Internet Companion for Abnormal Psychology

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PREFACE

The purpose of the *Internet Companion for Abnormal Psychology* is to help teachers, professionals, students, and consumers take advantage of numerous psychology resources on the Internet related to both medical (psychiatric) and psychological approaches to mental illness. The Internet is a world-wide computer network that brings computer users current information from around the world almost instantaneously, and the volume of information is so massive that a user must become savy about finding particular information. The *Internet Companion* will help you find particular information related to abnormal psychology by telling you about the types of information and discussion available on the Internet and some of the Web sites that are "master sites" for abnormal psychology. These master sites put together in one place an extensive array of links to resources both online and offline related to clinical psychology, psychiatry, psychological disorders and mental health. Many of these sites have organized psychology information according to topics frequently presented in an abnormal psychology textbook and so it is easy to supplement course textbook reading and get to precise information immediately. The *Internet Companion* is also a valuable tool for those who are looking for services and support provided by mental health clinics and self-help organizations.

Chapter 1 of this guide explains the Internet in simple terms. It includes discussion of the World Wide Web (Web), electronic mail (E-mail), mailing lists, and discussion groups. Chapter 2 presents helpful information on how to conduct research on the Web. "Surfing" the Web or using a search tool will lead you to a variety of types of information written by a variety of sources. These types of information are explained and the chapter ends with Internet resources for writing psychology papers. Chapters 3 through 5 discuss a variety of abnormal psychology topics and tell you how to find Web pages dedicated to these topics. In Chapter 6 you can find out about psychology and psychiatry as a profession. Several professional organizations with Web pages on the Internet provide lists of conferences, opportunities for continuing education, and current issues. The chapter will also point you to sites that act as an information service, providing information on current news and legislation related to the mental health field.

After these chapters you will find Appendix A which contains a glossary of frequently used terms. Finally, there is Appendix B which refers to major Internet sites containing large numbers of resources related to abnormal psychology. The locations of these sites are given in the Uniform Resources Locator (URL) format and a table for each site shows you the site's resources for mental health references, research, support services, and continuing education. The *Internet Companion* sometimes refers to Internet sites other than those listed in Appendix B. These sites will be accompanied by their URL address at the place they are mentioned in the text. Using your Web browser, you will be able to type these addresses in the "Location:" box and reach them almost immediately.

The guide does not cover all possible Web sites related to abnormal psychology that are available on the Internet. The references are meant to be starting points for further exploration of Internet resources. The guide can get you started by providing examples of sites that contain some of the information you are looking for, but there are many more sites out there than those to which we refer. If your attempts to reach a site are fruitless, as sometimes happens, try again later, just in

case their server was down temporarily. Web sites often have an address change, usually to provide information more efficiently, and sometimes they go out of existence. If we have pointed you to a Web site and you receive a message indicating it is not there anymore, don't despair. Move on; there are plenty of interesting places to visit on the "information highway."

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

We live in the "Information Age." All of us are aware that there is a vast amount of information available "out there" about any topic one can think of, including mental health and psychological disorders. Television, radio, and other media forms have brought the world of abnormal psychology into our homes and into our lives. In this new era of communication technology, the Internet (or the Net), with its vast stores of information, has become another important provider of information. The Internet is not as mysterious or difficult to use as it first seems to the novice; however, information available on the Net is growing at a staggering rate, requiring the user to become increasingly more knowledgeable about what it has to offer and how it functions. If searching on the Net becomes inefficient, users will quickly lose interest in this potentially valuable media form.

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?
The Internet can be viewed as a world-wide computer network linking a vast number of smaller networks together. The Internet is composed of several different kinds of computer networks, including commercial, educational, research, and government networks, each of which may be extensive or just local. Their computers contain large amounts of information, available for free in most cases, if you can get to the information via your computer. Each of these computers is uniquely named, and the type of network to which the computer belongs is identified in the last section of the name (e.g., .com or .co for commercial, .edu or .ac for educational, .org or .net for research, and .gov or .mil for government). This network of computers, once you and your computer become part of it, enables you to communicate with people around the world through a variety of methods.

Even a person lacking computer skills can take advantage of this exciting medium thanks to a distributed information system called the World Wide Web (WWW or Web). The Web gives Internet users a visually appealing interface to information in hypertext form that is called a *page*. *Hypertext* is simply a collection of documents that contain references to other items available to the user. This means that when a user views a Web page on the computer screen, there will be words that are highlighted and underlined, or there will be graphical icons that represent links to other objects on the Web. These objects may consist of things such as other Web pages, text, static graphics, movies, or sound clips on the same or a different computer. If your computer has the required hardware and software, you can begin to appreciate the Web's multimedia aspects.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE INTERNET COMPONENTS?
Information on the Web can be accessed in a number of ways. To make locating objects on the Web easier, the *Uniform Resource Locator (URL)* format was developed. A URL consists of two strings of text separated by a colon. The first string specifies the method or protocol to be used to transfer the information to your computer, and the second string is the location of the information on the Web. When you select highlighted text or icons on a Web page, you are actually selecting the URL for the information that you want to find. The standard protocol for the Web is the *Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP)*. The HTTP is used when Web pages are to be viewed across the Web. Web pages are written in a format known as *Hypertext Markup*

Language (HTML). The fact that the Web uses a standard transport protocol and a standard markup language allows any computer to access the Web regardless of its underlying architecture or operating system.

