

The evolution of the Speleological Abstracts (BBS/SA)

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Abstract

The Speleological Abstracts (SA), also known as BBS (Bulletin Bibliographique Spéléologique), is an annual review of the world's speleological literature, published by the Commission of Bibliography of the International Union of Speleology (IUS). It represents more than 38 years of bibliographic references from peer-reviewed and not peer-reviewed literature. The complete database currently contains 110,000 references. The UIS 2021 congress will be an important milestone in the already long history of the Speleological Abstracts (SA), as it gives the opportunity to draw new perspectives for the next decades.

The SA was born during the 5th International Congress of Speleology in Stuttgart in 1969. It was solely based on a paper version until 1986, when the first computer-based records were compiled. With the ever improving computer and Internet technology, the paper version gradually lost the battle versus digital.

This literature database has been regularly evolving thanks to the contributors from each country since 1969, but today a new friendly to use online-tool is being developed on GrottoCenter and should be operational starting with the summer of 2020. We present the latest technological developments related to SA, its new organization and tools, all designed to allow easier involvement of the broad caving community, and at the same time to allow SA to be further an important tool at the service of cavers and science in general.

Résumé

Le congrès UIS 2021 sera une étape importante dans la déjà longue histoire du BBS (bulletin bibliographique spéléologique). Il donnera également l'occasion de dessiner de nouvelles perspectives pour les prochaines décennies.

Le BBS est une revue annuelle de la littérature spéléologique mondiale, publiée par la Commission de bibliographie de l'Union internationale de spéléologie (IUS). Il représente plus de 38 ans de références bibliographiques en spéléologie. La base de données complète contient actuellement 110 000 références.

Le BBS est né lors du 5e Congrès international de spéléologie à Stuttgart en 1969. Il était uniquement basé sur une version papier jusqu'en 1986, date à laquelle les premiers enregistrements informatiques ont été réalisés.

Ce congrès sera l'occasion de présenter la nouvelle organisation et les outils qui ont été conçus pour permettre une implication plus facile de la communauté spéléo. Cette base de données évolue régulièrement grâce aux contributeurs de chaque pays depuis 1969. Aujourd'hui un nouvel outil en ligne est en cours de développement sur les Wikicaves et sera opérationnel au cours de l'été 2020.

1. A 52 years-long history

Taking in consideration the long history of the Speleological Abstracts (also known as BBS), we find it important to remind you shortly about it, a history which dates back to the initial work of the Swiss National Library in 1958.

Each year the Swiss National Library published in its "bibliographia scientiae naturalis helvetica" the chapter "Höhlenkunde / speleology", a compilation of Swiss literature related to caving. This work was carried out by Raymond Gigon (1929-1981), followed by Reno Bernasconi. In 1968 and 1969, two issues of the national speleological bibliography were published, called "Speleological Bibliographic Bulletin" (BBS).

Similar, Ray Mansfield as a contributor to the British Speleological Abstracts since 1964, decided to launch together with Tony Oldham the volumes "Current Titles in Speleology" (CTL) which presented each year, from 1969 to 1990, a synthesis of publications related to speleology in english published literature.

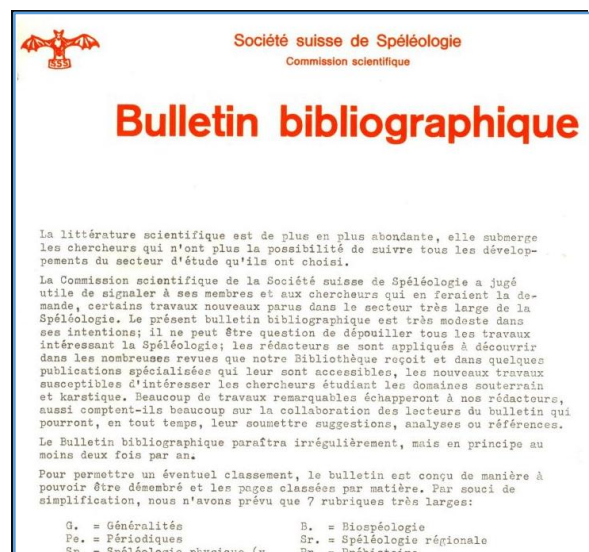


Figure 1 - Extract from No. 1 of BBS Suisse

In order to merge these initiatives, during the 5th International Congress of Speleology in Stuttgart (1969), the General Assembly of the International Union of Speleology (UIS) decided to create a Commission of Speleological Bibliography and elected Reno Bernasconi as its president.

The Speleological Bibliographic Bulletin / Speleological Abstract (BBS/SA) was then published every six months. The volumes 1 to 10 covered literature published from 1970 to 1974. Starting in 1975, collaborators included volunteer contributors, which considerably increased the number of documents and references included. In 1980, the French Caving Federation joined the project, followed in 1988 by the Società Speleologica Italiana, and in 1990 by the British Cave Research Association.

