

Geophysical Research Abstracts, Vol. 9, 10949, 2007  
SRef-ID: 1607-7962/gra/EGU2007-A-10949  
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## **UK NERC DataGrid: thematic focus and international context**

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The UK's Natural Environment Research Council has funded the NERC DataGrid (NDG) project to develop seamless discovery and access to a range of environmental datasets managed by its discipline-based 'designated data centres'. The initial focus is on the curated archives of the British Atmospheric Data Centre and British Oceanographic Data Centre, with additional data from the Plymouth Marine Laboratory and National Oceanography Centre, Southampton. These encompass a broad range of computational model and observational data from a variety of sensors. Preliminary work has also considered survey and species data from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. NDG's integration approach employs a standards-based information model (the Climate Science Modelling Language) and web services together with a novel security architecture, and will facilitate better use of the investment in these archives.

The status of the NDG project is reported and its role considered in the broader international context. At European level, the INSPIRE Directive mandates harmonisation of data across thematic and state boundaries. There is thus a convergence towards integration both from top-down policy and bottom-up science drivers. Projects such as NDG provide a proving ground for the emerging standards, as well as benefits to research communities. The international context with its emphasis on open standards adds a new strategic focus to the core business of data management and archiving centres.