Journey to the World Wide Web!

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A new medium encircles the globe, growing more extensive and complex each day. This medium connects resources and information in a web altering the limitations of space and time and breaking the boundaries of nations and cultures. The U.S. White house offers information through this medium, as does Citicorp, Sony, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Yale University, Miller Brewing, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the Palo Alto Airport, and the Krema Nut Company. This new medium is the World Wide Web. Reaching it means you can tap into institutional and corporate information as well as the creative expressions of individuals and groups finding form on the Web.

1 What is the Web?

The World Wide Web (Web) is a system for disseminating hypermedia through the worldwide Internet computer network. The Web works according to a common model for networked communication—the client/server model. A server is a computer host and its associated software which, when made publicly accessible on the Internet, serves as a "broadcast" station, providing access to information and resources contained in its online files. People use client software (called Web browsers) to access the information provided on servers. There are a variety of Web browsers for many different hardware platforms. Each browser conforms to the specific requirements of the user's computer and communicates with the myraid of Web servers worldwide using a standard set of rules.

2 Why Reach the Web?

Four centuries ago, the invention of movable type made it possible to more easily produce multiple copies of a printed work. This revolution fostered an explosion in knowledge continuing to this day. However, the control and dissemination of printed works is constrained by many forces, including publishers who may limit the content and distributors who need to physically move a medium (such as paper) through space to its users. The Web alters this information dissemination process by giving everyone with the right tools and skills a means for immediate, global distribution of a work. Web users can not only be information consumers, but providers as well. The result is that the universe of possible knowledge and expressions on the Web is, potentially, far richer and diverse than what the print world can offer.

The diverse expressions on the Web take many forms. Some Web expressions are organizational or institutional, such as Paramount's or Yale's Web sites. Other expressions include "home pages" in which individuals offer personal or other information about themselves. Groups of people collaborate to create rich trees and webs of information about subjects ranging on just about every human pursuit. There's information on the Web about pet rabbits, vegetarianism, world oceans, motorcycling, Fermilab, Mentos^{TM} breath mints, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), mood disorders, genealogy, horror movies, Dublin's Pubs, Sumo wrestling, beekeeping, and Socks the cat. And its not just raw information people are creating—there's a range of services available through the Web such as the World Birthday Web, an online coloring book, and the current weather that engage people interactively.

3 What is the Nature of the Web?

The Web isn't five hundred channels of television. The Web isn't homogenous or orderly and certainly not a definitive collection of human experience and knowledge. The Web is a new medium, born from the need researchers had to organize and associatively link related information. The Web now offers an unparalleled means for individuals to take part in a global conversation composed of links, hypermedia, and interactivity.

Unlike the one-way channels of traditional mass media, the Web no longer constrains the user to be passive, but enables users to be selective and follow whims. The Web, since it is truly global, potentially breaks the bounds of nations and cultures, offering a way for individuals to transcend government restrictions on information and communication. The Web offers people a way to browse information at a time convenient to them. And by allowing people to be both information consumers and producers, the Web alters the relationship people have with information as well as the possibilities for people to create information meaningful to them.

The Web has a long way to go toward living up to its potential as a universe of human knowledge, but the diversity and richness of what the Web offers today is a testament to human expressiveness.

4 How Can I Reach the Web?

4.1 Get Access

In order to fully make use of the Web, you must have access to the Internet. If you are associated with a college or university or a work in a company, you may have access to the Internet as part of your work. Otherwise, there are commercial companies offering individuals access to the Internet. Check in a phone directory or in computer magazine ads for companies offering Internet Services or Access. Ask the potential service provider specifically about access to the World Wide Web. If you will access the Web from home, you'll need a computer and a fast modem.

4.2 Get a Web Browser

Once you have access to the Internet, you can read about and obtain software programs (called "browsers") to view (and hear) the Web. Popular browsers include Mosaic, Netscape, and Lynx. If you have just email or telnet access to the Internet, use the instructions below to find more about the Web and its browsers. You can also learn more about the Web using a Gopher client or by obtaining information through File Transfer Protocol (FTP) at the Internet addresses given below.

If you have full Internet access, use one of the methods below to get the list of Web browsers for various hardware platforms. Check with your systems administrator if a browser has already been installed. If not, you can obtain one and have it installed.

5 How can I learn more?

5.1 Contact W^{3}C

The World Wide Web Consortium (W^{3}C) is lead by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Laboratory for Computer Science in cooperation with the French National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control (INRIA) and the originators of the Web at Conseil Europeen pour la Recherche Nucleaire (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland. The goal of W^{3}C is to support the stable evolution of the Web's standards and to foster its use in applications such education, research, government, and industry.

- Telnet to telnet.w3.org
- Anonymous File Transfer Protocol to ftp.w3.org
- Gopher to gopher.w3.org
- Web Browser to the URL http://www.w3.org/

5.2 Find out more online

There are many resources on the Web you can use to locate resources and find more about the Web. Following each resource is its Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Use a Web browser or the email or telnet interfaces to the Web to access these URLs.

- Yahoo: A large collection of Web and Internet-based information categorized in a subject tree: http://www.yahoo.com/
- Lycos: A "spider" which helps you locate resources on the Web using keyword searches: http://www.lycos.com/
- Virtual Tourist: A geographic directory of Web servers around the world using a map interface: http://www.vtourist.com/
- Internet Web Text: A listing of Internet-based guides, indexes, and more subject and keyword searching resources:

  http://www.december.com/web/text/index.html

Selected Resources from this article	
US Whitehouse	http://www.whitehouse.gov/
Sony	http://www.sony.com/
Paramount	http://www.paramount.com/
Motorcycles	http://cs.wpi.edu/~ravi/bike
Fermilab	http://www.fnal.gov/

Other Useful/Interesting References	
Internet Providers	http://thelist.com/
World Cities	http://www.city.net/
Commercial Sites	http://www.directory.net/
US Govt Info	http://www.fedworld.gov/
US House	http://www.house.gov/
US Senate	http://www.senate.gov/
CNN News	http://www.cnn.com/
US Census	http://www.census.gov /
Search Usenet	http://www.dejanews.com/
Multimedia info	http://viswiz.gmd.de/MultimediaInfo/

Happy exploring!

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and author of *Presenting Java.* ISBN 1-575-21039-8, 207pp, US$25, all from Sams.net Publishing, 1995 (A Macmillan Computer Publishing Company, 1(800)428-5331).