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ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abnormal Psychology on the Net

2002 Edition

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Introduction to the Internet

You're about to embark on an exciting experience as you become one of the millions of citizens of the Internet. Once you've accustomed yourself to this wonderful new world, you'll be amazed by how much you can discover, learn, and accomplish as you explore the Internet's dynamic resources.

Why Use the Internet?

In *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan foresaw the existence of the Internet when he described electronic media as an extension of our central nervous system. On the other hand, today's students introduced to the Internet for the first time describe it as "cool."

No matter which description you favor, you are immersed in a period that is transforming the way we live by transforming the nature of the information we live by. As recently as 1980, intelligence was marked by "knowing things." If you were born in that year, by the time you were old enough to cross the street by yourself, that definition had changed radically. Today, in a revolution that makes McLuhan's vision tangible, events, facts, rumors, and gossip are distributed instantly to all parts of the global body. The effects are equivalent to a shot of electronic adrenaline. No longer the domain of the privileged few, information is shared by all the inhabitants of McLuhan's global village. Meanwhile, the concept of information as intelligence feels as archaic as a television remote control with a wire on it (ask your parents about that).

With hardly more effort than it takes to rub your eyes open in the morning, you can connect with the latest news, gossip about your favorite music group or TV star, learn the best places to eat on spring break, find out the weather back home, or follow the trials and tribulations of that soap opera character whose life conflicts with your history class. You can carry on a real-time conversation with your best friend at a college half a continent away, or play interactive games with a dozen or more world-wide challengers. And that's just for fun. When it comes to your education, newspaper and magazine archives are now almost instantly available, as are the contents of many reference books. Distant and seemingly unapproachable experts are found answering questions in discussion groups or electronic newsletters.

The Internet also addresses the major problem facing us in our split-second, efficiency-rated culture: Where do we find the time? The Internet allows professors and students to keep in touch, collaborate, and learn without placing unreasonable demands on individual schedules. Professors are posting everything from course syllabi to homework solutions and are increasingly answering questions online, all in an effort to ease the pressure for face-to-face meetings by supplementing them with cyberspace offices. The Internet enables students and professors to expand office hours into a twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week operation. Many classes have individual sites at which enrolled students can gather electronically to swap theories, ideas, resources, gripes, and triumphs.

By freeing us from the more mundane operations of information gathering, and by providing numerous diverse sources of information, the Internet encourages us to be more creative and imaginative. Instead of devoting most of our time to gathering information and precious little to analyzing and synthesizing it, the Internet tips the balance in favor of the skills that separate us from silicon chips. As much as the Internet ties us together, it simultaneously emphasizes our individual skills—our ability to connect information in new, meaningful, and exciting ways. Rarely have we had the opportunity to make connections and observations on such a wide range of topics, to create more individual belief systems, and to chart a path through learning that makes information personally useful and meaningful.

A Brief History of the Internet

The Internet began as a tool for national defense. In the mid-1960s, the U.S. Department of Defense was searching for an information analogy to

the new Interstate Highway System, a way to move computing resources around the country in the event the Cold War caught fire. The immediate predicament, however, had to do with the Defense Department's budget, and the millions of dollars spent on computer research at universities and think tanks. Much of these millions was spent on acquiring, building, or modifying large computer systems to meet the demands of the emerging fields of computer graphics, artificial intelligence, and multiprocessing (where one computer was shared among dozens of different tasks).

While the research was distributed across the country, the unwieldy, often temperamental, computers were not. This made it difficult for computer scientists at various institutions to share their work without duplicating each other's hardware. Wary of being accused of re-inventing the wheel, the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), the funding arm of the Defense Department, invested in the ARPANET, a private network that would allow disparate computer systems to communicate with each other. Researchers could remain among their colleagues at their home campuses while using computing resources at government research sites thousands of miles away.

A small group of ARPANET citizens soon began writing computer programs to perform little tasks across the Internet. Most of these programs, while ostensibly meeting immediate research needs, were written for the challenge of writing them. These programmers, for example, created the first email systems. They also created games such as "Space Wars" and "Adventure." Driven in large part by the novelty and practicality of email, businesses and institutions accepting government research funds begged and borrowed their way onto the ARPANET, and the number of connections swelled.

