

MDID Users Special Interest Group Meeting: VRA conference, April 10, 2003

Christina Updike began the meeting with a “Welcome” to all attendees and then introduced the James Madison University MDID Team representatives:
Christina Updike, Visual Resources Specialist, School of Art and Art History
Andreas Knab, Computer Systems Engineer, Center for Instructional Technology
Sandy Maxfield, Director, Instructional Technology and Distance Learning

Sandy Maxfield then polled the Users Group participants with a show of hands, asking: How many have installed MDID, working on implementation? How many are exploring options? How many have implemented MDID, using in teaching? There were 46 total participants. She then gave the agenda for the meeting:

Brief Overview of MDID
Sneak Preview of MDID Version 2
Group Information Exchange
Individual follow-up and demos

Sandy then described the Madison Digital Image Database as an online database system for managing and delivering digital images. With MDID, instructors can generate online slide shows, which can be presented in the classroom, annotated for student review, and archived for testing or future use. The MDID is more than a digital image database system; it is a teaching tool.

Sandy provided the attendees with recent MDID updates. The system was made available for free download in October 2001. There are currently 200 members on the users list serve, and at least 22 institutions have implemented the system. In March 2003, JMU received a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, in support of further development of the MDID and collaboration with ARTstor. MDID Version 2 is in development now, with a target release date of fall 2003.

Andreas Knab presented an overview of the new features of the Madison Digital Image Database version 2. The new features include: multiple collections and custom catalogs; cross-collection searching; personal collections; an enhanced user interface; simple data exchange through XML; and distribution under an open source license with full API documentation. He then described the enhancements more fully.

Cross-Collection Searches: Keyword searches will be possible across multiple collections. The collection administrator can specify which fields are keyword-searchable to enhance cross-collection search results.

Individual Collection Searches: A keyword search will be possible across all fields or within individual fields of a collection. Date fields allow additional search criteria based on years or year ranges.

Catalog Definition Editor: Catalogs for new and existing collections can be more easily edited. The administrator can set a range of search and display options for every field.

Catalog Content Editor: New catalogs allow multiple values per field. There will be virtually no length restriction on text fields. The administrator will be able to specify internal and display values for date fields. Field specifications can be Dublin Core, Dublin Core qualified, and/or custom catalogs.

Slide Sorter: Users will be able to organize images for a slideshow using a “drag & drop” feature. While organizing images, users can move potentially unwanted images to a scratch area, where they could be retrieved for later use. Within the slide sorter module, users will be able to view catalog data and to annotate images.

Open Source Distribution: Full and unrestricted access to the Application Programming Interface (API) documentation will be released with MDIDv2. With open source distribution, programming efforts can be shared and all modifications can be redistributed.

Additional Features: Administrators will have more flexible assignment of user privileges. There will be support for simple image and data import. Users will be able to create personal collections, copy image annotation and designate a “favorites” collection of images.

Database Support: Several enterprise level and open source databases will be supported. Other ANSI SQL compatible databases can be used by implementing a simple database connector.

Release information: MDIDv2’s targeted release date will be fall 2003. The supported databases are Microsoft SQL Server 2000 and MySQL 4 on any operating system. The application server requires Microsoft Windows 2000 Server with .NET. Future releases may be compatible with mono (<http://www.go-mono.com/>) to support Linux application servers, depending on availability of mono.

Questions and Answers

What is the XML schema?

The exact way the data import/export will work has not been determined yet. It is likely that every collection will have its own XML schema depending on the catalog fields that are defined for this collection. The Dublin Core will play a major role when importing and exporting data, so the DC XML schemas will probably be supported.

How will the “private collections” feature work?

The privilege to create a private collection can be granted on an individual user basis. Users with this privilege can upload their own images for use in their own slideshows;

there is no way to share images in a private collection with other users. Images can be given a title and a description, no other cataloging is supported.

Where do annotations reside in the database?

There are two different kinds of annotations. Images from any collection can be annotated. In addition, slides (i.e. images in a slideshow) can have an additional annotation which only appears in that particular slideshow. Both kinds of annotations are bound to a user and not visible by others.

Has the security issue regarding clear text passwords been addressed in the new version?

Yes. If an SSL certificate is installed on the web server, all passwords will be transferred over the secure connection. Other traffic may still be transferred over a regular HTTP connection.

Is there a way to track circulation records or will there be a statistics module for hits per image in MDIDv2?

There probably will be simple usage statistics, although no details have been determined yet.

Will it be easier to create the three sizes of images?

The new import tool will have the ability to automatically create the three different sized versions of every image.

Will there be enhanced zooming in the ImageViewer such as Mr. Sid files or Zoomify?

No enhancements to the zooming feature currently available in the ImageViewer were made in the upcoming MDIDv2; however it is on a future “features” list.

Is there a way to search the catalog in the Edit Catalog?

For users with the “edit catalog” privilege, there will be a direct link from every record on any search result screen to the catalog editor for that record.

What is the collaboration between MDID and the Mellon’s ARTstor initiative?

This is a new grant funding initiative between James Madison University and the Mellon; therefore the specifics of the collaboration are just being explored. JMU is very pleased and excited to begin the collaboration.

Will MDIDv2 support multimedia files (moving pictures, audio)?

No, but that capability is on a future “features” list.

Can a user pre-set the split screen feature in the ImageViewer, so that every image in a slideshow appears in split screen?

No. Whenever the screen is split, the position in the slideshow remains unchanged though, so that it is fairly easy to achieve the desired effect.

If you use accent marks in artists' names, the search results does not bring up all versions of the name, with or without accents?

The way special characters are handled depends heavily on the database that is used. Both Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL, if configured correctly, handle special characters in a way that allows searches for names without regard for accent marks or other language specific characters.

Interest was expressed in having the capability of a hierarchical display of images in the thumbnail size.

This will not be implemented in the upcoming version.

Will error reporting be improved in the ImageViewer?

Yes. Error messages will be clearer to allow for easier trouble shooting.

What hardware will be needed for MDIDv2?

The hardware requirements have not been determined yet.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. The MDID representatives were available for individual demonstrations of the software following the meeting.