EDUCATORS always try to keep up with technological innovation. This may be why the Internet is so popular, and one reason educators want to learn more about it. At the 1995 American Vocational Association (AVA) Conference at Denver, Colorado, we heard the pleasure and opportunity to address a group on the topic of "Tools of the Internet." From the showing of some 90 people, it was apparent there is a significant need to explain this subject. Our presentation included a real-time connection to two different Internet accounts or servers—America Online (AOL), a commercial service, and the Showme server, distinct to the students, faculty, and staff at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

The Internet. The Department of Defense originally developed the Internet in the 1960s to move data from point A to B during a thermal-nuclear war. As communication technology progressed during the 1980s, other agencies such as NASA and the National Science Foundation (NSF) started to develop their own Internet communications networks (Internet Society 1994). Eventually, commercial organizations, government agencies, and other countries, adopted the technology and networks. Today, the Internet provides access to thousands of organizations and millions of individuals around the world.

The Internet is a global network of subscribers than all the largest U.S. newspapers combined. The fastest growing segment of this medium is the World Wide Web (WWW).

Making sense of the Internet. Each of us has different reasons for wanting to access the Internet—some for personal use, others for educational purposes, and some for business and industry. Whatever the reason, a few simple tools can help you make your experience with this new communication technology enjoyable.

The Internet offers a vast array of information. Initial requirements to gain access are a computer, software, modem that transfers data at 14400 baud per second (bps) or more, an on-line service account, a telephone or other direct connection, and the imagination to explore.

Once this hardware is in place, the basic tools for using the Internet are, e-mail, file transfer protocol (FTP), Telnet, Newsgroups, Lisserv's, and the World Wide Web (WWW). The Internet may appear overwhelming, but when broken down into discrete topics, it can be readily and easily understood by every one.

Communication tools. E-mail, or electronic mail, is the most common use of the Internet. It permits you to send and receive messages from any Internet account throughout the world. Unlike Qualcomm, and various on-line services such as AOL, Compuserve, Genie, e-World, and Prodigy.

File Transfer Protocol (FTP) is a feature that allows files, software, text, and graphics to be accessed anonymously from a remote server. This permits you, the user, not only to access and review information, but to bring that information to your computer and fingertips. FTP programs are a standard feature in most commercial on-line services.

Telnet or remote log-on is a protocol for creating a connection with a remote computer. Telnet offers the user the ability to remotely log-on, taking control of the server on your computer. If authority is granted, the user has access to the commands, services, and central processing unit (CPU) of the server. Telneting can occur from across the street or across the world.

Discussion groups. Lisserv's are electronic mail discussion groups that automatically forward and exchange information among groups of people who share similar interests. They readily give subscribers the ability to broadcast messages to everyone who subscribes. There are thousands of lisserv's, and they cover every imaginable topic—technology, American literature, philosophy, cooking, chess, sports, lifestyles—you name it!

Newsgroups, similar to lisserv's, are discussion groups created and maintained...
by people with similar interests. The subjects available on newsgroups are as
extensive as those of the listserv. A newsgroup differs in that it requires a user to
deliberately access the content. Newsgroups are also known as Net News, Inter-
net News, or USENET News. Technically, newsgroups do not really communicate
"news," but rather discussions among individuals with shared interests.
The World Wide Web is an interactive multimedia platform inclusive of
images, text, sound, graphics, and video. A key feature of the WWW is the user’s
ability to link or jump from site to site.
Additionally, the WWW can perform
each of the functions described above—
e-mail, FTP, Telnet, Newsgroup, and
listserv’s. Access to the WWW is offered
through either commercial on-line ser-
vice (AOL, Prodigy, Compuserve, e-
World, Genie, and others) or one of
many commercially available applica-
tions (Netscape, Mosaic, MacWeb, IBM
WebExplorer, NetCruiser, and others). The
WWW has become the most popular
medium for accessing information
around the world and for organizations
to document and publicize products,
services, events, and more.

Getting more Info. Many outstanding publications are readily avail-
able on newstands, in libraries, or in
bookstores. Better examples published
include Newmedia, Wired, Internet, Mac
User, and Byte Magazine. Some readers
may find the text The Internet For Dummies by John R. Levine easy to follow
and informative. You might also con-
sider taking introductory or applied com-
puter courses.
We hope this brief introduction will encourage you to seek additional op-
opportunities for exchanging knowledge
about the Internet. Communication
technology is an integral part of our
society. Everyone can build their skill
knowledge about one such technol-
y, the Internet, by simply getting in-
volved.

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