

NeXT-WAISStation Ð Wide Area Information Server software

This application allows you to tap into a variety of databases around the world with searches based on the simple ideas of ``Tell Me About This" and ``Give Me More Like That." You can also use WAISStation to create your own databases. Here is how to use it:

Keywords. . . . Type a question into the text area labeled ``Tell Me About:". Natural language is OK (for example, ``what is WAIS"). The words in your question will be used as keywords for the search.

Sources. . . . Select the information sources you want to query and enter them in the list labeled ``Using these Sources:". There are several ways to do this:

- Drag sources from well in the Source Palette to the well beside the source list.
- Copy (Command-c) sources from the list in the Source Palette and paste (Command-v)

them into the source list. The lists will highlight themselves to show which one you are editing. Click on any list to start editing it.

- Drag source files (ending in ``.src") from the NeXT File Viewer into the well beside the source list.

You can remove sources from the question's source list by selecting and then Cutting or Deleting them. You can remove sources from the Source Palette in the same way, but note that this will *permanently* delete these sources from your system.

You can make additional information sources available to your system by querying the special source named ``directory-of-servers.src" about a topic you are interested in. (When the search results appear, double-click the sources you want. WAISStation automatically installs them, ready for your use.)

Documents. . . Now press the SEARCH button (or hit Return if you're in the question text), and shortly, a Bar Chart showing the results of your query will appear under ``Resulting Documents:". Each document has a bar beside it which gives an indication of how well the document matched your question. There are several

ways to retrieve a document listed there:

- Double-click on the document's name in the result list.
- Select it and drag its icon out of the well beside the result list (and into Document Palette for example).
- Select and copy it out of the result list (and paste it wherever you like).

As it's being retrieved, the document shows up as a dimmed entry in the Document Palette (or Source Palette, if what you are retrieving is really a WAIS source). When retrieval is completed, the document will be popped open in the appropriate application (although this can be disabled).

Zeroing In. . . If you now have a document that fits well what you are looking for, and you want to find related documents like it, enter it into the list labeled ``Similar to these Documents:'. You can enter documents there just as with the other lists. Now, the next time you tell WAIS to search, the content of these documents will also be considered in the selection and scoring process.

Creating your own sources. . . You can organize your information with WAIStation! Select ``New

Source¼" from the file menu, and hit the CREATE button when the Source window comes up. It will ask you for a name to save the new source in, and then pop up an Indexing Panel.

Now select the type of data you wish to enter from the pop-up list, and then drag the files and folders containing your information into the Indexing Panel. You can enter files and folders of different types in the same source. (To change the type, select the entries in the list that you want to change, choose the correct type, and press the arrow button to apply this mode to your selection.)

When you've entered all your information files, press the INDEX button. This will give your new source indexed access to the information in your files. It will also present to you a Re-IndexerDand app which you can save in your ~/Apps folder and double-click any time you want to re-index the source.

Here are explanations of some of the data types used by the indexer:

:one_line	each line is treated as a separate document
:para	each paragraph (separated by blank lines) is a document

<code>:objc</code>	each method and class interface is a document
<code>:netnews</code>	each network news article is a document
<code>:mail</code>	each message in a UNIX mailbox is a document (you can use this on a NeXT <code>.mailbox</code> , but NeXTmail messages won't appear)

If you would like to publish your source for the use of others on the Internet, you need to do two things. First, you need to make sure that public WAIS access has been enabled for your system. This can be done by becoming the superuser `root`, issuing the command

```
/LocalLibrary/WAIS/bin/create-public-next.sh -on /LocalLibrary/WAIS
```

and rebooting the system (with `/LocalLibrary/WAIS` replaced by your system WAIS folder if different). As usual, care should be taken when executing shell scripts like this as superuser. Second, when creating your source in WAISStation, you need to save your source in the system WAIS folder, and select the "Public" mode before pressing the INDEX button.

How to Find Out More. . . How to Report Bugs. . .

If you have questions about WAIS itself, try asking about ``WAIS" using the special source ``wais-docs.src" . You can sign up for email discussion groups about WAIS by clicking a button on the Info Panel. There is also a button on the Info Panel for sending email to the designers of WAIS and WAIStation (for example if you have a bug report).

ÐTHE LEGAL STUFFÐ

WAIStation.app is a front end program written by Paul Burchard <burchard@math.utah.edu> to facilitate the use of the WAIS Wide Area Information Server software with the NeXTstep GUI. It incorporates WAIS protocol software from Thnking Machines, Inc., and is distributed under the same terms as the WAIStation software from Thinking Machines, Inc. The appropriately modified disclaimer is reproduced below:

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