

TECH TERMS:

ASCII

American Standard Code for Information Interchange. A world-wide standard for code numbers used by computers, it consists of 128 upper and lowercase letters. Since the ASCII code makes no provision for non-English letter accents and forms, currently most computers use an extended character set that accommodates technical, graphic, and non-Western characters. A "plain ASCII" file is just a normal text file.

AU files

A filename extension that denotes audio data.

Anonymous FTP

See FTP.

Archie

A method used to search databases on the Internet. Archie finds FTP sites related to the title, keyword, or subject you indicate.

Audio files

See au., midi, and .wav files.

Bandwidth

The amount of data that can be handled by a data communication link, for example, a telephone line. Essentially it is a measurement of network capacity and the amount of data that can flow through a communications circuit per second.

The broader the bandwidth, the more data can flow. For example, a 14.4K modem can move 14,400 bits per second. A T1-line, on the other hand, is capable of sending 1,544,000 bps.

Baud

A measurement of the speed data travels. Related to, but not identical to, bps.

BBS

Bulletin Board System. A computerised system which allows people to dial in through their phone lines to exchange e-mail, chat, and generally socialise. BBSs tend to be small and focused on local people and issues.

BinHex

Binary Hexadecimal. A method for converting binary files into ASCII. Necessary when using transport methods which only accept ASCII text, such as normal e-mail.

Bits

Binary Digit. One digit of a binary number, either zero or one. Bits are the smallest components of bytes.

BMP files

Microsoft Windows Bitmap format. A graphic file format.

Bps

Bits per second. A measurement of data transmission speed.

Browser

A software programme (such as Netscape or Internet Explorer) that enables you to access Internet resources. This is particularly used in relation to the WWW.

Users can read hypertext documents and navigate from one document to another. Most browsers are user-friendly, with button bars and pull-down menus. Many support images, forms, and audio files.

Byte

A unit of eight bits. Computer storage devices such as disk drives and memory usually measure their capacity by the number of bytes they can store. A more easily used unit of measure based on bytes is Megabyte.

CERN

The European Laboratory for Particle Physics. Located in Switzerland and France, CERN is the place where Tim Berners-Lee first originated the World Wide Web in 1989.

CGI

Common Gateway Interface. A standard for gateways, which interface between external programs and Web servers.

Client

A software program which contacts and receives its data from a server software program, which is often located on a different computer.

Cyberspace

Term coined by William Gibson in his novel "Neuromancer." Used today by the media to mean the entire Internet and all the resources available on the Internet.

DNS

Domain Name System. A distributed data query system used to translate hostnames (205.94.220.10) and e-mail addresses (betty@boop.com) into Internet IP addresses.

Dial-up Connection

A network connection where one computer dials up another over a telephone line. Slower than a direct connection.

Direct Connection

A network connection from one computer to another made through a permanent and high-speed method such as Ethernet or T-1 connections. Usually leased from a common carrier.

Domain Name

A domain name is a unique name that identifies an Internet site, such as `http://www.mysite.co.za`. Mysite identifies the host of the site, in this case `mysite.co.za` denotes a commercial site in South Africa. Other domain extensions include "ac", "edu," "org," and "gov," meaning, respectively, academic, educational, non-profit, and government hosts.

Download

To transfer files from a remote computer to the local computer. Downloading is the receiving of the file, uploading is the transmitting of the file.

E-cash

A way to make purchases over the Internet using an electronic transfer of funds. Eliminates the need to transmit a credit card number over the Internet. E-cash software holds electronic money on the user's computer.

E-mail

Electronic mail; also, email, e-mail, or Email. Responsible for reviving the lost art of written communication. E-mail is an electronic mailing system whereby you can send messages over the Internet.

You can send correspondence down the hall or across the planet in seconds. A typical e-mail address consists of two parts separated by an @ sign, such as `asjohn@myserver.uct.ac.za`.

Emoticons

Also known as "smileys." A way to convey tone in written conversations in lieu of spoken and physical cues. Emotions such as happiness, sadness, and tongue-in-cheek signals are displayed with the use of colons, dashes, periods, etc. Turn your head to one side to read. : = (

Enhanced Mosaic

Luckman Interactive's Web Browser. Part of the Net Commander integrated Internet access suite.

