



Collaborative Toolkit for Scientific Project development

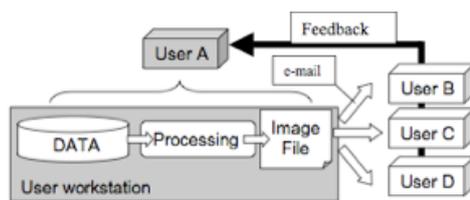
Note:

Paragraphs with a yellow background are intended for COLLA Leading Users/Administrators

Paragraphs with a white background are intended for standard users

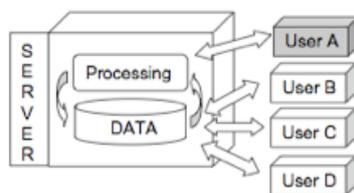
INTRO

COLLA is a Web based tool to support and foster collaborative activities among members of a working group. It is a draft work based on an idea by Paolo Diviacco (OGS) to develop a collabora-



e-mail limits

- Less than 5Mb file
- Duplicate file
- Inconsistent file naming
- No control on file version
- No shared search method
- No data mining



Server side

- No file size limit
- No duplicazione dati
- File naming univoco per tutti
- Tutti possono accedere a tutte le info
- Version control
- Data Mining, Search keyword..
- Organizzazione in task

tive tool tailored on the needs of Geophysics. COLLA in italian means glue, so that it's supposed to keep researchers together. COLLA came to version 2, which means that many efforts have been spent to improve its functionalities, but still needs a lot of work and feedback form users. Thus, any suggestion will be warmly welcome.

COLLA is a dynamic web site, any content is produced "on the fly" after user interaction. It is linked to a database that actually store all data. The very basic idea is to concentrate server side all information needed to be available to all the members of a working group. This moves the focus from the common e-mail based collaboration practice to a server side paradigm where users are encouraged to use directly the facilities offered by the system. This allows to bypass all the limitations of e-mail as: the file size limit, the lack of a shared repository, inconsistent file naming, the lack of a shared search tool and many others. At the same time users are notified by email of changes in their projects automatically.

Colla allows to host on the same web portal many projects. Data remains isolated from project to project on a user account based policy. The same user can access (if aggregated) many projects but cannot enter those where he/she is not allowed to. For this reason at the very beginning it is necessary to register and then to log.

Please note that you can enter as a guest user without any account but you'll be restricted to a demo project sandbox where anyone else can access

Registration

To register click on the Register button in the menu section of COLLA home page. You'll be sent to a page where a form will ask you some infos. Please enter data and pay attention especially to the e-mail address. Your user account and password will be sent automatically to this address, therefore if it's wrong you

will not be able to log in. For security reasons you will be asked to enter a "captcha" (a type of challenge-response test used in computing to ensure that the response is not generated by a computer)...if it looks too strange so that neither you can understand (which could mean you are not human), just reload the page (do not register). You'll be provided with a new and hopefully easier captcha. After having sent the registration form You'll receive an automatic notification via e-mail:



Embedding a text as follows:

```
-----
| Portal :http://prospc61.ogs.trieste.it/COLLA.2/
-- :: Subject ::-----
Automatic user registration call back for: Yourname yourfamilyname

Please do not reply to this message!!!

-- :: User profile ::-----

Please use these parameters while log in:

User : yourusername

Password: p372do
```

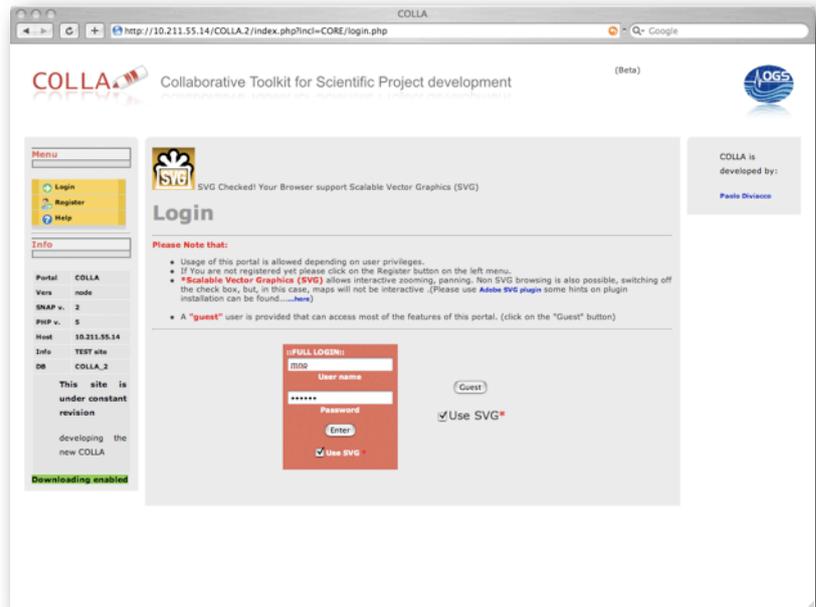
Please use those Username and Password parameters to log in

Different COLLA instances can exist on different servers, therefore you need to log in to the "right" one. Following the web links embedded in the e-mail notification in the field Portal: reduces this risk.

