Sextant User Guide

December 3, 1992

Introduction

Sextant is a Macintosh application for exploring the Brown Campus-Wide Information Service (Brown CWIS) and other information and information services on the Internet. Sextant should be approachable and usable by the majority of Macintosh users.

Sextant uses the University of Minnesota's Internet Gopher protocol.

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}

Networks and disks

While using Sextant you will be opening and closing many windows. These windows contain information gathered either from the network or your disks. To aid knowing where information originated, every window contains either a network or disk icon. These icons are placed near the upper right corner of a window.

Folders

Information within the CWIS is organized hierarchically using folders. Folders can contain files, textbases, phonebooks, and other folders. Sextant displays each folder in its own window. The

window display contains three elements, the parent folder, the current folder, and a list of the current folder's content. These elements are laid out according to their hierarchical relationship.

Illustration 1 shows the folder "Providence Local & Regional Information"; this is the current folder. The folder's title is displayed in the window's title and in bold within the window.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ ▤□▤▤▤▤▤ Providence Local & Regional Information ▤▤▤▤▤□▤      │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│ 🗁 Brown University                                       ⬆  │
│  └🗁 Providence Local & Regional Information             ⬆  │
│    ├🗀 Points of Interest in Rhode Island                   │
│    ├🗀 Transportation info: Amtrak, Bonanza Bus and Commuter train s... │
│    ├🗋 Beyond Brown                                          │
│    ├🗋 Providence Weather                                    │
│    └🗋 Restaurants around Town                           ⬇  │
│                                                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
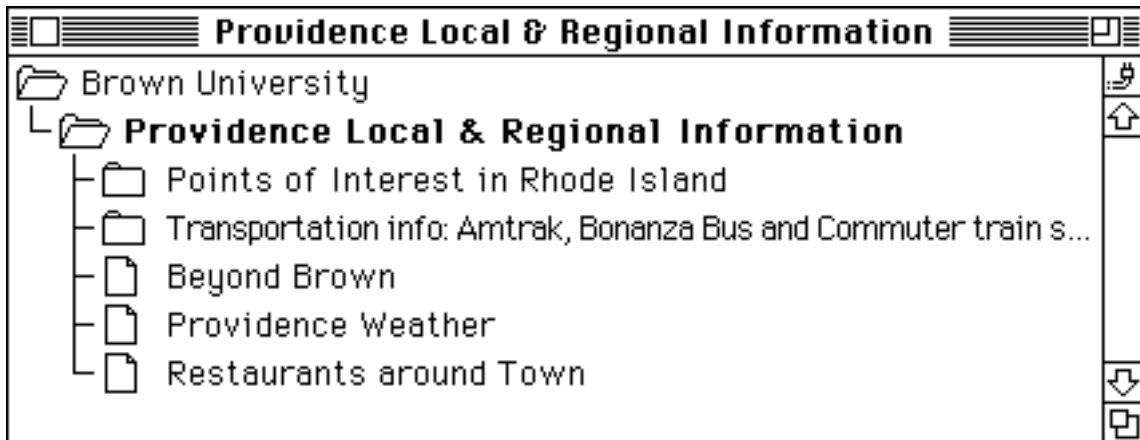
Illustration 1: A folder window.

The folder "Brown University" is the parent of the current folder. Including the parent folder in the Sextant window gives you easy navigation upwards through the folder hierarchy. The items below the current folder, are the items within the folder.

If a folder has no parent, for example it was created using New Connection in the File menu, the area for the parent icon and title will be blank.

Sextant displays folders using the ⌐ or 🗁 icons. The latter icon indicates that the folder is already open on the desktop.

Documents

Sextant can display plain text documents on the CWIS or on your Macintosh disks. Within a folder, a document is indicated with a 🗋 icon. For example, Illustration 1 contains three documents.

