Response on the Draft Report on "Data Availability and Use"

Australian Government Linked Data Working Group

Introduction

The Australian Government Linked Data Working Group (AGLDWG) is pleased with the proposed recommendations in the draft report on "Data Availability and Use". There are several recommendations that the AGLDWG strongly supports. In the following, the group is commenting specifically on some issues or areas of improvement in recommendations that pertain specifically to the publishing of dataset in a Linked Data form with the aim of increasing their discoverability and usability for humans and machines alike.

Response to Draft Recommendation 5.3

The AGDLWG strongly agrees with this recommendation - Linked Data should never be deleted! Per best practises of publishing data on the Web, the only reason for a dataset, data or a document to disappear from its Web address is that if the organisation that owns the domain went out of business or can no longer afford to keep the server running (cf. *https://www.w3.org/Provider/Style/URI.html*). For the Australian Government, that means, that data should never be deleted, but marked as deprecated, instead. This ensures that products and services that relied on that data, in particular, if used directly via an API continue to work. If data is moved, a redirect or proxy should be set up at the original Web address of the dataset or data within, that points to the new publication location, for example, in cases where data has been archived and the custodianship has been handed to the National Archives of Australia.

Response to Draft Recommendation 6.1

The AGLDWG strongly supports this recommendation, in particular, the requirement to use machine-readable formats for collected data and the requirement to provide metadata. The AGDLWG recommends that explicit reference to the "Data on the Web Best Practices" (*https://www.w3.org/TR/dwbp/*) by the W3C is made in this recommendation and that the 35 best practises proposed in these guidelines should be followed when data is published by Australian Government Agencies.

Response to Draft Recommendation 7.1

There appears to be a lack of definition of what specifically 'adding value' to a dataset means and the sub-recommendations made seem to be in contradiction to some other recommendations (i.e. Rec. 6.1

suggests making datasets machine-readable and add metadata for increased discoverability). We note, that adding metadata for the purpose of a better discovery of the data should not be considered 'adding value', but a requirement prior to publishing a dataset. Further, the focus on monetizing the added value to a dataset contradicts the aim of making government data open and free of charge. If the government has a function that relates to informing its citizens, it needs to be value adding to datasets through analysis and integration – in line with some of the other recommendations that propose an interlinking of datasets (i.e. Rec. 5.3 and Rec. 5.5). Also, releasing data in its raw form, without for example, adding value by defining the schema of the data, or lacking machine-readability of the data or lacking links to other datasets is, in fact, creating a barrier for private sector entities to add value. This will lead to situations where only a very limited number of private sector firms with the financial means and the technical know-how will be able to use and add value to the data. Since it is unlikely that those firms will release the resulting linked data to the wider public for free, the Government will increasingly see itself in the position to reacquire its own integrated data from those private firms. Citizens that cannot afford the purchase of these linked datasets on the other hand will be shut out from accessing that data, even though the datasets potentially include data about themselves. This is in contradiction to Recommendation 9.11 that states that individuals should have easy access to data on themselves, having the right to edit, copy or delete data records about them.

AGLDWG Response to Draft Recommendation 9.5

The AGLDWG strongly supports the establishment of release authorities that ensure the quality of datasets published by the Australian Government, including aspects such as the use of rich metadata and the appropriate use of technologies to ensure machine-readability of the data is guaranteed. The AGDLWG as a community of Commonwealth Government experts and champions with members from 10 federal agencies, who have been drafting policy and technical guidance on the implementation of Linked Data for the Australian Government, is keen to become an accredited release authority, pertaining to the compliance of Linked datasets published by Government agencies against the requirements for machine readability of data and metadata as defined by Recommendation 6.1.

General Remark:

The report refers to the W3C as the World Wide Web Foundation. Correctly, it should read the World Wide Web Consortium (*http://w3.org)*. The World Wide Web Foundation is a separate entity founded also by Sir Tim Berners-Lee to establish the open Web as a global public good and a basic right, ensuring that everyone can access and use it freely.