In 1980, the BBS was still produced on a typewriter, each analysis being the subject of an A6 file. For publication, the information was re-entered on an A3 format sheet. In 1986, the BBS was edited directly on the computer and it was from No. 30 (1991) onward that the BBS contributions were introduced by contributors directly in a data-file. The first CD was released in 1995.

Starting with 1998, as Patrick Deriaz took over the presidency of the UIS Bibliographical Commission, the development of digital tools took off. The 30 contributors entered data directly using a Filemaker entry mask, then sent the files to a national coordinator, who later sent the national files to the international coordinator. An annual summary of the cave-related literature was published in paper format and then in CD forms, up to number 51/52

2. The urge to evolve

The BBS has been using digital tools for many years and, as expected, is aiming to follow the evolution and availability of new IT technologies. Two aspects play an essential part: the manipulation of digital data and new IT technologies. The manipulation of digital data is now done, whenever possible, through a browser, so that it is no longer necessary to install any software or to update it, or to provide specific tools for users. Above all, data processing is directly accessible to all those who need it. Until present the file transfers from the BBS contributors to the national coordinator and then to the head of the UIS bibliographic commission led to many delays in the completion of the bibliographic analysis. Today, this is achieved in a matter of minutes.

On the other hand, the development of information technologies has seen the rise of new ways of working. Free software, standards for data exchange and collaborative work play a particularly important part in this, and the UIS Bibliographic Commission wants to integrate these concepts into the way it manages document-related information.

(2012/2013). Meanwhile, the SA/BBS database was directly available on the website of the Library of the Swiss Speleological Society.



Collaborateurs= outils

SI VOUS AVEZ FILEMAKER INSTALLÉ SUR VOTRE ORDINATEUR

masque de saisie Filemaker 12 ou supérieur:

- OS X 10.10 ou +
- W7 ou +

Filemaker 7, 8 ou 9 (Filemaker 9 recommandé):

- OS X new
- windows XP, vista new

[guidelines to install / manuel d'installation](#)

SI VOUS N'AVEZ PAS FILEMAKER (VERSION EXECUTABLE)

- mac OS X
- W7 ou +
- OS X new
- XP, seven

Figure 2 - BBS in 2019

In 2018, BBS decided to start its collaboration with the GrottoCenter application, a software developed by the Wikicaves association, which already partners with the UIS on issues related to data sharing. A new version of the software was under development, but in order to host the BBS, new developments were necessary. In 2019, the Swiss Speleological Society (SSS) funded a developer to provide access to the 110,000 BBS files, and in 2020, together with the French Federation of Speleology (FFS), funded the option of fully managing the BBS online.



Figure 3 - Logo of the Wikicaves association

3. A new way of organization and visualisation

Now the BBS is hosted at <https://grottocenter.org>. You can view it on any computer, phone or tablet with an interface in your own language.

If you want to contribute to the development of the app or create your own, just visit Project Github page at <https://github.com/GrottoCenter/GrottoCenter3>. Taking part in the translation work is also very easy. If you want the app to be translated in a new languages, the fastest way is to contact the Wikicaves association (<https://fr.wikicaves.org/contact>).

You can use the BBS search engine to look for the available literature by using different search criteria, which aim to assure the most suitable answers. As a very important note, a lot of the abstracts available do cover literature

been done in conjunction with the Karstlink project, also an UIS project, which is the subject of another article.

An important change has been made regarding the possibility of contributing to BBS. Previously, only authorized people could do it. Now, everyone can participate in the BBS. You only need to log on to the website.

The form where the input data is introduced has undergone significant work, in order to make it user-friendly, also to make input much easier through checks on the validity and consistency. Users may also complete a form for each journal article without having to re-enter the information related to this journal.

The BBS ("Bulletin Bibliographique Spéléologique" in french) is an annual review of the worldwide speleological literature.
You can find more info about the BBS on the dedicated GrottoCenter-wiki page.

Search on all fields ▼

Search on specific fields ▲

Content

Title

Abstract

Subjects ▼

BBS Reference

Regions

Authors

Publication

Year 🔘

1800 ————— 2020

Matching all fields 🔘

Specify if the search results must match all the fields you typed above (default is yes).

SEARCH

X RESET

Figure 4 - Search for BBS documents on GrottoCenter

published in local and non peer-review journals, literature otherwise difficult to find in other searching engines. The search result can be exported in csv format.

The information available for each document has been aligned with DCMI. DCMI is a standard way of describing documents. It is compatible with a large number of protocols and standards around the world. This work has

Although everyone can participate, it is important that the BBS continues to provide quality information. This is the reason why the online publication of the data will take place only after its validation by a coordinator, who has the possibility to correct the information if it is incomplete or contains errors.

