

Research and Innovation Committee

April 2009 Report to the General Assembly

Research and Innovation is one of four IHTSDO Standing Committees. The Committee has scheduled monthly teleconferences. The major focus of activity since the October 2008 meetings has been planning for a special face-to-face meeting that was held in Salt Lake City, USA in February 2009.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Co-Chairs of the meeting in Salt Lake City provided the following preliminary briefing on the meeting's outcomes.

The meeting achieved most (but not quite all) of its primary objectives as set out in the original proposal for the meeting:

1. To re-evaluate the existing specifications and reconcile with feedback received from NeHTA, OpenEHR, and others, plus a set of 17 previously agreed design principles.

The meeting progressed by a process of discussing specific items of difference between the alternate specifications (Enhanced Release Format (ERF) and Alternate Release Format (ARF)) before formulating the choices identified as formal motions to be voted on. In total, 69 such motions were moved and voted on. These record the detail of the technical decisions made, and are the primary input into the re-drafting process now underway. The unanimous opinion of the group is that the resulting harmonized specification will be better than either of the original alternate specifications.

2. To draft updated, harmonized Enhanced Release Format and RefSet specifications

This work is initially being undertaken, more or less as I write, by a technical writer whose effort has been contributed by NEHTA. Working from the two original specification documents, together with the list of motions carried at the meeting, the goal is for a coherent redraft to become available in the next 5 days. After checking and proofing by the wider group, this revised 'Release Format 2 (RF2)' specification is scheduled to be released to the Community of Practice in advance of Helsingor, and also to be presented in plenary at the ERF-PG meeting in Helsingor.

3. To harmonise the Machine Readable Concept Model specification with the above

Because RF2 is more generically extensible than the original ERF, this is no longer an issue. The expressivity required by the MRCM can now be accommodated as a legitimate extension of the RF2 core, rather than being a bespoke extension of the original ERF specification.

From the point of view of advancing the use of the MRCM, the situation therefore remains substantially unchanged: the existing prototype MRCM editing application can continue to serve as an interim development and proof-of-concept platform without significant re-engineering. Its current XML exchange format, currently compatible with the now superseded ERF-based Interchange Format, may require translation in due course to an RF2-based Interchange Format - but it may be possible to do this as an XSLT on the existing export.

The more pressing issue therefore remains to obtain clarity sooner rather than later with regards to when and how MRCM authoring and publishing functionality will become part of the IHTSDO platform, and when MRCM authoring and maintenance will become part of the relevant IHTSDO (and NRC) integrated release processes.

4. A couple of the original objectives remain outstanding:

i. Harmonising the Interchange Format specification with the above To some extent an exercise for the interested reader, once the RF2 draft is finalized.

The group believes this to be achievable through the focused effort of 1 or 2 interested individuals with review and guidance within normal ERF PG telecom processes. We're not suggesting that this is necessarily an effort that should be undertaken by a consultant, but it will require a few days of focused effort by someone. ERF PG chair will track this.

ii. Intensional RefSets

A majority of the group believes the IHTSDO needs to adopt a standard for the representation of 'intensional RefSets' (ie a means to dynamically determine the members of a RefSet by reference to a formal definition of membership, as opposed to having membership statically and exhaustively enumerated). Upon discussing intensional refsets it became apparent that the group had many opinions on the topic and that we could have discussed it for an extended period of time without making a lot of progress. The chairs therefore decided to set the issue aside for consideration at a later date. The group believes that the MRCM, as a potential early user of any Intensional Refset specification, can still make progress over the medium term without such a specification. It is unclear how this issue will be resolved; it remains on the ERF-PG agenda

iii. Specifying exactly how crossmapping information will be encoded in RF2 The group believes that the inherent flexibility of RF2 means anything Mapping SIG might seek to represent in future will be possible to accommodate. However, the group did not have sufficient up-to-date expertise with regard to the evolving Mapping-SIG requirements and so did not feel it useful or possible to take a definitive view on this. A priority task once the RF2 draft is available is to invite specific comment from Mapping SIG.

RELATED GROUPS

The following Project Groups report to the R&I Committee:

- a. Concept Model SIG
- b. Machine Readable Concept Model PG
- c. Enhanced Release Format, Interchange Format and RefSet Project Group
- d. Pharmacy "is a" Overload – Substance hierarchy (direct report is to Content Committee)