As the innocence of the 1960s gave way to the business sense of the 1980s, the government eased out of the networking business, turning the ARPANET (now Internet) over to its users. While we capitalize the word "Internet," it may surprise you to learn there is no "Internet, Inc." in charge of this uniquely postmodern creation. Administration of this world-wide communication complex is still handled by the cooperating institutions and regional networks that comprise the Internet. The word "Internet" denotes a specific interconnected network of networks, not a corporate entity.

The emergence of the World Wide Web, developed by the European Laboratory for Particle Physics in the early 1990s, transformed the Internet. For the first time, images as well as text could be viewed through the aid of graphical Web browsers (software for navigating the Web).

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Today, sophisticated browsers such as Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer have led to the Web's vast popularity.

Some Things You Ought to Know

In order to access the Internet, you must first have an Internet Service Provider (ISP). That's the organization providing you with your Internet account. Most of the time your ISP will be your school; but you may contract with one of the commercial providers such as America Online, the Microsoft Network, Earthlink, or AT&T.

Much of the confusion over the Internet comes from two sources. One is terminology. Just as the career you're preparing for has its own special vocabulary, so does the Internet. You'd be hard pressed to join in the shoptalk of archeologists, librarians, or carpenters if you didn't speak their language. Don't expect to plop yourself down in the middle of the Internet without some buzzwords under your belt, either. This chapter will explain the most common terms, but keep in mind that new Internet technologies are developing all the time.

The second source of confusion is that there are often many ways to accomplish the same ends on the Internet. This is a direct by-product of the freedom so highly cherished by Net citizens. When someone has an idea for doing something, he or she puts it out there and lets the Internet community decide its merits. As a result, it's difficult to put down in writing the *one exact* way to send email, search for information, or whatever.

There are also differences in the workings of a PC or Mac and the various versions of the two major Web browsers, Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer. If you can't find a particular command or function mentioned in the book, chances are it's there, but in a different place or with a slightly different name. Check the manual or online help that came with your computer, or ask a more computer-savvy friend or professor.

If learning about the Internet is making you a little nervous, relax! Getting up to speed takes a little time, but the effort will be well rewarded. Approach learning your way around the Internet with the same enthusiasm and curiosity you approach learning your way around a new college campus. This isn't a competition. Nobody's keeping score. And the only winner will be you.

Introducing the World Wide Web

If you've never seriously used the Web, you are about to take your first steps on what can only be described as an incredible journey. Just as no one owns the Internet, there is no formal organization among the collection of hundreds of thousands of computers that make up the part of the Net called the World Wide Web.

Initially, you might find it convenient to think of the Web as cable television with millions of channels. It's safe to say that, among all these channels, there's something for you to watch. Only, how do you find it? You could click through the channels one by one, of course, but by the time you found something of interest it would either (1) be over or (2) leave you wondering if there wasn't something better on that you're missing.

A more efficient way to search for what you want would be to consult some sort of TV listing. While you could skim through pages more rapidly than channels, the task would still be daunting. A more creative approach would allow you to press a button on your remote control that would connect you to a channel of interest; what's more, that channel would contain the names (or numbers) of other channels with similar programs. Those channels in turn would contain information about other channels. Now you could zip through this million-channel universe, touching down only at programs of potential interest.

If you have a feel for how this might work for television, you have a feel for what it's like to journey around (or "surf") the Web. Instead of channels, we have *Web sites*. Each site contains one or more *pages*. Each page may contain links to other pages, either in the same site or in other sites, anywhere in the world. These other pages may elaborate on the information you're looking at, direct you to related but not identical information, or even provide contrasting or contradictory points of view. And, of course, these pages could have links of their own.

Today, Web sites are maintained by businesses, institutions, affinity groups, professional organizations, government departments, and ordinary people anxious to express opinions, share information, sell products, or provide services. Because these sites are stored electronically, updating them is more convenient and practical than updating printed media. That makes Web sites far more dynamic than other types of research material you may be used to, and it means a visit to a Web site can open up new opportunities that weren't available as recently as a few hours ago.

Hypertext and Links

The invention that unveils these revolutionary possibilities is called *hypertext*. Hypertext is a technology for combining text, graphics, sounds, video, and links on a single World Wide Web page. Unlike traditional linear documents such as books, hypertext allows navigation through pages in any order that you like. Click on a link and you're transported, like Alice falling down the rabbit hole, to a new page, a new address, a new environment for research and communication.

