WHITE PAPER



The MOSAIC Publication Repository and Structured Research Reporting Framework

Overview

In recent years — as publishing has become more "digitized" — there have emerged many online platforms for scientists to share and publish their research work, including both raw data and scientific papers. These portals generally provide an index/search feature where readers can locate research based on author's name, keywords, or subject matter, and a document viewer where readers can view each publication's abstract (and sometimes its full text) and other publication details (such as co-authors, dates, citations, etc.). However, these portals offer only limited features for interactively exploring publications, particularly when it comes to examining data sets and/or browsing multimedia assets associated with publications, such as audio, video, interactive diagrams, or 3d graphics.

The "MOSAIC" system is a suite of code libraries allowing institutions to host publication repositories which address the limitations of existing scientific document portals (MOSAIC is an acronym for "Multi-Paradigm Ontologies for Scientific and Technical Publications"). With MOSAIC, each publication can be linked to a "Supplemental Archive" which contains information about the author's research methods, data sets, and focal topics. Using MOSAIC, developers can implement a hosting platform for this supplemental material, in addition to publications themselves, where the platform provide software enabling readers to browse and access Supplemental Archives and their data sets and/or methodological descriptions. A MOSAIC publication repository, also called a MOSAIC "portal," is a structured collection of data and documents which can be hosted via web servers (including fully encapsulated and containerizable cloud services) implemented with the help of MOSAIC libraries.

Mosaic repositories can be general-purpose portals hosting academic or technical papers covering a broad range of topics; or narrower collections of articles focused on specific subject areas or institutional archives. Organizations can use use Mosaic internally as the basis of a document management system (DMS). Conversely, Mosaic could be used to provide open public access to complete publications, including human-readable and machine-readable full text and all supplemental content, with no restrictions¹ (any project which *does* restrict access to some part of any document requires a commercial Mosaic license). Mosaic can also be customized for different subject areas by incorporating domain-specific ontologies into document-search features as well as machine-readable document-text annotations.

Mosaic is designed so that the software to access publications and Supplemental Archives can be embedded in scientific-computing applications, via "Mosaic plugins." This ensures that publications and data sets can be examined interactively with the same software as scientists use to conduct research. Mosaic also introduces a "structured reporting system" (Mosaic-SR) for describing research/experimental/lab methods and protocols. Supplemental Archives, plugins, and Mosaic-SR are outlined in the following sections.

¹ Excepting sensitive/private information which might be provided via a dedicated component within the portal with specific features for authors, editors, and administrators

Part I: MOSAIC Components

Supplemental Archives

Mosaic Supplemental Archives are additional resources paired with Mosaic publications. In general, Supplemental Archives may include raw data, descriptions of research methods, or annotated data linked to publication text. Each Supplemental Archive could have any of the following resources:

- **1.** Interactive versions of the publication, with annotations indicating important concepts and phrases, perhaps aggregated into a "glossary" defining technical terms;
- **2.** Structured files containing raw data discussed in the publication, along with interactive software allowing scientists to access and reuse the data;
- 3. Detailed reports of the author's research methods and experimental setup and/or protocols, conforming to the relevant standards with respect to the publication's subject classification for instance, the "Minimum Information for Biological and Biomedical Investigations" (MIBBI) includes about 40 specific standards for different branches of biology and medicine;
- **4.** Representations of analytic methods and algorithms used to derive the research findings, provided directly via computer code or indirectly via formal descriptions of computational workflows;
- **5.** Self-contained computer software demonstrating code which the author developed and/or used for analyzing research data;
- **6.** Multi-media assets such as audio or video files, annotated images, **3D** graphics, interactive **2D/3D** plots and diagrams, or other kinds of non-textual content which needs to be viewed with special multi-media software.

The contents of a Supplemental Archive will be different for different publications, depending on whether the archive contains specific raw data, or just a summary of the methods used to obtain raw data. In the former case, a typical archive will include a idata-set application, or a semi-autonomous software component allowing researchers to study and visualize the data set, typically provided in turn via data files that are also located in the archive. The data-set application will in general provide both a visual interface for raw data and code libraries for computationally manipulating this data; typically raw data files will encode serialized data structures that can be deserialized by code (e.g., C++ classes) included in the data-set application. Mosaic includes generic implementations of a "data-set explorer" (MdsX) which can be adopted to the specific kind of information needing to be serialized for a given publication. The resulting data-set application can then be packaged as a plugin to existing scientific software, depending on the relevant scientific discipline to which the research belongs.

