

Title: IsisHome - The first Web Hosting Service totally dedicated to CDS/Isis  
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### **Abstract**

The technological convergence towards the Internet is no more a trend, but it is a reality and libraries must be inside this new scenery. Although CDS/Isis standard has been largely used by libraries, archives and document centers throughout the world it is generally unknown by commercial hosting providers. This can be easily verified by a quick contact with the technical support from hosting providers and because most of them forbid the use of CGI applications in their servers, making the use of traditional tools like BIREME's WWWIsis, for example, impracticable. Because of this, CDS/Isis users who do not have their own structure fight against several difficulties when trying to publish their databases on the Web. Moreover, when they achieve it, they do not have an effective technical support from the web provider, because the provider does not enough expertise on how to use CDS/Isis. To avoid experiences like these, in 2007, Control decided to assemble a private structure of web hosting. At the beginning, the goal was to assist only the company's needs, for Control has several web pages with CDS/Isis databases. Later, it was decided to extend the service to some clients from the development area that wished to publish their databases on the Internet, but have faced difficulties on regular providers. Nowadays, the web hosting service has been offered to all clients, in Brazil or abroad, and it has an excellent technical infra-structure, including CDS/Isis specialized technical support. Hiring a hosting service, the client receives a pre-installed copy of WWWIsis in their domain and an e-mail with all the information needed to develop scripts. Moreover, it has been created a special customer line to solve doubts and give orientation concerning the best way to solve installation problems that may occur. The new generation of CDS/Isis applications, designed to Internet, like ABCD and IsisNBP, show an increasing demand on web hosting services and Control is ready to attend it.

### **Introduction**

The technological convergence towards the Internet is no longer a trend; it is a reality that is here to stay. More and more people are born and raised in an environment surrounded by technology where email, instant messages, blogs, RSS and other terms are as natural as moving or breathing.

Everyday, the number of online services available increases, reinforcing and promoting a self-service culture, where the user gets used to having access to different kinds of services by means of a device connected to the Internet. With a few clicks it is possible to know the weather report worldwide, see satellite maps and images, read newspapers, watch videos, among many other things. Library management systems are not immune to this revolution; their users are familiar with the easiness of online access and they consider it natural the

institution (library, archive, museum, etc) to be at the same technological development level as the other content providers. Online library catalogs integrated with loan control systems are good examples of it, when they allow users to request reservations or renewals, and also to verify their loan status and update their information remotely.

Based on that culture, and also on the fact that other systems allow such level of interaction, it is natural that professionals who have chosen to manage their databases using CDS/ISIS wish to enable their institutions' catalogs on the Internet likewise.

However, many institutions that have not chosen to use CDS/ISIS have decided so because they do not have the amount of money needed to purchase commercial solutions or to maintain permanent computer supporting staff. Therefore, the people who have to develop and maintain the system are the information professionals themselves. Another way to solve the problem is to hire external consultants who work on demand. Anyway, in both cases publishing databases on the Web ends up being done by commercial providers.

At this moment, a rather serious and impacting problem comes to light concerning the decision to keep CDS/ISIS use at the Institution. These professionals, consultants or employees are specialists in library treatment; many of them have good Winisis<sup>1</sup> knowledge. However, few master basic concepts of Web functioning in general, as well as WWWISIS<sup>2</sup> in particular. On the other hand, when these professionals have a computer science background, they master the Web environment, but they tend to show a strong rejection to solutions based on CDS/ISIS, due to their lack of knowledge, bias or for considering such solutions obsolete. To exemplify that, from January to August 2008, Projeto Oráculo<sup>3</sup> received 104 requests on publishing CDS/ISIS databases on the Internet, most of them related to simple questions on the subject.

### **Commercial Providers versus CDS/ISIS**

Constant attacks to servers by malicious programmers and cyber pirates brought up paranoia for security at commercial providers. And it would not be different, for the Internet environment can be classified as hostile, to say the least. Anyway, the truth is that this situation led most providers to ban CGI's use in their hosting services, creating a strong barrier to WWWISIS usage. By the way, this prohibition is largely used by solution providers to justify changing CDS/ISIS for softwares considered, according to them, *more secure and easier to use*.