Links come in three flavors: text, picture, and hot spot. A text link may be a letter, a word, a phrase, a sentence, or any contiguous combination of text characters. You can identify text links at a glance because the characters are <u>underlined</u> and often displayed in a unique color, setting the link apart from the rest of the text on the page. Picture links may be drawings, photos, or other graphic elements. On the Web, a picture may not only be worth a thousand words, but also the start of a journey into a whole new corner of cyberspace.

The hot spot is neither underlined nor bordered. It would be impossible to see were it not for a Web convention that offers you (literally) a helping hand for finding all types of links. Whenever the mouse cursor

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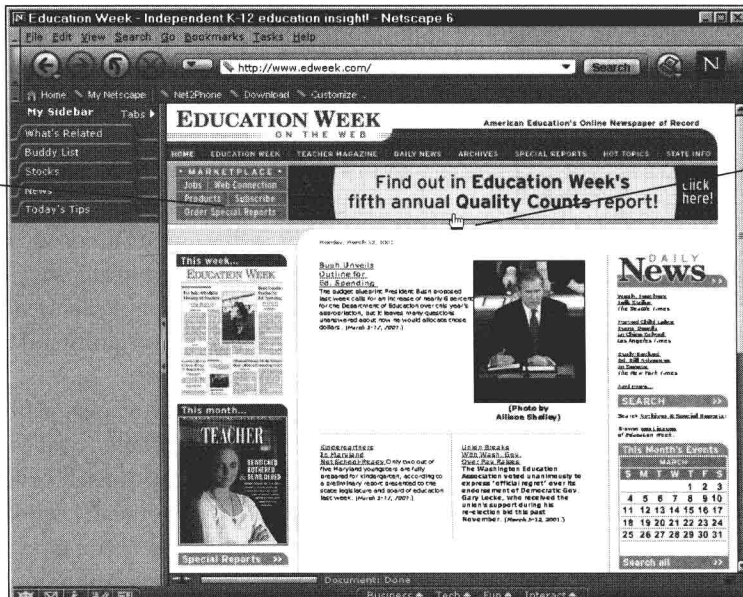
Text links are underlined and set off in color. You can tell this picture is a link because the mouse cursor has changed from an arrow to a hand.

passes over a link, the cursor changes from an arrow to a hand. Wherever you see the hand icon, you can click and retrieve another Web page. Sweep the cursor over an area of interest, see the hand, follow the link, and you're surfing the Web. Hot spots are sometimes located on areas of a large picture called an "image map." Clicking on different areas of the image map will lead you to different Web pages.

In the Name of the Page

Zipping around the Web in this way may seem exciting, even serendipitous, but it's also fraught with peril. How, for instance, do you revisit a page of particular interest? Or share a page with a classmate? Or cite a page as a reference for a professor? Web page designers assign titles to their pages; unfortunately, there's nothing to prevent two designers from assigning the same title to different pages.

An instrument that uniquely identifies Web pages does exist. It's called a *Universal Resource Locator (URL)*. A URL contains all the information necessary to locate the:

- Web page containing the information you're looking for;
- computer that hosts (stores) that page of information;
- form in which the information is stored.

A typical URL looks like this:

```
http://www.abacon.com/index.html
```

You enter it into the **Location** or **Address** field at the top of your browser window. Hit the **Return** (or **Enter**) key, and your browser will deliver to your screen the exact page specified. When you click on a link, you're actually using a shorthand alternative to typing the URL yourself because the browser does it for you. In fact, if you watch the "Location" or "Address" field when you click on a link, you'll see its contents change to the URL to which you're traveling.

The URL Exposed

How does your browser know where you're going? As arcane as the URL appears, there is a logical explanation to its apparent madness. This is true not only of URLs, but also of computers in general. Because a computer's "intelligence" only extends to following simple instructions exactly, most of the commands, instructions, and procedures you'll

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encounter have simple underlying patterns. Once you familiarize yourself with these patterns, you'll find you're able to make major leaps in your understanding of new Internet features.

