Getting Connected to the Internet, Part II

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Internet Tools

Defining the basics of the Internet

Several software tools are important in navigating your way the Internet. The most important ones are as follows:

Ftp

One major reason to access the Internet is that it gives you access to all kinds of health care information. Files and data are scattered all around the Internet in large and small archives. These files may contain text, pictures, sounds, or computer programs. Sometimes you look at this information while it remains on a distant computer, but at other times you'll want to have your own copy. Copying files from these archives to your personal Internet account will be one of your main activities on the Internet. Computers on the Internet have a standard tool for transferring copies of files, a program called ftp (file transfer protocol). You can use ftp to copy any file from one Internet host to another; all you need is an account name on a host and the account's password. Your ftp program will make a special connection with the remote host, which will allow you to navigate its directories and select files for transfer. Unfortunately, there is no way to look at the contents of a file while you are connected via ftp. You must transfer the copy and look at it once it is in your own account. An example of an Internet address for an ftp site is oak.oakland.edu. When you do not have an account on a remote Internet host, ftp recognizes a special account name called "anonymous." Anybody on the Internet can access a public archive through the use of anonymous ftp, and, once connected, can transfer a copy of any file in the archive. There are a number of shareware programs that make the job of ftping very easy: Anarchie (MAC), and ???/(PC).

Telnet

Telnet lets you log on and use a computer at another location on the Internet. You can then use that remote computer system and its software as if you were sitting there at its keyboard. Utilizing telnet, you can do real-time searches on full-text databases and data files, such as health care articles, statistics, government data, trade leads, material sources, and many others. You can even access other on-line services without incurring additional long distance charges.

Log-in procedures may vary, but the username of anonymous and your e-mail address password will usually work. In many cases, the log-in name will be the name of a service or program such as WAIS or gopher.

Gopher

Gopher is Internet software that functions as the "do it all" front end to many Internet resources. Basically it "goes for" things, tunnels underground and surfaces where the goodies are. It combines many of the Internet tools to search, locate, and retrieve documents and files worldwide. Gopher sites provide links to other gopher sites as well. There's currently about 4,000 resource locations

worldwide. To use all the features of gopher, you should be running gopher software on your computer with a SLIP connection. Mac users can use a shareware program called Turbogopher. However, a number of computer systems allow you to telnet to them to use their gopher program. If you don't have a SLIP account or the ability to use gopher software with a dial-up connection, you can access one of these two sites.

WAIS

Wide Area Information Servers (WAIS) provide a common interface to thousands of Internet databases. Users can search these databases with WAIS software easily and quickly using keywords or other methods. You may have access to WAIS on a dial-up account, but for best performance run your own WAIS software using a SLIP account. Several sites allow you to telnet to their systems and run their WAIS software.

IRC (Internet Relay Chat)

IRC is a world wide chat program that allows you to carry on conversations by typing to someone. You can converse with someone in Moscow or Tocoma in real time. Special channels are created to separate conversations. Some of the channels are constant and others are created for only minutes at a time. IRC software and higher speed internet connections are allowing voice calls to be made around the world for the cost of your local call to your internet provider only. Programmers are working on an IRC varient that allows for two-way video and audio over this same system, all for free.

World Wide Web (WWW)

World Wide Web is a "hypertext" interface to Internet information resources. Hypertext documents contain hyperlinks or hotlinks to other documents spread out across the Internet. Internet users must have hypertext browser software to navigate the WWW. Netscape is the most popular and powerful WWW browser; others include Mosaic, Cello and Internet Works for Windows and Lynx for DOS. This is how hypertext works: If you were viewing this page in hypertext form, you'd be able to click upon the word hypertext at the beginning of this sentence. Selecting it takes you to other related documents which could be located anywhere on the Internet (next door or in South Africa). In this case it might take you to a definition of hypertext or a video clip of the history of its development. These new documents would, in turn, contain hyperlinks to other documents. Continuing to select hyperlinks would take you on a trip through the World Wide Web. Hyperlinks can also be sounds, images, and even movies. WWW browsing software takes full advantage of these multimedia documents and you can view, play, or download them easily. Several chiropractors have constructed Web Home Pages on the NET giving chiropractic information and hypertext links to many other healthcare resources on the NET:

1. The Chiropractic Home Page by John Wiens DC in Manitoba, Canada
   [url=http://www.mbnet.mb.ca/jwiens/chiro.html]http://www.mbnet.mb.ca/jwiens/chiro.html[/url]

2. The Back Page by Steven Machado, DC, in Los Angeles, California
   ftp://ftp.netcom.com/pub/sm/smachado/backpg3.html

3. Home Page by Doug Smith, DC, in Santa Barbara, California
   [url=http://rain.org/dwsmith]http://rain.org/dwsmith[/url]

4. Logan Chiropractic College

http://alumni.caltech.edu/kurta/logan.html

Mailing lists

Also called discussion lists, each mailing list is based on a particular topic. There are two types: moderated and unmoderated. In both cases, e-mail messages or "posts" are sent by subscribers to a list's e-mail address which in turn rebroadcasts a copy of the message to all list subscribers. In the case of unmoderated lists, each e-mail message is automatically sent to the entire subscriber list as soon as it's received. Moderated lists are monitored by a person who reviews messages, determines if they're appropriate, and then forwards them to subscribers. More than 3,500 mailing lists operate around the world, and can be viewed with e-mail reading programs such as Eudora.

A chiropractic discussion group called CHIRO-LIST has been set up in Santa Barbara, California by Paul Cronshaw, DC. There are over 180 chiropractors from all over the world subscribed to this list actively discussion many interesting topics affecting chiropractic today.

Usenet Newsgroups

Usenet newsgroups are collections of messages posted by Internet users that have been arranged by subject. There are currently over 11,000 Newsgroups on the Internet. Unlike mailing lists, newsgroups are available to almost all Internet users, even those without basic e-mail access. Most computer bulletin boards (BBSs) offer at least a subset of the available newsgroups. America Online recently began offering the complete set, as does CompuServe. Topics covered by newsgroups are similar to those of mailing lists. The large number of newsgroups reflects their increasing diversity. Newsgroups are arranged in hierarchies and you can usually figure out what the newsgroup topic is by its name: sci.med, sci.med.nutrition, and misc.health.alternative. To date, there is no newsgroup specifically for chiropractic, but one is in the works called misc.health.chiropractic.

Newsgroup messages typically reside on the BBS or Internet service provider's computer and are not deposited in individual users' mailboxes. Each posted message is arranged by subject heading within each newsgroup. All postings to newsgroups are circulated to other systems around the world through various networks so that eventually (usually within two days) they reach every newsgroup-carrying computer. While mailing list subscribers automatically receive postings to the list with their e-mail, Usenet newsgroup readers must actually decide to read a specific newsgroup to view messages posted there. Some people read the news online, others download particular newsgroups to read off-line, format replies, and post those replies the next time they log on. Since newsgroups are broken down into so many specific topics they are a good place to look for information by posting questions. Various shareware newsgroup programs are available: Newswatcher (MAC) and ???/(PC). However, be careful not to advertise. Direct advertising such as FOR SALE items is not considered proper netiquette. You are likely to get a "flaming" e-mail response from another Net user. Basically, flaming is the exchange of heated e-mail between individuals.

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