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The Official Guide to NetCruiser™

ACCESS THE INTERNET!

Second Edition

David Peal



**Includes NetCruiser from Netcom,
the Leading Low-Cost Service Provider**



Access the Internet!™

Second Edition

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David Peal



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Acquisitions Manager: Kristine Plachy
Developmental Editor: Brenda Kienan
Editor: Neil Edde
Technical Editor: Juli Geiser
Desktop Publisher: Lynell Decker
Production Assistant: Alexa Riggs
Indexer: Ted Laux
Cover Designer: Ingalls + Associates

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Access the Internet!™

Second Edition

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On the enclosed disk is a copy of NetCruiser v.XX. This software and any offers associated with it are supported by Netcom On-line Communications, Inc. Netcom can be reached by calling (408) 983-5970.

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*Once again,
and always,
for
Carol, Gabriel, and Ella*

Acknowledgments

This heavily revised second edition of *Access the Internet* was a collective effort, and again I have incurred many debts along the way. Barbara Gordon, Sybex's Managing Editor, encouraged me in writing the first edition of this book and kept things on track for the second edition. Thank you, Barbara.

The following people did the real work of turning my word-processed pages into an attractive book: Neil Edde, the ideal editor—acute, insightful, and forever tactful with a prickly author; Juli Geiser, technical editor; Lynell Decker, typesetter; and Alexa Riggs, proofreader and production assistant. Carrie Lavine made the second edition possible, while Brenda Kienan, product manager and my esteemed competitor, helped make the book as good as possible.

I am grateful to the many readers of the first edition who shared their comments with me. Thanks for your support and your good ideas for improving the book, many of which have found their way into this edition.

Thanks again to Glee Harrah Cady, friend, mentor, flame-thrower, and Netcom's Manager of Information Services. Pat McGregor, co-author with Glee of Sybex's *Mastering the Internet*, helped me with the material on sound files in Appendix C.

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On the NetCruiser team, Rick Francis, Roger Lian, Rita Sarathy, and Jie Fu answered countless questions, while Mike Little ran interference and kept me informed of product plans and schedules. Additional thanks to Kael Loftus, Bob Hogg, and Bill Green at Netcom's HelpDesk for their assistance with Appendix B.

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Finally and most important, there's Carol. Despite a demanding new job and a cross-country move from San Francisco to Maryland, in which we exchanged palm trees for dogwoods, she did more than her share caring for Gabriel and Ella, now a year older and mercifully still showing no interest in computers. As for Gabriel and Ella, this is their book.

A special note of thanks and remembrance

Rudolph Langer and Roger Gershon, who did so much in support of the first edition of this book, died sudden deaths while the second edition was being written.

Throughout Sybex's long history Rudy embodied the editorial department. For me he was the perfect boss and exemplary editor-in-chief: laser-like in his incisiveness, articulate to a fault, intolerant of fools, and possessed of charm and fatherly anger in equal measure. It is hard to grasp his passing, and he will be much missed.

Roger Gershon was Sybex's marketing VP and Internet enthusiast. His passing deprived Sybex of a mensch and superior marketer, and he too will be greatly missed.

This book is dedicated to their memory.

Introduction

Nothing like the Internet has happened to desktop computing in years. It has opened up the world of the solitary individual pecking away at a word processor on a stand-alone machine, and it has made a reality of the old dream of a “world at your fingertips.” Until recently, the full Internet experience has been restricted to people with powerful computers and dedicated connections.

This book gives you the software that brings the experience of the Internet to you. NetCruiser™, from Netcom On-line Communications, provides on one disk everything you need to get started and go far. More important, it gives you everything you need to stay up to date on the Internet, where nothing stays put for long.

● This Internet Book Is Different

This book is different from other Internet books because the NetCruiser software is different from the software you’ll find in any other Internet book. Only NetCruiser gives you all of the following:

- ◆ Easy-to-use Windows software that upgrades itself online—free
- ◆ Access to the Internet via Netcom, a major Internet access provider
- ◆ A direct (SLIP) connection to the Internet
- ◆ An integrated set of all the tools you need to communicate with people, download files, use remote computers, browse the World Wide Web, and more
- ◆ The flexibility to add tools as you need them

If you are not getting all these things, your access to the Internet is neither “full,” nor “direct,” nor very interesting to use or look at, nor likely to remain up to date for very long.

