

The North Carolina Periodicals Index

by David L. Burke and Maurice C. York

The North Carolina Periodicals Index seeks to provide access to periodical literature pertaining to North Carolina and its people. It is available through the gopher server maintained by East Carolina University's Joyner Library. Easy to use and broad in scope, the index reflects the content of hundreds of articles in over forty magazines, journals, and newsletters published in North Carolina. The index has proved to be not only a valuable source of bibliographic information, but also a meaningful learning experience for the staff members and student assistants involved in its development.

The index grew out of a desire to help undergraduate students at East Carolina University find current information about the state. The scope and content of the index reflect these needs. Thus, the periodicals chosen for inclusion — most of which are not indexed in standard reference tools — regularly contain useful articles pertaining to the arts, social sciences, and sciences. Topics include artists and art exhibitions, folk music, education, social conditions, history, travel and tourism, politics and government, and the environment. Owing to staffing limitations, however, no attempt is made to index each title exhaustively or to include reviews of any kind. Although indexing began in January 1992, some retrospective work has been accomplished since that time. The product has been surprisingly useful in locating articles of interest to the library's patrons.

Graduate students employed by the library have been vital to the success of the project. As new issues of periodicals arrive in the North Carolina Collection, a graduate assistant selects articles thought to be substantive enough to merit inclusion in the index. After reading an article, the student completes a data entry sheet. These sheets contain fields for complete bibliographic information, up to four Library of Congress subject headings, and an abstract. The sheets are given to the North Carolina Librarian, who edits them and checks for consistency and appropriateness of subject headings chosen by the student. The student then enters the information for each article in a database. Because they realize that the index is being used by many people, the students have found

the work to be very rewarding.

Using Microsoft Excel, the Systems Librarian designed a data entry box for entering the data sheet contents into an electronic database format. A macro program prompts the student to add data to various fields and utilizes dropdown list boxes to insure standardized entry of periodical titles, abbreviations, notes, and dates. In an attempt to maintain authority control, the data entry system was programmed to bring up another dialog box for subject entry. Subject headings that have been used in previous entries can be cut and pasted to the entry at hand, and new headings are added to a thesaurus.

To enable patrons to search the index through the library's gopher server, the periodicals database, after steps in which it is converted to ASCII textfile format, is indexed with the IUBio WAIS program developed by Indiana University. WAIS enables the patron to employ a variety of search techniques. These are explained in a scope and content note available on the gopher.

Upon selecting the North Carolina Periodicals Index item on the library gopher's main menu, the patron can double-click on one of two icons. The first one describes the database and lists the periodicals indexed. After clicking on the second of these, "Search the North Carolina Periodicals Index," the patron is prompted to type a search string. Here the patron can search by keyword using Boolean commands (*and*, *not*), employ truncation, or enter literal phrases. A few examples follow:

Boolean

To find articles dealing with water pollution, which have been given the subject heading **Water—Pollution**, one can use the search string **water and pollution**. The search string **water pollution** will retrieve extraneous articles because the system defaults to *or* in the absence of a Boolean operator, thus locating articles dealing with many aspects of water or pollution. To limit a search by date, the patron must incorporate a year into the string: **Air and Cargo and 1993**. The *not* command can be used to restrict the scope of a search: **crime and prevention not juvenile**.

*La•gniappe (län-yäp', län' yäp') n. An extra or unexpected gift or benefit. [Louisiana French]

Truncation

The asterisk (*) applied at the end of a partial word will match all documents with words that begin with that partial word. The query **educat*** results in all records containing such words as **educate**, **educators**, and **education**.

Literal Phrases

If quotation marks (") surround a phrase, then the result will match that phrase exactly: **"University of North Carolina"**.

When the search engine locates the search string anywhere in the database, a list of article titles that match the search will appear on the screen. When the patron double-clicks on a title, the full record appears. This information can then be printed or downloaded to a disk.

The Joyner Library gopher server can be reached through any gopher client. While these clients vary in how a specific gopher server is accessed, the Internet address of the library's gopher server is **fringe.lib.ecu.edu**. The gopher is registered with the Home Gopher Server at the University of Minnesota and can be found under the listing of North Carolina gophers as "East Carolina University."

The library plans to update the index at intervals of two months, thus achieving the goal of making current information about North Carolina available to its patrons — and, as *lagniappe*, to anyone connected to the Internet.

Figure 1: North Carolina Periodicals Index listing on Gopher Main Menu (Windows).

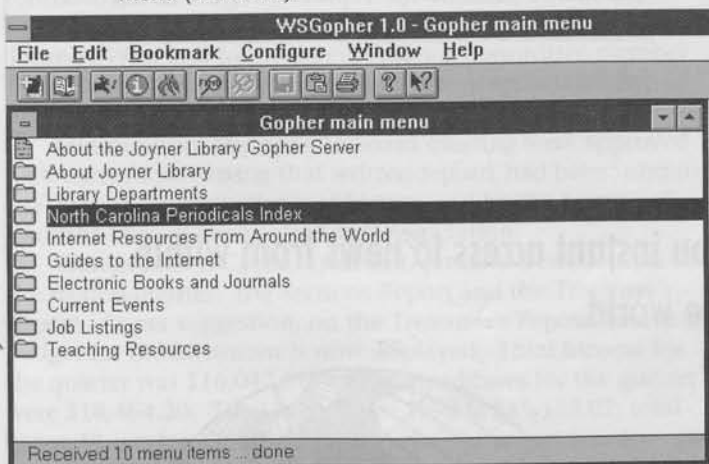


Figure 2: Periodicals Index search prompt.

