

Wired to the World

— by Ralph Lee Scott

Exploring the Internet can be a major job, albeit one that all librarians need to take the time to do. This "Wired to the World" column begins the first of a series that is designed to explore several Internet sites here in North Carolina. While you might not see an immediate use for some of these sites, I *guarantee*, as Justin Wilson would say, that at some point you will be scratching your head and saying "Now what was that #@%^ I read about in *North Carolina Libraries*."

This issue's site is fairly easy to find. Just point your favorite browser software (Mosaic, Netscape) to the North Carolina Home Page at UNC-Chapel Hill (<http://sunsite.oit.unc.edu/nc/nchome.html>) and scroll down to the entry entitled: NC Vital Statistics. This is a UNC gopher site that provides data sets for North Carolina Vital Statistics from 1968 to 1993. Covered are data on births, deaths, marriages, and divorces occurring in North Carolina stored via the MVS operating system at UNC's Office of Information Technology. (In fact, if you want, you can gopher directly to: [gopher://uncmvs.oit.unc.edu:70/gopher.ncstats\[menu\]](gopher://uncmvs.oit.unc.edu:70/gopher.ncstats[menu]).)

Online documentation for the data sets is available within the gopher site. This documentation provides general guidelines for use of the data sets, general information, and a list of the sets and exhibits available. This site is, among other things, an electronic version of the following North Carolina state documents: *Vital*

Statistics, Detailed Mortality Statistics, Basic Automated Birth Yearbook (BABY), and North Carolina Health Statistics Pocket Guide. Additional supplementary one-time studies and reports from the North Carolina Center for Health and Environmental Statistics (CHES) Studies series are included among the files.

The following are some of the files represented at the gopher site: Birth and Fetal Death Files, 1968-1987; Birth Files, 1988-Present; Fetal Death Files, 1988-Present; Death Files, 1968-Present; Consolidated Birth/Infant Death Files, 1968-Present; Divorce Files, 1968-Present; Vital Statistics Codes of North Carolina Counties and Incorporated Places of 2500 and over; Out-of-State Codes; North Carolina County Codes; Out-of-State Codes — Marriage Files; and The Apgar Score. Several other tables are listed but not yet available electronically: Monthly Report of Divorces Granted; Certificate of Death;

Application, License and Certificate of Marriage; Certificate of Absolute Divorce or Annulment; and the Origin, Flow and Disposition of Vital Records, North Carolina.

Also available at the gopher site are the official definitions of data categories such as: Live Birth, Fetal Death, Death, Marriage, Legal Divorce and Annulment, and Divorce from Bed and Board. Following these legal descriptions is an excellent brief history of vital records processing in North Carolina. This information alone is invaluable to genealogists and other researchers. Data completeness was certified for deaths in 1940 and 1950 (86 and 96 percent respectively), fetal deaths in 1974 (99 percent), and marriage registration in 1963 (again 99 percent). No completeness certification is given for the divorce and annulment data. Other text files indicate the tape identification and record length of the files, together with the variable

record descriptions, positions and possible values (such as Hospital code, Doctor's Office, County, Place of Residence of Mother, etc.).

After you locate the file that you are interested in, just click on the date you wish to view and the data will be downloaded to your computer. (Hint: this may take a while). To better use the data, you will want to import the file into a spreadsheet or data handling software package such as SPSS. Next month, we will visit another location on the North Carolina Information Highway.

