Browser Tutorial

This tutorial is designed to teach you some of the basics of operating a Web browser and finding information on the Web.

You can get the most recent version of this tutorial from the seminar website:

```
http://www.xula.edu/Administrative/cat/workshops/introweb/
```

As you work through the tutorial, keep these things in mind...

- Netscape is only one brand of browser. There are many others.
- Netscape continues to release new versions of their browser. This tutorial was written with version 4 browsers in mind.
- Netscape Communicator is actually a suite of programs, including an e-mail client, a news client and a Web client (or browser). The name of the Netscape Web client is Navigator.

Contents

This tutorial will guide you through the following steps:

Prerequisites

This tutorial assumes a level of competency with basic computing tasks and concepts. You should understand the following terms:

- Files
- Folders
- File hierarchy
- The desktop
- The Finder (Mac only)

Conventions

Actions that you need to perform are bulleted, like this:

- Open the file.

All discussion of concepts or theory — or anything that is not an action to be performed — is not bulleted (for example, the paragraph you're reading right now.)

Menu commands look like this: **File > Open**. This means choose the **Open** option from the **File** menu. Sometimes, for the sake of brevity, common menu items may be referred to simply as **Save** or **Open**. The same style is used for other user interface elements, such as key you're supposed to press and buttons you're supposed to click, i.e. "Click the **OK** button."

HTML code and URLs look like this:

```
<B0DY BGC0L0R="white">
```

Names of files and folders, as well as text that you are supposed to type, are rendered in *italics*. I've chosen italics rather than the more conventional quotation marks to avoid potential confusion: "Am I supposed to type those quotation marks or not?" If you see quotation marks, you can assume that they *are* to be typed.

Before You Begin

- Create a new folder on the desktop and name it *tutorial*.

  Windows users: You can do this quite simply by clicking on the desktop with your right mouse button and choosing **New > Folder** from the pop-up menu. Then, without pausing to draw breath, type the word *tutorial*. Press the **Enter** key and you're done.

  Mac users: You can do this quite simply by clicking on the desktop while pressing the **Control** key; choose **New Folder** from the pop-up menu. Then, without pausing to think, type the word *tutorial*. Press the **Return** key and you're done.

- Read the following information about filename extensions.

About Filename Extensions

Some operating systems use filename extensions to identify different types of files. For example, a file named *document.htm* or *document.html* is marked as a Web page. A file named *document.gif* is marked as a particular type of image file, while *document.jpg* indicates an image file of another format. A Microsoft Word document might be named *document.doc*, whereas a plain text file would most likely be named something like *document.txt*.

Web servers, which may run on a number of different operating systems, use filename extensions to identify file types.

The Microsoft Disk Operating System (MS-DOS) uses filename extensions. Windows uses them too, since it is built "on top of" MS-DOS. Windows is often configured to hide filename extensions, so that you may not be aware of them. (But see below for the remedy.)

The MacOS doesn't use filename extensions. A very different system is employed to identify different file types, so that a file named *document* could be almost anything -- text, graphics, audio, video, whatever. Mac users who want to publish on the Web or share files with Windows users need to be aware of filename extensions and start using them correctly.

Examples of Common Filename Extension Problems

- ❖ You find a file named *document.html.txt*. Which is it — plain text or hypertext?
- ❖ You create a web page that is supposed to display an image. The image file is named *picture.jpg* but you mistakenly set the SRC attribute of the IMG tag to point to *picture.gif*. The image does not appear.
- ❖ You're a Windows user. A Mac user sends you e-mail with a Word document attached, named *Final Report*. You can't open it. Because *Final Report* has no filename extension, the Windows operating system can't identify it as a Word file. If the Mac user had named the file *Final Report.doc*, this would not have occurred. Also note that it's good practice to avoid spaces in filenames if you plan to share them over the Web, so an even better name would be *Final_Report.doc*, *Final-Report.doc* or *FinalReport.doc*.

Windows Only: Configure Your System

Follow these instructions to make Windows display filename extensions at all times. This is highly recommended for aspiring Web authors, because it reduces opportunities for confusion.

- Open any folder or drive.
- From the **View** menu, choose **Options** or **Folder Options**. A dialog box should appear.
- Click the **View** tab.
- Look for an option that says "Hide file extensions for known file types" or "Hide MS-DOS file extensions for file types that are registered." *Make sure this item is **not** checked.*
- Click the button marked **OK**.

1. Starting Netscape

- Find the Netscape icon on your desktop and double-click it. If the icon is not on your desktop, you will have to find where Netscape resides on your hard drive. Hunt it down, and when you find it, double-click.

When you start Netscape, it automatically displays a "home" page by default. Later, we'll discuss how you can customize Netscape and choose whatever home page you like. This tutorial assumes that your browser is set to display the Xavier University home page.

- If you're not seeing the XU home page, you will need to go there now in order to proceed with the tutorial; skip ahead to section 5 below and then return here.

