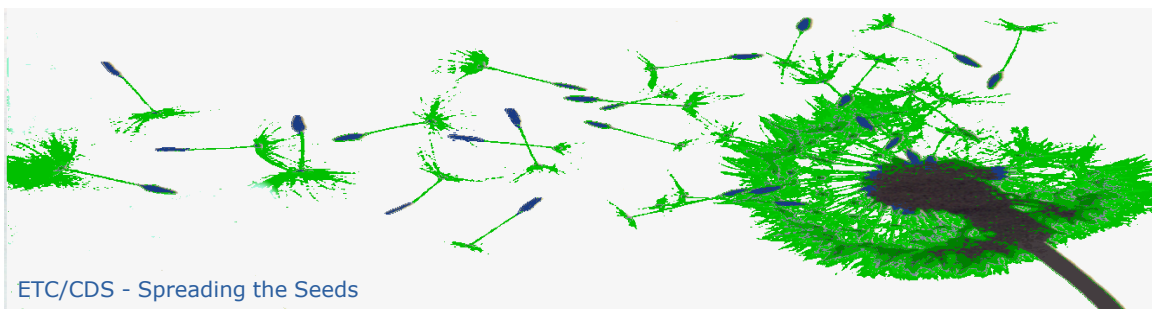


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ETC/CDS - Spreading the Seeds

The ETC/CDS Symposium 2001

We are happy to use this opportunity to announce our 8th annual symposium, to be held in Thun, Switzerland from October 6 to October 9, 2001 and invite you to attend and contribute. The theme of this year's meeting is **Building Environmental Web Services** and the symposium comes in a new format. For the first time it is jointly organised together with the annual ITTAG work conference.

Environmental reporting as a whole is subject to a major overhaul so that information can be collated with less burden, made available faster, reused better and shared transparently.

The purpose of this work conference is to provide a forum for learning and sharing experience on the solutions in this rapidly moving area. The conference begins with a set of tutorials to the systems and solutions used in and around the EIONET. Reflecting the current priorities of the European Topic Centre on Catalogue of Data Sources, it continues with invited speakers and voluntary presentations that portray the state of art and the best practices in enabling resource discovery, integrative dynamic web services, and environmental information interchange. Detailed information can be found at

<http://www.eionet.eu.int/events/cdsittag2001/>

The conference also marks the final public step for the CDS topic centre. When the EEA Management Board decided to renew the ETC/CDS for another three year period (1999-2001) in 1998 it was foreseen that the activities would gradually be integrated with the development of the European Environment Reference Centre (E2RC) hosted by the EEA. This process will be completed by the end of the year.

A large network has been built up around the ETC/CDS. The high number of participants attending the yearly workshops illustrates the size and scope of this network. Many of the participants have stated that they find the tools developed by ETC/CDS and the topics discussed highly relevant to their work. It seems therefore that both EEA and the countries benefit from a co-operation of national NRC's in developing both the necessary tools and their diverse implementation within the field of metadata technology.

The impact of the topic centres metadata work data is reflected in EIONET's ReportNet project

(<http://eea.eionet.eu.int:8980/irc/eionet-circle/eionet-telematics/info/data/en/reportnet05/>).

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CoastBase - Approaching the First Prototype

The goal of a virtual data warehouse for coastal and marine data is coming closer. The first prototype for internal testing will be available in July/August 2001. Since the last meetings and the clear definition of systems specification out of the user requirements the system has already been connected to some sources and a virtual metadata component for searching and accessing the data has been implemented. The metadata model is fully compliant with the standards GELOS, Dublin Core and EDMED and therefore supports harmonisation and exchange efforts in this field. Another component of interest is the thesaurus part which is based on GEMET, the widely used and supported environmental thesaurus that comes with 18 languages.

The system is using standard internet technologies like SOAP, XML, and CORBA to deal with the problems occurring in searching and accessing heterogeneous and distributed databases over the web.

The system architecture has four main parts:

The **CoastBase client** (based on HTML and Java) provides uniform, multilingual and interactive access to all CoastBase services.

The **virtual catalog** enables users to localise the information they need on the basis of metadata. Existing metadata catalogues are wrapped and integrated via mediators.

The **data access and manipulation services** are responsible for transforming and aggregating the data. They also have to address security problems.