Login

Once you received your user account info, you can login. Select The login button on the left side of the COLLA home page menu section. COLLA will notify if your browser is SVG compatible, otherwise COLLA will automatically set off the option (if your browser offers SVG then you can decide to switch it off anyway)

Please note: below you will find another way to enter using e-mail based automatic notification without the need of logging in (...read below)



User accounting and privileges

Quite obviously user accounting and privileges is an important issue. COLLA protects your work once in a project. All data contained within a specific project can be access only by an authorized pool of users. Among these users we can distinguish three types of users:

Leading user(s): one or more steering user, that manages the project, its formal representation (TaskMap) and can edit the pool of users.

Standard users: that can upload and download data, send and reply to messages, edit their own data and messages (COLLA keep trace of who loaded a file and only he/she can edit or delete it). These users cannot perform Lead users tasks, while a leading user can perform all standards users tasks

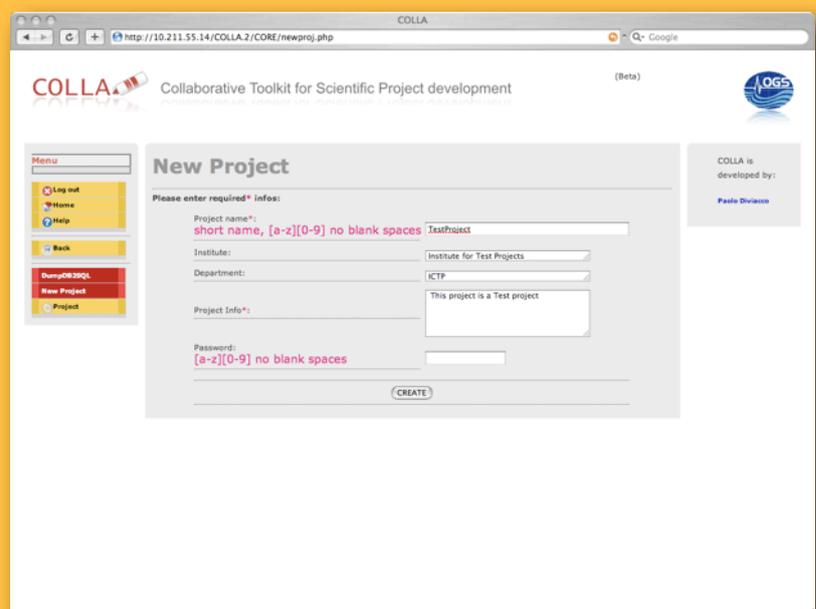
Restricted users: can access and download data, can read messages but cannot upload file or send messages and of course cannot perform Leading users tasks

(if you do not need to administrate a project you can skip this section and go to "Selecting a Project")

Creating Projects

Any Standard or Leading registered COLLA user can create a new project. Once created it that user becomes its Leading User.

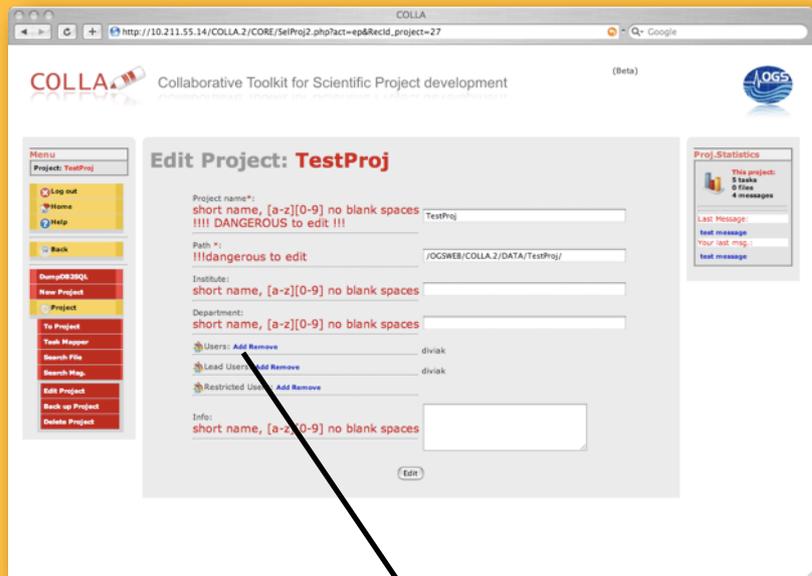
Clicking on the CREATE button a new project is initiated. After some feedback from the system you can access the project clicking on the "To Project" button.



You will be notified with a warning: No task map yet... Which is of course correct since nothing has been done so far.