Opening "Restaurants around Town" displays the document's content.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ ▤□▤▤▤▤▤▤▤▤ Restaurants around Town ▤▤▤▤▤▤▤▤□▤               │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│ APSARA ASIA          Elmwood at Public Streets. Eclectic  ⬆ │
│                      Cambodian and Vietnamese cuisine, rock- ⬆│
│                      bottom prices.                         ▒│
│                                                             ▒│
│ BIG ALICE'S          100 Hope St. Perhaps the best ice cream▒│
│                      in Providence. Amazing sundaes and     ▒│
│                      surprising flavors of ice cream. Its   ▒│
│                      fame has even reached the pages of     ▒│
│                      People Magazine.                       ⬇│
│ ◁ ▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭ ▷      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
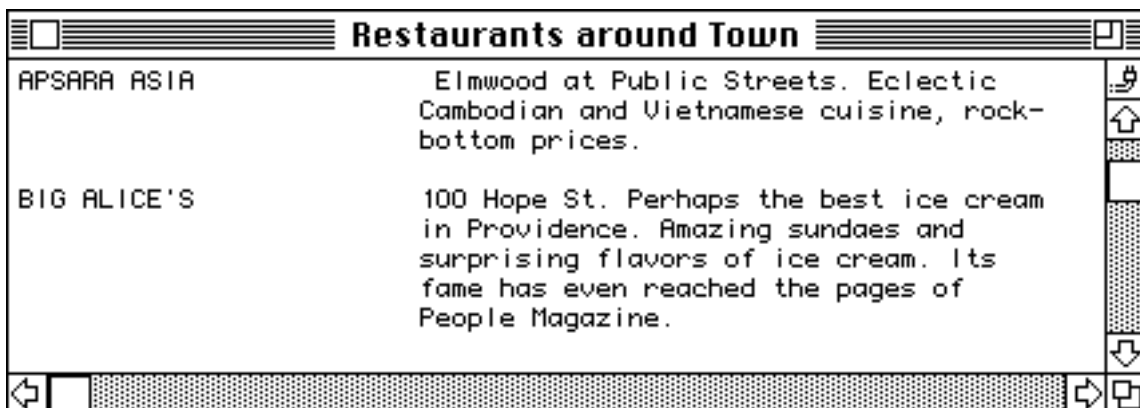
Illustration 2: A document window.

If you forget where a document came from choose Show Parent in the Windows menu to show the parent folder or textbase. {Show Parent does not correctly dim when there is no parent.}

Unknown documents

If the CWIS contains documents with an unknown format Sextant displays these documents in gray and they are not selectable.

Textbases and searching

Many CWISes have organized large collections of similar or related documents into textbases. A textbase is like a database in that you access its content by searching rather than browsing. Sextant uses the ? icon to indicate a textbase in a folder.

Opening a textbase, presents Sextant's search dialog. See Illustration 3.
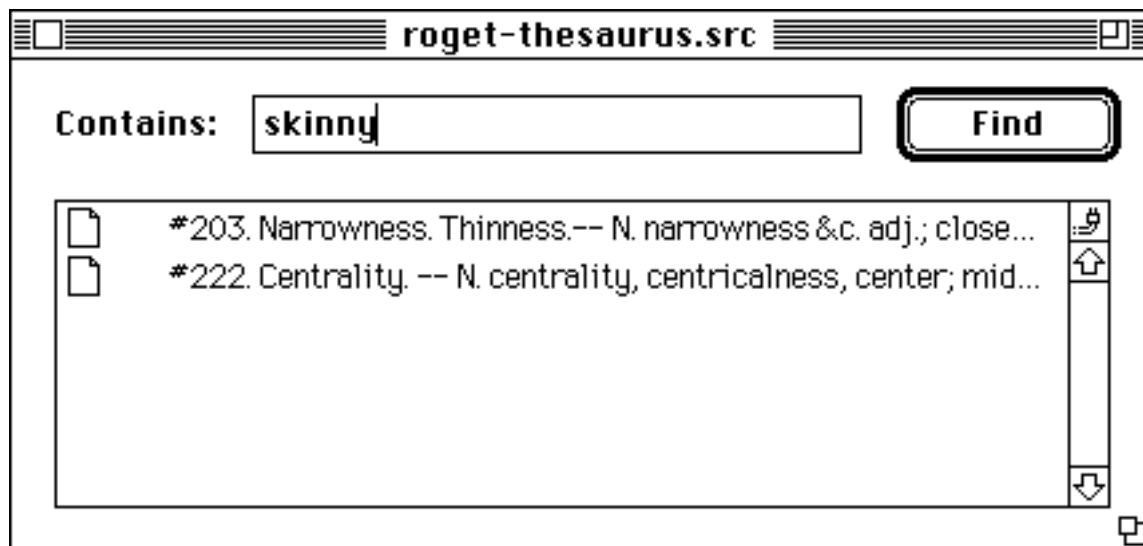

Illustration 3: The search dialog.

The search dialog contains three elements; the "Contains" field for entering your search terms; the "Find" button to start a search; and the results field listing what was found. Illustration 3 shows searching for "skinny" in the 1911 Roget's Thesaurus. This search finds two entries—narrowness and centrality. Both of these entries have document icons so opening them will display more information; in this case the full thesaurus entry.