Because you can get new versions of NetCruiser free, online, the possibilities of incremental improvement are considerable. That’s what makes Net-

com so important in the equation: Access to the Internet via Netcom gives you the means of continually updating the software. Appendix A tells you how the upgrade process works. The book makes the software as easy to use as possible by providing tips for using NetCruiser to discover the world of online resources.

What's New in this Edition?

The latest version of NetCruiser offers both new features and numerous refinements of existing features. This new edition of *Access the Internet* helps you make the most of these changes:

- ◆ You can now have NetCruiser start by automatically launching your favorite tool (see Chapter 2).
- ◆ You can now run “Winsock” applications while you’re using NetCruiser—applications such as Netscape, Pegasus, CU-SeeMe, and Eudora (see Chapters 2 and 7).
- ◆ You can now send and receive files attached to mail messages (see Chapter 3).
- ◆ You can now copy text from mail messages and News articles (see Chapters 3 and 4).
- ◆ You can now read ClariNet News via the World Wide Web, for news, sports, weather, and more (Chapter 4).
- ◆ NetCruiser now has a built-in IRC program (see Chapter 5), letting you chat with people world-wide.
- ◆ You can now start a Telnet session from Gopher and the Web, and you can send mail while using the Web (see Chapters 6, 8, and 9).
- ◆ With proper equipment you can now hear sounds within Gopher and the Web by clicking links to sound files (see Chapters 8 and 9).
- ◆ You can now print Gopher menus and documents and even complex Web pages with inline images (see Chapters 8 and 9).
- ◆ The Web browser can display the following effects: centered text and images; formatted tables with rows and columns; and subscripts and superscripts. In addition, horizontal rules (lines used as organiza-

- tional or decorative elements) now appear in 3-D, an effect that's especially impressive with the background color set to gray, as explained in Chapter 9.
- ◆ During the Registration process, NetCruiser automatically detects your modem (see Appendix A). Plus, you can now choose from more than 150 local phone numbers and even use Netcom's 800 number. Netcom has also greatly expanded the list of modems it supports. In the near future you will see new POPs coming online and faster modems being supported.
- ◆ You can now specify "helper apps"—specific programs that will launch automatically when you download certain types of graphic, sound, or other multimedia files (Appendix C).

Who This Book Is For

If you have Internet experience on a PC, this software will probably mean a step up. If you have Internet experience on a powerful networked computer at work, this book and software will let you start having some fun at home as well.

If you are familiar with online services such as Prodigy, America Online, or CompuServe, and their usually partial, often expensive, and sometimes slow connections to some Internet services, you will experience here the pleasures of a full connection to the entire Internet, including Telnet and Internet Relay Chat.

If you currently have a Netcom shell account, you will want this book for the software and for the book's complete guidance in using it effectively.

If you currently have only a NetCruiser disk, the book will show you how to tap its power.

How This Book Is Organized

Books about the Internet tend to be devoted to either tools or resources. In addition, some books make access easier. *Access the Internet!* has the software that provides every link of the chain from you to the Internet. It is a

guide to using each of NetCruiser's major tools to maximum advantage in finding and retrieving the Net's resources.

NOTE

In this book, **resources** mean information available online, such as files, databases, mailing lists, newsgroups. A **tool** makes it possible to use specific resources.

Chapter 1 brings the much-hyped Internet down to earth: what it is, where it is, and how to get access to it. Chapter 2 introduces you to NetCruiser itself, and gives you a chance to practice what everyone's doing these days on the Net—exploring the World Wide Web.

Each of Chapters 3–9 deals with one of the major tools:

- Electronic mail (Chapter 3)
- Usenet News (Chapter 4)
- Internet Relay Chat (Chapter 5)
- Telnet (Chapter 6)
- FTP (Chapter 7)
- Gopher (Chapter 8)
- World Wide Web (Chapter 9)

Each of these chapters proceeds from a thorough explanation of a tool to an exploration of the resources the tool makes available. The choice of resources is pretty arbitrary, but each chapter gives you tips for locating resources of interest and staying current as new resources come online daily. You can read Chapters 3–9 in any order, but it's a good idea to start with Chapters 1 and 2.

