



Newsline

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Where it's at - resource discovery by place

by David Medyckyj-Scott and James Reid

The assertion that over three-quarters of all information has a geographic context should mean that for the purposes of information retrieval and for scholarly interpretation, geography should be as common a search criterion as, say, subject. In addition to indexing by 'what it is about' (subject content), we ought to be able to index cultural, statistical and most other scientific information by 'where it is about'.

However, (and perhaps inevitably), this is easier said than done.

Together with national and international partners, staff at EDINA are working on a range of projects in order to realise the potential of geo-referencing for more general resource discovery and as infrastructure for digital libraries. A fuller account of the relevant projects can be found at <http://edina.ac.uk/projects/>. Here we offer an overview of some basic ideas underlying this project work.

Our efforts can be viewed as part of a larger undertaking in the development of digital libraries, one which aims to unpack the subject field in order to provide the basis for indexing by topic, time, people and place. What is special about indexing on place is that spatial referencing should relate to the co-ordinate systems used by map makers (e.g. latitude/longitude and/or a national grid), and not just names for use in a nominal thesaurus such as that used for topics. It is this spatial co-ordinate referencing that enables



Geo-referencing can be an imprecise process.

both a geographic user interface and the linkages between the many and various geographic 'vocabularies' in which the geographical characteristics of information resources are most often expressed: typically those of place name, address (e.g. postcode) and areal classification (e.g. administrative areas).

We have a three-part strategy for our work. The first part, geo-tagging, is concerned with the metadata used to describe resources: ensuring that there are geo-specific metadata tags, and that they contain geographic terms that have known spatial co-ordinates, or a footprint. Typically, the latter are stored in gazetteers. The second part, geo-parsing, is concerned with automatically processing the text of documents in order to recognise

geographic place names, and hence enhance the metadata description, which is often poor with respect to geography. The third part, geo-crosswalking, provides the facility for mapping (pun intended) one geographical view of the world to another geographical view e.g. from counties to place names or from parishes to postcodes.

It is perhaps easier to appreciate the benefits gained from taking an explicitly geographical perspective by looking at some concrete examples.

For someone searching an on-line resource for published papers on the decline of the Liverpool docks, it might help to be told about papers on the same topic about Birkenhead and Bootle docks.

Likewise an architect interested in photographs of bridges along the Thames, would much prefer searching an on-line database using that query than have to find (most likely by using a map), and then enter into the search, the names of the different settlements to be found along the Thames.

A report on the health of people in Clydeside should be indexed with the appropriate geographic footprint, so that a search for reports on health of people in Govan should return the Clydeside report as a potential hit because Govan is within Clydeside.

The key to answering such queries is having resources indexed using spatial co-ordinates and a facility that can

Cont. on p. 3

In this issue Where it's at - resource discovery by place - p.1 ... Digimap news - p.2 ... UKBORDERS: a new service begins - p.2 ... EDINA to host Glgateway - p.3 ... No subscription charge for Education Media OnLine - p.3 ... Statistical Accounts and Athens - p.3 ... New agreements for EDINA and Ovid services - p.3 ... Art Abstracts and Art Index Retrospective - p.3 ... High level of accessibility at EDINA - p. 4 ... AGI Scotland site visit to the University of Edinburgh - p.4 ... New staff - p.4 ... Forthcoming Events - p.4

Digimap news

Digimap joins Athens Single Sign-On

The EDINA **Digimap** service now uses **Athens Single Sign-On** (SSO), which enables users to log in once to access a range of SSO authenticated services from EDINA and other Athens-authenticated service providers.

Note that the implementation of SSO does not change the current registration process. As part of the agreement with Ordnance Survey, users' credentials will still be checked against the Digimap registration database prior to gaining access to the service. If the user is not registered with Digimap in the usual way, they will not be able to access the service.

Also note that for **Digimap Carto**, which uses a Java applet, there is a special procedure to log out.

If you have any questions about Athens SSO within the Digimap service, contact the EDINA Helpdesk, at edina@ed.ac.uk.

Digimap - a new look

Digimap has a new look for 2003/4. In response to user feedback, both in the course of EDINA's support work and from a user questionnaire posted on the EDINA web site in May, the Digimap interface has been re-designed. This has been done primarily to improve the navigation, and to raise the profile of facilities that users may be unaware of, such as **Postcode Query**.

The functionality within Digimap is unchanged, but links between facilities and to help pages are more accessible. Gazetteer services have been re-named, and there is a new simple place name search called **Gazetteer Query**. In line with Digimap's move to Athens Single Sign-On, a logout button is present throughout the service. The new and old interfaces will both be available for the Autumn term, to allow for updating of local documentation and teaching materials. Feedback on the new interface is welcome.

New look Home Page for Digimap

UKBORDERS: A new service begins

UKBORDERS is the name of the Geography Data Unit for the ESRC/JISC Population Census Initiative and an online service that has provided the UK research and teaching community with access to digital boundary data since 1994.

