

Editor's Notes

The Data Documentation Initiative has had workshops, special sessions and general good publicity in IASSIST connections since the 1995 IASSIST conference in Québec. This issue of IASSIST Quarterly brings you a paper from the IASSIST/IFDO conference last year in Amsterdam. The DDI has evolved and in a session on “DDI Tables” this paper from the University of California (Berkeley) and from the California Digital Library at the same university appeared. The paper is titled “Using DDI Extensions as an Intermediary for Data Storage and Data Display” and is written and prepared by Patricia Cruse, Marsha Fanshier, Fredric Gey, and Margaret Low. In the paper they are addressing the problem of providing metadata for multi-dimensional files (or aggregate files or tables). The solution based upon use of XML is shown in the paper.

At the IASSIST/IFDO conference last year a session was devoted to “Digital Archiving”. I believe that the subject is much too important to leave to archivists alone and it also has the attention of governments and the EU. The paper from Concha Fernández de la Puente at the European Commission, DG Information Society is titled “The European Union initiatives in the digital archive area: achieving the Information Society” and the point of departure of the paper is that initiatives from the European Union has had the goal of ensuring that all European citizens have easy access to information. The many initiatives in the areas of electronic document management and exchange are reviewed in the paper. Among the initiatives are DLM-Forum which have had widely participation from archivists. The paper surely points further in its conclusion where the citizen-friendliness of on-line government is mentioned as well as “the ideas and values which have shaped the European Union”.

Another session at the same conference was on “Qualitative Data”. I could mention that this session also had its paper on DDI, but here we are looking at a very different content than the values of variables or columns that the DDI was invented for. Culture often implies a notion of being analog, personal, and difficult to disseminate. Tiina Mahlamäki from the University of Turku describes in the paper “From the Field to the Net: Cataloguing and Digitising Cultural Research Material” how tape-recorded interviews was catalogued and transferred for use on the Internet. Tiina Mahlamäki explains that the oral tradition became an important aspect of the folkloristic research in the Nordic countries in the mid-1960ies and an important part of the fieldwork. The individualistic trait of culture also applied to the culture researchers as every project followed its own principles of archiving. The paper describes the project of standardization and digitisation of this cultural research material.

The last paper in this issue of IASSIST Quarterly is from the opening plenary at the Amsterdam conference. The title of the plenary was “Inter- and Intra- National Archives in the New Millennium: Issues, Strategies and Models” where Yvette Hackett from the National Archives of Canada presented “A National Research Data Management Strategy for Canada: The Work of the National Data Archive Consultation Working Group”. Yvette Hackett gives an account of how recommendations for preservation of data for the social sciences and the humanities lead to a working group and project that are investigating questions about how to meet the needs of the research community and to take advantage of new technologies.

When this issue of the IASSIST Quarterly reaches you the 2002 conference in Storrs, Connecticut will be over. I am certain it has been a successful conference and that you can look forward to receive papers from that conference in the coming issues of the IASSIST Quarterly.

May 2002. Karsten Boye Rasmussen