MOSAIC Plugins

By design, Mosaic Portals will provide a suite of plugins for existing scientific software, allowing publications and Supplemental Archives hosted on the portal to be read and examined within computer software associated with each publication's subject matter. For example, articles about chemistry could be read within IQMOL, a molecular visualization program; articles about cellular biology and bioimaging could be read within CAPTK, an image-processing application; articles discussing novel computer code could be read within QT Creator, an Integrated Development Environment (IDE) for programming; etc. The advantage of accessing a publication and a Supplemental Archive within actual scientific software is that it allows research work to be understood, evaluated, and reused within the computing environments which scientists actually use to conduct professional research. This is different than existing science-publication portals, which generally rely on web browsers to access supplemental materials like data sets and multimedia files — in this setup, as a result, the software ecosystem wherein readers examine published research is



fundamentally separate from the software platforms where research is actually conducted. This is one example of how existing portals are limited in their ability to share research in rigorously reusable and replicable ways, and how MOSAIC offers a potential improvement.

For authors, embedding presentations of their research within existing scientific software has the added benefit of making their work more practically and immediately useful for the scientific community. Such presentations establish the computational framework for practically deploying their techniques in real-world scientific contexts, accelerating the pace at which research work can be translated to concrete scientific (and clinical/lab/experimental) practice. As one example, research involving novel image analysis techniques could be packaged so as to target a MOSAIC plugin for bioimaging software such as CAPTK, so that readers could actually run the author's code as a CAPTK module. This kind of functional assessment and adoption of novel contributions is harder to carry out if a research work is only described indirectly within article text, as opposed to being concretely developed for execution within a specific scientific application.

Another benefit of using plugins to access Supplemental Archives is that the host application will usually provide more sophisticated multimedia and data visualization capabilities, compared to static PDF images or even interactive web portals. Publishers have begun to develop online platforms for browsing research papers in conjunction with multimedia content such as interactive diagrams and 3D graphics — a physical model of a protein or a chemical compound, say, can be viewed online via WebGL; such graphics could even be embedded as an "iframe" within an HTML version of the publications. Publishers consider this to be cutting-edge technology. However, the same molecular 3D model, when viewed in IQMOL, can be enhanced with many additional visual features, representing bonds, orbitals, torsion angles, etc. The multimedia experience of exploring chemistry data in custom software like IQMOL is therefore much greater than the experience of generic web multimedia, so the scientific software is a better forum for showcasing novel research.

MOSAIC Structured Reporting

The MOSAIC Structured Reporting framework (MOSAIC-SR) includes tools to help authors develop interactive presentations supplementing academic documents, and specifically to use Supplemental Archives to document how thier research has been conducted. With MOSAIC-SR, authors can implement or reuse code libraries that report on research/experiment methods, workflows, and protocols. The MOSAIC-SR information may be structured as a "minimum information checklist" conformant to standards such as those collectively gathered into the MIBBI recommendations; in this case MOSAIC-SR would be applied by implementing object models instantiating MIBBI policies. Alternatively, MOSAIC-SR reports can be derived from actual computer programs simulating research workflows, similar to BIOCODER² (which is included, in an updated C++ version, as one MOSAIC library). Finally, MOSAIC-SR presentations may be based on annotations applied to research/analytic code. For example, in the context of image analysis, the PANDORE project provides an "Image Processing Objectives" Ontology as well as a suite of image-processing operations that can be called from computer code. Image-analysis pipelines can therefore be explained by annotating the pertinent function-calls (which PANDORE calls "operators") with terms from the PANDORE controlled vocabulary.

