

The SPOLD information system for LCI data - a global solution to LCI data exchange¹

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INTRODUCTION

The SPOLD Information System (SIS) was released in January 2000. This poster gives a quick survey of the system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As can be seen in the illustration (next page), the SIS is composed of:

- an Internet based search engine (the Data Directory), linking to data stored at local web-servers,
- a local web-server software for handling data access (password handling) for the locally stored data at the data suppliers web-site,
- a local PC-based software for web-server administration, which allows (local) remote control of the data on the local web-servers and ensures consistency between the data on the local web-servers and the information in the Internet search engine. The web-server administration includes unlimited options for restricting access to specific users, even to specific fields in each dataset.

Although the SIS is based on the SPOLD data format (Weidema 1999), there is no restrictions on the format of the data to be placed in the search engine.

The SPOLD Information System is currently under internal testing by a limited number of data suppliers, and will be opened to the public as soon as this testing phase is finalised.

The intention is that the use of the search engine should be free and open for the public, and the placing of data should be free for those data suppliers that supply unrestricted data (free and publicly available). The operation of the SIS is financed by voluntary sponsors and those data suppliers that use the SIS to distribute restricted data (in subscription, against payment, or restricted to specific users).

SPOLD has delegated the administration of the SIS to a self-organised forum composed of those who supply data to the system.

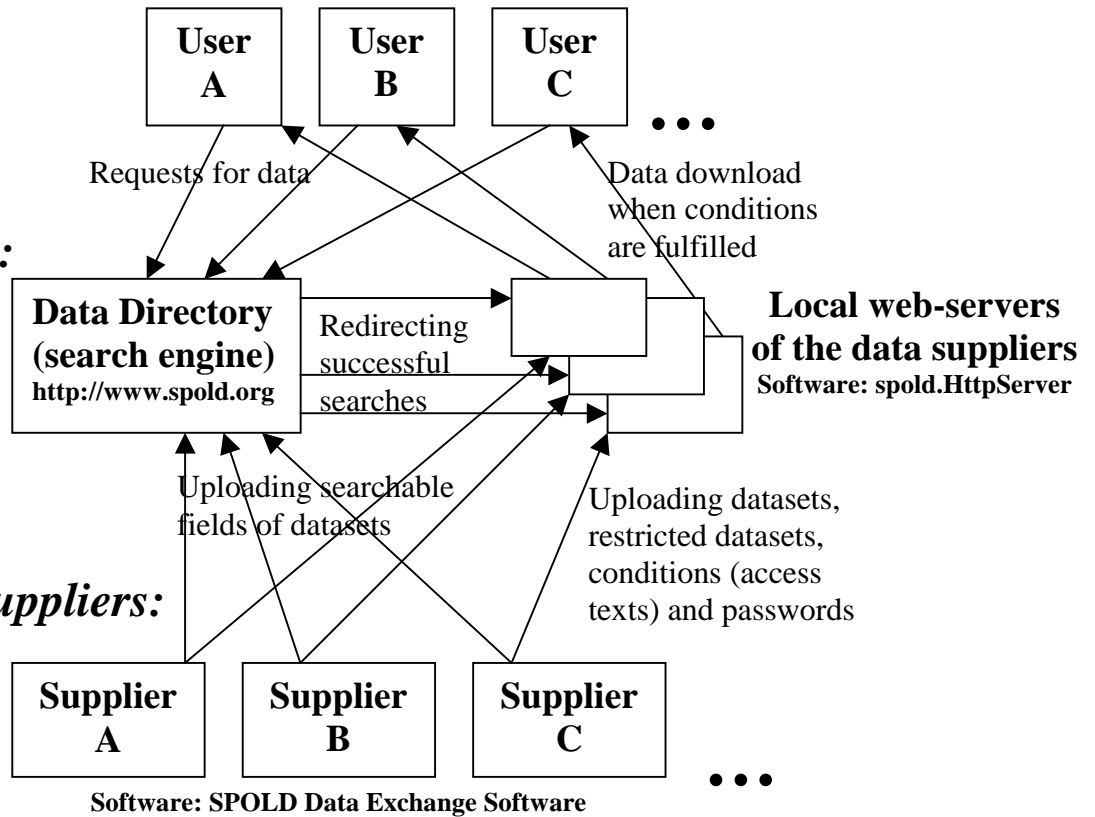
¹ Text version of poster presented to the 3rd SETAC World Congress, Brighton 2000.05.21-25

Local users of data:

Besides Internet access, data users need a software that can read files in the SPOLD format. For this, SPOLD provides the free SPOLD Data Exchange Software, but several dedicated LCA-software, including KCL-ECO and TEAM, also support the SPOLD standard.

The Internet:

Local data suppliers:



The local data suppliers use the Webserver Administration function of the free SPOLD Data Exchange Software to:

- Control of the data on the local web-servers,
- Ensure consistency between the data on the local web-servers and the information in the Internet search engine,
- Restrict access to specific users by linking one or more passwords to a specific dataset or a group of datasets on the web-server. The password protection can be limited to individual fields of the datasets through the use of a user-defined 'template' containing information on what fields should be protected and what fields should be publicly accessible in the form of a 'restricted dataset'. The template may be specifically adjusted for each dataset.
- Linking password restricted datasets to (dataset specific) access texts describing the conditions for obtaining the relevant passwords (e.g. against payment or supply of user information).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

A fully functional platform for exchange of LCI-data has been released for general use by suppliers of LCI data. The current task is mainly to persuade relevant data suppliers to place their data on this platform.

For managers of databases and data collection programmes, the main advantages of using the SPOLD data format are:

- Reduced costs: Collecting data directly to the SPOLD format is much less expensive than converting data later when making them publicly available.
- Increased flexibility to choose data provider: Working simultaneously with several different LCA-software and several different consultants becomes easier as more and more LCA-software become SPOLD compatible (see: <http://www.spold.org/FAQ.html#software>).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of the SPOLD Data Format and the SPOLD Information System has only been possible through the generous support of a very large group of dedicated people and organisations. The full list of everyone involved is published on <http://www.spold.org/acknowledge.html>

REFERENCES

Weidema B P. (1999). The SPOLD file format '99. Download from <http://www.spold.org/publ/SPOLD99.zip>