Intro & Recent Advances

Remote Data Access via OPeNDAP Web Services

For the ESIP Summer-2016 OPeNDAP Workshop
Wednesday, July 20th, 2016, 13:00-17:00

Excerpted from a 2015 presentation to the
CEOS Working Group on Information Systems & Services (WGISS)

Dave Fulkier, President of OPeNDAP, Inc.
subcontractor to Raytheon for NASA/ESDIS

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Part I

Introduction to OPeNDAP* Web Services

* OPeNDAP is an organization and an acronym:

“Open-source Project for a Network Data Access Protocol”
OPeNDAP Concepts
originally from Distributed Ocean Data System (DODS) circa 1994

- URL ≈ dataset*
- URL with constraint ≈ subset
- Retrieve
- Retrieval protocol built in to multiple libraries
  - flexible data typing
  - many, diverse clients
  - dataset descriptions (metadata)
  - dataset content (typed/structured)
  - arrays (~coverages)
  - tables (~features)

*dataset ≈ granule
URL ≈ Granule*  
per OPeNDAP’s Data Access Protocol (DAP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain name often is an organization’s web server.</th>
<th>Servers often have hierarchical collections.</th>
<th>Each URL references a distinct DAP “dataset.”</th>
<th>Suffixes specify return types.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Depending on suffix, DAP returns metadata or content, with options for human- or machine-readable forms (XML, NetCDF4…). Suffix “dmr” → metadata only.

*dataset ≈ granule

http://laboratory.edu/device/experiment/granule.dmr
OPeNDAP

Datatype Philosophy

- Internal data model has few data types
  - For simplicity…
- Types are domain-neutral but flexible
  - Structures & attributes ➔ rich syntax & semantics
- These types support many domain-specific needs
  - A recent crawl* (23,000 domains in .gov, .edu, .org) found >1400 collections with DAP servers

* By the National Snow & Ice Data Center (for NSF/EarthCube)
OPeNDAP services

Function as Middleware

- Data ingest via encoding-specific adapters
  - Handlers for a growing set of source-data types
- Multiple response encodings
  - Native DAP—useful in Python, Java, C++, Fortran…
  - netCDF (also GeoTIFF where possible)
  - XML (⇒ HTTP via style sheets)
  - Recently added: WMS, W10n (JSON), WCS (beta)
Architectural Overview of Hyrax

a widely-used DAP server

- Data-User App (python, java, Native-DAP Libraries)
- Data-User App (other standard) OGC-Compliant
- Data User, Browser-Only XML or JSON

DAP(2|4), netCDF, XML, GeoTIFF, WMS, JSON…

Core DAP Services (Hyrax Front-End)

DAP-Extending Services

Apache Server Framework

Other Web Services

Other Web Services

Hyrax Back-End Server with Encoding-Specific Handlers

- HDF files
- netCDF files
- text files
- SQL database
- extensible…
URL + Query ➔ Subset & (future) results from other server functions

http://…/granule.nc4?dap4.ce=constraints&dap4.func=functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dataset identifier as above, except return-type is NetCDF4 (= HDF)</th>
<th>DAP “constraint expressions” yield sub-arrays &amp; other proper subsets</th>
<th>DAP4 “function expressions” enable extensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constraints specify subsets by variable names, by array indices &amp; (for tables) by content. Likely extensions include statistics, UGRID subsetting, feature extraction…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The query form &dap4.func=… enables DAP extensions ⇒ new server functions
DAP-based
Subset Selection (from arrays | tables)

- Select variables by name
  - For tabular data, this means selecting columns
- Select rows of a table via column-specific value constraints
  - Allows both domain-based & range-based subsetting
- Select sub-arrays by constraining their indices
Index-Constrained Subsetting

Source Array ➔ Sub-Array (response)
caveat —

Index-Based Subsetting

- Excellent if desired subset is a bounding box parallel to source array (indices $\leftrightarrow$ coordinates)

Less useful when

- Subset selection not based on domain coordinates
- Source is not organized as coordinate-mapped arrays
- Desired subset is polygonal or is skewed (relative to source-array orientation)
Part II
Recent Enhancements of OPeNDAP Web Services