This coordinator status can be easily be given at demand by the BBS administrators, enabling the BBS team to be much more effective. For coordinators, a detailed file-interface is

available, which will allow them to select the texts individually or as a group, with a larger number of selection criteria (region, date, subject, type of document). Also, will give them the possibility to validate or reject the data by sending a comment to the data contributor.

All of these technical advances will make the BBS contributions more active and surely will increase its visibility on the global scale, which is its ultimate aim. If we have access to all these features, it is also possible for search machines to use them. Do you want to be able to select data from the BBS and view them on your own site? Is enough just to use the Apis that are provided by us. The Grottocenter application is just an example of how these Apis can be used as you might do it yourselves.

4. An ongoing project....

If the BBS is fully functional now, but it is still possible to improve it with additional functions. Therefore, we took the opportunity to inform you about the current status of the BBS, and we are looking forward to your suggestions and comments. For example, for now, the BBS makes it possible to present the metadata associated with documents, which can be linked with a document available on the internet. But these links are not always permanent and some documents are not available online. This is why we are considering the addition of files while respecting copyrights. Also, BBS data is available today via Apis in JSON format. Work is underway to ensure that they are also provided in JSON-LD format, as part of the specifications for making the semantic web for the BBS to be fully part of the Karstlink project. Many international caving libraries manage the documents on their own and are willing to participate in BBS without having to enter information twice: on their software

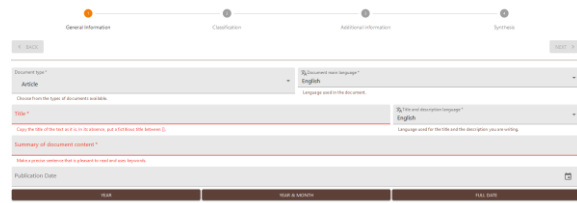


Figure 5 - Add a document

and on the BBS application. This will be possible through the tools set up by Karstlink, but it will require the libraries to carry out some software developments. Another solution, with ongoing work, is to upload a csv file to Grottocenter which will allow all the document analyzes to be provided with a single click. Finally, Grottocenter hosts the BBS, but also manages information on people, organizations, networks and, of course, on caves. Important developments are underway, which will allow to manage all of these different objects and to allow links to be created. These links between the documents, their authors, their publishers, the library where they can be consulted, the massif or the caves they are linked with, will give additional value to the BBS data.

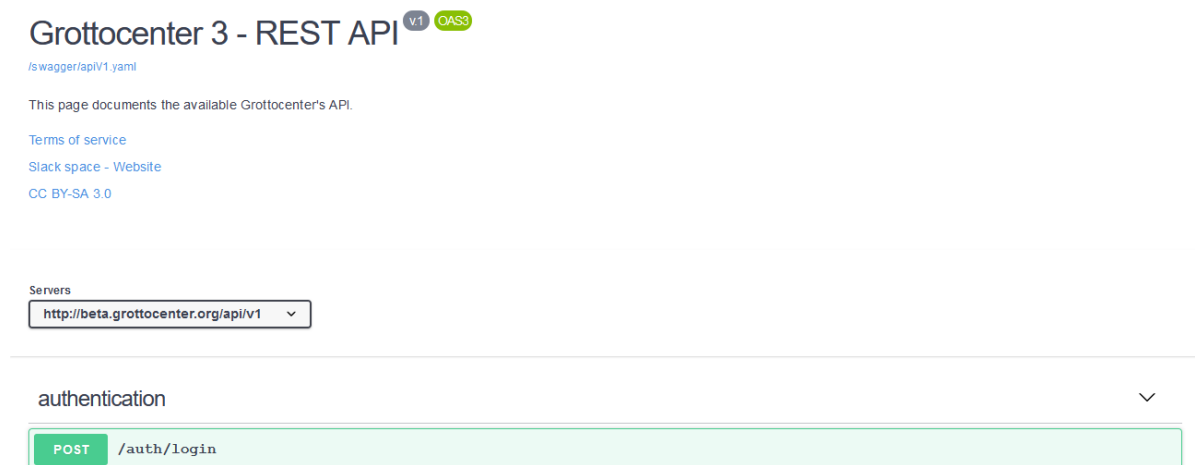


Figure 6 - Use the Rest Api to access the datas

5. Conclusion

The UIS has some great ongoing projects, the BBS / SA is one of them, by allowing the community to contribute directly with as much information as possible regarding the literature published in the field of karstology. The tools have evolved, as have the methods. Each time, the BBS has been able to follow this evolution in order to offer the best service to users and ensure the sustainability of the

information collected. Software with freely accessible code, freely downloadable and usable data, the possibility for everyone to contribute while ensuring quality control before publication, allows the BBS, still today, to be at the service of cavers and science at the same time.

Reference

DERIAZ P., BERNASCOI R. 38 Years of Publication of the Speleological Abstracts <https://www.ssslib.ch/bbs/histoire/>