

Xpert Repository Demonstration

Blog by Sam Jordison

Pat Lockley has put up the 'joke title': Methodologies and approaches for depositing in repositories..

He says that they wanted to build a toolkit to allow content to be created online and allow for the simple creation of DCMI and RSS feeds.

Xpert would provide a search engine to search for various resources generated by toolkits and co.

That was the theory anyway, says Patrick

One site would bring together a lot of feeds without the need to upload.

So they built a harvester - a web robot - that would go off and find the relevant RSS feeds and start populating a database.

But they hit a problem and discovered they had to build a better robot that could cope with the differences between DCMI and RSS feeds.

And then, they found they needed a third robot! To tell them more about feed types... "There's no point bringing in RSS feeds if you can't bring in the right metadata and allow people to search them."

And a fourth robot came along to sift through subject, category, author, creator, various descriptions and related content.

And a fifth... which had to deal with conflict and spam and bad metadata. (There's now a nice picture of the robot from 'Short Circuit' on the screen.)

The 6th Robot (R2D2) was needed to help users relate to the metadata.

The 7th robot (the Terminator!) had to work out what to do when the RSS isn't even RSS, had invalid date stamps and similar.

The 8th robot (Kryton from Red Dwarf, according to the slide that's up now) had to work out how to prioritise RSS content for humans or machines, how to sift through the content..

The 9th robot had to deal with content in other forms like OPML, OAI, SRU and co. (I don't recognise the machine in the slide - but it looks fierce).

The 10th robot (C3PO) was there to make it all make sense. To harmonise all the other ideas, make an aggregator, handle new challenges...

You can now search for podcasts, video feeds, and the system is getting greater and more intelligent says Pat.

The 11th robot is here now. It harvests every day (starting about 11pm), knows which items have been deleted.

We're now getting a demo of Xpert in action. Visit <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/xpert/> if you want a play yourself.

Question: Where are you going next with this?

"We don't know!" says Pat. We're doing all kinds of code mangling and refinements, he says. We'd like more and more things to submit and put materials in the repository. A useful thing would be tailor the system, to give information, say for lecturers who want to reuse things, or to provide related learning content to students who just want to look at things.

Question: It would be really useful to be able integrate this with other repositories...

You can in some ways! says Pat, who gives a quick demo... "We'd also be really keen to find out other ways to integrate and re-use this."

Question: Is the content key related. Is there context awareness in it? Or is that a challenge to meet?

Pat - It's a question about gauging search satisfaction. How much content do you cut out? How do you define success and happiness? With hashmaps, say, I can see the logic of restricting feeds.

Question: You can filter by subject right? Might that not be better? So if you search for 'keys' in the right subject area you'll get something relevant to you. Whereas in google you'll just get information about door keys.

Again we're running over time and delegates still seem to have a lot of questions. There are a number of hands raised, but no minutes left...

On to the next demo!