Another common transfer protocol is the *File Transfer Protocol (FTP)*. FTP was developed to allow Internet users to transport files across the Internet. Through a mechanism known as *anonymous FTP*, you can log on to a remote computer, locate publicly accessible information, and download the information to your computer without a password or system name.

Just as the Web is a distributed information retrieval system, there are two other retrieval systems still in use on the Internet. These are *Gopher* and the *Wide Area Information Server (WAIS)*. These distributed information systems were developed in the early days of the Internet to provide keyword-based search capabilities for users, but they have largely been superseded by the Web itself. This is because Web pages written in HTML are inherently structured to facilitate document searching by keyword. In addition, there are now many Web applications that have other search engines built into the software which effectively eliminate the need for Gopher or WAIS.

The Internet can be used to send messages to other users independent of the structure of the Web itself. The three most common systems for communicating with other users, depending on whether a user wants private, semi-private or public viewing of the message, are electronic mail (E-mail), mailing lists, and newsgroups. E-mail is relatively private, and in most circumstances, only the sender and recipient view the message. E-mail is not usually sent directly to another user's computer, but to a mail server to which the user can connect. Thus, messages may not be completely private. Both the sender and the recipient must have a mail account to access E-mail.

Mailing lists must be handled by a mailing list server such as *LISTSERV*, which is best thought of as a system to communicate with a restricted group of individuals who share a common interest (e.g., alcoholism, depression, or schizophrenia). Users of LISTSERV must subscribe to the mailing list of interest, and there may be very specific prerequisites for subscription.

The third system of communication is *USENET*, which is organized around several thousand newsgroups. USENET can be thought of as a discussion system which allows messages (or articles) to be posted and read by users of newsgroups with a specific interest in some topic (e.g., psychology, divorce, or hypnosis). Newsgroups serve a much larger audience than mailing lists because they are not limited to subscribers only. When you post a message to a newsgroup, your message is sent to several hundred or even thousands of systems all over the world who have a connection to the network news service.

The Internet is only one of the various networks carrying USENET traffic. USENET does not use HTTP to transfer news articles, but rather a protocol called *Network News Transport Protocol (NNTP)*. Just as E-mail access requires a mail server, network news access requires a news server.

E-MAIL
Electronic mail (E-mail) is fast mail service over computer networks. E-mail gives you the capability to send messages to anyone who has an E-mail address anywhere in the world, and they

will receive your message and maybe even reply in the same day! If you have a good E-mail program with a friendly user interface, it is easy to participate in this unique medium.

An E-mail program usually has several primary functions: to send mail and reply to messages in your mailbox, to save and delete messages you receive, to insert text files into your messages, and to write one E-mail message and send it to multiple sites. Of course, the functions are not limited to these, and as you learn your E-mail program you will gradually become aware of all of the options offered to you. The E-mail tool can usually be customized to meet a variety of your additional needs. If you have direct access to the Internet, you probably will want to use a program for E-mail such as *Eudora*. *Eudora* has all of the functions mentioned above and more, and is available over the Web from QUALCOMM, Inc. The URL address is:

http://www.eudora.com

NEWSGROUPS AND MAILING LISTS
Mailing lists and newsgroups have their origins in the academic community where scholars and researchers have used them to exchange ideas for years. With the widening of the Internet audience, more people than ever before may now obtain access to these scholarly discussions as well as other types of discussions of interest, giving everyone a great opportunity for broadening their education and keeping up with new ideas in the academic community and beyond. There are many mailing lists (many using *LISTSERV*) and newsgroups (most using *USENET*) specializing in various abnormal psychology topics that are available to the general public.

Electronic mailing lists operate by having electronic mail sent to a central computer, and from there, messages are posted by electronic mail to all mailboxes on the subscriber distribution list. To subscribe to a mailing list you need two addresses: the *LISTSERV* address for administrative business such as signing on, and the list address for sending messages to all the like-minded people who have subscribed to the mailing list. Depending on the amount of activity, you may receive daily postings which sometimes create lively discussions.

