DDI Mission and Guiding Principles -- DRAFT

Mission

The mission of the Data Documentation Initiative is to establish standards and semantic products for documenting, managing, and preserving data from the social, behavioral, and economic sciences across the data life cycle. To carry out this mission in a trustworthy way, the DDI Alliance commits to the guiding principles outlined in this document.

Guiding Principles

The DDI Alliance accepts responsibility to establish standard metadata specifications and semantic products for use by researchers, policymakers, data producers, archivists, developers, and other users in national and international jurisdictions. These technical specifications shall be publicly and internationally available free of charge to any organization and should fulfill the following requirements in order to support the return on investment made by their stakeholders.

- The specifications should *solve common issues* in the relevant domain and adapt to changes in the domain. For example, many ongoing social science surveys have begun to supplement their data with biomedical data. The DDI should be able to accommodate such evolution.
- The specifications should be *accepted in the relevant communities*. The quality and usefulness of the specifications should be apparent to prospective users.
- The specifications should be *transparent and reliable* in terms of
  - Development of the specifications. It should be clear who is developing them, who has input into the content, how they are changed and developed, the process by which they vetted for approval, and the timetable for releases.
  - Access to the specifications. All versions of the specifications should always be accessible from persistent locations. The specifications should be licensed appropriately to ensure wide access.
  - Usage of the specifications. The specifications should be as easy to use as possible. Users should be able to understand their structure and documentation with minimal training in order to use them effectively and to develop tools to exploit them. To support such understanding, the specifications should be model-based, with actual representations (like XML Schema) derived from the model and adaptable to current and emerging technologies (for example, RDF or linked data).
- The specifications should support solutions that are
  - Maintainable
  - Reusable
  - Sustainable
- When the version of a standard changes, the standard should *support migration* from older versions, ensuring that investments in mark-up and solutions based on previous versions are not lost.

- The standards should be *interoperable with other metadata standards* in the domain and related domains.