Open Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 28, 2003
Ottawa, Ontario CANADA

An Open Meeting of the DDI Alliance was held in Ottawa during the 2003 IASSIST conference. Nearly 40 people were in attendance.

1   Introduction
     A brief introduction to the DDI Alliance was presented, with the following points:
     Membership
     At the end of May, membership forms were sent to contact people at 25 institutions with reasonable certainty of joining the Alliance and to 8 others who indicated interest but were not certain of obtaining funding.
     Meetings
     The first meeting of the Alliance Steering Committee, the oversight committee that is composed of representatives from the Alliance Host Institutions (Roper and ICPSR) and Host Associations (IASSIST, CESSDA, and IFDO), was held in February 2003.
     The first meeting of the Alliance Expert Committee, the technical and scientific committee that will undertake the further development of the specification, will be held October 12 and 13, following the ICPSR Official Representatives meeting in Ann Arbor. Some concern was expressed about the timing of this meeting, since that Monday is Canadian Thanksgiving and Columbus Day in the U.S. Nevertheless, October is a busy month and many have other commitments. The APDU meeting is the following weekend in Washington, DC, but most Europeans would not be planning to attend that conference.
     Web site
     The new Alliance will need a robust Web site that is useful to a wide range of competencies. There will be instructions on getting started with DDI, taking into account types of source materials and ultimate functionality desired.
     DTD status
     While revisions to the DTD were approved at the February meeting, a new version 2.0 has not yet been published. This should happen in June 2003.

2   Relationship of IASSIST to the DDI and Documentation Standards

IASSIST President Ann Green circulated a handout summarizing IASSIST s position and role vis-a-vis the DDI Alliance. The following points were emphasized:

- IASSIST will be a Host Association of the DDI Alliance and its president will be a member of the Steering Committee. This does not give IASSIST a seat or a vote on the Expert Committee.

- IASSIST will not pay a membership fee to the Alliance. The IASSIST Administrative Committee may allocate funding to support participation in meetings of the Alliance Steering Committee.

- IASSIST will continue to provide a nurturing environment for the DDI and promote its propagation.

- IASSIST will establish an Action Group on Data Documentation as a structure for communicating DDI-related information. This group will either set up a new listserv or use the DDI-users listserv that is already in place.

3. IASSIST members may participate in the Alliance in several ways, including joining the Alliance, coordinating conference activities related to DDI, contributing materials to the DDI site, publishing articles on documentation, and suggesting IASSIST members that might serve as Visiting Experts at the Alliance Host Institutions.

4. Discussion of the Alliance Strategic Plan
Several points were raised during the discussion of how the Alliance should move forward strategically.
Meeting participants agreed that face-to-face meetings are a necessity, and thus the Alliance needs to make it a priority to ensure that funding for meetings, at least for working groups, is available. Most organizations will find it difficult to pay the Alliance membership fee plus travel for one to two meetings a year. Planning one of the meetings each year around the time of IASSIST is a good way to defray costs since many already attend IASSIST.
The new Expert Committee needs to agree to a broad program of work up front and to a timetable for accomplishing that work so that there is buy-in from all members. At the same time, the new Expert Committee should have some latitude in charting its agenda of work. Constructing a data model for the DDI is seen as

the top priority for the new Expert Committee.

It is difficult to develop the DDI specification and provide the kinds of promotional activities and training we need at the same time, but we do need to move forward in all of these directions. Tools are important and need to be highlighted on the new Alliance Web page. It is important that the DDI become easier to use so that markup is seen as a manageable task with great benefits.