To unscramble the mysteries of Web addresses, we'll start at the end of the URL and work our way toward the front.

```
/index.html
```

This is the name of a single file or document. Eventually, the contents of this file/document will be transferred over the Internet to your computer. However, because there are undoubtedly thousands of files on the Internet with this name, we need to clarify our intentions a bit more.

```
www.abacon.com
```

This is the name of a particular Internet *Web server,* a computer whose job it is to forward Web pages to you on request. By Internet convention, this name is unique. The combination of

```
www.abacon.com/index.html
```

identifies a unique file/document on a unique Web server on the World Wide Web. No other file has this combined address, so there's no question about which file/document to transfer to you.

The characters *http://* at the beginning of the URL identify the method by which the file/document will be transferred. The letters stand for HyperText Transfer Protocol.

You Can Go Home (and to Other Pages) Again

You know that a URL uniquely identifies a Web page and that links let you travel from page to page, but what if you end up at a dead end? Missing page messages take several forms, such as "URL 404," "Object not on this server," "Missing Object," or "Page Not Found," but they all tell you that the page specified by the link or URL no longer exists.

There are many reasons for missing pages. You may have entered the URL incorrectly (every character must be precise and no spaces are allowed). More than likely, though, especially if you arrived here via a link, the page you're after has been moved or removed. Remember, anybody can create a link to any page. That's the good news. The bad news is that the owner of a page is under no obligation to inform the owners of links pointing to it that the page location has changed. In fact, there's no way for the page owner to even know about all the links to that page. Yes, the Internet's spirit of independence proves frustrating sometimes, but you'll

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Don't Be Lost In (Hyper)Space

Let's pause for a quick check of your Web navigation skills. Look at the sample Web page below. How many links does it contain?

Did you find four? The four links include:

1. The word "links" in the second line below the seaside picture;

2. The sentence "What about me?";

3. The word "cyberspace" in the quick brown fox sentence;

4. The hot spot in the seaside picture. We know there's at least one link in the picture, because the cursor appears as a hand. (There may be more hot spots on the page, but we can't tell from this picture alone.)
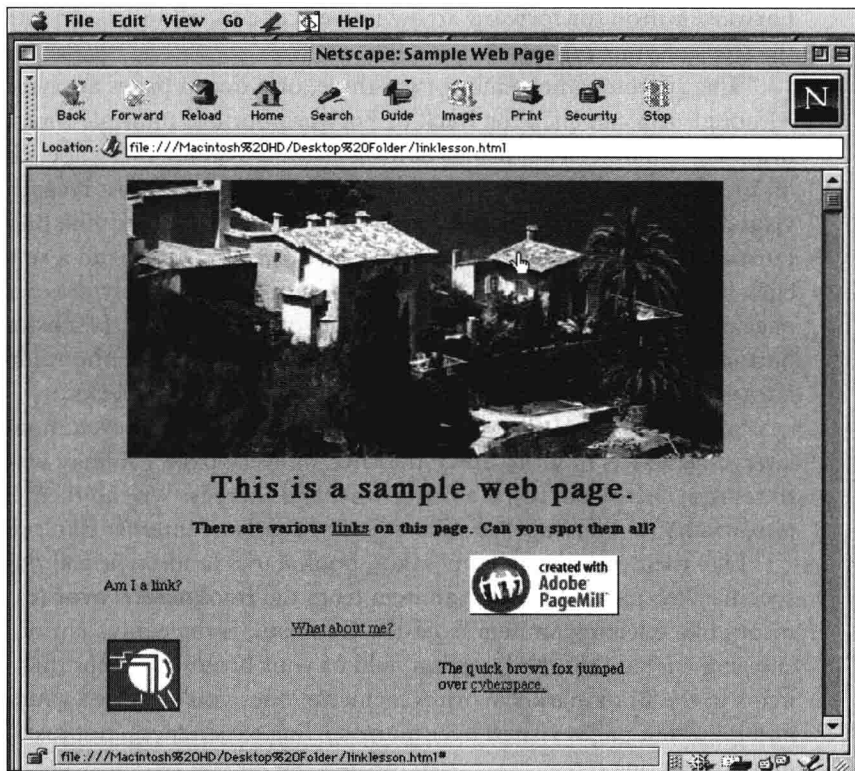
A sample web page to exercise your link identifying skills.
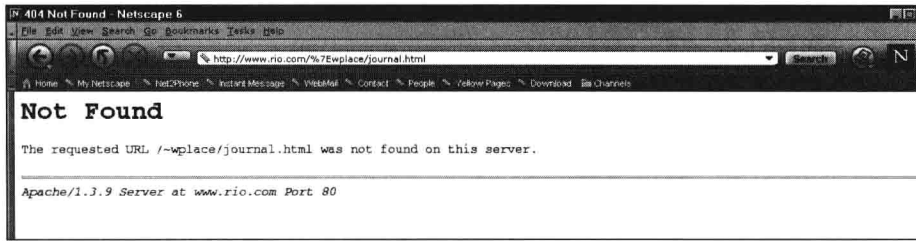
A missing page message, an all too common road hazard on the information superhighway.

