

Metasearch Infrastructure Project: Update

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The Metasearch Infrastructure Project seeks to develop a robust set of tools for crafting tailored search interfaces to diverse information resources for specific audiences and/or purposes. For additional background information, including previous updates, see the project web site at <<http://www.cdlib.org/inside/projects/metasearch/>>.

CDL Developments

Metasearch Software

Since the last update on March 1, 2006, we have successfully completed the National Science Digital Foundation grant, during which we demonstrated the integration of NSDL content along with licensed journal content (see Figure 1).

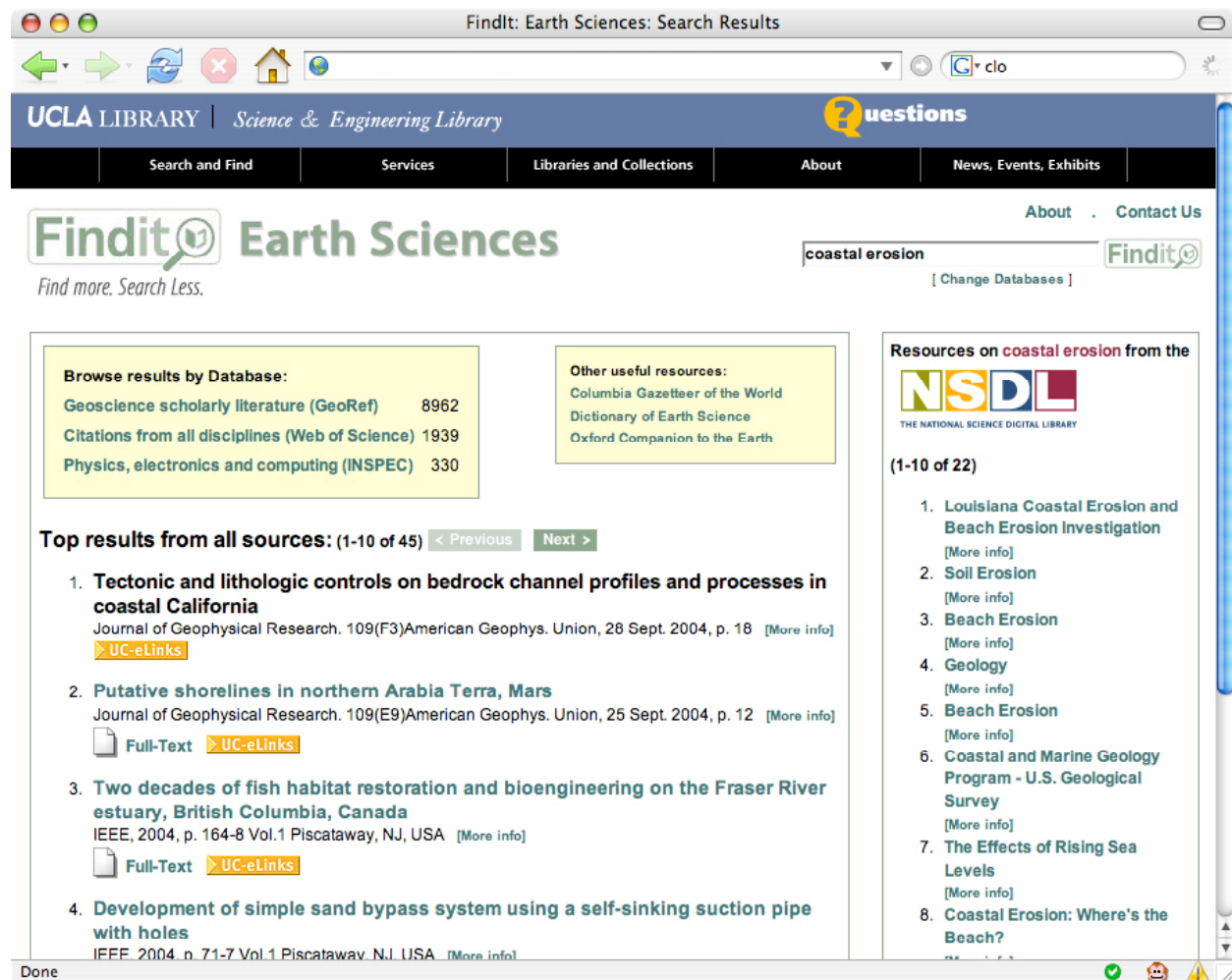


Figure 1. Prototype integrating NSDL content with search results from licensed databases.

Usability assessment work was performed on the prototype at UCLA by CDL (Felicia Poe and Jane Lee) and UCLA (Elaine Adams) staff. The report is available at <http://www.cdlib.org/inside/projects/metasearch/nsdl/CDL_0333710_A5.pdf>. Screenshots of this prototype can be found at <<http://www.cdlib.org/inside/projects/metasearch/metasearchscreens.ppt>>.

In working with the Common User Interface (CUI) based on Java Server Pages (JSPs) and Struts to develop this prototype, we determined that it was too complicated and time consuming to deploy for the potentially large number of search portals we expect. Therefore, we embarked on a refactor of the user interface code in Ruby on Rails at the beginning of this year. This work is ongoing, and we hope to have it completed by the end of March.

We suffered a setback in this work due to a hard disk failure in late January. The timing of this could not have been better, as we were able to join the v. 4 early adopter program at the last minute. By the end of February we will have installed version 4 of MetaLib, which will include the ability to provide faceted browsing of search results. This ability may not immediately be available through our user interface code, but it will be added as we can get to it.

Campus Developments

Elaine Adams from UCLA assisted us with NSDL prototype usability testing. UCLA is also partnering with us to do a test deployment of the metasearch infrastructure, and through this process inform our decision-making regarding deployment of this service.

Co-chaired by Marta Brunner and Caroline Kelley, the UCLA project will work with a campus academic department to select appropriate sources and build a search portal to their requirements using the metasearch infrastructure. UCLA has decided to change subject focus from the previous project on European Studies. UCLA and CDL staff will record the time and level of staff required to perform various deployment tasks. Once the prototype is complete, tests such as load testing will be performed. The main deliverable from this project is a report that summarizes experiences of CDL and campus staff, and makes recommendations regarding production deployment. The project runs from now until late Fall of this year. If the end result is a decision to deploy this infrastructure in production, one of the first projects will be an undergraduate search portal.

As time allows, CDL may also configure a test instance of the metasearch infrastructure for UC Merced to compare against their existing (Innovative Interfaces, Inc.) metasearch service.