Edit Project and User pool

Once a project is instituted, the user that created it automatically becomes the leading user. Then a list of users needs to be entered to define who will be part of the user's pool. This can be done clicking the Edit Project button (please note that administrative buttons appears only to the leading user[s])



In the Edit Project page you can edit Project Settings. (Please consider that editing the fields labeled with an asterisk can be dangerous if you are not already a COLLA wizard or Paolo Diviacco)



Here you can add or remove user to three pools: Users, Lead Users and Restricted Users, having the privileges mentioned above.



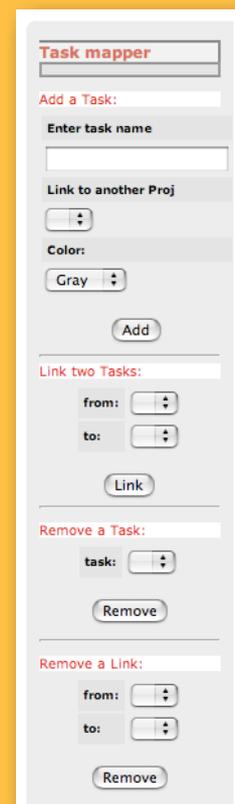
Clicking Add you can select the users to add from a list box. Click on the Add button, and the user will be added. Of Course users need to exist before this action.

To remove a user from the pool, the procedure is similar, with the difference that in the list box you will see only users already entered in the pool

Task Mapper

The Task mapper is the core of the formal representation of the Project. Here it is possible to graphically represent what we are doing. It is made of balloons labeled after the activities or tasks we perform. There's no semantics involved, therefore an activity can be anything you can conceive. **The Important thing is that a task will become a sort of box where all files and messages regarding this activity will be stored (some-kind of a folder) with the adding value that tasks can be linked graphically and interactively to represent your workflow.** To add a task please first open the Task mapper window by clicking on the "task mapper" button in the menu. This widow appears on the rightmost part of the web page and is as in the picture here on the right.

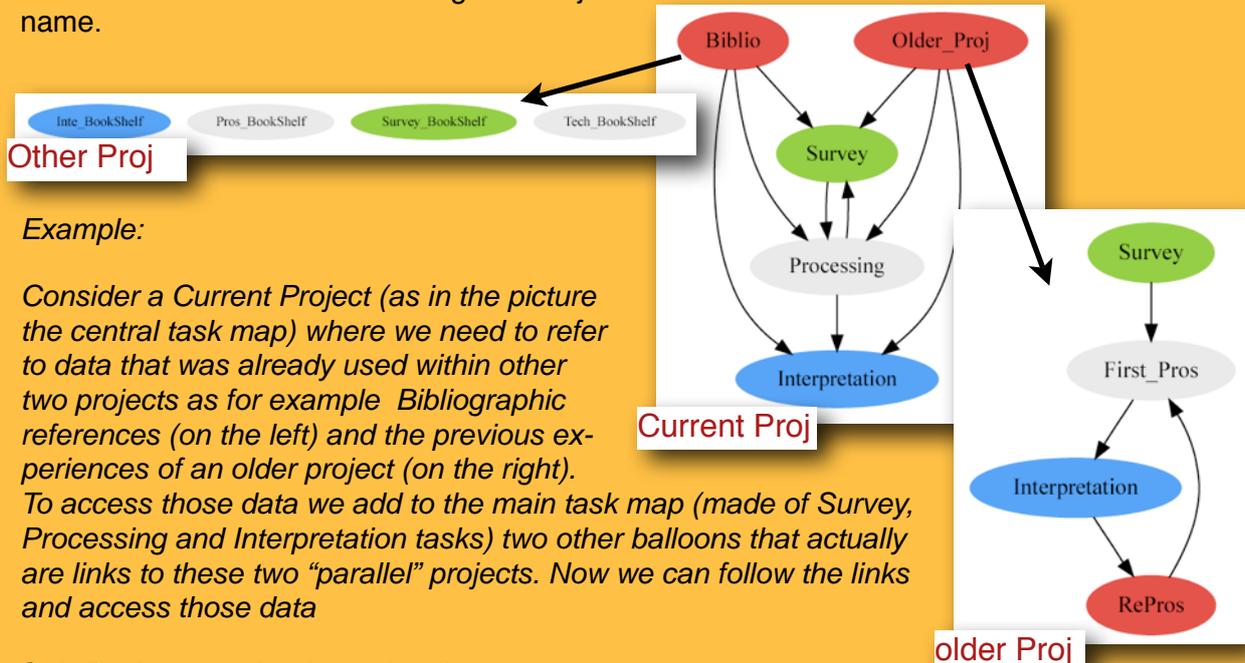
Here you can find four sections. The "Add a Task" section allows to create a new task, simply entering its name (**one word only!**, for multiple word name use a char in between e.g. not: " a new task" but "a_new_task" otherwise 3 tasks will be created), moreover here, you can assign a color to your tasks (before actually adding the task).



Linking other projects:

A brand new function of this version (2) of COLLA is the possibility to link a task to another project of the same COLLA instance (the same COLLA offered by the same server). This introduces a 3rd dimension in the graphs of a taskmap. In fact it is possible to have different layers corresponding to different projects each one having its own taskmap. Through project linking it is possible to cross these layers creating a virtual 3D task volume.