There are several types of psychology mailing lists. Some psychology mailing lists have been created to allow researchers to exchange ideas and engage in collaborative work. Other mailing lists have been created to operate like "support groups." Many of these mailing lists are devoted to a particular psychological disorder, so that one afflicted with the disorder, or persons dealing with the disorder in some other way, can engage in discussions. When choosing which mailing lists to subscribe to, keep in mind that subscribing to only a few mailing lists could result in 50-100 messages filling your mailbox daily! Remember, too, that whatever you post to a list may be distributed to thousands of subscribers.

To subscribe to a mailing list usually requires only one E-mail message to the list moderator who will add your name to the list and send you directions for participating.

The reader or browser of articles in a newsgroup can step in at any time to browse the messages that are currently archived and then choose whether or not to reply. An advantage of newsgroups is that your mailbox doesn't fill up with messages coming from a list. But the disadvantage is that you are not notified of new articles arriving in a newsgroup, and so you must remember to check for new articles regularly. Just as with mailing lists, there are newsgroups for every need, and

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many of the newsgroups have been connected with their counterpart mailing list so that messages to one are automatically forwarded to the other. In addition, many newsgroups have a moderator who screens inputs before they are posted to the group.

You should be aware that many, if not most newsgroups are not available to the average university, government, or business user. Individuals are not required to subscribe to a newsgroup, but their Internet provider must carry the newsgroup on its news server. Each USENET site makes its own decisions about the set of groups available to its users so you may have to request that your Internet service provider include a particular newsgroup in its available selections.

One newsgroup of interest to students of abnormal psychology is *sci.psychology.research.* Newsgroup names have several descriptive components divided by periods. The components become more specific as you read from left to right. You can derive from this newsgroup's name that it includes the scientific psychology community and that issues are research-related. Upon reading the group's charter you will find that discussions center around topics such as applied psychological techniques, current theoretical work, reviews of current journal articles, and grant searches. It is moderated to screen out non-psychology articles, personal attacks, political debate, and inappropriate topics such as issues related to individuals seeking help on a specific psychological disorder. To find out the purpose of the group and submission guidelines, access the *Charter of sci.psychology.research* at the following URL address:

http://www.coil.com/~grohol/psychart.htm

Most of the major psychology sites have links to several mailing lists and newsgroups related to mental health, therapy, and psychological disorders and usually will have the necessary information on membership constraints and how to join. By far the best place for getting a complete listing is *Psych Central,* which will link you to every known mailing list and newsgroup in the mental health and self-help areas. The lists are divided into two categories: "general support" and "professional." The professional lists are designed for individuals doing research or clinical work and carry prerequisites for joining. The other category is for the general public.

The *Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic Library* site has information about mailing lists on psychiatry and psychology. There you will be able to read a short description of each mailing list and learn the address of the list administrator if you care to join. Although most of the mailing lists they refer to are for professionals, sometimes students are allowed to join. The site also has a listing entitled "Psychiatric and Psychological USENET Groups." The groups are divided into "alt." groups which present an alternative point of view, "sci." groups which specialize in scientific research and applications, and "soc." groups which look at social issues and world cultures.

Many mailing lists and newsgroups will give you information about participation after you join. If not, it is wise for a novice to start by listening and observing before posting any messages to find out the particular conventions of a group. A quick way to find out the knowledge level or restrictions of the group is to check the FAQ file or a summary of past discussion topics, if these have been archived and are available. Then, use care in composing messages so that they are clear expressions of your ideas and are courteous. In addition, take the time to decide whether it

would be more appropriate to send your message to the entire group or to respond to only one person via his or her E-mail address. Responses to individuals cut down on message traffic and may often be the better choice.

GETTING CONNECTED

None of the features of the Internet can be accessed without the appropriate software for your computer. The Web is best accessed with a Web browsing program. Although there are many browsers available, the two most widely used browsers are *Microsoft Internet Explorer* and *Netscape Navigator*. More recent versions of these browsers have more capabilities than earlier versions and so you can do more with them. For example, you can print from the screen with *Netscape Navigator 3.0*, but can't with version *1.0*. Even the most up-to-date browsers do not include all of the software that you will need to take advantage of all of the components of the Internet or to access all of the information on the Internet, but usually the browser allows the supporting software to be identified and called from the browser itself.

Internet Explorer is free from Microsoft and is currently in version *3.0* with a *4.0* in beta test. *Internet Explorer 4.0* is an integrated package with more than just a browser. The Microsoft Internet site is located at the following URL address:

http://www.microsoft.com

Netscape Navigator must be purchased. Netscape also has a new integrated package called *Communicator*. To reach their Net site go to the following URL address:

http://www.netscape.com

You must also get Net access through an Internet service provider, a company that has the computers and leased lines to act as your gateway to the Internet. *America Online* and *CompuServe* provide Internet access, among other online services. There are several providers who provide Internet access only. Either way, you pay a monthly fee to "dial in" to access the online services.

While the Web at first glance seems very complex and potentially difficult to use, the best approach is to get on the Web and become familiar with it. It is both fun and educational.

