

VOGCLUSTERS: An Example of DAME Web Application

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Abstract. We present the alpha release of the VOGCLUSTERS web application, specialized for data and text mining on globular clusters. It is one of the web2.0 technology based services of Data Mining & Exploration (DAME) Program, devoted to mine and explore heterogeneous information related to globular clusters data.

1. Introduction

Along with the progress of the instruments for astronomical investigation of our Galaxy, the amount of data available for each globular cluster (GC) in the Milky Way is also growing at a steady rate. In this very moment, several instruments from earth and from space are restlessly working to improve our detailed knowledge of such objects, which are of utter importance for our understanding of the status and evolution of our Galaxy. Moreover, since some of the older objects in the Universe are contained in globular clusters, they have a key role also in many cosmological topics.

The importance of GCs for a broad range of astronomical studies has been already addressed by Harris (1996). In that seminal paper (that introduced the famous online parameter compilation for galactic GCs) he also stressed the importance of having readily available up-to-date list of parameters for these unique objects. After all these years, his words appear even truer: not only we have new and more reliable parameters for a great part of the known clusters, but - thanks also to modern surveys conducted in bands different from the visible, such as 2MASS (Skrutskie et al. 2006) - several other objects keep going to increase our list of Milky Way clusters (e.g., Froebrich et al. 2008, Moni Bidin et al. 2011).

However, at the present day, such data appear still scattered among the various papers and/or are reported in different (and for the most part not-homogeneous) web pages and online catalogues. Such resources typically cannot be easily put in connection by people who want to make researches involving all kind of data.

Nowadays it appears more and more important to delineate a strategy in order to present the relevant information on a given cluster, or a range of clusters, in a single source and under a well-defined standard. This represents a necessary step to disclose a wide range of new investigations: the more we find ways to explore the parameters space, the more we'll be able to make useful science investigating upon the correlations of those set of data.

In the following it is presented a brief introduction to a project born to meet these requirements, named VOGCLUSTERS*.

2. A first step: the galactic globular clusters database

The Galactic Globular Clusters Database (gclusters) is an online resource[†], focused on presenting, in an organized way, a comprehensive list of bibliography, parameters and data for each of the known GCs of the Milky Way (Castellani 2007).

From the technical point of view, *gcluster* it is a "classical" dynamical web site, and can be considered as a prototype of VOGCLUSTERS. Initially built around the Harris compilation, it is designed to allow a more flexible fruition of available data, allowing a number of operations, such as ordering clusters according to the value of a given parameter, select objects whose parameters falling in a given interval, display related bibliography and colour magnitude diagrams, or even drop a note pertinent to that cluster, to be displayed online for the benefit of other users.

Data are collected from several different sources, such as NASA Astrophysics Data System (ADS), Digital Sky Survey, related papers and websites, etc.

3. A further step: moving to VOGCLUSTERS web application

The goal of the project VOGCLUSTERS is the development of a web application specialized in data and text mining activities for astronomical archives related to galactic and extragalactic GCs. Main services are employed for the simple and quick navigation in the archives and their manipulation to correlate and integrate internal scientific information. The archives are uniformed under Virtual Observatory (VO) standards and constraints, in order to provide a homogenous and flexible environment, virtually capable of interactions with an ever growing amount of external resources. At variance with *gcluster*, the project has not to be intended as a straightforward website, but as a real *web application*.

A website usually refers to the front-end interface through which the public interact with your information online. Websites are typically informational in nature with a limited amount of advanced functionality. Simple websites consist primarily of static content where the data displayed is the same for every visitor and content changes are infrequent; more advanced websites may also have management and interactive content. A web application, or equivalently *Rich Internet Application (RIA)* usually includes a website component but features additional advanced functionality to replace or enhance existing processes. The interface design objective behind a web application is to simulate the intuitive, immediate interaction a user experiences with a desktop application.