Mosaic-SR can express both computational workflows that are fully encapsulated by published code and real-world protocols concerning laboratory equipment and physical materials or samples under investigation. In the latter guise, Mosaic-SR code can employ or instantiate standardized terminologies and data structures for describing experiments — such as MIBBI policies or BioCoder functions. In this case, the role of Mosaic-SR code is to serve as a serialization/deserialization endpoint for sharing research metadata. Conversely, when workflows are fully implemented within software developed as part of a body of research, Mosaic-SR can provide a functional

²See https://jbioleng.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1754-1611-4-13.



interface allowing this code to be embedded in scientific software. For these latter cases, MOSAIC-SR provides a framework for modeling how a software component specific to a given research project exposes its functionality to host and/or networked peer applications. There are also cases where both scenarios are relevant — the MOSAIC-SR code would simultaneously document real-world experimental protocols and construct a digital interface as part of a workflow which is part digital ("in silico") and part "real-world" ("in the lab").

MOSAIC Annotations

Included in any MOSAIC plugin would be specially-designed PDF viewers for interactively reading student's papers. In particular, these PDF applications would recognize cross-references linking between student publications and their associated Supplemental Archives. This would allow readers to identify concepts which are discussed and/or represented both in the research paper and in the archive, annotating their papers accordingly. For example (a similar example is used in the documentation for BIOCODER, the concept "RNA Extraction" may be discussed in a publication text, and also formally declared as one step in the lab processing as represented via BIOCODER, and summarized in a BIOCODER-generated chart (and included in the Supplemental Archive). The PDF viewer would then ensure that the phrase "RNA Extraction" in the text is interactively linked to the concordant step in the experimental process, so that readers could view the BIOCODER summary as a context-menu action associated with the phrase where it appears in the PDF file. For a different example, the phrase "Oxygenated Airflow" refers to airflow in assisted-breathing devices, such as ventilators; to ensure that the device is working properly, the equipment must be monitored to ensure that a steady stream of oxygen reaches the patient. Research into the design and manufacturing of ventilators and similar devices may then include "Oxygenated Airflow" both as a phrase within the article text and as a parameter in data sets evaluating the device's performance. In this situation, the publication location of the "Oxygenated Airflow" phrase should once again be annotated with links to the relevant part of the data set (e.g., a table column) where measurements of airflow levels are recorded.

Part II: Concrete Applications

MOSAIC in the context of Image Analysis

This section will focus on one specific application of MOSAIC-SR in the context of image analysis and bioimaging — specifically, a "Data Structure Protocol for Image-Analysis Networking" (D-SPIN), which both extends and adds a narrower focus to MOSAIC-SR. Software using the D-SPIN protocol provides a description of image processing capabilities which have been utilized and/or are functionally exposed by code and data associated with a research project. This includes "structured reporting" of research objectives as well as a concrete interface for invoking analyses associated with the research (either new algorithms or techniques used to obtain reported findings). D-SPIN, in turn, is based on CAPTK (the Cancer Imaging and Phenomics Toolkit) and PANDORE (an image-processing environment which includes both data models and interactive software). The PANDORE "Image Processing Objectives" Ontology, mentioned above, that provides a structural basis for D-SPIN. For information about how different objectives are merged into workflows, D-SPIN adopts protocols from CAPTK, particularly with respect to implementating image-analysis capabilities as extensions to a core application, and with respect to CAPTK's implementation of the Common Workflow Language (CWL). In effect, D-SPIN formalizes the data models and prototypes adopted by PANDORE and CAPTK so as to concretize MOSAIC-SR for the specific domain of image processing and Computer Vision. The following sections will therefore outline D-SPIN features in the context of MOSAIC-SR design principles and objectives.



Meta-Procedural Modeling in D-SPIN and Mosaic-SR

Most approaches to modeling research workflows involve some concept of "meta-objects",3 "tools" (in the terminology of CWL), or "transitions" (in the language of Petri Net theory). In MOSAIC-SR, the analogous concept is that of meta-procedures, which are analogous to ordinary computational procedures but add extra sources of information concerning input and output parameters. In general, rather than simply passing an imput value into an executable routine, metaprocedures define steps which can be taken to acquire the proper values when needed. Aside from ordinary runtime values, the most important input sources are methods defined on GUI components; command-line parameters; file contents; and not-yet-evaluated expressions (perhaps encapsulated in scripts or function pointers). A meta-procedure formulation abstracts the acquisition of input arguments (or the consumption of values within "channels" via which a procedure sends and receives data) from the concrete procedure or procedures which are eventually executed. Therefore, a MOSAIC meta-procedure definition has two separate parts: a preamble where input sources are described; and an executive sequence where concrete procedures are indicated. A meta-evaluator then operates in accord with these definitions, concretizing the input values and launching the actual procedure(s). For D-SPIN, meta-procedures can be defined using a framework based on **BIOCODER**, but adopted to the imaging and Computer Vision context.

