

## NBII Metadata Clearinghouse Evolves to Meet User Needs

One Clearinghouse innovation has been the significant redesign of the Clearinghouse interface, making metadata access simpler and easier than ever before.

In late 1997, the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) initiated an Internet-based Clearinghouse — the NBII Metadata Clearinghouse <<http://metadata.nbii.gov/>> — to help individuals easily search for, and locate, biological data and information from a variety of sources. Since then, the Clearinghouse has been and remains one of the most important NBII components.

Through this service, NBII users can search an online “card catalog” of detailed descriptions (metadata) of hundreds of different biological data sets and information products from many different sources to find the particular item that meets their needs. These information products are developed and maintained by U.S. Geological Survey scientists as well as other NBII participants, including federal, state, and local government agencies; private organizations; universities; and other partners around the nation and the world.

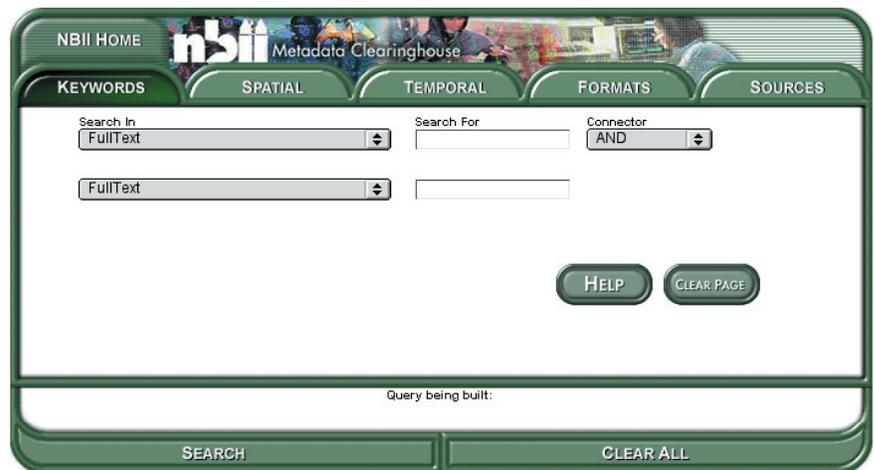
The metadata concisely convey such things as subject matter; how, when, where, and by whom the data were collected; how to access the database or information products;

and person(s) to contact for more information.

The requirements of some Clearinghouse searchers include data on specific research topics or data from studies in specific geographic locations. Others use this service to compile background information before beginning new studies or to better design new research or inventory studies. Still others use the Clearinghouse to help identify organizations and scientists who have done or are doing work on specific resource issues as a source of possible future interactions or collaborations.

The NBII Program provides training and technical support in metadata development to assist those agencies, organizations, and individuals who are interested in documenting their data and information for the Clearinghouse.

Since its founding, the NBII Metadata Clearinghouse has been expanding and evolving. Metadata descriptions of new data sets and information products are continually added and, in addition, many NBII partner organizations have established their own NBII Clearinghouse “nodes” through which they are serving their collections of NBII metadata. Because



The metadata descriptions in the NBII Clearinghouse are developed by a host of NBII participants who wish to make their data sets or information products (such as technical reports) more widely available to others for sharing, exchange, and analysis. Metadata records found in the NBII Clearinghouse are biological, spatial, or both (some types of biological data are spatially oriented). They follow the Federal Geographic Data Committee’s (FGDC) Content Standard and the Biological Data Profile (BDP). The BDP is an approved profile of the FGDC Standard.

the NBII Clearinghouse is also fully compliant with (and a registered node of) the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Clearinghouse, users of the NSDI Clearinghouse system can readily search through metadata in the NBII Clearinghouse and vice versa.

The Clearinghouse interface makes metadata access simple and easy. Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), in Oak Ridge, TN — a designated World Data Center — designed the interface. In addition, they oversee the operation of the Clearinghouse.

To reach the search interface, visit <http://mercury.ornl.gov/nbii>. The interface offers a variety of “tabs” to choose from – keywords, spatial, temporal, formats, and sources. First you click on one of the tabs, enter relevant information to search against in that category, then click on “submit” at the bottom of the frame to start your search.

The interface automatically searches metadata of all the NBII node partners, or individual collections may be chosen in the “sources” tab. Once the search is completed, a “Search Summary” report shows the databases searched, the Clearinghouse status, and the number of records found to match each query by node.

To examine the metadata found in a database, just click on the database name and the records pop up for you to scroll through. You can click on the title to open the metadata record and read the abstract as well as other information the record offers.

For spatial searching, you can use your mouse to select an area, then either enter the coordinates or click the MAP button. If you choose the latter, a map pops up for you to glide your cursor over, drawing a box around the area you want. A mouse click lets you “zoom in” or “zoom out” on the map.

If you need help operating the NBII Metadata Clearinghouse interface, just

click on Help and it is available via a pop-up window.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the NBII Metadata Clearinghouse, please contact:

Vivian Hutchison  
NBII Metadata Program Coordinator  
USGS Western Fisheries Research Center  
6505 NE 65th Street  
Seattle, WA 98115  
Phone: 206-526-6282 ext. 329  
Fax: 206-526-6654  
E-mail: [vhutchison@usgs.gov](mailto:vhutchison@usgs.gov)