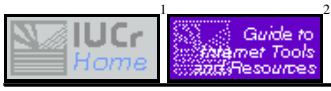

Crystallography World Wide – W3 Virtual Library in Crystallography

Origin and History

Berners–Lee originated the World Wide Web Virtual Library[3] to create a global, distributed and authoritative resource structuring the information available over the W3. The work force necessary to accomplish this task is drawn up on a voluntary basis from people knowledgeable in a particular subject area or of a particular geographic or national region. In true W3 style, W3VL was designed as a distributed system, each site operating its own W3 server. A certain style in the formatting of the individual components of the W3VL was requested to create a unified presentation. The W3VL main server provides both the administrative organisation and a central point for lists of hyperlinks to the individual subject and regional servers. In turn the latter provide global indexes of W3 servers relevant to their subject matter. The content of the individual contributions to the W3VL varies enormously from one subject area to another, this being due essentially to human rather than technical factors. At one extreme there are W3VL sites providing no more than a single list of relevant servers. At the other, the editor has created a virtual encyclopædia of his subject area.

The Crystallography section of the W3VL[4] was registered with the W3O in September 1994 and a status report[5] written in March 1995 gives much background history to its setting up. The name **Crystallography World Wide** was adopted for this resource in Autumn 1995. The server contains sections on the following subjects:

- **What's New**[6]
- Submission[7] of information
- Crystallography World Wide Editor[8]
- **Contents**: | Conferences[9] | Crystallographers[10] | Data and Databases[11] | Discussions[12] | Employment[13] | Geographic index[14] | History[15] | Institutions[16] | Journals[17] | News[18] | Projects[19] | Radiation facilities[20] | Software[21] | Suppliers[22] | Teaching and Education[23] | Subjects related to Crystallography[24] |

and the reader is left to browse through the server to judge its style and content. The content of the section on Software[25] is maintained by Yves Epelboin,[26] Paris with the support of a grant from the CNRS and the French Ministry of National Education whilst the rest of the server content is maintained by H.D. Flack,[27] Geneva with the support of the University of Geneva.[28]

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1 http://www.iucr.ac.uk/iucr–top/welcome.html
2 int.index.html
3 http://www.w3.org/vl/Overview.html
4 http://www.unige.ch/crystal/w3vlc/crystal.index.html
5 ../w3vlc/crystal.mar95.html
6 crystal.whatsnew.html
7 crystal.submit.html
8 crystal.editor.html
9 crystal.index.html#conference
10 crystal.index.html#people
11 data.index.html
12 crystal.index.html#discussion
13 job.index.html
14 geo.index.html
15 crystal.index.html#history
16 soc.index.html
17 crystal.index.html#journal
18 crystal.index.html#news
19 crystal.index.html#projects
20 rad.index.html
21 http://www.lmcp.jussieu.fr/sincris/logiciel
22 sup.index.html
23 edu.index.html
24 crystal.index.html#related
25 http://www.lmcp.jussieu.fr/sincris/logiciel
26 http://www.lmcp.jussieu.fr/~epelboin/
27 ../ahdf/Howard.Flack.html
28 http://www.unige.ch/

Synergy

It has been found very effective to work in conjunction with the usenet newsgroups bionet.xtallography[29] and especially sci.techniques.xtallography.[30] Newsgroups are very good at drawing attention to new information, allow the originator to post one's own information directly but are poor at structuring. On the other hand, W3 pages are excellent for the capacity to index information, to access it in a straightforward way through the use of hyperlinks but are relatively poor at drawing attention to new information.

Suppliers of information are thus encouraged to post their message in one of the above newsgroups which are very regularly scanned by the *Crystallography World Wide Editor*. Failing this, direct e–mail communication to the W3VL Crystallography editor is used but this is now only a rather secondary source of information. There are also one or two mailing lists providing articles. Information presented as ink or carbon on paper is refused. Articles are hardly ever presented marked up in HTML, the native 'language' of the W3. This might at first sight seem discouraging but on reflection it is not surprising. Those people having experience with HTML are those running a W3 server and they will most often store their article on their own server and consequently only need to distribute its URL.

For this type of server to be a success and attractive to its user community it is considered essential to capitalize on the strong points of Internet technology. This leads us to try and provide a 24–hour service in the display of new information and in the correction and modification of existing information. It is our opinion that the intervention of a human editor is essential for success, as we suspect that free and uncontrolled submission of information to a server would become unruly.

Mirrors

Starting sometime at the beginning of 1996, the *Crystallography World Wide* (CWW) pages in Geneva were restructured to enable them to be exported both by HTTP and by anonymous FTP protocols. With this work completed it has been possible through the kind cooperation of various sites to mirror CWW around the world. Mirror sites work by using public domain software to automatically download new or changed files once very 24 hours. The existence of such sites reduces considerably network delays due to slow links.

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[29] news:bionet.xtallography
[30] news:sci.techniques.xtallography
[31] int.index.html
[32] ../ahdf/Howard.Flack.html