Documentation in Blaise: past, present and future

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Overview

- Introduction
- What kind of documentation and for who
- The past: Cameleon and BAD
- The present: TADEQ, Blaise API
- Example of the present: Delta
- The possible future
Blaise - Introduction

- Blaise is a tool for data collection and processing
- Produced by Statistics Netherlands (since 1986…)
- Ongoing development
- Used by many NSI’s all around the world

- Based on the Blaise datamodel language
- Blaise has a well defined meta data structure
- Meta data available in proprietary format (BMI)
What kind and for who

- Type of documentation:
  - Electronic / Interactive
  - Paper

- Target audience for documentation:
  - Questionnaire developers and testers
  - Researchers (user of the data, survey methodologists, …)
Blaise documentation - Past

Until late nineties of the last century the only way to ‘export’ meta data from Blaise:

- Cameleon. Blaise meta data manipulator
- BAD = Blaise Automatic Documentation
Blaise - Cameleon

- Has the capability to extract part of the Blaise meta data from a BMI file
- Language based. Cameleon language is XSLT ‘avant la lettre’
- Logic contained in meta not available
- Example: DDI_DTD.cif
  - Used to convert BMI to DDI-compliant XML form
BAD — Blaise Automatic Documentation

- Made by ONS with help from Statistics Netherlands (by sharing some Blaise internal libraries)
- DOS only…
- Accesses also logic
- Produces RTF-files
- Much richer output compared to Cameleon approach
Blaise documentation - Present

- Improvements in Blaise started with the TADEQ-project
- **TADEQ** = **Tool for Analysis and Documentation of Electronic Questionnaires**
TADEQ

  - Many participants (ONS, Statistics Finland, …)
  - Project leader: Jelke Bethlehem (Stat. Netherlands)
- Not a Blaise project
- Uses XML (*Questionnaire Definition Language* = QDL)
- ‘System neutral’: CASES, Blaise, …
- Blaise meta data can be exported to QDL
TADEQ (2)

- Target audience: both
- TADEQ supports electronic and paper documentation (including a graph representation)

- But how could they access the meta data to generate the XML?
TADEQ-Blaise spin-off

- Statement viewer: visualisation of the logic of a BMI in a tree view
- Target audience: questionnaire developers
Blaise - API

- Since 2001: Blaise API available
- Access to all meta stored in BMI
- Can be used by programmers to build documentation tools (and many other things)
- Two examples:
  - Blaise DELTA
  - BlaiseDoc (Gina Cheung, U of Michigan)
Blaise - DELTA

- Comparable to TADEQ, but works directly on BMI (using the API)
  - No intermediate XML-file
- Target audience: both
- Not system neutral. Blaise only!
- Uses XML / XSLT for presentation layer
- Can produce HTML output
- Shipped with Blaise 4.6+
Blaise documentation - Possible Future

- Graph functionality in Blaise
  - TADEQ like but build on graph toolkit
- Provide functionality for user defined meta extensions
  - Possible solution: ‘structured’ comments in Blaise source (compare with JavaDoc)
  - Can be used to add DDI-tags to Blaise