Some tools make it possible for you to communicate with *people* (e-mail, Usenet News, and IRC); you will learn about them in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Others facilitate communication with computers, so that you can retrieve information by downloading files, retrieving data, or using remote resources (Telnet, FTP, Gopher, and the World Wide Web). These tools make it possible to retrieve a wealth of information, and you can read about them in Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Throughout, tools are never seen in isolation. Instead, this book tries to make you aware of how they can be used together. NetCruiser's Gopher and Web tools, for example, now make it possible to run Telnet sessions, so the discussion of Telnet in Chapter 6 has been overhauled. Telnet itself provides access to additional tools, such as Archie. Finally, through Winsock compliance, covered in Chapter 2, you can run other software with NetCruiser, incorporating new tools such as Internet Phone into NetCruiser's toolkit. Chapter 7 (FTP) shows you where to get the best Winsock software.

Appendix A covers installing and updating the NetCruiser software, customizing your configuration, and updating your software. Appendix B offers troubleshooting tips for when things go wrong. Appendix C helps you use NetCruiser's graphics and text viewers and its sound player.

Some Conventions

Where possible I have tried to make things easier by offering Tips, Warnings, and Notes based on my own experience with NetCruiser. Each has a special icon and is set off in special type.



A Tip gives you a shortcut, some advice, or a pointer to an especially useful Internet resource.



A Warning tells you what to avoid and, where possible, how to avoid it.



A Note calls special attention to something that NetCruiser does or doesn't do.

In step lists, when you are shown how to do something using a menu, you will see the following notation:

File ► Download new version

which means to go to the File menu and choose the *Download new version* option, using either the mouse or the keyboard.



This book assumes you are comfortable using a mouse and Windows. Chapter 1 has some recommendations to make this easier.

Anything you see in **bold** is something you type.

Non-English words—computer stuff such as addresses, file names, most directories, and names of Usenet newsgroups—appear in special font for legibility.

Ellipses (...) in a menu command mean that choosing the command brings up a dialog box in which you specify how to carry out the command.

The asterisk (*) is a *wildcard*, which means it can stand for anything. In this book it is used whenever one part of an address or file name, for example, stays the same while another part (the wild-card) changes. For example, in Table 4.1 there is a description of a Usenet newsgroup called `alt.current-events.*`. This points you to a *family* of newsgroups all having to do with current events, such as `alt.current-events.bosnia` and `alt.current-events.somalia`.

Sometimes in Windows you must use more than one key to do something, such as make a menu selection. In this book two keys used together are joined by a plus sign (+). In Chapter 4, `Ctrl+]` means to hold down the Ctrl key and press the right bracket key. Common keystroke combinations are `Ctrl+F4` to close a window (or a tool, such as Mail or Gopher), `Ctrl+F6` to cycle among open windows, and `Alt+F4` to end a NetCruiser session. F4 is *not* F+4, but a special key on your keyboard called a *function* key.

What Do You Think?

People from practically every state (including folks without access to Netcom yet—in Cambodia, France, Jamaica, and elsewhere) have shared comments with me about the first edition of *Access the Internet!*. Many of their recommendations have found their way into this book. You can help shape future editions of this book by sending comments to me at dpeal@ix.netcom.com. Please note that I don't work for Netcom. For all connection, registration, and other service-related questions, please get in touch with Netcom using the contact information at the end of Appendix A. Thank you!

I*way

Your Guide to the
Information Superhighway

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Whether you're a Net Newcomer or a veteran Surfer, let I*way be Your Guide to the Information Superhighway. We'll help you get connected and find the coolest stuff, show you the best sites on the World Wide Web, explain the latest Net developments, even demonstrate how you can create your own home page!

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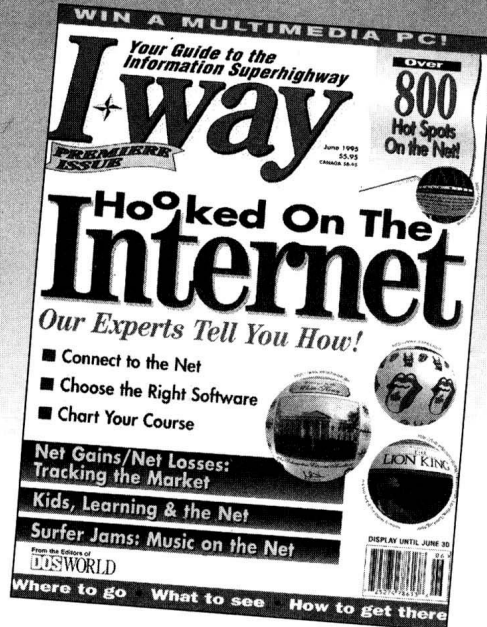
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