

MRT Future Activities (2021-2023)

Arofan Gregory on behalf of MRT, 1 March 2021

Introduction

This document has been written in response to a request by the DDI Scientific Board for a brief description of expected activities of the MRT group in the short and medium term. This subject was discussed within the group, and a general consensus reached on the points given below.

We have been asked to look at two different frames: the coming year, and then a 2-3 year horizon. This may not really be how we would divide the work, so I have taken a small liberty with this, counting the next year from now rather than from the DDI fiscal years starting in July ("Immediate Term") and then describing the 2-3 year vision ("Medium Term").

Immediate Term (March 2021 - June 2021)

The immediate work of the MRT is to finalize the first production version of the Cross Domain Integration specification. We are aiming to complete the spec for submission to TC by the end of June 2021.

We are not intending to expand the functionality/scope beyond what is already in the current review draft - any extensions to functionality will be prioritized for the next revision moving forward.

We will incorporate changes from feedback and on-going issues in Jira (IDs, Annotations, etc.)

Examples will be enhanced to better show how the model can be used/implemented, and more complete mappings will be provided to other DDI specifications (Codebook and Lifecycle). Further, we hope to include some mappings to external standards which were not included in the review package, notably to SDMX and DCAT.

We will enhance both high-level and detailed documentation of the model and other supporting artefacts (e.g., XML Schemas).

We plan to review and revise the package organization to support a more modular approach in future, and to provide guidance to users on how implementation guides for specific applications can be created, to identify the supported subset of the model in a given community or implementation.

Medium Term (2-3 Year Horizon)

In terms of the scope of DDI-CDI, we see it remaining essentially a complement to other metadata standards, especially Codebook and Lifecycle, with a focus on cross-domain use. We envision at least one major revision to the specification in the next few years, to reflect implementations and to support emerging needs within the area of cross-domain research.

Resources will limit the extent of additional feature support which can be implemented within this time frame, even with existing work in the DDI 4 model which has not yet been addressed. Additional features to CDI will need to be identified in collaboration with the SB and TC, to make sure they occupy

the right place(s) within the overall suite of work products (e.g., within DDI-CDI, within DDI-Lifecycle, within both).

Overall goals for the medium term include:

- Respond to input from implementers (e.g., BLS, EOSC, ALPHA/INSPIRE, R Libraries project, Dataverse, and any others which emerge).
- Coordinate with the TC to maintain/enhance alignment with other DDI deliverables/specifications
- Identify and prioritize areas for further work (some examples):
 - Produce a more formalized methodology for mapping to other standards and/or incorporating them in the model directly
 - Address more diverse "data"/qualitative/deep linking (to handle more than traditional numeric data, support annotation layers and access control, etc.)
 - More fully describe the integration of DDI-CDI into the emerging FAIR ecosystem (FDOs, FIPs, FDPs, etc.)
 - Explore more complete support for digital units of measure and consider additional standards alignments from external domains
 - Align the process and provenance description and the upper model with SDTL and emerging other provenance frameworks
 - Identify features for optimizing interactions with external ontologies and vocabularies, in line with emerging best practice in other domains
- Create a modular architecture for the specification
 - To support focus on specific functional areas
 - To provide a framework for specific Implementation Guides around needed functions/enhanced ease of use
- Establish MRT as a regular WG for the duration of active CDI development
 - To achieve better integration within overall organization
 - To establish a core group to maintain a coherent and consistent model across functional areas/modules
 - To establish sub-groups to focus on specific functional areas/implementations, and to recruit more active participation from inside and outside the Alliance
- Continue co-ordinations with Training WG, Marketing WG, and other DDI groups around webinars and other outreach/review activities

General Notes

It was agreed within the MRT that we would like for the Scientific Board to establish organization-level relationships with external standards bodies where needed/appropriate (today we sometimes feel like technical discussions take place with no higher-level dialogue in place.)

Further, although we manage to work together fairly well across the different sub-groups within the Alliance (Training, Marketing, TC, MRT, etc.), having the Scientific Board provide a more substantial frame for this is seen as desirable. We very much want to support collaboration across groups, but we feel the right place for this to be coordinated is within the SB, and not on an ad-hoc basis within technical committees and working groups.