Experiences in Ordering MODIS Data

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Topics

EOS Data Gateway (EDG)

Hierarchical Data Format (HDF)

MODIS Reprojection Tool

Some Good Things

- Data center unplanned down time seems much less now than it was 6 months or a year ago
- Data are available just a few days after acquisition
- Data center personnel are very helpful
- Often I get notification that my requested MODIS products (MOD02, MOD10 and MOD29) have been staged for ftp within a few minutes after I start the ordering process through the EDG
- NSIDC will put daily CMG maps up on their site as JPEG files for easy browsing prior to ordering
- Browse products will be implemented this fall!

EOS Data Gateway (EDG)

Positive

Steep learning curve, but once you master it, it's quite easy, though awkward

Some good features, i.e., tools that show where your study area is located

"Browse problem" is being addressed by Goddard and NSIDC for snow and ice products

Negative

Lack of browse products for most of the products that I search; when available, it's incredibly slow (e.g., it can take several minutes to show the browse), and often the browse product is not usable

System is slow every time a page is "turned"

Granules should be numbered when listed; important for large orders (>10 granules); too much wasted space on the granule listing page, requiring lots of scrolling & mouse clicking that should be avoided

Awkward at times - especially when you want to select your data set from among the hundreds of choices - and when granules are displayed

Occasional quirkiness, e.g. in the middle of a session it will ask you for your password again

HDF

- ENVI makes it easy to read HDF files, but it is expensive and a lot of people, especially students, don't have access to ENVI
- Many (most?) people prefer flat-binary files
- University of Maryland summer students could not figure out how to convert the HDF files to flat-binary files, so they converted the HDF files to ascii format and used their own programs to convert to binary, to view it in GrADS; this process wasted a lot of time

Miscellaneous

- Must register for MODIS Reprojection Tool; it took me one day to receive approval but a student complained that it took her one week! Why isn't the approval process automatic so you can start using it right away? Student's comment on this tool: "…seemed like a good piece of software, yet I was unclear about its capabilities to reproject multiple tiles and produce a single grid."

- Same student wasted a lot of time trying to figure out what a granule is when she first started using the EDG

Conclusions

- Data centers have made good progress in data distribution and reducing unscheduled downtime
- EDG is slow and awkward, but once you've learned it, it's quite easy, and it has some handy features, but it needs to be much "friendlier"
- Free "tools," etc., should be available right away
- Browse products for each product (where possible) are mandatory for ease of use of the system