

DICOM Standards Committee Position on Translation and Localization

The DICOM Standards Committee¹ desires to have a mutually beneficial, respectful, and collaborative approach to recognition of the DICOM Standard in national regulations. To ensure continued global interoperability of diagnostic imaging and therapy equipment, the efficient exchange of healthcare diagnostic information, and to remove barriers to trade, it is critical that there be only one normative global specification of the DICOM Standard. The single normative specification is the English language edition produced by the DICOM Standards Committee and published by and under the copyright of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA),² and available for free on the DICOM web site in PDF, XML, and HTML formats.

The DICOM Standards Committee understands well that international users of the Standard have specific needs, and is willing to actively cooperate and assist those users in the appropriate use of the Standard. The free multi-format publication of the Standard is an example of that commitment to serve the needs of users.

Translation

Specifically, the Committee understands the desire of implementers to have access to the Standard in their native language. The Committee and NEMA have already granted to several organizations permission under the copyright for translations of the Standard into Japanese and Chinese, and will continue to do so for any reputable requester. Such translations, however, must be considered non-normative best efforts that might include unintentional discrepancies from the normative English publication, might not include the latest Standard updates, and might not include all normative Parts or sections of the Standard. Disclaimer text to that effect is shown in the Annex to this statement. Translations shall not include intentional deviations from the meaning of the normative English publication.

Organizations interested in developing and publishing such a translation must request prior permission from NEMA, which holds the Intellectual Property / Copyright on behalf of the DICOM Standards Committee.

The Committee is open to publishing such translations on the DICOM web site in the same format as, and with hyperlink cross-references to, the official English language version to facilitate use of both the Standard and the translations by non-English speakers. This also allows the translation to be updated in an agile process, rather than being codified in an inherently out of date hardcopy edition.

Localization for National or Regional Requirements

The Committee also understands that there are national or regional requirements related to language, local administrative and medical practices. DICOM is designed to address these needs, and has demonstrated this capability through its worldwide implementation.

¹ DICOM — Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine — is the international standard for medical images and related information (ISO 12052). It defines the formats for medical images that can be exchanged with the data and quality necessary for clinical use. DICOM is implemented in almost every radiology, cardiology imaging, and radiotherapy device (X-ray, CT, MRI, ultrasound, etc.), and increasingly in devices in other medical domains such as ophthalmology and dentistry. With tens of thousands of imaging devices in use, DICOM is one of the most widely deployed healthcare messaging standards in the world. The DICOM Standards Committee is chartered with managing the development of the DICOM Standard.

² <http://dicom.nema.org/> NEMA serves as Secretariat of the DICOM Standards Committee.

National or Regional bodies may produce separate specifications that reference the DICOM Standard and further constrain the options available in the Standard in order to promote more seamless interoperability in their context. The Committee has actively cooperated with organizations such as Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) in specifying such constraining profiles, and national bodies have often added requirements such as support for specific character sets as allowed by the Standard. It is important that these additional constraints not change or deviate from the normative requirements of DICOM, and their documentation should clearly identify the source authority for those requirements. The Committee advises publishing such national or regional requirements in a separate specification document to highlight those requirements for implementers, facilitating accurate compliance.

Continuous Maintenance

The DICOM Standards Committee is proud of its record of responsiveness through the DICOM maintenance process to the evolving real-world needs of implementers. It welcomes Change Proposals from any source that identifies an issue with the normative requirements or editorial explanations of the Standard, and particularly welcomes requests for clarification from translators, who need clear understanding of the meaning. The Committee processes approximately 10 major Supplements and 100 Change Proposals every year, and updates the published edition several times each year.

Maintaining synchronization between a translation and the normative edition is difficult, which is why translations are considered informative and claims of product conformance to the DICOM Standard must claim conformance to the official NEMA publication of the Standard.

Products may additionally assert conformance to additional national or regional requirements, profiles, or implementation guides, but such assertions are supplemental to conformance to the DICOM Standard.

Conclusion

Since its first publication in 1993, DICOM has revolutionized the practice of radiology worldwide, allowing the replacement of film with a fully digital workflow, and creating a global market for medical imaging equipment and services. This has been accomplished by ensuring a single international standard for imaging interoperability, so that local interoperability requirements can be addressed without imposing a barrier to products from any country being accepted in any market, and so that medical images acquired anywhere are clinically usable everywhere. The DICOM Standards Committee is committed to ensuring that all implementers have the information necessary to implement products conformant to the Standard.

Annex - Disclaimer Statement

After requesting and receiving permission from the DICOM Standard Committee to publish a translation of the DICOM Standard, a condition of publication will be that the following text shall be included, in English and in the translated language, on a cover page of each translated document:

DICOM is the worldwide Standard for medical imaging and related information. It is published and copyright by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA). The normative DICOM

Standard is published in English, and is available free on the official website at <http://dicom.nema.org/standard.html>.

This document is a translation prepared by *<name of translating organization>* under agreement with NEMA, with the intention to help *<language>* readers understand the DICOM Standard more readily.

This translation represents a “best effort”; however, differences in meaning may exist between this translation and the normative DICOM Standard. Further, the DICOM Standard is under continuous maintenance and extension, so readers should expect that there are changes that are not reflected in this translation.

In the event of any difference between this translation and the DICOM Standard published in English by NEMA, the English version is normative and takes precedence.

Implementations shall claim conformance to the normative DICOM Standard. Users are advised to obtain the most current documents of the DICOM Standard directly from the official website.

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