MapServer and web map and features services

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A Web service is an interface that describes a collection of operations that are network accessible through standardized XML messaging: we operate in a distributed environment and the interaction between web services and applications is guaranteed via XML messages. In the same way services can be considered as an extension of “classical” dynamic components like CGI, ServletJava and scripts. Related to geographic information, two kinds of services have been defined: the web map service (WMS) and the web feature service (WFS). Both the definitions have been formalized by the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC). In the former case the services provide map images, in the latter directly geographic data in standard GML language (Geographic Markup Language), which is a geographic specialization of XML. The client accesses diverse services and downloads from them the map images (to be used as background) and/or the geographic features of interest. Then the user can create is own maps from geographic information internet distributed. In effect a web feature service can be even more: those transactions allow the users to an height handling of the data, which include feature creation, deletion and updating. Anyway the emphasis of the present communication is on the former aspect, that is the distributed data acquisition and query. MapServer can be used to implement both map and feature services: how to do them and related some examples are presented.