Image analysis methods are often described in academic literature in terms of mathematical formulae and/or characterizations of computing environments (such as Graphical Processing Units); it requires additional construction to translate these overviews into actual computer code. Once Computer Vision innovations are in fact concretely implemented, there is then an additional stage of development requisite for users to actually enact the computations described in the research. Although it is theoretically possible to demonstrate novel methods within fully self-contained autonomous applications, it is more convenient for users if research code is integrated with existing imaging software. Along these lines, the D-SPIN interface can help connect new code to existing applications, allowing users to access the new code's functionality through GUI actions, command-line invocations, or inter-application messaging.

In addition to practically enabling application embedding, D-SPIN models represent research methods and theories, contributing to transparency and reusability according to the MIBBI and FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) standards. This can be achieved, in part, by implementing data structures conforming to PANDORE Image Processing Objectives. However, D-SPIN embeds this logic in an Object-Oriented context which allows imaging-specific workflow notations to be paired with specifications outside of image-processing in the narrowest sense. This allows D-SPIN to be available for hybrid computational objectives representations which are only partially covered by the imaging domain — analogous to the MIAPE-GI (Gel Electrophoresis Informatics) component of MIAPE (Minimum Information About a Proteomics Experiment). The following section will discuss several domains where D-SPIN has been explicitly integrated with code libraries codifying MIBBI-style research protocols.

D-SPIN in Contexts Supplemental to Image Processing.

Image Flow Cytometry

One important use-case for biomedical image processing is to analyze cellular microscopy in conjunction with cytometric experiments which investigate cells and cellular-scale entities (such as proteins) indirectly. Conceptually, image analysis and flow cytometry (FCM) analysis are mathematically similar, and some commercial cytometry software has been extended with image-processing capabilities. The overlap between cytometric and image analysis has also inspired

⁴See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331775411_FAIRness_in_Biomedical_Data_Discovery.



³See the VISSION system: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1ad7/c459dc4f89f87719af1d7a6f30e6f58dff17.pdf.

attempts to merge cytometry standards, such as MIFLOWCYT (the Minimum Information about a Flow Cytometry Experiment policy within MIBBI), with bioimaging standards such as DICOM (Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine). One such proposal is due to Robert Leif, who argues that "The large overlap between imaging and flow cytometry provides strong evidence that both modalities should be covered by the same standard" and has formalized an XML language (CYTOMETRYML) to serve as that overarching bridge. The D-SPIN project builds off this work by introducing its own FCM/DICOM hybrid, although in an object-oriented rather than XML-based context (along with an expanded XML-oriented schema discussed in the next section). As a reference implementation for this D-SPIN extension, the project also provides a pure-C++ cytometry library based on the OPENCYTO and FACSANADU libraries, but eliminating external dependencies such as R and Java. The FCM/DICOM bridge is implemented in this context via a D-SPIN supplement to DICOM based on "Semantic DICOM," which is an effort to standardize query processing within PACS (Picture Archiving and Communications Service) workstations and to more effectively integrate DICOM with clinical data.

A Semantic **DICOM** Object Model

As a formal representation of imaging workflows, D-SPIN would reasonably be paired in many contexts with DICOM, insofar as DICOM represents the canonical standard for exchanging medical image data. For its applications within the medical-imaging context, therefore, D-SPIN provides object-oriented accessors to DICOM data such that image-objectives and DICOM object models can interoperate. This object-oriented foundation also provides a basis on which to further integrate clinical data in the form of "Semantic" PACS models. The original Semantic PACS implementation draws clinical data from DICOM headers, and represents this extracted information via RDF. In keeping with MOSAIC's more object-oriented focus, the MOSAIC-Semantic DICOM (MOSAIC-SD) integration is engineered instead as an extension to the DICOM Toolkit (DCMTK) library, though it imports many constructs within Semantic DICOM in the guise of a "Hypergraph Ontology", one example of a system MOSAIC uses to merge Semantic Web schema with Object-Oriented code. In short, MOSAIC-SD extends D-SPIN by defining a central DICOM object model affixed to both clinical and image-processing object models.

