

Distributed versus centralized databases: decision points

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Abstract:

Powerful tools exist for linking servers (as distinguished from client computers) on the Internet. In a distributed system, data providers will have placed their data on a server, and made them available to other servers via so-called web services. The feasibility of this approach for building comprehensive seabird databases depends on the willingness and ability of each participant (organization or individual) to administer a participating server. The appropriate architecture for world seabird databases will therefore depend on: (1) the type and current status of data (i.e., colony registers and pelagic survey data may be amenable to a distributed approach; monitoring, tracking, and diet information probably less so), and (2) whether the systems are envisaged to be all-inclusive or limited to a number of major players. For data not currently online or already stored in shared databases, data contributors and users may be better served by centralized systems. This talk will introduce and illustrate the concept of Seabird Research Markup Language (SRML), an essential step in implementing either approach, and a way of rendering the distinction largely moot.