

Guest Editors' Notes

Welcome to a special double issue of the IASSIST Quarterly featuring articles focused on the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI), a metadata standard for the social sciences. We are proud to present these six articles, which explore various projects related to DDI 3 and its enhanced features.

The articles draw on previous presentations and papers created in connection with the 2009 "Expert Workshop on Implementation of DDI3 -- Advanced Topics" held in Wadern, Germany; the 2009 European DDI Users Group (EDDI) meeting held in Bonn, Germany; and the IASSIST conferences held in Tampere, Finland (2009) and Ithaca, New York, USA (2010).

Jeremy Iverson's article on metadata-driven survey design highlights the reuse of metadata starting at the very beginning of the research data life cycle and also discusses the benefits of using metadata to drive the process of collecting, visualizing, and analyzing survey data. This is a powerful and efficient approach that should be taught in survey methods courses in order to save costs and to enable data producers to leverage the metadata they create across the life course of research data.

Also related to data collection is the article on the Questasy online survey documentation tool by Marika de Bruijne and Alerk Amin. Questasy permits internal users to document longitudinal data and to make this documentation available to external users on the Web. A benefit of DDI 3 for this system is that it facilitates tracking of Question Items across waves in the study, where each wave can have Question Constructs and Variables that refer to the same Question Item. This system was developed for the LISS panel online survey at the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands.

"Implementing DDI 3: The German Microcensus Case Study" by Andias Wira-Alam and Oliver Hopt looks at using DDI 3 to document the German Microcensus through a customized DDI 3 editor and a Web view providing different perspectives for the end users based on the same DDI 3 items. Interestingly, Andias and Oliver discuss basing some of their decisions about software design on Jannik and Dan's use case describing the development of the DDI 3 metadata authoring tool – see Building a Modular DDI 3 Editor.

"Metadata Creation, Transformation and Discovery for Social Science Data Management: The DAMES Project Infrastructure" by Jesse M. Blum, Guy C. Warner, Simon B. Jones, Paul S. Lambert, Alison S. F. Dawson, Koon Leai Larry Tan, and Kenneth J. Turner shows the wide variety

of data management tasks that DDI 3 can support and document, including recodes, merging, and data cleaning. Using DDI 3 to document these phases of the data life cycle is an exciting development.

"DDI 3 Development at DDA" by Jannik Jensen and Dan Kristiansen of the Danish Data Archive provides a fascinating look into the development of an authoring tool for DDI metadata, a tool that is being designed to play a central role in the work flow at the DDA archive. It focuses as well on the underlying reusable middleware and general considerations on open source software development for DDI. This article provides the reader with an up-close view of strategic decisions made at DDA to incorporate the functionality of DDI 3 into the architecture of the DDA archive.

With its focus on machine-actionability and data typing, DDI 3 needs a strong system of controlled vocabularies to supplement the creation of metadata. The article on controlled vocabularies by Taina Jääskeläinen, Meinhard Moschner, and Joachim Wackerow presents the case for using controlled vocabularies and the ways in which they benefit the user. The article also showcases the work of the DDI Controlled Vocabularies Group and its efforts to create vocabularies for DDI 3, which will be made available as separate products using a format called Genericode.

We hope you enjoy reading these articles, and we offer our thanks to all of the authors. We also want to express our appreciation to IASSIST for the opportunity to publish this work in the IQ. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the IASSIST community and its nurturance of DDI from the very beginning.

Sincerely,

Mary Vardigan and Joachim Wackerow