Ethernet

A common method of connecting computers in a LAN. Ethernet transfers data much faster than a dial-up connection--10 million bps.

External Viewer

An application for viewing multimedia information, such as audio files, within Web pages. External viewers are available for audio, video, and virtual reality data, among many others.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions. These are files which are maintained by people so that those who are starting out have a rich source of information on the subject in which they are interested.

Originally referring a list of questions and answers aimed at new users of a Usenet newsgroup, FAQs are also employed on the Web to convey information quickly and concisely. It is considered good netiquette to read the relevant FAQs on a subject before posting questions in a newsgroup.

Finger

A software tool for finding people by name on the Internet. For security reasons many private computer systems do not respond to incoming Finger requests.

Firewall

A gateway which protects an organisation's internal Local Area Network (LAN) from external access and tampering from a Wide Area Network (WAN), such as the Internet. Many firewalls disable the functionality of real-time audio and video players such as RealAudio.

Flame

A verb which means to post an excessively rude and personally insulting response to another's message. People who post controversial messages on Usenet often get flamed in response.

Freeware

Software available without charge through the Internet, bulletin boards, and user groups. Not synonymous with shareware.

FTP

File Transfer Protocol is the standard Internet protocol for moving files from one computer to another.

GIF

Graphics Interchange Format. A colour graphics file format owned by CompuServe. Useful for higher-resolution images because of its file compression feature.

Gateway

Hardware or software which translates data between computers using incompatible protocols. For example, CompuServe and America Online have gateways to the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Gopher

Menu-based format used in gopher client software and most Web browsers for accessing information on the Internet. You can gopher to a Telnet or FTP site.

Graphics files

See BMP, GIF, and JPEG.

HTML

Hypertext Markup Language. The formatting language of the Web. It determines the

appearance of and defines the links (which permit navigation through linking documents together) in a Web document. This page is an example of HTML text.

HTTP

Hypertext Transfer Protocol. The basis of the Web, this protocol allows the exchange of HTML documents across the Web. When found at the beginning of an URL (page address), it indicates that the address is a Web site.

Hardware

The physical components of a computer, such as the monitor, CPU, keyboard, disk drives, etc.

Home Page

The top-level HTML document for a Web site. Other pages can be accessed by following hyperlinks from the top-level page. Usually called index.htm/l.

Hotlist

Also, hot links. A hypertext list of links to, in someone's opinion, interesting or valuable sites on the Web.

Hypertext

Called hyperlinks, or more commonly, links. How information on the Web is connected together. Clicking on the highlighted hypertext in a Web document takes you to another page in that document or to a completely different Web site. Instead of processing information in a linear way, hyperlinks let us get the information in the order that makes the most sense to us.

IP Address

A number consisting of four parts--each part containing numbers between 1 and 255--separated by dots, such as 206.117.25.3. Every computer on the Internet has a unique IP address and a unique Domain Name. The Domain Name Server translates between the two.

IRC

Internet Relay Chat is a global network of people talking to each other in real-time over the Internet by typing messages via their keyboards. A text-based live chat facility divided into a number of topics called "channels." Networks of IRC servers all over the world connect IRC users.

ISDN

Integrated Services Digital Network. A digital communications network built over existing telephone lines that can carry voice, data, and video transmissions. ISDN gives the user a faster Internet connection than a modem does.

To give an idea of ISDN's speed, an ISDN line transmits 64,000 to 128,000 bps, compared to the fastest available analogue modem's speed of 28,800 bps.

ISP

An Internet Service Provider is a company that gives you access to the Internet. They are companies with dedicated, high-speed Internet connections that sell access to the Internet to individuals and other companies. Providers offer dial-up, ISDN, T1, and other types of Internet connections.

Imagemap

An image in an HTML documents that has "hot spots" which when clicked, take the user to other documents.

Inline Image

A graphic image within an HTML page meant to be displayed along with text.

Internaut

An internet user. (Robert French Dictionary)

Internet

Originally used by the military, scientific and academic communities. Can be thought of as a world-wide network of networks using a common addressing format. Not originating from any one source and owned by no one, the Internet is constantly changing and growing-by connecting to it, you become part of it. The Web is part of the Internet.

