

National Cave and Karst Research Institute's Karst Information Portal

By E. Spencer Fleury

Karst Information Portal, University of South Florida, LIB 122, 4202 E. Fowler Ave, Tampa, FL 33620

Abstract

Founded in 2005 and rolled out in 2007, the Karst Information Portal (KIP) (<http://www.karstportal.org>) represents an effort to resolve certain recurring challenges inherent to locating and accessing existing karst literature. First, the publication of karst-related research in academic journals has historically crossed disciplinary lines; researchers working in one discipline may be unaware of relevant literature from another discipline, or may even be unable to identify the “flagship” journals of other fields. Second, much of the existing karst literature is in the form of grey literature, which can be notoriously difficult to track down and acquire. This fragmentation of karst-related resources makes it difficult to address questions of karst science without significant duplication of effort. Third, many difficult-to-find resources are available in hard copy only, often stored in private libraries or collections where they could be lost forever in the case of a fire or flood.

The KIP is intended to remedy these difficulties by providing an online, centralized repository of karst literature, accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. KIP combines aspects of traditional web portals (in that it provides up-to-date links to karst information stored elsewhere on the web) and databases (in that some of the resources provided by KIP are stored locally on its own server). As of January 2008, the KIP catalog contained more than 4,000 content records. While KIP shall attempt to acquire the widest possible variety of karst resources, the project’s emphasis is on grey literature and raw data that have historically been most difficult to locate. KIP is also intended to facilitate collaboration among karst professionals and enthusiasts across the globe. Registered users are able to upload descriptions of recent research projects, as well as communicate directly with one another in the portal’s forums.

This presentation will demonstrate the basic functionality of the KIP and describe the contents of the catalog, as well as discuss some of the portal’s ongoing projects and long-term goals. These include acquiring and scanning hard copy resources, developing a library of oral histories of leading figures in karst science, and participating in effort to develop a world karst map.