The MOSAIC-SD object system applies not only to DICOM integrated with statements of imageprocessing objectives, but also to other biomedical contexts where image analysis should be integrated with other analytic modalities and also with clinical or epidemiological information. For example, Flow Cytometry overlaps with clinical data tracking because one of FCM's essential investigative roles is to examine patients' immunological response to diseases and/or interventions. In the context of Covid-19, say — with respect to achieving a deeper understanding of how and why SARS-CoV-2 symptoms present differently in different patients — "The starting point will likely be a deep characterization of the immune system in patients with different stage of the disease". That is, FCM observations need to be matched with clinical data in order to classify (and consider statistical correlations between) immunological findings and clinical facts (risk factors, sociodemographics, disease progression, and so forth). This analysis intrinsically assumes that FCM data can be transparently linked with all relevant clinical data, but such integration is difficult even in DICOM, where DICOM headers are specifically designed for preserving patient data across picture-sharing networks (there is no analogous "header" component in the Flow Cytometry Standard, FCS). In brief, D-SPIN extensions to non-imaging domains can promote data integration insofar as D-SPIN Clinical Object Models, based on Semantic DICOM, provide an affixation point for clinical data in analytic contexts which are operationally related to image analysis, not just to image analysis per se.

⁷See https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cyto.a.24002.



 $^{^{\}bf 5} See~https://spie.org/Publications/Proceedings/Paper/10.1117/12.2295220?SSO=1.$

⁶See https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5119276/.

Geo-Imaging and Geographic Information Systems

Another area where **D-SPIN** provides structured object models is that of Geographic Information Systems (**GIS**) annotations. There is a direct link between image processing and **GIS** insofar as identifying geotaggable features is one dimension or application of Computer Vision. Effectively manipulating geoimaging data requires mathematical translations between several different coordinate systems, in both two and three dimensions. These coordinate transforms — as well as semantic interpretations of geoimage segments (buildings, land features, roads, etc.) — can serve as the basis for an object model attaching image-processing objectives to **GIS** workflows.

In conventional GIS annotation, data structures are linked to both geospatial coordinates and to visual cues or icons allowing locations of interest to be indicated on maps. The actual geotagged data structures can be derived from any domain; as such any object model can be integrated with GIS annotations so long as one can assign spatial interpretations to the phenomena computationally encapsulated by the domain in question. In a medical context, for instance, geotagged data may represent the scope of a vaccination campaign or the extent of an epidemic, along with relevant geographic or civic features (villages, medical clinics, national borders, and so on). The actual map as a visible digital artifact therefore serves as a virtual glue where clinical, geographical, governmental, and GUI data are all sutured together. Insofar as geoimaging involves analysis of photographed land features and/or urban environments, image processing information represents a further object model that can be added to the mix. Even when dealing solely with virtual maps, however — rather than with satellite images or other geospatial photography — the analysis and application-level rendering of map features is sufficiently similar to image processing that a rigorous model of GIS integration belongs properly within D-SPIN, specifically within a MOSAIC-GIS extension.

Part III: Markup Serialization and "Grounding"

The data-integration mechanisms discussed in this paper thus far have focused on object models and object-oriented programming techniques. While composing special-purpose object-based libraries specifically tailored to individual data-integration problems is a powerful tool for solving such problems, data integration initiatives in practice are often organized around standards for sharing or serializing conformant data structures. As a result, an important aspect of data integration is implementing proper data-serialization technology which is sufficiently rigorous to serve as a proxy for formal interface definitions. XML formats are a good case-study for such formalizations because most serialization in the biomedical and bioimaging context, operates through XML languages.

