

Directory Interchange Format (DIF) Usability Survey

NASA's Earth Science Data Systems Standards Process Group (SPG) is considering the DIF (Directory Interchange Format) specification, developed by the GCMD (Global Change Master Directory), for adoption as a community standard. Your responses to this survey on the usability of the DIF and the suitability of this specification for Earth science data will be helpful.

Please answer as many of the questions below as you can.

1. Please provide your name, organization and contact information (including email address)

2. Are you answering for your entire organization, for a smaller group, or individually?

a) Entire organization

b) Smaller group (please specify) _____

c) Individual response

3. Are you a data producer, data consumer, or both?

a) Producer b) Consumer c) Both

4. How long have you been using the DIF?

Since 1991

5. Please describe how the DIF is used in your organization.

ASF uses the DIF to define data holdings at the facility for GCMD.

For the following, you can answer either about the DIF alone, or relative to other, comparable specifications.

6. What are the strengths of the DIF? How has the use of the DIF helped your organization?

DIFs are useful for single-purpose datasets. The use of DIFs has had no impact on the organization as a whole, they have however permitted the datasets to be found through GCMD searches.

7. What are the weaknesses of the DIF? What would you like to change about the DIF or what would make the DIF a better specification?

DIFs are not suitable, as currently defined, for representing data holdings that can be applied to a wide range of research topics. ASF datasets are platform based and comprise multiple images that can be used in diverse ways. The frames are processed on demand for approved users. The DIFs are not flexible enough to enable our datasets to be accurately represented.

8. How well does the DIF solve your metadata storage, discovery, and/or interchange needs? Are there specific areas it is applicable to vs. areas where it is not applicable or not used?

It doesn't solve any of our needs.

9. How suitable is the DIF for representing your data holdings?

ASF's datasets cover a huge range of research areas and DIFs do not adequately represent that diversity.

10. Do you use the DIF to track your own data holdings (i.e. do you use DIF in your own data management activities)?

No

11. What are the limitations of the DIF? Does the DIF prevent you from doing things you would like to do? Does its use make other things more difficult?

It really has no impact on our organization. We only use the DIFs in the GCMD as required by NASA.

12. Do you think ESDS-RFC-012 (and thus the DIF) should be endorsed as a NASA Earth Science Data Systems Standard? Why or why not?

If it is valid for a sufficient number of datasets, then it could be endorsed as a standard.