find these small inconveniences are a cheap price to pay for the benefits you receive. Philosophy aside, though, we're still stuck on a page of no interest to us. The best strategy is to back up and try another approach.

Every time you click on the **Back** button (or back arrow in Netscape 6) at the top of the browser, you return to the previous page visited. That's because your browser keeps track of the pages you visit and the order in which you visit them. The **Back** button, and its counterpart, the **Forward** button (or forward arrow in Netscape 6), allow you to retrace the steps of your cyberpath.

What if you want to move two, three, or a dozen pages at once? Although you can click the **Back** or **Forward** buttons multiple times, Web browsers offer an easier navigation shortcut. If you use Netscape, clicking on the **Go** menu in the menu bar displays a list of your most recently visited pages, in the order in which you visited them. Unlike the **Back** or **Forward** buttons, you can select any page from the menu, and a single click takes you directly there. There's no need to laboriously move one page a time. If you use Internet Explorer, you can click on the **History** button in the Explorer bar or press the arrow at the end of the Address bar to see a list of links you visited in previous days and weeks.

Suppose you want to return to a page hours, days, or even months later. One way is to write down the URL of every page you may want to revisit. There's got to be a better way, and there is: We call them *bookmarks* (in Netscape) or *favorites* (in Microsoft Internet Explorer).

Like their print book namesakes, bookmarks (and favorites) flag specific Web pages. Selecting an item from the **Bookmark/Favorites** menu, like selecting an item from the **Go** menu, is the equivalent of entering a URL into the **Location** field of your browser, except that items in the **Bookmark/Favorites** menu are ones you've added yourself and represent pages visited over many surfing experiences, not just the most recent one.

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In Netscape 6, to save a favorite Web page, pull down the **Book-marks** menu and click on the **Add Current Page** command. When you want to select a page from your bookmark list, just click on the desired entry. To edit the title or URL of a bookmark, choose **Manage Book-marks.** This feature also lets you arrange your favorites in folders by category.

Selecting **Add to Favorites** from the **Favorites** menu performs the same function as Bookmarks in Netscape 6 and adds the location of the current page to your list of favorite pages. If you want to be able to review this page when you're not online, click on the "Make available offline" checkbox.

A cautionary note is in order here. Your Bookmark or Favorites list physically exists only on your personal computer, which means that if you connect to the Internet on a different computer, your list won't be available. However, if you routinely connect to the Internet from a computer lab, there is a way to avoid the work of retyping your URLs each time you use a different computer. Both Internet Explorer and Netscape provide procedures to save favorites in a computer file that you can move from one computer to another. You can export a selected folder in your Favorites list, or all of your favorites. Since exported favorites are saved as an HTML file, either Internet Explorer or Navigator can import them.

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In Internet Explorer 5.5, under the File menu, choose **Import and Export** to pull up the Import/Export Wizard. Follow the on-screen instructions to **Export Favorites.** You will see a list of files. Insert a blank diskette into the diskette drive and choose the diskette drive on which you want to export the favorites. When you begin working on a different computer, insert your diskette with the file of favorites into the diskette drive. Again choose Import and Export from the File menu and follow the on-screen instructions to **Import Favorites.** Click on Browse to indicate where you want to import the favorites.

In Netscape 6, click on **Bookmarks,** and then **Manage Bookmarks.** Then, in the window that opens, select **Export Bookmarks** from under the File menu. A list of files on your hard drive will appear. Insert a blank diskette and click on the arrow beside the "Save in" prompt to change the drive. When you begin working on a different computer, insert your diskette with the file of bookmarks into the diskette drive. Again, click on Bookmarks, Manage Bookmarks, and select **Import Bookmarks** from the File menu. Locate the filename of your bookmarks in the browser window and open it. Your bookmark file will now open when you choose Bookmarks.