To point to another project simply select it from the “Link to another Proj” list. Of course the project should already exist, otherwise you should first create it and then select it. You can add a name (a different one) to label this link-task to the linked project or simply leave the text field blank to use the original Project name.



Example:

Consider a Current Project (as in the picture the central task map) where we need to refer to data that was already used within other two projects as for example Bibliographic references (on the left) and the previous experiences of an older project (on the right).

To access those data we add to the main task map (made of Survey, Processing and Interpretation tasks) two other balloons that actually are links to these two “parallel” projects. Now we can follow the links and access those data

Sub-Projects and sub-pools of users

Please note that each project own his own pool of user, therefore only “enrolled” users will be able to access data in a linked project. The possibility to link other projects, adds an important “community” flexibility. In fact it is possible to subdivide a project in sub-projects, in order that different sub-pools of users (each within a different sub-project) can access different bases of data. At the same time this allows to organize every sub-project within a “general” project and its task map.

Linking task

It is possible to link graphically two tasks. This again has no semantics involved, it has the only advantage to represent formally the relationships among tasks. A link can represent a sequence (as in the case of “processing” that follows “acquisition”) or can be a parenthood, it can have any meaning the workgroup agrees on. To link two tasks just select a the tasks from the listbox and an arrow will be drawn from the first task to the second.

Removing tasks

Just select the task you want to remove from the list box and click “Remove”

Removing links between tasks

Just select the from and to tasks link you want to remove from the list boxes and click “Remove”

Once a task map is created a project can be populated with data.

Selecting a Project

To select the project you are interested in, from the main menu click on the "Project" button. Enter the project name or a substring in the field(es: if project is called Lost_Place you can enter Lost or Place) or leave it blank to have a list of all the registered project available on the server.

You can select the project you are interested in simply by clicking its name (in blue), Please note that Colla reports on the possibility for you to enter other projects (Full= you are allowed in, Restricted= you are not allowed in)

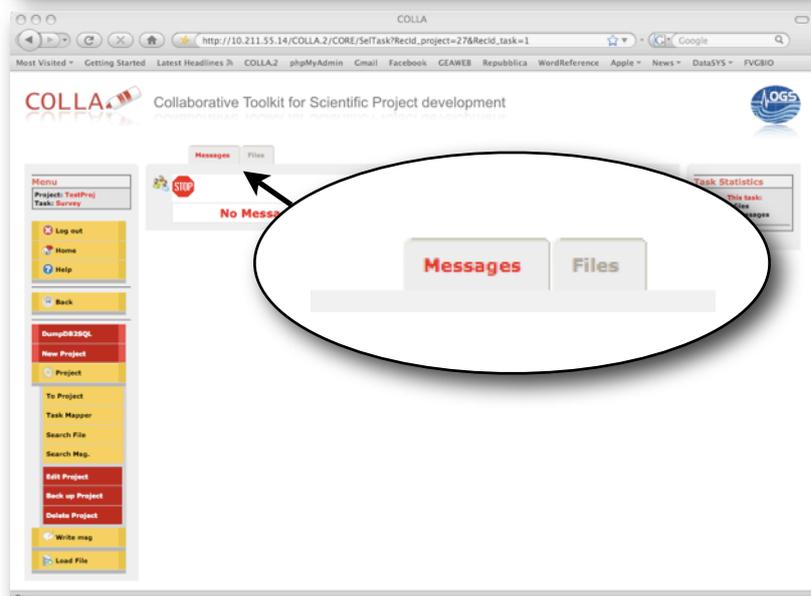
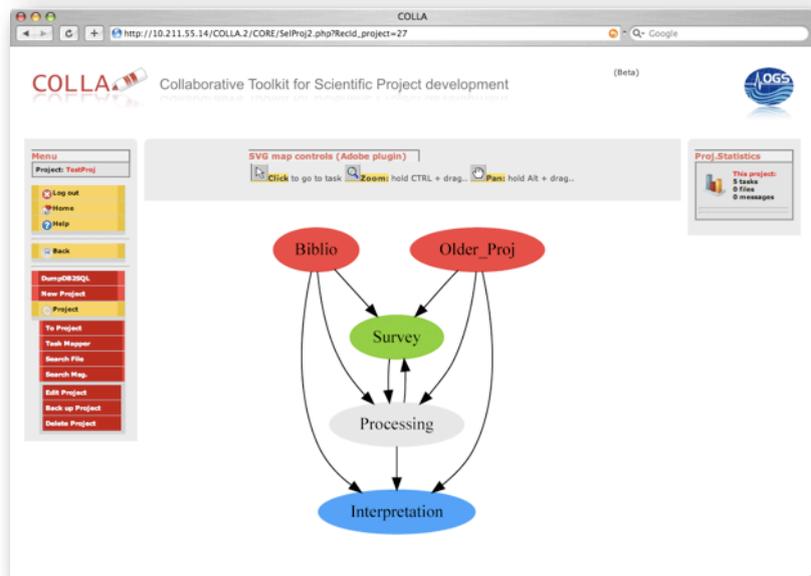
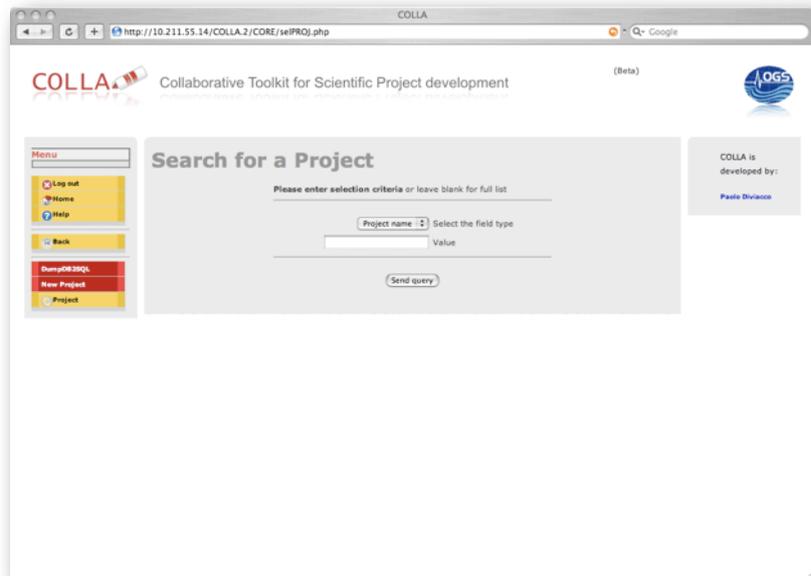
You'll be sent to the task map of this project. Here each balloon represents a task that contains data and messages related to that task.