Some textbases allow boolean operators between search term. Unfortunately, Sextant can not automatially detect this feature so you will have to use trial and error.

Phonebooks (Ph)

In addition to textbase searching, Sextant can also search online directories based on the University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne's CSO name server. Sextant uses the icon to indicate a phonebook item in a folder.

Opening a phonebook, Sextant presents a search dialog similar to the textbase search dialog; however, the results of a phonebook search are text and not a list of items. Illustration 4 shows the results of looking for information about Brown's President Vartan Gregorian.
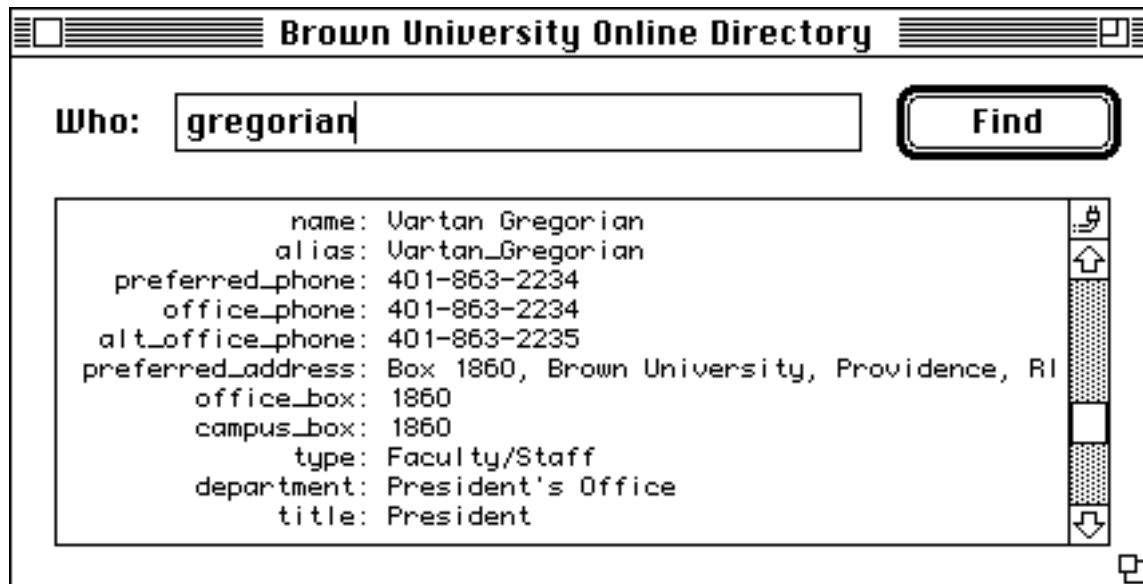

Illustration 4: A Ph search dialog.

Telnet

Only a small portion of the information available on the Internet is accessable via Sextant. Some of this information can be accessed by logging directy into the computer hosting the information. This is done via NCSA Telnet.

Sextant uses the ⊟ icon to indicate a telnet item in a folder. Opening this item will launch NCSA Telnet and open a connection to the host. Before launching NCSA Telnet, Sextant will ask you for a file name to save the host information; this file can be trashed afterwards.

References

As you explore the CWIS there will be items of interest that you would like to keep a reference to. Sextant has two facilities for keeping references; references and archives.

A reference is a Sextant document that when opened takes you directly to the referenced item without navigating the folder hierarchy. You can create references to folders, files, textbases, and phonebooks.

To create a reference, navigate the CWIS folders so that the item to be referenced is in the front window. Now, choose Save As from the File menu. If the item is a document, the dialog will ask if you want to save a reference or the content, choose Reference. Sextant reference files have the icon

References remember the path followed to reach the item.

Archives

Sextant also supports archives; an archive is a list of references saved in a single file. References in archives do not remember the their path. {Archives may be removed from future versions of Sextant.}

To create an archive, choose New Archive from the File menu. To add references to items in folders and search results, simply select, copy, and then paste the items into the archive. Don't forget to save the archive when done. Sextant archive files have the icon

Miscellaneous

- Use the Find command to locate a particular phrase in a document.

- Holding down the option key while choosing New Connection allows you to specify the port number.

- Use the up and down arrow keys to move the selection in the folder window.

- Hold down the command key to do a discontiguous selection in folder and search windows.

- Option double clicking an item closes the parent window.

- Use command-period to stop a command.

- The Get Info command shows you Gopher protocol specific information about the selected item.