Reviewer's report

Title: The Tissue Microarray Data Exchange Specification: A Community-based, Open Source Tool for Sharing Tissue Microarray Data

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Reviewer: Catherine A Ball

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

Discretionary revisions

1. The manuscript is quite accessible those with limited experience with XML or data formats.
2. I would recommend some more detailed discussion of the reasons why a more structured data model and dtd were rejected. Especially in light of the efforts of the MAGE-ML community, readers will be interested in knowing first that a more rigorous structure was considered and second, why it was deemed not to meet the needs of the TMA community.
3. The authors do not refer to any effort to create controlled vocabularies or ontologies for the data that is to be used to describe TMAs. Considerable effort has been invested by many in the biological and informatic communities to construct ontologies. Although a common data structure is enormously useful, its value is diminished if different laboratories use different language to refer to the same concept.
4. The manuscript should be accepted, but I believe it would be more interesting and more pertinent if the TMA data exchange specification were discussed in the context of similar types of projects and specifications.

Competing interests:

None declared.