UCAR/Unidata – An NSF-Funded Data Software Center for Universities

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Description

Unidata is a national program to help universities acquire weather data and to analyze and display those data for teaching and research. The program is funded by the National Science Foundation and managed by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research. Unidata negotiates a group contract with a commercial data-broadcasting firm so that universities may receive weather data at a discount. Unidata develops and distributes software for capturing, analyzing, and displaying those data locally. Unidata also advocates on behalf of universities on data issues in Federal and other arenas.

Unidata-developed software includes the Unidata Local Data Manager (LDM), which captures real-time weather data from a satellite broadcast, and netCDF, a network-transparent, self-describing form for storing scientific data. The LDM is being enhanced to allow users to capture and forward data over the Internet.

Unidata distributes applications software developed and licensed by universities. These are Purdue University's Weather Processor (WXP) and the University of Wisconsin's McIDAS-OS2 and McIDAS-X software. WXP and McIDAS-X are UNIX-based applications; McIDAS-OS2 runs on PS/2 computers with the OS/2 operating system. Unidata also distributes and supports the UNIX version of NASA's GEMPAK (for General Meteorological Package) and a UNIX-based, general-purpose data-analysis and image-processing research package called YNOT, developed by MacDonald Dettwiler under a Unidata contract.

Unidata provides bug fixes, upgrades, and software distributions over the Internet. Software support includes forming and maintaining special-interest mailing lists, offering advice on hardware acquisitions, and holding semiannual training workshops in the use of Unidata-supported software. Consultation with users is conducted via email. The program also publishes a quarterly newsletter.

Network Access

Unidata is connected via a LAN to NCAR, an NSFNET backbone site. All software is distributed via ftp. The Unidata NetCDF software is freely available; you can access a compressed tar file (*cd incnetcdf.tar.Z* in directory *pub*) via anonymous ftp from *unidata.ucar.edu*.

Who Can Use the Software

The Unidata netCDF software is freely available. All other Unidata software is restricted to universities and requires licenses.