Update on SIGMOD On-Line Services

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In the previous issue of the *Record*, we described the initial set of services available from the ACM SIGMOD Information Server:

- Past issues of the *Record* and of the *Record* funding column.
- Requests for proposals from funding agencies.
- Calls for papers/attendance from approximately 65 database conferences.

To date, the root document of the SIGMOD Information Server has been used (accessed) approximately a thousand times from approximately 220 machines. There's plenty of bandwidth left on the server, and people wishing to become users of the service are invited to look at the previous issue of the *Record* for general instructions on getting started, or to look at the file howToBrowseAndWhy.txt in the anonymous ftp directory /pub on bunny.cs.uiuc.edu. In this column, we summarize recent additions to the SIGMOD Information Server and to the best means of accessing the server, through the internet browser Mosaic.

1 New on the Server

The SIGMOD Information Server is an archive for essentially all material on the dbworld mailing list, as well as for much other material. In addition to the items mentioned earlier, the Information Server currently contains:

- A compilation of free and/or public domain database software (ConceptBase, Postgres, Ingres, ODE, Coral, Exodus, 007, RDBI, SLG, and MultiCal), including direct hypertext links to the systems.
- A listing of job opportunities in the database area, currently containing roughly several hundred job announcements with approximately 50 employers.
- The latest news stories on events relevant to database funding, such as the recent tumult over the role of NSF and over the fate of the HPCC program, and the full text of Clinton's National Information Infrastructure Proposal including sound clips and pictures.
- A compilation of suggestions and hints on how to get funding for database research, as well as a collection of suggestions for success in an academic career.
- Hypertext links to a variety of on-line database publication servers, including on-line university technical report archives and IEEE's new on-line journal services.
- A large bibliography of database publications, currently browsable and soon to be accessible under a full text search facility.

2 New in Mosaic

The Mosaic internet browser was available for X platforms when the last issue of this column was published. On November 1, release 2.0 of the X version of Mosaic will be available, with some exciting new features for database people. In addition, the first full release of Mosaic for Macintoshes and for PCs under Windows will take place on November 1, so PC and Mac users should find internet browsing easy thereafter. The PC and Mac software will be available on the ftp server ftp.ncsa.uiuc.edu in directory /Mosaic/Windows and /Mosaic/Mac.

Release 2.0 of Xmosaic has three features I find particularly appealing: first, the long timeouts when one tries to connect to unavailable sites have been greatly reduced. Second, Mosaic now supports form-based access to information (i.e., hypertext documents written in the html language can now include easy formatting commands that create forms on the screen). In other words, Mosaic now supports what is perhaps the most popular mode of access to databases: filling out a form. This opens up the possibility of on-line access to databases over the internet. One can view this feature in action by looking at URL http://doccenter.com/doccenter/home.html within Mosaic (use the FILE and OPEN buttons in the top-line menu): a commercial company called Document Center has an on-line form-based facility for ordering government standards documents, as well as a browsing facility for finding the documents one wants to order. Thus one can order anything from the three ISO SQL standards documents to the ten ISO documents containing condom requirements, without ever leaving the screen. Third, Mosaic now supports attachment of executable files to buttons; before, pressing a button always meant traversing a hyperlink, but now a button press can cause an arbitrary file on the server to be executed. As an example use of these new facilities, perhaps some of the public domain database software providers can use the new forms facility and the executable buttons to create little demos that one can run while browsing through the available software.

3 Help Wanted

I am looking for a person or persons to help in filing away articles from dbworld and other sources on the Information Server. If you would like to help, please send email to winslett@cs.uiuc.edu. If you would like to help in other ways (e.g., improving parts of the server), I would also like to hear from you.