‹ddi› DIRECTIONS
A newsletter of the Data Documentation Initiative

This issue of DDI Directions includes a brief report on recent work related to development of the next-generation DDI, which will be based on an information model. This is a very exciting project, permitting us to draw upon all of the advances that have taken place since DDI Lifecycle was first published in 2008: we now have existing vocabularies and innovative new technologies that make our work process easier. This is a community effort and there are many ways to be involved, so if you are interested, please get in touch.

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EDDI Registration Open

EDDI13, the 5th Annual European DDI User Conference, will take place on December 3-4, 2013, in Paris, hosted by Réseau Quetelet, the French portal for data in the humanities and social sciences. A meeting of DDI software developers precedes the EDDI conference on Monday, December 2.

The conference will open on Tuesday, December 3, at 9:00 am and close on Wednesday, December 4, at 5:30 pm. Tutorials (included in the conference fee) will take place on Monday, December 2, from 2:00 pm - 5:30 pm.

The schedule overview and program are available. Registration for participants and accommodation booking are now open. Please note that the conference has a maximum number of 90 participants.

The program offers 38 presentations including the keynote from Philippe Cuneo (Director of Methodology, Statistical Coordination and International Relations at INSEE, the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies), 3 full papers (first time this year), 9 posters/software demonstrations, and 2 tutorials.

EDDI will take place at the Maison Internationale and the Cambodia House of the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris.

Call for Papers for NADDI 2014 Announced

The second annual North American DDI User Conference will take place at the Harbour Centre in Vancouver, Canada, on April 1-2, 2014, with workshops taking place the day

before on March 31. Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, and University of Alberta are co-hosts for the event. There will be an opening night reception on March 31. NADDI is based on the successful European DDI conference (EDDI), now in its fifth year.

The NADDI2014 call for papers is now open. To submit a proposal for a presentation, please fill out the submission form.

We are looking for presentations related to DDI: the use of DDI in research settings, archives, or in official statistics organizations; papers on DDI tools, or critiques of DDI. Of particular interest are presentations on the use of DDI related to documenting reproducible research.

For details on how to submit a proposal for a presentation, please visit the NADDI2014 website.

First DDI Sprint Held

A successful first "sprint" was held from October 28-November 1, at Schloss Dagstuhl, Leibniz Center for Informatics, in Wadern, Germany, to jumpstart the process of producing a model-based DDI specification. Twenty-two participants contributed to the sprint, which focused on creating infrastructure for the DDI modeling process, building a production process for producing the desired technical expressions from the UML model, and creating DDI object descriptions for inclusion in the model-based specification. This Dagstuhl workshop was preceded by a 2012 workshop that produced a paper on the modeling process.

You can read more about the sprint here. The second sprint is scheduled for December 5-6 in Paris after the EDDI conference.

From left, Ørnulf Risnes, Wendy Thomas, Dan Gillman, Merja Karjalainen, Larry Hoyle

Use Case Based DDI Training Held

A new approach to DDI Lifecycle training was implemented at the Dagstuhl Training workshop held the week of October 21-25. Participants in the course brought DDI use cases that were discussed in the full group, leading to greater interaction and exchange of ideas and practical suggestions for DDI implementation. Subgroups were created on the basis of the use cases to write related papers.

Participants in the DDI Lifecycle training course held in October [Photo credit: Stephanie Roth]

Generating a DDI Codebook from SDMX

By Pekto Yanev and Jean-François Fracheboud
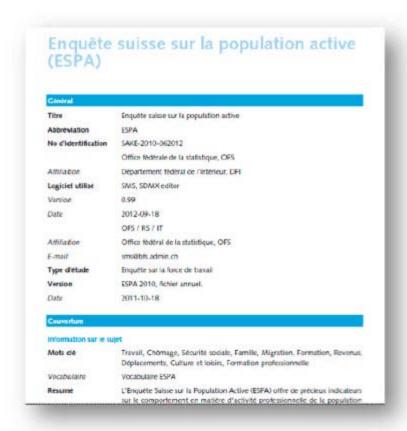Federal Statistical Office, Switzerland

The [Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland](#) is in the process of adding new functionality to its central Statistical Metadata System (SMS), which will generate a DDI Codebook from the metadata stored in the system in [SDMX format](#).

In implementing the new features, developers of the SMS, which is based entirely on SDMX, were rapidly confronted with the problem of volume: that is, how to structure, store, exploit, and present a large (and constantly increasing) volume of mutually-dependent metadata. The DDI Codebook provides a convenient solution to this problem, considering that an interface between the SDMX and DDI is defined in the system. This interface has been developed in the form of a "plug-in", which generates the Codebook automatically using the information stored as SDMX artefacts: code lists, hierarchical code lists, concept schemes, metadata structure definition (MSD), metadata sets, data structure definitions (DSD), and data sets. The flexibility of the SDMX standard allowed the use of an MSD for defining the structure of the DDI Codebook and the metadata set together with other artefacts for describing its content.

The first prototype of the SDMX-generated Codebook was presented during the SDMX Global Conference in Paris. It is currently used to produce PDF files containing the DDI Document Description and DDI Study Description parts of the Codebook together with a catalogue of variables (a synopsis), their formats, and associated code lists.