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1 Winisis is the CDS/ISIS version with graphic interface for the Windows operating system (BIREME, 2008).

2 Executable program developed in C language by BIREME with the CISIS functions library that works as an interface between web server CGI (Common Gateway Interface) and the application written in its native language - IsisScript - allowing the management of information in ISIS model databases (BIREME, 2008).

3 Projeto Oráculo is a pay-free technical support service created to help CDS/ISIS users. Know more at <http://www.oraculo.inf.br>

On the contrary, providers that permitted CGI use ignore WWWIsis functioning and do not give any adequate technical support whatsoever. Some of them require long negotiations to grant permission to execute files within the directory where the software is installed. And, when they are requested to solve any technical problem that might happen, they only repeat that the problem is caused by WWWIsis and it should be solved by the client.

Without knowing how to face these difficulties, the user ends up choosing simpler solutions, or at least the most known ones in the market, and accepted by most of the computer professionals and providers. Among the available options, there are free applications based on free software, as well as copyrighted applications, sold at different price ranges.

### **About Control**

Control Informação e Documentação (Information and Documentation) is a consultancy company, specialized in organizing, automatizing and maintaining Archives, Libraries and Documentation Centers. Funded on March 23 1992, it is widely known in the south of Brazil, but it also acts all over the country and abroad as well. It uses different softwares from the CDS/Isis family, especially Winisis and WWWIsis, also, it maintains a free technical support service to the Isis community users: Projeto Oráculo. Following the principle of continuous improvement, it constantly seeks quality improvement concerning services by means of researches, technological evolution updates and getting to know the newest available solutions on library management at the market.

### **Hosting as a solution**

Control used the external web providers' structure for a long time, both to fulfill its needs and also to enable applications developed to its clients. It was then that the level of difficulty faced by CDS/Isis users who tried to publish their databases on the Internet became evident. In order to avoid such problems, the company decided to have its own hosting structure in 2007. Initially, the only objective was to meet the company's needs, because Control keeps several websites with CDS/Isis databases working. Afterwards, it was decided to enable the service to some development clients who wished to publish their databases but did not have the necessary infrastructure and/or had problems with commercial providers previously.

Nowadays, the hosting service is offered to all clients – in Brazil and abroad – and it includes an excellent hardware structure, together with technical support specialized in WWWIsis.

When clients hire our hosting service, they get their domain with a preinstalled WWWIsis copy and an email with all the information needed to develop scripts. Besides, there is a special telephone line to solve any doubts and guidance concerning the best ways to solve installation problems that may occur.

Up to this moment, it has been possible to observe that the installation time of a web application that uses WWWIsis is drastically shorter at IsisHome if

compared to the installation of the same application at a regular provider. This is possible due to taking some very simple measures, as for example:

- WWWIsis pre-installation in directories with all necessary access permissions;
- giving the necessary information to develop scripts clearly and precisely. For instance, the database directory's physical path on the server;
- technical support by CDS/Isis experts who are able to answer all your demands on the topic.

To allow the access to institutions of any size, two basic hosting plans have been created: Domain and Subdomain. The first is the traditional plan, where the client has a registered domain and uses it normally, like any site on the Internet. The Subdomain plan, however, was created to allow access of institutions that do not have a domain, that is, the URL is provided using the [ISISHOME.NET](http://ISISHOME.NET) address. Both plans have the same storage space (200 Mb) and transfer rate (2 Gb/month). The difference is that the Domain plan has a graphic interface to manage the site, FTP access, MySQL databases and email. The Subdomain plan can update the site only via FTP (ISISHOME, 2008).

### **CDS/Isis next generation**

The new generation of CDS/Isis applications is already being projected to run on the Internet environment, which demonstrates the increase of demand by hosting services by itself. This way, Control hopes to collaborate to expand the use of technologies based on CDS/Isis even more.

### **Conclusion**

IsisHome service is innovative because it is the first commercial hosting provider in Brazil to offer specific CDS/Isis support. Therefore, the CDS/Isis Users Community has, at their disposal, a customized hosting service, where it is possible to install their applications securely, as well as to count on the specialized technical help whenever necessary. This breaks the barrier imposed by commercial providers and makes CDS/Isis use easy, allowing the number of users to increase.

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