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The implementation of a browsing tool for IPCC AR5 data

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A large amounts of (geo)data are created as a consequence of the rapidly advancing computing technology. This development imposes the task of providing users with an unimpeded and effective access to data. Confronted with the same challenge, the staff of Max Planck Institute of Meteorology in Hamburg and German Climate Computation Center has been tasked to develop and implement a tool for browsing the data to be included in the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the International Panel for The Climate Change (IPCC). This tool will be incorporated in the virtual Earth System Modeling Resource Center (v.ERC) portal which is the main component of the IS-ENES project aiming at building the climate data infrastructure within Europe. The browsing functionality is based on the parsing of the catalogs generated by the THREDDS data server, used for the publication of the climate data. Instead of parsing each catalog at a time, the novel approach collects informations from all catalogs related to a dataset and stores them in a central file. This file is updated in regular time intervals. Thus, the obtained information about the hierarchy of data within the dataset can be combined with corresponding metadata provided from the parsed catalogs or other external resources. In the case of the v.ERC portal, the metadata are provided in the form of XML documents containing additional information about data such as data availability, images, description, context information etc. An alternative approach that bases its navigation on the SQL queries to a PostgreSQL database where the parsing results of Thredds catalogs have been stored is also presented. In conclusion, a comparison of these two approaches is discussed.