JPEG

Joint Photographic Experts Group. A digital image compression method, also a graphic file format. Best used for photo-realistic grey-scale and colour images, rather than line drawings or cartoon images.

LAN

Local Area Network. A computer network limited usually to a single physical location such as a floor of a building. See WAN.

LISTSERV

Mailing list software which distributes one e-mail message to many addresses at once.

MIDI

Musical Instrument Digital Interface. A hardware protocol for exchanging musical information between computers, synthesisers, and instruments.

MPEG

Motion Pictures Experts Group. A standard for compressing moving images for transmission. A file format for encoding video and/or audio data.

MUD

Multi-User Dimension, or Multi-User Dungeon. Originally used for role-playing games, now also used for education and business conferences. Multiple users can interact at the same time within a virtual environment.

Mailing List

A distribution list sent to list subscribers. LISTSERV is an automated distribution program for mailing lists.

Megabyte

Short for 1,048,576 bytes.

Mirror site

A server which duplicates or mirrors, the files in another site. Users can choose to connect to their closest site. For example, a popular U.K. site may be mirrored at several sites in the U.S. to speed access time for North American users, and reduce the load on the originating site.

Modem

An acronym for Modulator/Demodulator. A piece of hardware which allows your computer to communicate using the telephone system.

Mosaic

Name of the first graphical World Wide Web browser, developed by NCSA. The graphic Web browsers today are either actual or spiritual descendants of the original Mosaic. Enhanced Mosaic, Luckman Interactive's browser, is contained within the Net Commander integrated Internet access suite.

NIC1

Network Information Centre. An office which maintains and handles information about a network. The NIC in charge of the entire Internet is called InterNIC. It assigns IP addresses and high-level Domain Names.

NIC2

Network Interface Card. A physical device, such as an Ethernet card, that attaches to the computer and allows it to communicate over a specific type of network. Common ones include Ethernet, Token Ring, and FDDI.

Netiquette

General code of manners for social interactions over the Internet. As in any community, good manners make life more pleasant for everyone. The Netiquette Home Page is a good place to bone up on Internet deportment, especially before joining a newsgroup discussion.

Newsgroups

Discussion groups on Usenet, a network not the same as the Internet, but which can be accessed from the Internet, among other channels. Newsgroups consist of millions of people posting and reading thousands of messages about innumerable topics.

Newbie

Name for someone new to the Internet. Usually not considered complimentary.

PGP

Pretty Good Privacy. An encryption application created by Phillip Zimmerman. PGP allows the private and authenticated transmission of data over communications networks. Using Public-Key Cryptography technology as a base, PGP does not require the use of secure channels.

POP

A Point of Presence is a location where you can get dial-up access.

OR

POP

Post Office Protocol. An application that allows users to obtain their e-mail from a server.

PPP

Point to Point Protocol. A protocol mostly used for establishing TCP/IP connections remotely through a dial-up connection. It is a method of connecting computers to the Internet via a telephone line and modem.

Password

The code which allows a specific user to gain access to a computer system.

Post

To send a message to a public medium, such as a Usenet newsgroup, or a mailing list. Also used to mean the actual message.

Protocol

An agreed set of procedures that ensures compatibility between the receivers and the transmitters of data.

RAM

Random Access Memory. High speed memory used by the computer to store temporary information such as a running application. A larger amount of RAM often increases application execution speed and allows more applications to run at the same time.

RFC

Request For Comments. A process for creating standards on the Internet, where new standards are proposed and marked as Request For Comments. Discussion and eventual adoption of new standards evolve from the proposals.

Real-time video

Video transfer that makes use of data streaming rather than downloading to allow the users to view a video file almost instantaneously.

Router

A device which allows connections between two computer networks.

SGML

Standard Generalised Markup Language. Providing conventions for other mark-up languages, SGML defines the formatting of a text document, including hypertext, by describing a document's information rather than its visual components.

SLIP

Serial Line Internet Protocol. A protocol for using a telephone line-the serial line- and a modem to establish TCP/IP connections between two computers. SLIP is being gradually replaced by the more secure and versatile PPP.

Search Engines

Search Engines are computer databases which attempt to catalogue all the information on the Internet. Documents can then be retrieved by typing in key words and phrases, or other user-specified criteria. A few of the search engines you can find on the Web are Yahoo, Webcrawler, and InfoSeek.