CHAPTER 2
CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON THE INTERNET

The Internet can bring you the latest research and discussion on "hot" topics in abnormal psychology. Information on the Internet is less than a year old, in most cases, and updates are frequent. The Net gives you a window to "living" psychology where you quickly gain a sense of how practitioners and researchers around the world live and breathe psychology in their daily lives. In that sense, the Internet is not like a college library, full of the history and traditions of psychology. Instead, you get the psychology of the "here and now." A keyword search on the Internet is very likely to lead you to an article in a recently published psychology newsletter, or a list of the current research projects at a renowned research institute. Searches often lead to another important source of information on the Internet--the popular *USENET* newsgroups on a large variety of psychology-related subjects. Here you will find discussions of current issues in psychology as viewed by academics and practitioners, or you can become part of a support group for the general public. Mailing lists and newsgroups were discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

Information on the Internet is distributed from a variety of sources in a variety of styles. There are mental health articles, designed to be "brochures" for the general public. Other sites present information using the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) format, again usually for the general public. There are research articles, book reviews, news, and abstracts (short summaries of articles) designed for professionals. In order to better evaluate the information you receive, you need to know something about the purpose and sources of these various types of information.

In the past, the Internet centered around the exchange of science and research information. Use of the Internet for commercial purposes, such as product advertising, was frowned upon. Today, the basic infrastructure of the "network of networks" is changing hands--from government and education networks to commercial and special interest networks. With the commercialization of the Internet, the number of Web sites are growing at a staggering rate, and it now takes longer to find scholarly and scientific information. To save time and make your travels on the "information highway" more efficient, Appendix B presents a number of "master" sites for abnormal psychology. These sites were so named because they have extensive amounts of information concerning mental health, psychological disorders, research, support services, and continuing education in the field of abnormal psychology, so much information that you will want to bookmark these sources so that you can return to them again and again. Some of the master sites come from educational institutions and the informational resources are of an academic nature; other sites are brought to you as commercial services and so tend to have free services as well as services to sell. Some of the sites will inform you of their intended audience, for example, consumers, professionals, students, the world. The remainder of this chapter shows you the types of information available through these sites. If you do not find the information you are seeking by using the "master" sites then it is suggested that you use one of the many search tools available through your Web browser.

Since the Internet is largely unregulated, remember to always evaluate your findings by considering the source of the information. Remember, too, that just because there is a Web site doesn't mean the information at that site is correct!

MENTAL HEALTH ARTICLES

The Internet has an outstanding potential to disseminate mental health information to large audiences, and so you see a wealth of what might be called mental health "fact sheets" on the Net. These are brochure-like information presentations on various mental health topics such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety disorders, etc. Most are published by reputable national organizations, such as the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) or the American Psychological Association (APA). For instance, the AACAP publishes online *Facts for Families (FFF)* brochures to educate parents and families about psychiatric disorders affecting children and adolescents. The URL address for the AACAP is:

http://www.aacap.org/web/aacap/

A representative master site containing this type of mental health information is *Online Psych*. Their alphabetized list of topics contains more than 250 Internet links in 25 different areas related to psychological conditions and mental health services available to the general public. Many of the links are to the type of articles we have described here, where the article content is written in layman's terms. Computer users are also provided links to mailing lists and newsgroups related to the topic.

There is also much scholarly information on the Internet intended for the academic community and professionals in the field. The scholarly information is likely to be located in electronic journals or presented by academic institutions. *Psych Web*'s "Scholarly Psychology Resources on the Web" and *Clinical Psychology Resources* have hundreds of such references sorted by topic. Of course, most of academic psychology remains offline rather than on the Internet itself, but online access to library catalogs and indices to databases are invaluable for helping you find what you want. Most of the master sites in Appendix B provide links to bookstores and book publishers as well, and several of the sites give you lists of psychology books, magazines, and journals to help you get to information in print form. Several of the master sites offer opportunities for ongoing scholarly discussion of important topics in mental health through a "discussion forum" that can be entered into at any time.

WHAT ARE FAQs?

Another format for the presentation of mental health information is the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. As you might guess, these pages present in-depth information on a particular mental health topic in a question-and-answer format. Designed for the general public, the FAQs are presented in layman's terms. The APA's *PsychNET, Online Psych, Internet Mental Health Resources, Psych-Link*, and *Psych Web* have numerous links to information of this sort. Most of the USENET newsgroups have FAQ files that give you a wealth of information about their newsgroup's focus. You can access a Web page with links to all the USENET newsgroup FAQ files by typing the following URL address:

http://www.cis.ohio-state.edu/hypertext/faq/usenet/FAQ-List.html

ELECTRONIC JOURNALS

The term "electronic journal" is seen frequently as one browses the Web sites related to psychology, but there is little consistency in how the term is being used. In a conservative sense,

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