Standardizing a data format by stipulating how XML files may encode the data is simpler than defining an analogous specification in terms of executable computer code: one way to document the shape of any relevant data is just to explain how an XML document will be structured insofar as it encodes data accordingly. Potentially, such specification can be a single XML DTD file, or an XML sample, providing a convenient reference point for developers to grasp the underlying data model. However, the structure of an XML document does not, in itself, present a clear picture of how the information which the document represents is semantically organized. Even though XML is processed by computer programs, it is not even evident from an XML document or schema which XML elements (if any) correspond to data types recognized by applications which read and/or write the corresponding XML code. For example, the XML portion of OME-TIFF (the principal Open Microscopy Environment imaging format) includes an explicit Image element (which gathers up all significant image metadata); an application reading OME-TIFF files might therefore introduce a single datatype — analogous to (and maybe wrapping an) itk::Image from the Insight Toolkit imaging libraries — bundling the data in that part of the OME XML. In this case there will be a one-to-one correspondence between XML structure and application-level data types, at least for that one Image node. On the other hand, software reading OME-TIFF information



may not manipulate images directly, but rather pull out other kinds of metadata, such as an experimenter's name or description of the microscopic setup. In this case, the application may not have an explicit "object" representing the image itself, but it may still read information about the image from child nodes of the **XML Image** element.

In short, applications can read or use data from an XML document in different ways, so the document's structure does not itself provide a clear picture of how code which reads the XML is organized. This uncertainty is significant insofar as one wishes to use XML specifications as an indirect strategy for documenting parameters and features of the data structures which are serialized via the relevant XML language. In effect, XML serialization operates on two levels: on the one hand, the specific XML document provides an encoding of data conforming to a given structure; but, at a more abstract level, one can model the relationship between the surface-level XML node structure and the application-level data structures thereby serialized. This second level of detail is usually implicit and unstated, but in MOSAIC, such "meta-serialization" — a term used to suggest the idea of providing meta-data *about* a serialization — is directly formulated through a notion of "grounding", which involves adding supplemental markup clarifying how documents instantiating a serialization format (such as XML) relate to the coding protocols and data types of software which reads or creates these documents.

For maximum expressivity, MOSAIC introduces a meta-serialization system that can be applied to languages more flexible than XML — notably TAGML — as well as to XML proper. In effect, MOSAIC provides parsers for an extended version of TAGML which includes an additional "grounding" layer. Grounding, in this context, means describing how elements in the markip — nodes, attributes, and character sequences — are "grounded" in application-level types, data fields, and other programming constructs. MOSAIC provides parsers for this "Grounded TAGML" (GTAGML) language as well as converters to output serialized data as conventional XML, so that GTAGML specifications can be used in contexts (MIFLOWCYT, for instance) where ordinary XML is expected and serves as a basis of standardization. MOSAIC also provides code libraries for extracting data from GTAGML documents.

GTAGML documents, with certain restrictions enforced, are structurally isomorphic to XML and can be rendered as pure XML; as such, GTAGML schemata can be used to define norms for XML languages, although the logical role and operations of such requirements is not identical to XML schema definitions. By design, GTAGML schemata operate on two levels: on the one hand, they constrain the organization of GTAGML files themselves; but they also stipulate how GTAGML document structure relates to the type systems of code libraries serializing and deserializing GTAGML files. To model this second, type-oriented metadata, GTAGML introduces a hypergraph-based type model organized around "infosets," which are structured overviews of application-level data types. To fully utilize GTAGML features, programmers may then compose "infoset classes" as wrappers around ordinary data types (e.g., C++ classes) whose instances are serialized via nodes or character strings within GTAGML documents. Infoset classes provide hypergraph "views" onto type-instances, and act as a bridge between data types and their associated GTAGML schema. In particular, infoset classes (rather than the types they encapsulate) are the basis for schematizing the relation between GTAGML document elements and type instances (and the data they contain).

The hypergraph-based modeling incorporated into **GTAGML** reuses much of the code associated with ConceptsDB, which is the new hypergraph database being developed alongside MOSAIC. More information about ConceptsDB can be found on the guthub project page for Linguistic Technology Systems (https://github.com/Mosaic-DigammaDB/LingTechSys).

For more information please contact: Amy Neustein, Ph.D., Founder and CEO Linguistic Technology Systems amy.neustein@verizon.net • (917) 817-2184

 $^{{\}bf ^8 See \ http://www.balisage.net/Proceedings/vol21/print/HaentjensDekker01/BalisageVol21-HaentjensDekker01.html.}$

