GPO Access, WAIS, via the WWW at Oklahoma State University through Oklahoma Gateway

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Overview

Oklahoma State University (OSU), a State university of close to 20,000 students, is one of two regional depositories in the State of Oklahoma. The other regional is the Oklahoma Department of Libraries at the State Capitol. OSU was the most equipped at the time, to step forward and plan a gateway.

In August of 1995, we set up our first gateway. I decided to go the way of the WWW since there were already a number of SWAIS access points available and few on the Web. Our campus computer center (Computing and Information Services, from now on CIS) also had reservations about users dialing in, our library had concerns about adding another database to our online catalog system and SWAIS was difficult to use at times. We did have the WAIS software set up in our documents office.

I approached the person at CIS who was the OSU Web site's Webmaster. We discussed the idea and initially decided on the following:

On the Computer Center's IBM RS/6000 running AIX, (IBM's version of UNIX), we set up wwwwais.c, v. 2.5 , a small ANSI C program for use on the WWW (acts as a gateway between programs that create indexed catalogs of files and a forms-capable browser). The searches and results produced were fine and timely, but we were not able to access GPO's .PDF files. We believe this to be due to the version of freeWAIS (v. 2.02) it was working with. The person at CIS who had helped me to put this together left OSU for another position, so instead of trying to unravel his work, we decided in November/December of 1995 to change our setup.

I was now working with the person at the CIS who had replaced the Webmaster, but was no longer the Webmaster as this position had been moved to our Public Information Office. He and I, together with a CIS C programmer modeled our new gateway after that of Purdue

University. Purdue has provided access to the programs they used on the Internet: http://www.lib.purdue.edu/ gpo/GPOsetup.html.

The basic user format or style stayed the same. We have an introductory page which:

- describes GPO Access;
- offers access to GPO's home page and WAIS site;
- offers access to GPO's helpful hints for searching the WAIS databases, and
- offers access to Adobe site for downloading of the Adobe Acrobat for the .PDF files.

The second page of our site gives the actual database listing and basic search directions. It is set up as a Table with boxes to the left of the databases where users must point and click to make their selections. This works very well for now, and we are able to clearly describe the databases. Although as more and more databases are added, we might change our setup to something similar to what GPO has done or reorganize the Table so that users do not have to scroll through screens of pages to see all of the available databases.

From the Purdue site, we downloaded the following to the IBM RS/600 (and I am told that Xwindows must also be installed since the files below are in C. (Xwindows = graphical windowing system for the UNIX environment)

1. Downloaded the newer version of freeWAIS.

2. Downloaded Imagemagick, allowing for viewing of .PDF files.

3. Downloaded GPO Access gateway code file (.cgi), written by Purdue, to combine 1 and 2, above.

The above three files were first saved to a local drive and then FTP'd to the server. Some of the files have to be modified so that they match to the directories of the particular server being used. (The Make file (which actually writes the new program files after you have changed the defaults in the original template files) also needs to match the server.)

I have an ID and password from the Computer Center to access the server in order to edit the gateway screens. I use Pico, a UNIX editor.

A user counter has been added to the bottom of the page: (as the number).

.**User Support Issues**

I communicate to campus users via an electronic bulletin board on our e-mail system. I have advertised GPO Access WAIS in library newsletters, demonstrated it at conferences, legislative days, etc., to promote it statewide. My e-mail address is at the bottom of the page for user comments. Users need to be aware of the necessary search commands, Boolean operators in upper case, phrases in quotations, etc., but GPOps helpful hints are available and straightforward. (Bill Taylor from Georgetown has also put together a GPO Access

Searching Tips which is very good too.) Overall, users are amazed and really pleased that this is available. They are waiting for the CFR however!

Why Set One Up

It has been said that GPO Access WAIS will be a main distribution point for electronic materials. We have enjoyed the experience of making something so useful and worthwhile available to our State users and others. We are grateful to Purdue for their capability and their willingness to share.