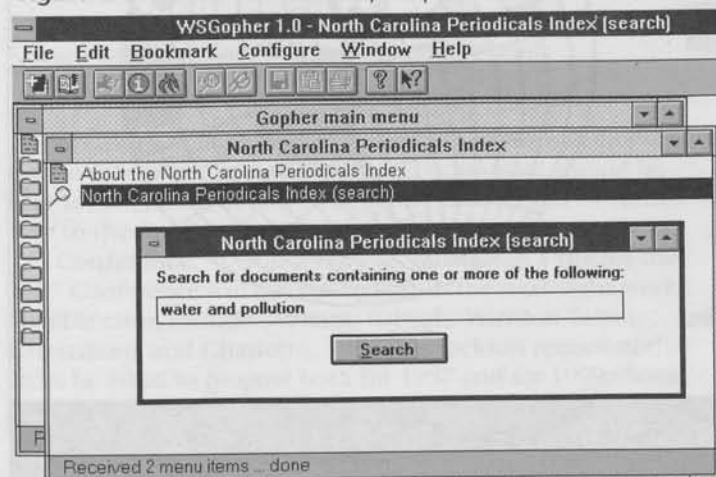


Figure 3: List of record titles that match the search.

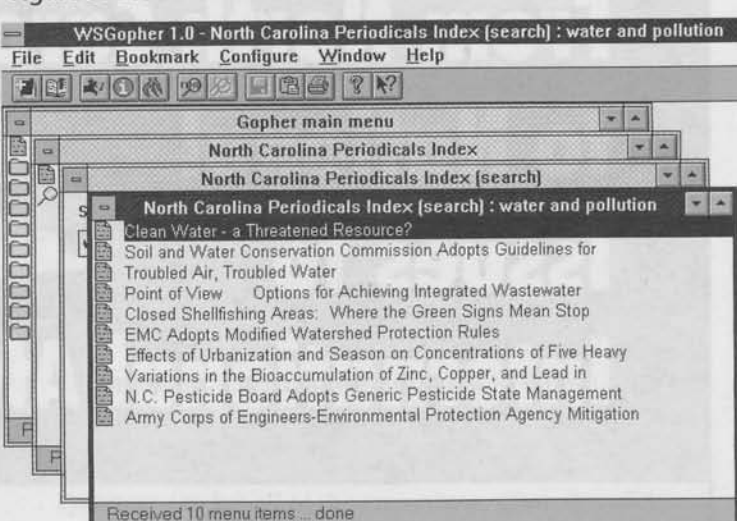


Figure 4: Part of a sample record.

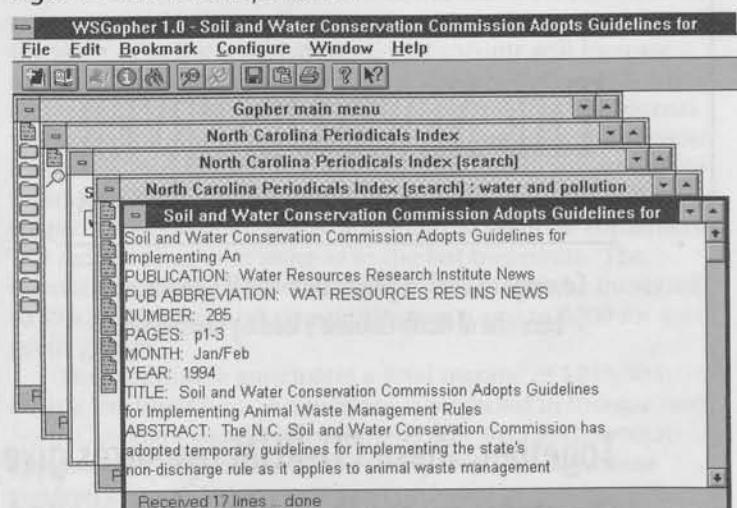
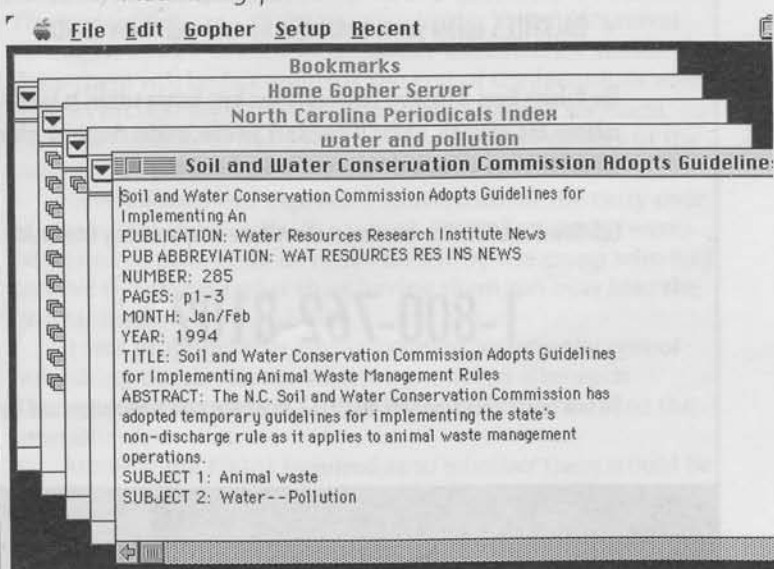


Figure 5: Complete bibliographic record as it appears on the Macintosh gopher client.



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