On 25th September 2003 EDINA will begin the phased release of a **new UKBORDERS service**, complete with a wide range of quality controlled digital boundary datasets.

The first phase of release will introduce a new facility called **Easy Download**. This will provide the most commonly requested UKBORDERS boundaries as national datasets pre-built in popular spatial data formats. New 2001 Population Census digital boundaries and look-up tables will be available for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Downloading these datasets will be quick and easy, involving just two or three clicks of the mouse.

The **Boundary Data Selector**, a new tab-based interface for the data download facility will be released in Phase 2. This is a simpler and more intuitive interface allowing users to download a given boundary set, for specific areas of interest, in the format of their choice. It includes extra features, such

New look Home Page for UKBORDERS

as a **Map Preview** which uses Ordnance Survey back-drop maps.

Extensive metadata for UKBORDERS boundaries will be released in Phase 3.

Both old and new services will run in parallel for some months, allowing users to migrate and update teaching documentation.

For more information, go to <http://edina.ac.uk/ukborders/>.

Where it's at - cont. from p. 1

answer questions about geography. Such a facility would know about the 'nearness' of the Liverpool Docks to Birkenhead in the Wirral and Bootle in Sefton. It could crosswalk between the geography that represents Clydeside (say a 'footprint' of the urban area) to the sub-geographies within it, not just places but other geographies such as postcodes, the civil parishes, wards and so on. It could also answer a question about which places fell within, say, one kilometre of the River Thames to produce a list of places to use as search terms for the photographs.

EDINA, working with the UK Data Archive, have developed just such a facility for crosswalking. As part of the JISC Shared Services Programme, we have built an online digital gazetteer service to support geographical searching within the JISC Information Environment - **geoXwalk**. In addition to supporting geographic searching, the gazetteer service can be used to geo-parse and geo-tag catalogue records, metadata and web pages. geoXwalk is already being used in another trial JISC service - **Go-Geo!** - and has recently been incorporated into Archaeology Data Service's HEIRPORT as part of a demonstrator project for the JISC's Common Information Environment.

Interest in gazetteer services is growing world-wide through a number of initiatives. All recognise that geo-referencing is needed in a world of distributed information, for finding out what is where, and for indexing information objects so that they are 'geographically aware'. We encourage everyone interested in finding out more about geoXwalk, gazetteers, geographic referencing, to contact us.

geoXwalk: <http://www.geoXwalk.ac.uk>

Go-Geo!: <http://hds.essex.ac.uk/Go-Geo/>

Alexandria Digital Library:

<http://www.alexandria.ucsb.edu/adl.html>

ADS HIERPORT: <http://ads.abds.ac.uk/heirport/>

JISC Common Information Environment:

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=wg_cie_home

JISC Shared Services Programme:

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=programme_shared_services

EDINA to host GIGateway

EDINA is pleased to announce that it has been awarded the contract to host the **GIGateway** service (<http://www.gigateway.org.uk/>), an information service which provides access to geospatial metadata in the United Kingdom, and to assist in its on-going development. The service was launched on Thursday 28 August.

Funded by the Government through the National Interest Mapping Services Agreement (NIMSA), GIGateway is a web service aimed at increasing awareness and access to geographical information in the UK, and offers two online services: the **Data Locator**, which helps people find and use accurate UK geographic information from a range of sources; and the **Data Directory**, which assists people in finding organisations who supply geographic information products, services and data.

GIGateway was formerly known as askGIRaffe.

No subscription charge for Education Media OnLine

The JISC have confirmed that **Education Media OnLine** will continue to be free of charge to subscribing institutions until 31 July 2005, the entire term of the current sub-licence for the service.

About 130 institutions now subscribe to the service, two thirds from Higher Education, one third from Further Education.

The service is still developing. A selection of films from the Imperial War Museum are the latest additions to the service. In October, the first set of highlight extracts from the IWF collection (the IWF in Germany is one of the world's leading science film institutes) is expected to be added to the service. This means that Education Media OnLine will soon comprise material from ten collections.

Further training workshops for Education Media OnLine will be held this autumn and winter, details of which will be available on the EDINA web site at <http://edina.ac.uk/events/courses.shtml>.

Statistical Accounts and Athens

Access to the **Statistical Accounts of Scotland** subscription service will be available via the **Athens Single Sign-On** (SSO) authentication system from 15 September 2003. This replaces the IP address checking mechanism for higher and further education institutions, and offers improved security together with off-campus access. SSO enables users to leave one Athens-authenticated service and use a different SSO-enabled one without the need to re-enter a username and password.

Institutions that are not eligible for Athens will continue to be offered access by IP address checking or with usernames issued by the EDINA Helpdesk.

New agreements for EDINA and Ovid services

EDINA and Ovid are pleased to announce the continued availability of five popular subscription databases for the coming academic session: **Inspec, EconLit, MLA Bibliography, PAIS International, and CAB Abstracts.**

Institutions can now choose to activate **Balsa**, a journals locator, within EDINA bibliographic databases. For more information on this see <http://edina.ac.uk/balsa/>

To request a 30-day institution-wide trial or to subscribe to any of the databases, email edina@ed.ac.uk.

