

Interactive comment on “A guide for digitising manuscript climate data” by S. Brönnimann et al.

S. Brönnimann et al.

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Igor Smolyar makes useful comments on our manuscript. In his general comment, he highlights the need to establish “commonly accepted procedures”, but regrets that our paper is not well structured and that the aim of the work is not clear. We have tried to improve on these points, as is outlined below.

A. It was not our intention to come up with “commonly accepted procedures”, but we agree that our work might be a step in this direction and add a corresponding sentence in the introduction. The paper was restructured substantially and follows more closely the actual digitising process (for instance, we added a Section on the preparations (“Defining requirements and compiling information”), which contains information that was scattered across various sections of the manuscript). The original manuscript was structured around the choice of the digitising technique, which is arguably the single most important decision.

The referee emphasises that there are two categories of digitising projects: development of a multitask database or digitising projects designed to solve a specific problem. Our paper clearly concerns only the latter type of projects. This is now stated in the Introduction and is also added to the Abstract. The referee then goes on describing the differences, pointing to the fact that for category #2 projects the description of the quality is an inherent part. In the submitted manuscript, material on this topic was scattered over several Sections. In the revised manuscript we add several sentences on this topic in Section 2 and then again in Section 6.

B. It is true that we presented a list of questions rather than a list of rules, as the title “A guide...” would imply. We changed the Conclusions section completely and present actual guidelines rather than questions. This list of rules is far more comprehensive and does not focus only on the choice of the digitising technique. Nevertheless, for the decision concerning the digitising technique, the list of questions is important and hence we included the list as Table 2.

C. Reason #1: Concerning the aim of the work, we are more precise now in the introduction. The sentence “Following our publications we have repeatedly been contacted” is omitted. Rather, we clearly indicate now that our goal is to provide guidelines, which might eventually contribute to the development of a set of commonly accepted rules. The referee also asks how it is possible to check that the goals are reached. We try to give quantitative information (such as digitising speed and error rates). But in general this is difficult as we are not testing a hypothesis but take a retrospective view. We report our experience and try to prevent others from doing the same mistakes. The rules are based on our experience and can only be tested by experience.

Reason #2: It is true that we solely refer to category #2 projects. The referee asks us to describe how we have avoided the high risk. We originally stated that digitising projects can have a high risk of a “no result”, and that one can “reduce” this risk by considering a few points. However, the risk can not always be avoided. But it can be assessed. We reformulated the sentence accordingly. Also, in Section 2, we more clearly explain our

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scientific problems, including quality targets etc.

Reason #3. The revised manuscript gives more weight to the data quality. In Section 2 (see above), we added information on the quality from the perspective of the project requirements and in Section 6 we revisit these issues from the perspective of quality assurance.

D. 1) We think the categorisation of the data (we omit that expression in the revised manuscript) is important for many of the more technical decisions (reproduction technique, digitising technique, quality assurance). There is no simple relation between the categories and the decisions in the sense of a “cook book”. One can think of this categorisation as a questionnaire that must be filled out before the start of the project in order to make sure that no important piece of information is missing. This is written in the revised manuscript. Also, the questions that originally were in the conclusions section are now given in a table that matches the categorization relatively closely.

2) The limitations of the different methods are pointed out clearly. The only part where assumptions play a role is the quality control and validation part. Here, the assumptions are stated.

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