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AppleSearch WAIS Gateway: Description (5/94)

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TOPIC -----

This article describes the AppleSearch WAIS Gateway.

DISCUSSION -----

AppleSearch is a client/server information retrieval system which allows users to search large text databases for topics of interest. The AppleSearch WAIS gateway expands the scope of AppleSearch beyond Local Area Networks (LAN) to the Internet, allowing AppleSearch Reporters (search agents) to navigate the Internet retrieving information for AppleSearch users.

WAIS, the Wide Area Information Servers system, is one of many services on the Internet. WAIS was developed jointly by Thinking Machines, Apple Computer, KPMG Peat Marwick, and Dow Jones and Company. It has become popular public domain client/server software, providing searchable databases on the Internet. Commercial implementations of WAIS are also now available. Because WAIS and AppleSearch use similar indexing methods (inverted index files) and both provide relevance ranking, AppleSearch and WAIS work very well together. There are approximately five hundred WAIS servers on the Internet throughout the world with content including Supreme Court opinions, regional economic reports, weather maps, and even recipes. By extending the reach of the AppleSearch Reporter, the AppleSearch WAIS gateway makes it possible for users to receive updates from any WAIS server. The AppleSearch WAIS gateway allows less Internet-savvy users to easily conduct research on the wealth of informational resources on the Internet.

AppleSearch WAIS Gateway Features

- Allows Macintosh clients on AppleTalk networks to search Internet WAIS servers without having to be on the internet themselves.
- Provides user-defined "agent" based tracking of developments on the Internet.
- Allows server administrators to select the specific WAIS servers and restrict access to inappropriate servers.
- Enables unattended, non-prime time access to heavily used Internet information sources.
- Seamless integration of LAN and WAN based information sources.

AppleSearch Usage on the Internet

The AppleSearch WAIS gateway allows Educators and students, business people, and other professionals to share in all the benefits of the existing AppleSearch client/server architecture as well as accessing WAIS servers on the Internet. WAIS servers will appear in the AppleSearch sources window along with any AppleSearch sources on the user's LAN. Users can create AppleSearch Reporters to search and retrieve information on local servers from the following sources: documents stored in their native format on servers, CD-ROM-based information, information from online news feeds, in addition to sources out on the Internet. Queries may be sent out on the Internet in an interactive fashion for immediate feedback or scheduled to search the Internet during off-peak hours.

The AppleSearch WAIS gateway is a gateway from the AppleSearch server software out to the main WAIS directory server located and maintained by Thinking Machines Corporation at Think.com. The main Think.com directory server points to all the registered WAIS servers on the Internet. The administrator of the AppleSearch server connects to the gateway and then selects which WAIS servers will be made available to local area AppleSearch users. This allows the administrator to choose servers that are applicable and appropriate for the local users' needs. Because there are so many WAIS servers, the AppleSearch interface conveniently organizes them in a volume oriented fashion listing all available servers in alphabetically grouped folders.

The AppleSearch client user composes a query and selects an appropriate WAIS index from the AppleSearch Server software. The client passes the query to the Server over the AppleTalk network and the server connects to the WAIS Server over the TCP/IP Internet. The WAIS server returns a relevance ranked list of documents that match the search criteria to the AppleSearch server and on to the client user. The user can then select a document for viewing by double clicking on the list and the AppleSearch server will contact the WAIS Server and retrieve the document.

The AppleSearch Reporter agents can be used to periodically search designated WAIS servers for topics of interest selected by the user. Scheduled searches can be instructed to return their results to a predetermined folder or update document. The user simply schedules a Reporter to deliver updates to their Macintosh on a daily or weekly basis.

AppleSearch System Requirements

AppleSearch Server

- An Apple Workgroup Server (AWS) 60, 80, or 95 (file and print configuration), a Macintosh Quadra, or Centris 610 or 650.
- Macintosh system software version 7.x or A/UX 3.1.
- 8MB of RAM to run concurrently with AppleShare.
- AppleSearch Server and WAIS Gateway software.
- XTND translators for documents format support.

AppleSearch Client

- Macintosh computer with an internal hard disk and at least 4MB of RAM.
- Macintosh system software version 7.0 or later.
- AppleSearch Client software

