Outsourcing programmer's work

Knutholmen Sprint | 23–27 May 2016

On 26 May 2016 we had (1) a discussion at the sprint and later (2) a hangout call. Participants for both events include Achim Wackerow, Jared Lyle, Johan Fihn, Marcel Hebing, Oliver Hopt, Olof Olsson, Wendy Thomas.

# Introduction

In the DDI Moving Forward project, we started with a large group of developers, many of which are either dropping out now for various reasons or have only a limited amount of time to use on DDI projects. One related problem might be that some institutions are getting sceptical how the DDI Moving Forward is performing and are therefore getting reluctant to invest more developer time.

The solution, which we are discussing, is to outsource specific programming tasks to external developers and to pay them. The major concern is that if we pay some programmers, the other ones (who did it for free so far) might feel deprived.

# Conclusion / next steps

1. Get a **list of open software issues** regarding the production workflow.
2. Also we already have the developer group, it would be good to have **one person to be in charge** and to overlook both the architecture and the issues. In particular, this person should define the requirements for external projects and control the results.
3. The definition of tasks should **focus on input and output formats**. Furthermore, all external development has to be **open source**. These two points ensure reusability and interoperability.
4. When we have a list of open issues, we can first ask the developers which tasks they could do by themselves. Tasks that none of the developers can do (either to limitations in skills or limitations in available working time) could be given to external developers.
5. **Define how developers can make decisions** about the design of the technical infrastructure. One solution might be that the scientific board defines only the inputs (someone is editing the model) and outputs (definition of the DDI 4 product). After that, the developers would be free to make any decisions on how to get from the inputs to the outputs.
6. Jared will initiate **follow up discussions** on this issue

# Related issues / parking lot

* We also see an urgent need for a **project manager** for the DDI 4 project.
* There is a [Production Process and Tools Support Team](https://ddi-alliance.atlassian.net/wiki/display/DDI4/Production+Process+and+Tools+Support) in DDI 4 which is a subcommittee of the modelling team. However, this team has had limited meetings outside of sprints, primarily focused on setting up Bitbucket and Bamboo systems. We see the need to clarify **how to make decisions** regarding the production workflow outside of sprints. There are conflicting opinions on how much freedom the developers should get in making decisions.
* We discussed what participating institutions get out of the DDI Moving Forward project. One idea was that we should start to produce **articles** for high-ranking journals and conferences.

# Open issues in the tools

The following tasks and issues are open regarding our tool suite:

* Generate resturcturedText documentation files from XMI source
  + Package
  + Class
  + View
* Generate GraphViz syntax from the XMI source (including references classes outside the package/class with properties)
  + Package
  + Class
  + View
* Build script for generating SVG/PNG from the Graphviz syntax files (simple)