The **feedback** component is supposed to improve the communication between the data user and the data provider. The data producer is informed how the information is used and how aggregation methods are rated by users. It also allows CoastBase users to upload the products they generated within or outside the CoastBase system.

UpdateCDS - Integration of JCDS and UpdateModule v. 2.0

A new version of the web based UpdateModule is under development and will be integrated with the JCDS into one package called '**UpdateCDS**'. Version 2.0 will be upgraded to Java 2 and therefore be more stable and performant. It supports features which seems to be necessary for a broader use in the network (e.g. SSL encrypting; print functionality, easy-to-install procedure, letter sensitive picklists etc.). Through this integration, both UpdateModule v.2.0 and the current JCDS will be using the same thesaurus and navigator component for search, retrieval and maintenance of the CDS /DIR. The beta version will be released at the beginning of September 2001.

The development is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forest and Landscape (BUWAL). The Swiss agency has already been involved and made use of the first version of the UpdateModule, using it in combination with all CDS tools (JCDS, WinCDS, WebCDS).

The advantage of the integrated CDS tool '**UpdateCDS**' is to have just one package for all current CDS purposes (search & retrieval; collect & maintain; indexing), easy to use over the Internet or Intranet without doubling efforts for installation and maintenance on different clients and/or servers. Therefore '**UpdateCDS**' will incorporate new technologies like Java WebStart.

Nevertheless the '**UpdateCDS**' will be fully compliant with WinCDS to furthermore support clients without a sufficient Internet infrastructure.

'**UpdateCDS**' is developed by disy Informationssysteme GmbH.

For further details and release announcement please visit our homepage

<http://www.mu.niedersachsen.de/cds>

UNEP has Adopted CDS Approach

The United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP) has developed a meta data approach for its INFOTERRA network, which is based on the CDS developments and a strategic alliance between EEA and UNEP. The tool is fully compliant with the core elements of the CDS and therefore with Dublin Core.

In phase I UNEP is building a complete address directory of institutions worldwide. This will be extended in phase II by adding a catalogue of the institution's resources (projects, documents etc.)

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WinCDS 2001 - The Final Package

WinCDS is currently treated with a general overhaul. It was necessary to upgrade the software to MSAccess2000 and simultaneously making it capable of processing Unicode. The Unicode standard is a character coding system designed to support the worldwide interchange, processing, and display of the written texts of the diverse languages of the modern world. In addition, it supports classical and historical texts of many written languages (<http://www.unicode.org/unicode/standard/standard.html>).

Through the use of MSAccess2000 we were also able to incorporate some functional improvements like drag-and-drop and the inclusion of tab folders, which made it necessary to adjust the design of the GUI. The final version will be available at the CDS Symposium in October or may be ordered via the topic centre:

etc/cds@numis.niedersachsen.de

WinCDS goes Arabic

The State Ministry of Environment of Syria, the Ministry of Environment of Lebanon and the Ministry of Environment of Jordan started a project in co-operation with the German Environment Agency and MVV Consultants and Engineers for two ambitious long term measurement campaigns on water and air quality.

This project now aims to collect all available information relevant for the measurement campaigns and to design an adequate information structure to be able to host and capitalize on the data that will be gathered in the campaigns.

During the first working group meeting in Beirut in July the decision was taken to evaluate the WinCDS as the strategic metainformation repository.

The evaluation foresees a bilingual English/Arabic version of the main user interface of WinCDS. The Dr. Lippke und Dr. Wagner GmbH was asked establish a co-operation with the European Topic Centre on Catalogue of Data Sources and propose a project plan.

The project is entirely third party funded.

GEMET 2001 - New Translations and Applications

EEA and ETC/CDS are continuously working towards a harmonised environmental terminology. This vocabulary is being used for indexing and retrieval within environmental information services as well as to support translation work in a multilingual European network.

The General Environmental Multilingual Thesaurus (GEMET) consists of a stable vocabulary of about 5400 terms currently supporting 15 languages. It will be published in a new release by the ETC/CDS in October. The version will be provided on a CD-ROM together with its browser ThesShow. For the 2001 release 4 languages will be added: Bulgarian, Czech, Russian and Slovenian.

