

The Internet: What's out there and how you can get it-

Bruce Davison goes hitch-hiking down the electronic highway

By BRUCE DAVISON

WHATEVER YOU ARE INTERESTED IN, employed at or curious about, you can probably find information about it somewhere on the Internet. Last week I reviewed The Internet Directory, by Eric Braun, which defined the Internet as "the collection of information services available on the interconnected computer network that connects the globe." This week I take a look at some of what the Internet has to offer and how you can access it.

E-mail: Almost everyone on campus this year seems to be using E-mail. For the few of you who have not yet begun to use it daily, E-mail is the process of sending messages you enter on a computer to someone else. E-mail is actually part of the Internet when messages (which can also have computer files attached to them) are sent between two different computers connected only by their both being connected to the Internet. For example, if I had a friend in Fredericton, Thailand, or Zagreb and this friend had Internet E-mail access, then he or she could send me mail directly by sending mail to me at "bdavison@upei.ca". Similarly, I could reply to their E-mail address. Addresses typically contain a user name (bdavison), a place or host where the person is at or "@", and in the cases of most Internet hosts in Canada, "CA" for CA*Net, the Canadian part of the Internet. E-mail, if you have access, is free and almost instantaneous. If you have a friend or someone else at Holland College, UNB, NASA, or just about anywhere else that might have Internet access, find out their address and send them a message. Obviously E-mail has the capability to significantly advance communication on local and global levels. I already know of one course where students get their assignments E-mailed to them and a professor who does most of his international correspondence via E-mail.

The Gopher: Information gathering is the purpose of gophers. A gopher

client (like the one we have at U.P.E.I.) connects to other computers on the Internet for the sole purpose of retrieving information. For instance, recently I retrieved some information

with the capability of being able to retrieve programs or documents. "FTP sites" are computers that you can connect to for the purpose of retrieving information or programs. The advent

When it comes to programs for IBM-compatible computers, they are usually "zipped" and are named something like "[name].zip" and PKZIP, or a similar program must be used to uncompress them prior to use. Programs I've successfully retrieved using FTP have included games, graphics, and a really useful day planner program. Programs of virtually every category have been written as shareware or freeware, and if it has been written, it can be found most often at one or more FTP sites.

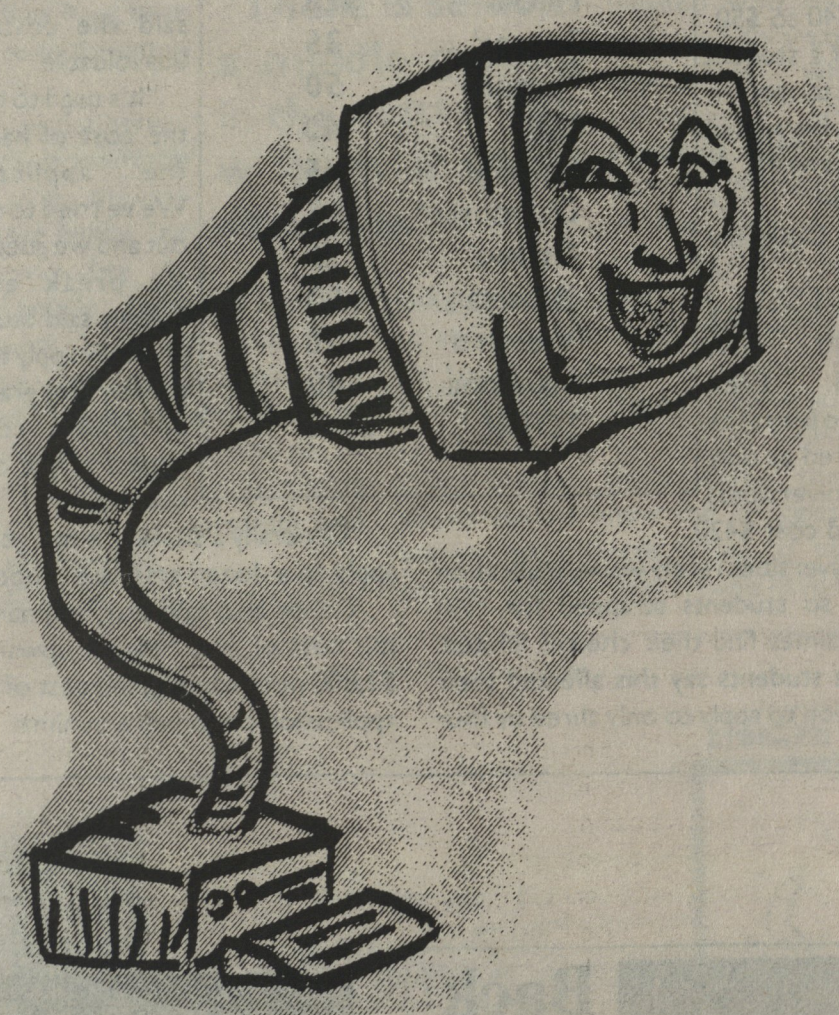
To use FTP you need access to a computer that will do FTP, the name of the site you want to connect to, and knowledge of the commands you need to use to retrieve, and some disk space to put the programs you get. To run FTP on campus you must exit to the DOS prompt on a computer that has Internet access. Then, simply type "FTP [FTP site name]." It is usually possible to find the name of a particular FTP site using the gopher before trying to connect to it using FTP.

"Newsgroups" Of all the Internet services I've tried, this one is the most fun. Basically, computers all over the Internet serve as hosts for newsgroups that let people from across the globe discuss and exchange information on thousands of topics. When you run a news reader for the first time you usually can scroll through all the available newsgroups (on P.E.I. this is over 2600) and subscribe to any one you want. When you subscribe to a newsgroup it comes up every time you start the news reader. Usually people subscribe to a number of newsgroups that they read regularly. Messages offering information, opinions, questions or answers are "posted" to newsgroups. Postings stay available to be read in newsgroups until they have been read or are deleted and can be saved to disk if the person wants to keep them for later reference. Newsgroups exist on what seems like every conceivable topic.

of FTP sites has been tied to the rise of software that is either "shareware" or "freeware." Shareware is software that may be freely copied and used. After a specified trial period of use it is expected that anyone who intends to keep using shareware will send a registration fee to the author of the program (Very few people seem to do this, however). Freeware is like shareware, but no payment is expected. Most programs at FTP sites are compressed to take up less disk space.

on American student aid reform from a university in the U.S. and took a look at some Croatian government press releases about the war when looking at a host computer in Zagreb. Once you find some information, you can read it and in many cases have it E-mailed back to you. The Gopher is fast and easy to use as well.

"FTP" File Transfer Protocol (FTP) is an Internet service that enables people to connect to other computers in basically the same way as gophers, but



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