



The Flax team is pleased to announce the alpha release of Flax Search Service (FSS). FSS combines powerful, high-level indexing and search features with a well-designed Web Services interface. FSS is Open Source software (under the MIT licence) and is available as a free download from Google Code [1].

Web Services and Service Oriented Architectures (SOA) have become increasingly popular in recent years due to their many advantages. A Web Service is simply a software system that exposes its functionality over standard Web protocols (HTTP etc.) and is designed for machine-machine (not human) interaction. Because they are based on established standards and technologies, Web Services have predictable performance

and proven scalability. And because functionality is modelled as service which is independent of programming language and data model, they are compatible with a wide range of platforms, and simplify re-use and re-engineering. [2]

FSS provides a "RESTful" interface [3] in which databases, documents, and searches are represented as resources identified by URLs. For example, to add a document to a database, the document data is sent to FSS as a standard HTTP request. To search for a word or phrase, the client sends the query to the database, which responds with a list of matching documents. All features and configuration are accessed like this.

For convenience, client libraries are being developed in several languages, including PHP,

Python, Java and JavaScript. It would be a simple matter to interface to FSS in any language with support for Web protocols. The FSS distribution also includes example code to get you started, and full documentation.

FSS alpha supports enough indexing and search functionality to implement basic but useful information retrieval systems. Over the next few months we will be adding support for advanced features like facets and tags, geolocation and image search. It will run on any system with support for Xpian and Python (Windows, Linux and Mac amongst others).

[1] <http://flaxcode.googlecode.com/files/flax-search-service-0.1.0-alpha.tgz>

[2] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_service)

[3] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representational\\_State\\_Transfer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representational_State_Transfer)

## Free Enterprise Search

TMC Marine offers consultancy services to the shipping industry and relies heavily on recording detailed information. It has over 300,000 documents; precedence outlines, technical sheets and reports on specifics of individual ships, and these exist in a variety of formats including PDFs, Microsoft Word and Excel. Data proliferation was making searching time-consuming, so TMC Marine installed Flax Basic – for free!

Flax Basic can be downloaded from the web and will conduct complex multi-term searches rapidly; it is one of the fastest such systems on the market. It will search inside files in common formats such as Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Adobe Acrobat, HTML, RTF and plain text. The search engine is completely scalable with no artificial limit on the number of documents or records searched. The basic version even includes automatic spelling correction.

Flax Basic tied in to all of TMC's computers across their network and the results were immediate. TMC Marine found the interface easy to use and perfect for its needs. It has freed up significant time for their consultants to be more productive in other areas, which will certainly be beneficial for their bottom line.

## Flax News 1st edition

Welcome to the first edition of Flax News. It replaces Lemur News which has been circulating over the last five years. Increasingly the information retrieval world is talking about Flax and referring to Lemur Consulting as Flax, the brand name Lemur created for its enterprise search platform. It seemed sensible, therefore, to rename the newsletter Flax News as this is what it's all about - we hope you enjoyed it!

Take a look at the new Flax website: [www.flax.co.uk](http://www.flax.co.uk)

### About Lemur

Lemur is highly active in the information retrieval market with international clients from sectors including academia, public relations, e-commerce, government and private businesses.

Lemur's Flax™ project delivers a cutting-edge enterprise search solution, using the power of open source software to drive down costs and provide world beating search performance with no software licence fees.

Lemur's Bamboo™ software is a collaborative, web-enabled, multimedia database system used by academics and researchers.

Lemur also provides general expertise and development in technologies such as Java, C++, Linux, Windows and XML.