue of Volume 40 of the IASSIST Quarterly (IQ 40:2, 2016). We present three papers in this issue.

First, there are two papers on the Data Documentation Initiative that have their own special introduction on the next page. I want to express my respect and gratitude to Joachim Wackerow (GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences). Joachim (Achim) and Mary Vardigan (University of Michigan) have several times and for many years communicated to and advised the readers of the IASSIST Quarterly on the continuing development of the DDI. The metadata of data is central for the use and reuse of data, and we have come a long way through the efforts of many people.

The IASSIST 2016 conference in Bergen was a great success - I am told. I was not able to attend but heard that the conference again was 'the best ever'. I was also told that among the many interesting talks and inputs at the conference Matthew Woollard's keynote speech on 'Data Revolution' was high on the list. Good to have well informed informers! Matthew Woollard is Director of the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex. Here in the IASSIST Quarterly we bring you an edited transcript of his talk. Woollard starts his talk on the data revolution with the possibility of bringing to users access to data, rather than bringing data to users. The data is in the 'cloud' - in the air - 'Revolution in the air' to quote a recent Nobel laureate. We are not yet in the post-revolutionary phase and many issues still need to be addressed. Woollard argues that several data skills are in demand, like an understanding of data management and of the many ethical issues. Although he is not enthusiastic about the term 'Big Data', Woollard naturally addresses the concept as these days we cannot talk about data - and surely not about data revolution - without talking about Big Data. I fully support his view that we should proceed with caution, so that we are not simply replacing surveys where we 'ask more from fewer' with big data that give us 'less from more'. The revolution gives us new possibilities, and we will see more complex forms of research that will challenge data skills and demand solutions at data service institutions.

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 a presentation, give a thought to turning your one-time presentation into a lasting contribution. 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 session participants, and will be readily available on the IASSIST website at *http://www.iassistdata.org*.

Authors are very welcome to take a look at the instructions and layout:
http://iassistdata.org/iq/instructions-authors

Authors can also contact me via e-mail: *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 2016
Editor

Guest Editor's Notes

Metadata in official statistics and demographic surveillance projects.

This issue includes two papers focusing on the use of DDI in official statistics and in demographic surveillance projects in low and middle income countries. Both articles focus on core metadata of empirical data like concepts, variables, and classifications, use acknowledged reference models (GSIM, GSBPM, and GLBPM), and evaluate common software.

First I would like to express my special thanks to Mary Vardigan (former Assistant Director of ICPSR and DDI Alliance Director, now retired) for the long and excellent cooperation in editing several special issues of the IASSIST Quarterly on DDI. Her experienced and balanced view on the metadata landscape was a perfect completion to my perspective on technical details of DDI usage and DDI development. Her large experience in editing in general was always very helpful. Conferences and workshops - we both were involved in organizing and performing - were partly the fruitful ground for some DDI papers published in the IQ. Mary copy-edited also the two papers on DDI in this issue.

The first paper is 'Towards Common Metadata Using GSIM and DDI 3.2' by Mogens Grosen Nielsen and Flemming Dannevang from Statistics Denmark. It provides a comprehensive perspective on the conceptual level of official statistics in order to improve the understanding of the role of metadata in relation to users, metadata in relation to production processes, and common terminology. This applies especially to reusable metadata in larger organizations. The vision is to have a system with integrated and reusable metadata and data. For this purpose, the authors claim the importance of precise metadata terminology and careful modelling going from conceptual level to physical level.

The value of GSIM (Generic Statistical Information Model) as complementary reference model to GSBPM (Generic Statistical Business Process Model) in creating frames of reference by introducing common terminology is discussed and underlined.

A solution approach is described which uses a GSIM-compliant model of DDI Lifecycle with the software Colectica.

The understanding of the paper cannot only be applied to official statistics but also to large studies or networks of cooperating institutions in the social science. The mentioned issues are common in both domains.

This topic was presented by the authors at the conference EDDI15 as full paper.

The second paper is 'Open-access for existing LMIC demographic surveillance data using DDI' by an author group mainly based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and the National Institute for Medical

Research, Mwanza Tanzania. Multiple levels of applying DDI are analyzed and evaluated. The used data collection is the Kisesa Open Cohort Study collected by the TAZAMA project within the National Institute for Medical Research. This project is involved in the INDEPTH network which is an umbrella organization for projects collecting health and demographic data in countries without universal population registration. The analysis comprehends the two different DDI specifications, related tools, the training effort etc. The authors use the reference model GLBPM (Generic Longitudinal Business Process Model) as guidance in selecting the correct DDI Lifecycle elements for specific steps in the survey process. GLBPM is derived from the GSBPM (Generic Statistical Business Process Model) in official statistics.

This article is not only valuable for similar projects in low and middle income countries but for any project with similar data collections and framework conditions. It provides practical information for projects which have to decide which DDI version and which of the acknowledged software options could be used.

Finally, on a more personal note, I was happy to see that this article focuses on the application of DDI on surveillance data in Tanzania. In 2009, INDEPTH invited me together with Wendy Thomas for teaching an intense DDI training in Kenya for member HDSS sites (Health and Demographic Surveillance System). Benjamin Clark from the site near Mwanza in Tanzania was one of the organizers. Basia Zaba, one of the co-authors, attended this workshop. At the workshop, we learned about the value of the work of INDEPTH and the surveillance sites for providing an evidence base for health policy.

The main author, Chifundo Kanjala, presented on a related topic at the conference EDDI14 and attended the GESIS DDI training workshop in Dagstuhl in 2013.

DDI-specific events - like the conferences EDDI, NADDI, and IASSIST - provide a good opportunity to present on DDI-specific topics and to get in discussion with others from the DDI community. This can then eventually result in a written paper in the IQ. Presentations at conferences are important. But written papers can show more details and provide the possibility of distributing the content to a wider community. They are more visible and bring the authors more credit. In this sense, I would like to encourage writing on DDI-related topics.

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January 2017
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