This was achieved through the kind co-operation with National Focal points and other expert organisations of these countries. The translations are contribution of the countries to the EEA's workprogramm and have been financed through national funds or with additional funds from outside the EEA scheme.

While the amount of languages contained in the new GEMET release grows to 19, there are increasingly applications making use of it. A good example, reaching beyond governmental information services is the PLANETECOLOGIE project (<http://www.planetecologie.org/>), a Paris based NGO providing environmental information to the public. EEA itself is building new services in its European Environmental Reference Centre making use of harmonised terminology. The GEMET is presented with the help of ZOPE web-publishing technologies (<http://eea.eionet.eu.int>).

An emphasis is being put on providing explanations of terms in use based on definitions from GEMET and the new EEA Glossary. The glossary has a strong overlap with GEMET and contains additional terms relevant for the translation of EEA publications.

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UNEP's tool relies on GEMET for indexing and added some extra classes to collect more required details on addresses, e.g. like annual budget, description and geographic scope of work.

The application also incorporates an automatic notification system for verification and maintenance of addresses.



Dublin Core and Environmental Information Resources

As with other domains, the environmental information resources become increasingly available through the internet. In fact, most EIONET resources are circulated through e-EIONET, the telematic network of the organisation, and/or are being made available to the public through the Reference Centre and EEA's website.

The information resources are of several types with type document and type data accounting for more than 90%. Currently EIONET document type resources are described with the GELOS metadata element set.

This element set is compliant with the Dublin Core Element Set (DCES) <http://dublincore.org/documents/dces/>. DCES arrived at a point that it is robust enough to use it for EIONET metadata needs and EIONET is adopting DCES for description and discovery of its information resources for the ReportNet project.

<http://eea.eionet.eu.int:8980/irc/eionet-circle/eionet-telematics/info/data/en/reportnet05/>

Since DCES is geared towards discovery of resources on the internet, it is less appropriate for the description of data. However, it includes enough flexibility to extend it for these resources and those that are (not yet) online. DCMI has generated two namespaces for general use, DCES and the Dublin Core Qualifiers <http://dublincore.org/documents/dcmes-qualifiers/>. For the description of data then (this is a central part of the ReportNet initiative) additional elements are needed. The Swedish EnviroNet System was the first system to use DCES for the description and discovery of environmental information resources on the internet.

<http://smn.environ.se/miljonat/english/om-smn/om-smn.htm>

They have walked the well travelled path of extending DCES and DCQ with the 'missing' elements and qualifiers, while fitting them with their domain specific themes. With ReportNet the EEA chose a different approach. By defining an individual namespace for each data element, maximum flexibility is possible to cover the unnumbered sub-domains that together make up the environmental domain.

ETC/CDS is actively contributing to several DC working groups (dc-government, dc-agents, dc-administrative metadata).

DC-2001, the annual International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications will be held from October 22 to 26, 2001 at the National Institute of Informatics, Tokyo, Japan.

<http://www.nii.ac.jp/dc2001/>

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While aiming at streamlining the networks reporting system it is build on a solid metadata backbone.

EEA's metadata efforts will be coordinated by the former ETC/CDS project leader Stefan Jensen, who signed up with EEA as a national expert this july. While this move manifests EEA's commitment to continue ETC/CDS' successful work on metadata, it is important to point out that national contributions by the member states and the accession states to the discussion and working groups are vital for the continued success of the process.

This newsletter was edited by
Matthias Menger / Thom Pick -- ETC/CDS -- European
Topic Centre on Catalogue of Data Sources --
Archivstr. 2 * D - 30169 Hannover *
fone: +49-511-120-3470 * fax: +49-511-120-3697
eMail: etc/cds@numis.niedersachsen.de

New Organisational Structure at ETC/CDS

Since the last issue of our newsletter the ETC/CDS staff has faced some changes. Our 'jewel' Justina Lethen left to face the challenge of working in the public relation office of our host ministry. Christiane Giffei, our 'youngest' staff member, took up a job in the industry and the former project leader Stefan Jensen left for the EEA as national expert.

Thom Pick and Matthias Menger are still on board and stay tuned for the ETC/CDS and its goal. They will take care of the tasks until the end of 2001 when the contract with the EEA will expire.