If you have an SVG enable browser you can zoom and pan the graph using the instructions showed above it.

In the rightmost part of the page you can see a Statistics report (if the project is empty this will be empty too, as in the image)

Clicking on a balloon you can enter the task, and get data gathered there, or start populating it. If it's empty you will get a warning notifying that no message has been found

Please note the Messages and Files Tab (this is a major change compared with the former version of COLLA) from this tab you can select if showing messages or files gathered in this task



MESSAGES

Colla messages are very similar to the common e-mail, with two exceptions:

- 1) you have to type your text within a COLLA page (not in your mailer)
- 2) you do not attach files, you load them separately and then refer to them in your msg(see below)

The idea behind is that messages are collected server side and are available to all the members of a user pool. At the same time being stored in a database they can be catalogued, searched, indexed or what else can be done using a database

To write a message

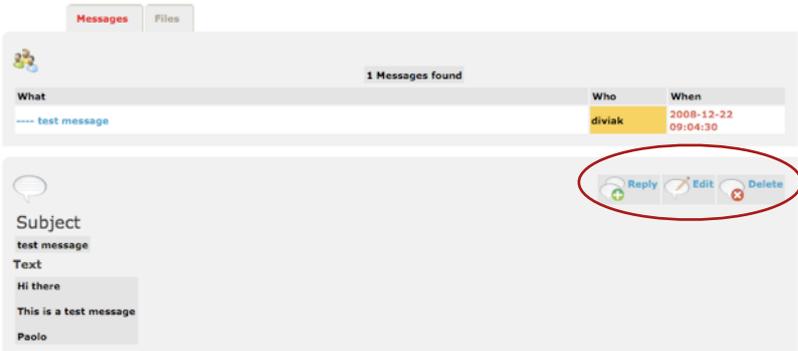
Select from the main menu “write a Message”. Enter the subject and the text and click on the Send button.



Once the message has been sent the Message tab list will be filled with the relative record notifying what (the subject) has been sent to the workgroup by who and when. The Subject is in blue to advise that it's a link. In fact if you click on it you are sent to a page where you can read it.

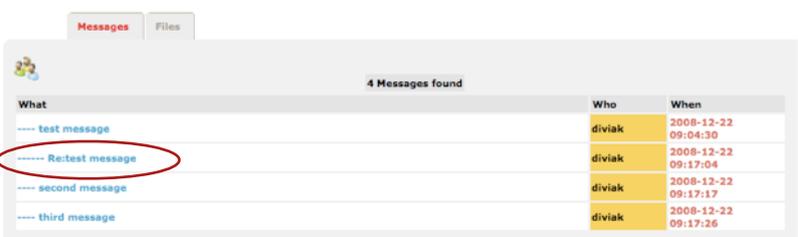


Please note on the right three buttons that allow to reply, edit or delete your message (please note that if you are not the “owner” of the message you will not find the edit and delete button)



To Reply to the message click on the Reply button . Enter text or edit subject if necessary and then send.

Please note that the message sent as a reply appears in the list after the original message but indented on the right to highlight that its a reply to the upper message



Task Statistics

This task:
0 files
4 messages

Last Msg:
third msgag ...

Your Last Msg:
third msgag ...