*<http://dame.dsf.unina.it/vogclusters.html>

†<http://gclusters.altervista.org>

4. The DAME framework

DAME (DAta Mining & Exploration) is an international collaboration for data mining and machine learning research program, by exploiting the web2.0 technologies and exposing a series of applications and services for e-science communities. In particular, since the beginning, it is specialized in astrophysical services. Its products are hence basically focused on data/text mining on massive data sets with machine learning methods, on top of an hybrid distributed computing infrastructure (Brescia et al. 2010). The DAME design architecture is implemented following the standard LAR (Layered Application Architecture) strategy, which leads to a software system based on a layered logical structure, where different layers communicate with each other via simple and well-defined rules:

1. Data Access Layer (DAL): the persistent data management layer, responsible of the data archiving system, including consistency and reliability maintenance.
2. Business Logic Layer (BLL): the core of the system, responsible of the management of all services and applications implemented in the infrastructure, including information flow control and supervision.
3. User Interface (UI): responsible of the interaction mechanisms between the BLL and the users, including data and command I/O and views rendering.

5. Details and status of the VOGCLUSTERS web app

The VOGCLUSTERS web application is hosting an integrated specialized toolset in the DAME infrastructure, then taking fully advantage of its features. In particular, its integration deals with the technological solutions adopted, derived from DAME Web Application Suite strategy and requirements. For example, concerning the user access security policy, VOGCLUSTERS shares the DAME user archive and, being on top of pre-existing CLOUD-GRID hybrid architecture, it inherits integrity and security levels. Inside DAME, all VOGCLUSTERS authorized users are protected against privacy and data consistency violations.

The VOGCLUSTERS application is at an advanced phase of development. Its main features are:

1. fully adoption of the DAME layered model;
2. developed adopting the Google Web Toolkit (GWT). GWT make possible to use java language (which is rapidly reaching the status of a standard for a great number of scientific applications and projects, so that it is widely diffused among researchers), having java classes translated into an AJAX powered website. AJAX is an acronym for Asynchronous JavaScript and XML; it represents a group of interrelated web development methods used on the client-side to create interactive web applications. This choice allow us to develop powerful features while maintaining low the requirements of time and human resources.
3. As usual for a DAME application, it is developed according to the standards of VO. In this way, present and future archives in VOGCLUSTERS can take

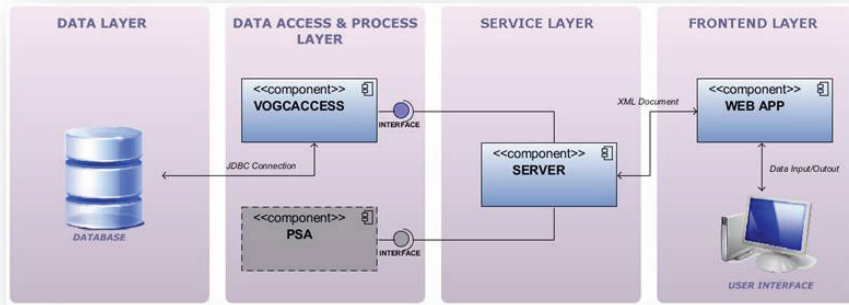


Figure 1. The VOGCLUSTERS architecture: each box shows a different layer of the application

advantage of a well-defined environment expressly ideated for the easy exchange of information between different resources.

We consider that the knowledge of a GC is made of observational parameters, sometimes including also an history of the research evolution on their values. The user has the possibility to visualize and navigate the GCs archives (galactic and extra-galactic objects) and make correlations, in a constantly increasing number of ways, asking also for on-the-fly plots of different combinations and/or selections of data (coming soon). The information is transparently presented to the user in a simple and attractive web interface (by merging worldwide distributed VO databases and registries). So far the user has the possibility to integrate/update these parameters adding new values, comments, images, diagrams, references, etc. Obtained results are not locked in the application: soon it will be possible to save them in a number of formats, like FITS, EPS, PDF, etc.

The web application foresees three different categories of users, respectively, administrators, qualified (registered) and generic (not registered) users. The main differences between these user categories are related to the information manipulation rights. In particular the web application can be passively navigated by all users (generic category), can be integrated/updated by registered users (already authenticated within DAME Suite) in terms of own data management and can be re-engineered by administrators (typically DAME working group members). The first stable beta release of the application should be available by the end of October 2011.

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