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WebGIS for mapping information derived from paleoenvironmental literature

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Web-based Geographical Information Systems (WebGIS) allow us to distribute interactive maps via the Internet. Users can handle the maps using a web browser to change the scale, contents and extent of a displayed map. WebGIS can also distribute text descriptions for particular locations. We use WebGIS to map information on paleoenvironmental literature published in academic journals. A preliminary system of WebGIS was constructed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, using ArcView IMS from ESRI as the main engine. It contained information from literature such as the location of areas studied, geomorphological and geological data used for paleoenvironmental reconstruction, target ages and eras, and references such as author names, article titles, journal names, and volume and page numbers. These data were taken from ca. 6,000 papers in international journals of earth and Quaternary sciences published between the mid-1990s and 2002. The data collection ceased in 2003 when a related research project was over. Recently another project "Replacement of Neanderthals by Modern Humans" was launched in Japan by a group of archaeologists, anthropologists and geographers. For this project, we first transferred the data in the previous WebGIS to a new system with ArcGIS Server from ESRI. Then we added new data from articles published after 2002. We have been collecting data for the Middle East, South Europe and North Africa because they are relevant to the project. The new WebGIS will be useful for the project, because the spatial distribution of paleoenvironment and its temporal change are crucial. The system will also be used by researchers worldwide to collect basic information about existing paleoenvironmental literature.

Keywords: paleoenvironment, literature, GIS, Internet