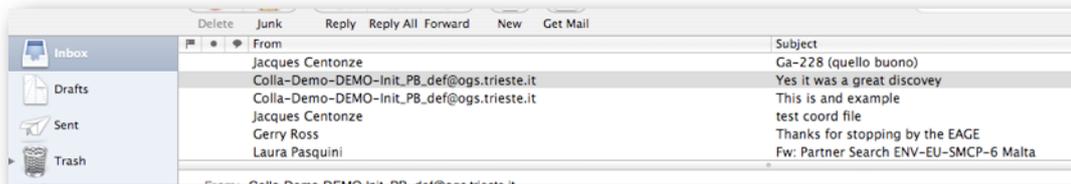
Note that as you or your partners send messages, the statistics are updated, showing what is the last message sent by anyone and at the same time which is your last message.

e-mail Notification

When any user sends a COLLA-Message, COLLA automatically forwards it to all the members of the working group by e-mail. This message has several interesting features

- 1) notifies of any discussion, alerts all members of the workgroup
- 2) contains a web-link to enter the discussion exactly where it is held, without the need to login and browse all the tasks.

Upon any user sending a message all users of the same pool (same project) receive an e-mail as here below

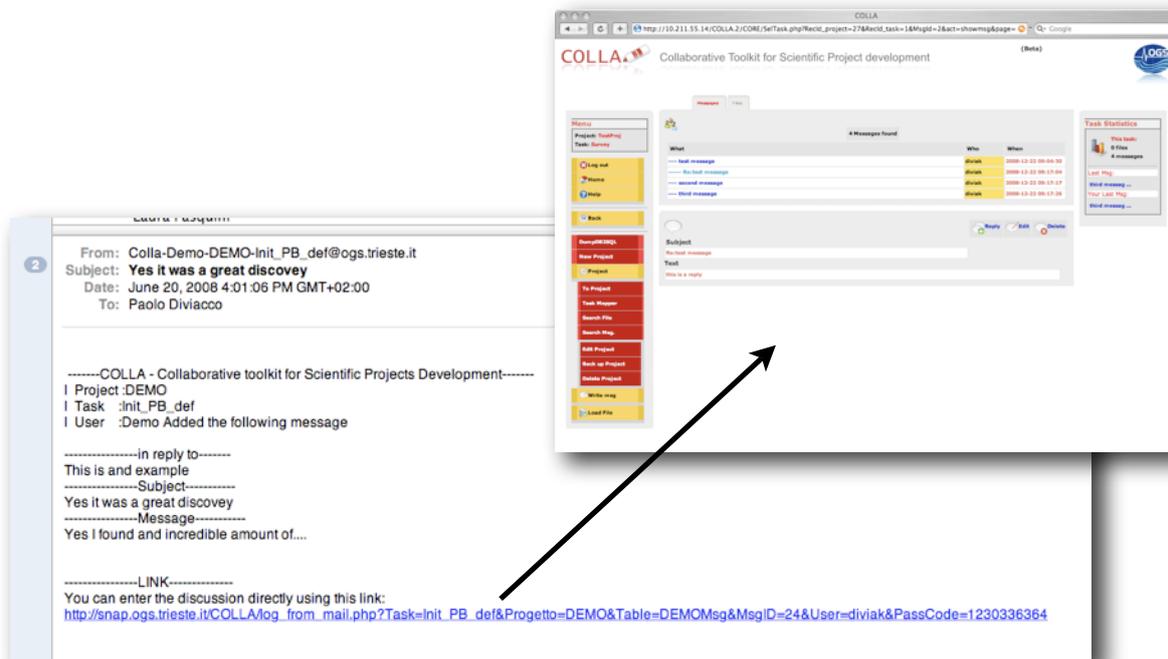


The From field of the mail follows the following format:

COLLA - project name - user that sent message - pertinent task @ hosting computer

this is very practical in sorting or filtering messages

the subject is the subject entered within the COLLA message sending tool. The e-mail text reports everything entered by the sending user divided by sections, and has in the lowermost part of the messages a web-link. If you click on it a web-browser will be opened and you'll be sent directly to the project and task where this message belongs to, avoiding time-consuming log-in actions.



FILES

Within COLLA files are not attached to a message, they live independent lives. They actually reside in the filesystem of COLLA but are accessed through the COLLA interface, that organizes them coherently with the task map, that handles versioning and quick-look visualization. Everything is done accordingly with a server-side paradigm in order that every member of the user pool can access files seamlessly.

Colla accepts any kind of file, Some file types (.jpg, .gif, .png) can be viewed directly from within COLLA itself, some can be viewed through a visualization tool (.sgy) some are automatically translated (.tif) to a viewable format some use an external program that is embedded within the page during visualization (.pdf, and .doc, .xls [only in MS explorer]). (if you work on ms windows with explorer, world will be opened within the browser, please read below to avoid any possible mistake).