Server

Software (or a hardware and software combination) which provides a specific kind of service and information to client software which may run on other computers. For example, Web servers allows one to access the Web documents located on them.

Shareware

Software, distributed for trial use, without charge. The author requests payment if the software is found useful.

Shell Account

A dial-up account to an ISP which only offers terminal emulation access to a UNIX shell account, and does not allow use of graphical applications directly from your machine.

Smiley

See emoticons.

Spamming

This is sending loads of unacceptable junk mail to e-mail lists, newsgroups, and so on.

Spider

A term used to describe an application which travels the World Wide Web collecting information. Many Web search engines use spiders to collect data from which they build their indices.

Static Address

An IP address which is permanently attached to a computer connected to the Internet; as opposed to a Dynamic Address, which may change every time the computer establishes an Internet connection.

T1

A fast direct connection used mostly by large companies, universities, and ISPs to the Internet. For comparison's sake, the T1 transmits at 1,544,000 bps and a 28K modem transmits at 28,000 bps.

TCP/IP

The Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol are two communication protocols by which all information is sent over the Internet. It allows computers with different operating systems to communicate with each other.

Telnet

An application you can use to log in to a distant computer as if you were part of its network.

Trolling

To act in a manner which deliberately elicits flames.

UNIX

Written in the C programming language, UNIX is a multi-platform, multi-user, multi-tasking operating system. The language used by many applications on the Web, UNIX is known for its lack of user-friendliness.

URL

Uniform Resource Locator. Each Web page's unique address, for example: - <http://www.uct.ac.za>. Made up of distinct parts, it can give clues to the kind of host which is the source of the site. For example, in the American URL address <http://harvard.edu>, the ".edu" designates an educational domain. Commercial and nonprofit organisations are, respectively, ".com," and ".org." Other extensions include ".gov," for government, ".mil" for military, and ".net" for network.

In South Africa domains end with "za".

Usenet

User Network. A decentralised, networked system of news and discussions topics, which are called newsgroups, where people can exchange news and views.

Veronica

Very Easy Rodent Oriented Net-wide Index to Computerised Archives. A database and search engine for finding information on gopher servers.

Video files

See MPEG, real-time video.

VRML

Virtual Reality Modelling Language. A language authoring standard which describes 3-D environments on the Web. The VRML specification allows users to participate in interactive 3-D simulations on the Web, for example, a room in which users can walk, and pick up objects and rotate them.

WAIS

Wide Area Information Server. A commercial indexing tool for keyword searches of text documents on the Internet and other WANs.

WAN

Wide Area Network A network which physically covers a large area. See LAN.

WAV files

A filename extension that denotes Windows audio files.

WebBot component

According to Microsoft "WebBot components add functionality without complex programming" in both FPXpress and FP98. A WebBot is a "dynamic object" on a Web page. WebBots may add Time Stamp, Include, and Search features to Web pages, as well as forms handling and navigation bars.

Web Browser

A browser, such as Netscape Navigator, or Microsoft's Internet Explorer, provides a window to the Web, allowing you to follow hyperlinks effortlessly, from networks in New Zealand to Zurich, and from Zurich to Africa, with a few clicks of the mouse.

Web Page

A Web site is made up of a series of HTML pages, connected to each other by hyperlinks.

Web Server

Server software-and sometimes the hardware-which makes access of HTML documents possible through HTTP.

Web Site

An organised group of Web pages located on the same Web server.

Webmaster

Person in charge of managing and maintaining a Web site.

WinSock

Windows Sockets Specification. Provides an Applications Program Interface standard for Windows TCP/IP software development.

World Wide Web

WWW, also, the Web. The most user-friendly part of the Internet, offering graphics, sound, video, and hypertext links to other Web pages and Web sites. Refers to all Web servers on the Internet, as well as the information on the Web servers.

Worm

Among other definitions, a robotic indexing program creating a database which can be accessed or keyword-searched over the Web.

WWW

The World Wide Web is the easy-to-use graphic interface which allows you to move about the Internet by clicking on certain images or words.

WYSIWYG

What You See Is What You Get. This refers to any application which allows you to see an approximation of what it is you are creating. A Word Processor is WYSIWYG, as are the various web-editors.