With Demonstrations
This part of the presentation is drawn primarily from a project report on:
NASA Data Interoperability

An EOSDIS Presentation & Demo
Originally given March 27, 2015

Original Presenters: James Gallagher & Nathan Potter (OpenDAP)
main NASA motivations for OpenDAP Enhancements

- Easier software builds & better documentation
- Authentication of data users
- More response encodings
  - Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) Web Services (WMS, WCS…)
  - JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) for Webification (w10n)
- Requesting DAP ops on many granules at once
  - Response = concatenated CSV (arrays ➔ tables) or
  - Response = zipped files
progress on simplifying

OPeNDAP Server Installation

Context

- Hyrax-install complexity was once a barrier to use

Key Accomplishments

- Adding modules does not increase the package count
- Source build: now just 3 distinct packages
  - Previously 18 packages
- Binary install: now just 2 RPMs + 1 WAR
  - Previously 15 RPMs + 1 WAR
progress enhancing OPeNDAP’s Website & Documentation

Key Accomplishments

- Various Website repairs
- 760 fixed links (from automated before/after crawls)
- Five documents added
  - Client configuration for authorization
  - Server configuration for authorization
  - Source-code build how-to
  - Summary of Winter-2015 ESI P-panel on Web-services performance
  - Server configuration for WMS provision
progress on

User Authentication
(via EarthData Login at NASA EOSDIS)

Context/Things to Notice

- Fine-grained access control for individual directories
- Demo is Web-only, but cURL tests work as well
  - cURL—like most client applications—is built around libcurl, thus serving as a lowest common denominator
  - EarthData credentials are simply stored in a user’s .netrc file

Live Demo…
prior context for enhancing

Multi-Granule Aggregation

- Many servers have allowed DAP providers to form (virtual) aggregations of (similar) granules
- But until now, end users could not choose
  - Granules to be aggregated
  - Forms of aggregation
- Furthermore, array- & table-style subsetting could not be mixed (with or without aggregation)
Multi-Granule Aggregation

Context/Things to Notice

- Request data from 1,000s of files with one operation
  
  _N.B._ Necessitates use of HTTP POST (to avoid huge URLs)

- Two forms of aggregation response
  - Zipped netCDF files
  - Concatenated tables (CSV)

  _N.B._ Arrays may be aggregated as concatenated tables!

Live Demo…
DAP Output-Encoding Extensions

Data-User App (netCDF-based)
- netCDF Libraries

Data-User App (python, java, Native-DAP Libraries)

Data-User App (other Standard)
- OGC-Compliant
  - XML or JSON

Data User, Browser-Only

DAP(2| 4), netCDF, XML, GeoTIFF...

Hyrax Back-End Server with Encoding-Specific Handlers

Apache Server Framework

Core DAP Services (Hyrax Front-End)

Other Web Services

Other Web Services

HDF files
netCDF files
text files
SQL database
extensible...

DAP-Extending Services

WMS, JSON...
OGC Protocol:
WMS Web Mapping Service

- WMS (Web Mapping Service)
  - Great for 2-dim geospatial data on ‘maps’ (but not for higher-dimensional data types)
  - A bridge to display tools, notably, Google Earth

Live Demo…
DAP Interoperability Leverage

- Data-User App (netCDF-based)
  - netCDF Libraries

- Data-User App (python, java, Native-DAP Libraries)

- Data-User App (other standard)
  - OGC-Compliant

- Data User, Browser-Only
  - XML or JSON

- Other Web Services

- Core DAP Services (Hyrax Front-End)

- DAP-Extending Services

- Other Web Services

Apache Server Framework

Hyrax Back-End Server with Encoding-Specific Handlers

- HDF files
- netCDF files
- text files
- SQL database
- extensible...
We demonstrated NASA (HDF5) files ➔ OpenDAP ➔ WMS ➔ Google Earth.

Notably, it seems unlikely that either Google Earth engineers anticipated reading HDF5 or NASA engineers planned to display data on Google Earth!

This suggests* a definition for interoperability: “supporting unanticipated uses”

*Paraphrasing John Orcutt
This presentation, and the recent work described, were supported by NASA/GSFC under Raytheon Co. contract number NNG15HZ39C