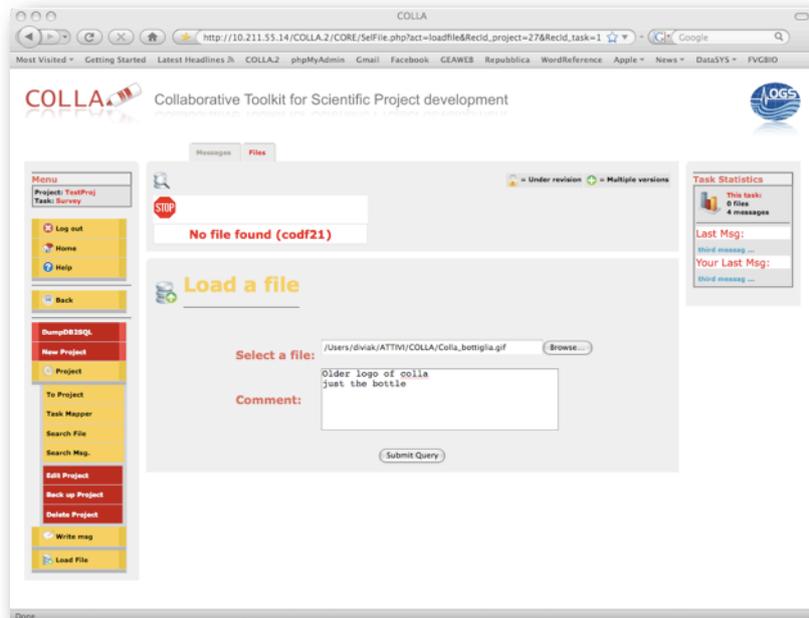
Loading Files

Click on the “Load File” button, Select your file after browsing your local hard disk. Add a comment and Submit.

Please note that **Comments** or additional infos regarding the file are **VERY IMPORTANT**. They can help the other partners and yourself to later retrieve the correct version of what you are looking for. For example it is possible to find a file upon querying the database on something written in the Comment box, as for example ...a query like “document written after a bad monday” or “the great test that went right at the first take”.

Leaving comments on the content of the file is an invaluable tool, please consider to add as many info as possible.

Please note that you can upload files with 3 digit extensions only (.jpg not .jpeg)



Once the file has been loaded the file tab will show it in the file list specifying the file name, the date of loading and who loaded it. If you drag the mouse on the file name a second window will pop up showing the comment you entered upon file uploading. This way you will know the content of the file.



To visualize the file it is sufficient to click on the file name. A new page will be opened where you'll be able to view the selected file.

In case of .pdf files or .svg files the relative plugin will be used, for .doc or .xls the behavior is different from browser to browser. Ms. Explorer opens the files within explorer itself.

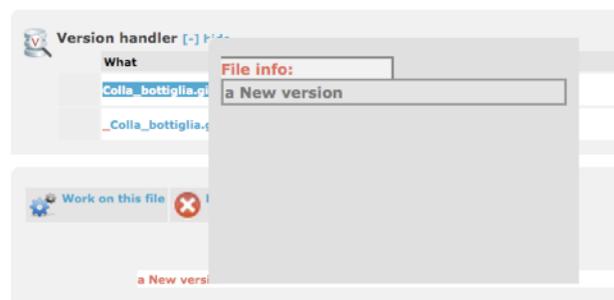
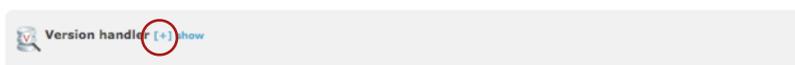
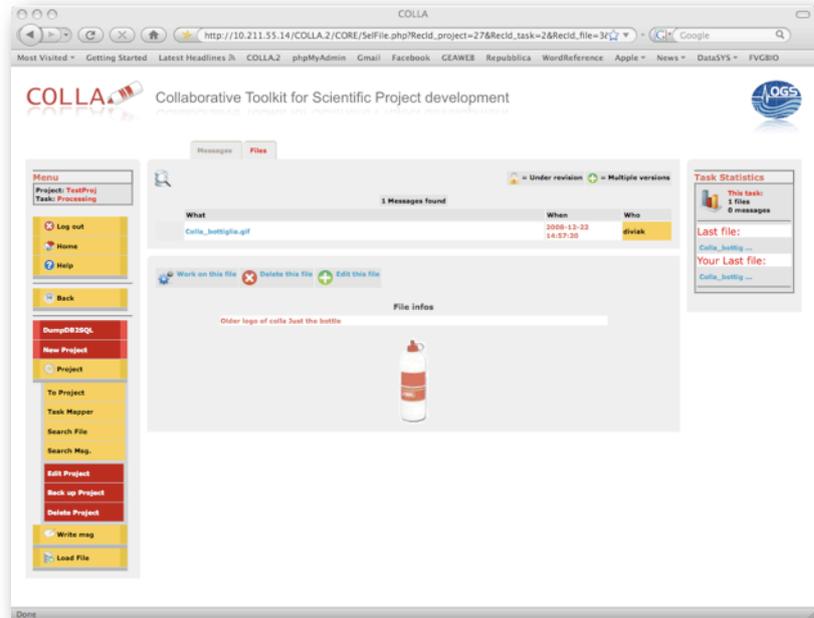
Beware that any change will be saved to a temporary file. This means that any edit will not be saved in the file you are thinking to edit. To properly handle a new version of the file you should first download it and edit it, or edit within Explorer but then save it to your local hard disk, to upload it then to COLLA in a second step. **Beware also that file name should be the same!**