The DDI Codebook can be generated as a structured PDF file or, in the near future, in HTML format, ready to be published directly on an organization's website. Although the codebook is DDI-conformant, in order to satisfy the demands of the statistical production units, the system permits new information and attributes to be added dynamically by the user.

Pekto Yanev and Jean-François Fracheboud gave a [presentation](#) about their statistical metadata system based on SDMX at the SDMX Global Conference held September 11-13,

2013, in Paris.

Colectica Updates

The Colectica Team announces a new version of [Colectica for Excel](). This update addresses feedback since the initial release. Colectica for Excel is available for free download on the Colectica website.

In addition, Colectica 4.2 has just been released. You can view a [summary of changes]() and see the detailed [Press Release]().

The new 4.2 release builds on previous versions by adding features such as support for SDMX-based international quality frameworks, translated user interfaces, REDCap and queXML survey import and export, and a new customizable task-based user interface mode.

DDI Hackathon

A small group of developers met at the Danish National Archive in Copenhagen on October 24-25 for a DDI Hackathon, organized by Jannik Vestergaard Jensen (Danish Data Archive) and Olof Olsson (Swedish National Data Service). The goal of the Hackathon was to bring people together to collaborate on implementations of the mapping for the DDI Discovery vocabulary (DISCO) and DDI-C/DDI-L, with these tasks in mind:

- Create a DDI-L (and DDI-C) to DDI-RDF stylesheet
- Convert existing DDI-L/DDI-C to DDI-RDF
- Deploy an SPARQL endpoint
- Write SPARQL queries (based on [http://rdf-vocabulary.ddialliance.org/discovery.html#example-queries]())
- Write proof of concept applications and widgets based on these queries

DDI Workshop in Budapest - What's New in DDI 3.2?

By Jeremy Iverson

In August Colectica developers Jeremy Iverson and Dan Smith traveled to Budapest to provide training on DDI as part of Colectica's new [DDI 3.2 training](#) series. Jeremy wrote an account of the training, which is excerpted here.

For the past year or so we've been advising on a German project to develop some data documentation tools for folks working with employment data. As part of the project, we went to Budapest to conduct training on DDI. We worked with the developers at OPIT, who are creating a toolset called Rogatus that works with the DDI Lifecycle standard. Last year we provided an introductory workshop to the same developers, so this year we were able to dive deeper.

We had a few goals for the workshop:

1. Learn what's changed in DDI 3.2 over the past year
2. Get in-depth with DDI content
3. Since Colectica works with the same standard, make sure Colectica and Rogatus are interoperable

Bonus: Besides accomplishing these, a side effect of having four developers spend a full week with our eyes on the DDI 3.2 schemas is that we ended up performing a pretty thorough initial review of the draft standard. We were able to submit dozens of fix requests to the DDI Technical Committee, and I'm thrilled that the fixes have been incorporated into the schema.

Changes in DDI 3.2 over the past year

The OPIT team is targeting the upcoming DDI version 3.2 instead of the current 3.1 release. They knew going in that 3.2 was a moving target, but the improved developer-friendliness of the update makes it worthwhile. Since the schemas the developers were targeting were a year old, the first day of the workshop was focused on bringing everybody up to speed on the freshly-released draft 3.2 schemas. Briefly, what changed over the past year includes:

- All item types can now be referenced; there are no places where items must be included inline
- All types now have consistently-structured Groups (e.g., VariableGroup, QuestionGroup, ConceptGroup)
- Documenting datasets is much easier
- Specifying data types for questions and variables no longer requires an extra level of indirection with "delineations". What were those anyway?
- Describing missing values is simplified
- A few of the new elements were renamed, like DataElement -> RepresentedVariable

[Read more about the Budapest visit](#)

Image courtesy of zbdh12 on Flickr

New Release of Canard Question Module Editor

Sam Spencer has announced a new release of the [Canard Question Module Editor](#).

The biggest addition to this release is the ability to import and export DDI-Lifecycle 3.1 documents. Sam points out that this is due in no small part to the expertise of Olof Olsson, whose knowledge of XSLT were invaluable in producing the DDI<->SQBL conversion.

This addition provides the ability to quickly and easily generate questionnaires in real-time with live questionnaire preview that can then be converted to and stored as DDI.

This functionality can be seen in the [tutorial videos online](#).

This playlist includes videos demonstrating how to create basic questions, questions with complex responses, simple logical flow, and dynamic text with word substitutions, all in an easy to use, click-and-drag, what-you-see-is-what-you-mean user interface.

Currently functional in this release:

- Dynamic text and word substitutions in question text and statements
- Nested branching and complex routing within surveys
- Three types of basic response type:
  - Text - with optional enforcement of minimum and maximum response length
  - Number - with optional enforcement of minimum and maximum values, with required step values
  - Codelists - with the ability to indicate a minimum and maximum number of choices
- While also allowing for complex response types:
  - Question Groups - allow for tightly linked questions with different responses to be brought together
  - Individual questions can have subquestions and multiple responses to capture complex lists and grids of responses quickly
- Live preview of question routing and example form instances using Graphviz and XForms
- Plugin support to extend import and export functionality
  - This release includes plugins for [DDI3.1](#) import and export

You can download the windows executable [here](#).

A Mac OSX application should be coming very shortly.

DDI Annual Report Available

The DDI Alliance recently released its [Annual Report for 2012-2013](#).