Art Abstracts and Art Index Retrospective

On Thursday 31 July, EDINA ceased to be the service provider for access to Art Abstracts and Art Index Retrospective. We would like to thank our users for their support: from the lowly expectation of a dozen subscriptions, the number of subscribing institutions rose to nearly sixty over the five year period.

From Friday 1 August 2003 the services have been provided directly by the publisher, HW Wilson.

For further details about migration of these services to HW Wilson, please contact the JISC Helpdesk-jisc2@kcl.ac.uk.

High level of accessibility at EDINA

A recent audit of the EDINA web site found “a very high level of accessibility.” Any problems discovered were deemed minor and trivial to remedy.

Following on from the JISC-funded accessibility audit of 2001, EDINA commissioned a new audit earlier this year from the Digital Media Access Group, based at the University of Dundee, to take a fresh look at the general EDINA web pages, and to include the service interfaces of Education Media OnLine and the Statistical Accounts of Scotland.

The original audit reviewed a draft version of the EDINA web pages, and though the recommendations were taken on board when designing the final version of the site, it was considered useful to subject it to the same level of scrutiny after having been in service for a while.

The new report said that “the site had evidently been designed with accessibility in mind, with all information keyboard-accessible, and additional features added to ease navigation and understanding for users browsing with assistive technologies such as screen readers.”

Whilst naturally pleased with the outcome of the audit, we at EDINA are not resting on our laurels, and have been busy implementing this new set of recommendations.

One of the main recommendations was to implement an “Accessibility Statement” to help users to understand how the site is constructed, what facilities are available, and what barriers still remain. Whilst we will be authoring statements for each service, an overall statement for the web site can now be found at <http://edina.ac.uk/accessibility.shtml>.

Forthcoming events

More events can be found on <http://edina.ac.uk/newsevents.shtml>

FERL Annual Conference, 24–25 November 2003, Novotel Hotel London Hammersmith, London.

Online Information, 2–4 December 2003, Olympia Grand Hall, London.
<http://www.online-information.co.uk/>

Edinburgh Data & Information Access

<http://edina.ac.uk>

EDINA, based at Edinburgh University Data Library, is a JISC-funded national datacentre. It offers the UK tertiary education and research community networked access to a library of data, information and research resources. All EDINA services are free of charge at the point of use. For information on institutional subscription fees, visit the EDINA web site, or contact us by email (details below).

EDINA services are:

- AGDEX
- BIOSIS
- CAB Abstracts
- Digimap®
- EconLit
- Education Media OnLine
- Ei Compendex®
- Index to The Times 1790-1980
- Inspec
- MLA International Bibliography
- PAIS International
- SALSER
- The Statistical Accounts of Scotland
- UKBORDERS™
- UPDATE

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Staff News

Nathalie Schulz has joined EDINA as a Project Officer with the SUNCAT Project. Nathalie is a professional librarian with extensive experience in cataloguing and serials control, and was recently employed at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia.

Zena Mulligan joined EDINA at the end of August 2003 as a part-time SUNCAT Project Officer. Zena is retaining her current position with the Edinburgh University Library on a part-time basis assisting with the administration of electronic publications. In her new position she will be working on the liaison and user requirements aspects of SUNCAT.

AGI visit to the University of Edinburgh

The **Association for Geographic Information (AGI)** will be holding an open-day at the University of Edinburgh in October.

Co-hosted by EDINA and the Institute of Geography, the focus will be on **Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI)** related technologies. EDINA is hosting **GIgateway** on behalf of the AGI (see article on p. 3) and is pleased to announce that a member of the GIgateway team will also be participating.

The afternoon will take an open-day format, with displays, demonstrations and staff available for discussion of the various services and projects. It will run from 13:00 to 16:30 and, although visitors are welcome at any time, will begin with a formal welcome. During the afternoon, there will be a presentation on the subject of SDI in relation to the UK academic sector.

Situated in central Edinburgh, within walking distance of Waverley station, the event will take place in the University Library, George Square. Tea and coffee will be provided.

Where: Wolfson Suite, University of Edinburgh Main Library, George Square, Edinburgh.

When: 1300 - 1630 Friday 3 October 2003.

EDINA contacts

Helpdesk: Helen McVey, Paula Cuccurullo, Kirsten Thomlinson and Andrew Bevan
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EDINA subscription and registration

Many EDINA services require the completion of a licence agreement before those services can be made available to users. Free 30-day trials are available for most of these services.

Other services are free of charge, with or without a licence agreement.

Please see the EDINA web site for details of the requirements of individual services:
<http://edina.ac.uk/access/subscribe.shtml>

Newsline is published by the Edinburgh University Data Library. Suggestions and comments on *Newsline* may be sent to edina@ed.ac.uk

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