Version control

The file list shows only the last version of a file. It is possible to load multiple instances of the same document, so that revisions can be applied, while taking track of editing and leaving the possibility to get back to a previous version. This is performed automatically while uploading, **provided that you have loaded a new file with the same file name of the older version.** COLLA retrieves the previous versions from the database and handles the new file consistently while taking care of version and file comments.

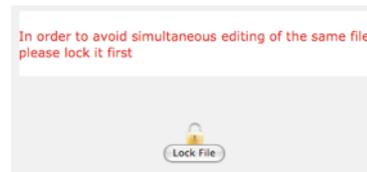
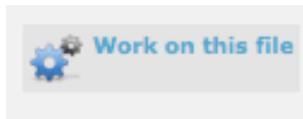
After having loaded a new file with the same file name COLLA highlights that version handling has been activated placing a plus icon close to the file name. Please note that in this file list only the last version is presented.

If multiple versions of the same file are present, when selecting to view a file the last version is shown but at the same time a new section is made available where you can find older versions, if you press the [+] button, this opens the version handling facility, where you will be able to see older versions of the same file. Dragging on each of them you'll be able to see comments from each file that enable you to select which version you are interested in.



Locking file

While editing a new version of a file, it can be useful to prevent other users to edit it. It is possible then to lock the file in order that no-one else will be able to upload his new version before you. To enable this function you need to click on the “Work on this file” button, then click on “Lock file”.



Locked files are labeled using a lock icon. Once a new version is uploaded the file is automatically unlocked. Or if you want to unlock it manually use the “Unlock this file Button”, you can see selecting the file to be viewed.



Editing Deleting files

If you are the user that uploded a specific file, you are allowed to edit or delete it. Use the pertinent button while viewing the file itself. It is possible in the Edit file form to “move” or “copy” the file to a different task of the same project.

Messages Files

Under revision Multiple versions

1 Messages found

What	When	Who
Colla_bottiglia.gif	2008-12-22 14:42:42	diviak

Version handler [-] hide

What	Which	When	Who
Colla_bottiglia.gif	1	2008-12-22 14:42:42	diviak
Colla_bottiglia.gif	0	2008-12-22 14:34:19	diviak

To download this file:

1. Right click on the link below
2. Save target as..

File: Colla_bottiglia.gif

Messages Files

Edit File

File: Colla_bottiglia.gif

File Info*:

Possible actions:

- No activity
- Move this file to task
- Copy

Edit File

Referring to a file already loaded in COLLA from within a message

As already said COLLA is based on a server-side paradigm. You load a file and then refer to it through a web link (URL). COLLA addresses this issue for you through an easy file reference procedure. While you are composing or replying to a message you can see two buttons between the Subject and Text field: Insert into message a “file link” or a Web Link. Just type your message and when you need to put a reference to a file within your text click on the File link button. Then You’ll be sent to a page where you’ll get a drop down menu where you’ll be

New Message

Project name: Messaggi_ordinati Task: provalink User: diviak

Subject*: this is a message with a file reference

Insert into message: --- File link --- Web Link

Text: Hi overthere, take a look at this file i just loaded

* This field is mandatory

Send

able to select the file you are interested in.

Upon selection you'll return to your message and a "weird" text will be added to your message, something like "COLLA::fid::6::" this is used internally by COLLA to reference to the right file. Do not be afraid then this technicality will disappear... You can add other files obtaining similar results. When you're done with your message, press then the Send Button and You'll be to the main "messages" page where you'll notice your new message that embeds the references to the file(s) you needed.

Try to select it to see what changed. Now you do not see anymore that weird technicality, but only a web link (in blue) to the correct file you needed. Just click on it and you'll be sent to the page where it will be displayed.

Referring to an external web page within a message

Similarly to the case above of a file you can add a reference to an external resource using its URL (the web address you can see in your browser URL field).

Please not that you are fully responsible for the addresses you enter in the system. Malicious addresses can harm computers of other members of your working group. COLLA and its developer or maintainer disclaim any responsibility about what you enter in the system!

To enter a web link just press the Web link button that will send you in a page where you can enter manually a web link or better just copy and paste it from the address field of any web browser.

Please not that the address should be like <http://webpage.domain>.

Then just click on the send button and you'll be sent back to the page where you were entering the message and where you can add other links or files. Here You'll see the strange text



COLLA::WL::<http://www.ogs.trieste.it>:: . When you are done send the message and you'll be able to see it without technicalities with links named as link 1, link 2 and so on.

Of course both files and web links are included in e-mail notifications.