Poster proposal: OR09 – The Fascinator

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Title: The Fascinator – desktop eResearch and flexible portals

The Fascinator is an Apache Solr front end to the Fedora commons repository. This project was originally funded by ARROW, as part of the mini project scheme.

The Fascinator is written in Java. It drops into the Tomcat server that comes with Fedora.

There are two ways this software can be used. At the moment there is a single installer no matter which you wish to use.

The Fascinator Server Edition

The goal of the project is to create a simple interface to Fedora that uses a single technology – that's Solr – to handle all browsing, searching and security. This contrasts with solutions that use RDF for browsing by 'collection', XACML for security and a text indexer for fulltext search, and in some cases relational database tables as well. We wanted to see if taking out some of these layers makes for a fast application which is easy to configure. So far so good.

The Fascinator can:

- Create one or more web portals for a Fedora 3 repository.
- Ingest content from other sources into Fedora 3 using OAI-PMH, a direct connection to Fedora 2 or via the experimental OAI-ORE.
- Provide simple efficient access control to Fedora repositories.

The Desktop Fascinator

The Desktop Fascinator is an experimental software package based on The Fascinator, which is inspired by the ongoing problem of getting eResearch data and publications into repositories where they can be backed up, preserved and shared with a network of other researchers. See Desktop eResearch revolution which gives some of the background.

Another source of inspiration is consumer tools like Picasa, which indexes images and provides a way to browse them, iTunes which indexes music files and provides faceted search and browsing based on metadata such as artist and album, and KDE/Linux application digiKam which has an easy to configure tagging system for classifying images.

See the FAQ.

It is Open Source (GPL) with copyright held by the University of Southern Queensland.