Let's review what just happened:

As soon as you launched Netscape, it sent a request to the XU Web server. The essence of this request was: "Send me a copy of the XU home page." The server responded (hopefully) by delivering a copy of the requested document. Netscape then stored the copy on your computer's hard drive, in a special folder called a "cache," and displayed the document in the browser window.

2. Following Links

Hypertext documents contain references to other documents. These references are commonly called "links" and they are embedded right in the text. Often links are highlighted with colored text and underlining, but their appearance can vary.

Each link points to another document. To follow a link (in other words, to go to the referenced document) simply single-click it.

- Starting at the XU home page, follow the link to *Resources*.
- From the Resources page, follow the link to the Center for the Advancement of Teaching.
- From the Center's home page, follow the link to *Workshops*.
- From the *Workshops* page, follow the link to *Introduction to the Web*. You may have to scroll down a bit to find it.

You're now at the page dedicated to this seminar. If you ever need to review the materials from this seminar, you can retrieve them from here.

Let's review what just happened:

In order to get here from the XU home page, you successfully navigated through five documents, following four links. You can think of this as a document path:

XU home > Resources > CAT > Workshops > Introduction to the Web

Each time you clicked a link, your client (the browser) sent a request to the Xavier Web server. The server responded by delivering the document you requested.

3. Bookmarks

Netscape has a feature that allows you to "bookmark" Web pages for later reference.

Access to this feature is a little different for Windows and Mac.

> *Windows users* will find a **Bookmarks** pop-up menu below the toolbar on the left side of the screen.
>
> *Mac users* will find a **Bookmarks** drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

When you open the **Bookmarks** menu, you will see a number of options followed by a list of bookmarks.

- Making sure that you are viewing the Web page for this seminar, choose the first option: **Add Bookmark**. This adds the current page to the list of bookmarks.
- Verify that the bookmark has been added by opening the **Bookmarks** menu again; the new addition should appear at the bottom of the list.
- You can jump to any item in the bookmarks list by selecting it. Try this a few times just for practice. When you're done, use your new bookmark to return to the seminar page.

Finally, it's worth noting that if you bookmark many pages, your bookmarks list will become very long and unwieldy. Fortunately, you can edit your bookmarks by choosing the **Edit Bookmarks** option. You probably shouldn't edit bookmarks on a shared computer, but this feature is handy for organizing the bookmarks on your personal computer. You can delete bookmarks, change their names, sort them, and even organize them into folders. The process is fairly intuitive but is not covered in this tutorial.

4. Button by Button

Notice the row of buttons across the top of the browser window. This is called the toolbar. It allows quick and easy access to some of the browser's most essential features.

If your buttons look like the image above, with pictures but no text, you should change your preferences:

- From the **Edit** pull-down menu, choose **Preferences**.
- A dialog box should appear. Choose the first option on the left-hand side, which should be **Appearance**.
- In the section marked "Show toolbar(s) as" choose either "Pictures and Text" or "Text Only."
- Then click the button marked **OK**.

Let's examine each button in turn:

4.1 Back

The **Back** button is first because it's used most often. (Luckily, software buttons do not wear out from repeated use!)

- Press the **Back** button once (just single-click it). Your browser should return to the previous document in your document path.
- Now click the **Back** button again, but this time hold the button down (by continuing to press the mouse button). A list of items should appear beneath the button, representing your document path. This is called your history list.
- Slide down the history list and select the bottom item, then release. Your browser should return to the first document you viewed.

4.2 Forward

As you might imagine, the **Forward** button is the counterpart to the **Back** button and functions in much the same way.

Press the **Forward** button once (just single-click it). Your browser should return to the next document in your document path.

Now click the **Forward** button again, but this time hold the button down (by continuing to press the mouse button). Your history list should appear again. Slide down the history list and select the bottom item, then release. Your browser should return to the "Introduction to the Web" page.

4.3 Reload

- Press the **Reload** button. Netscape re-sends its request for the current document to the server. The page reloads.

Usually Netscape and the server engage in a little behind-the-scenes communication here. Netscape will ask the server if the document has been modified since the previous transmission. If it has, the server will re-send the document. If it hasn't, then Netscape will just reload the page from the cache (see section 1, Starting Netscape, above).

> *Hint:* This is great in theory, but sometimes it messes you up. If you ever need to *force* Netscape to get a new page from the server and not the cache, just hold down the shift key when you hit **Reload**.

There are a number of different reasons why you'd want to reload a page. The two most common reasons are probably dynamic content and transmission errors.

Dynamic content is content that changes over time. Perhaps you've been looking at a page displaying information about the local weather. You're called away from your desk and when you return an hour later, you see this page is still on the screen, but you suspect that the weather report has been updated since you first retrieved it. Therefore, you reload the page to get the latest information.

Even though the Web is a wonderfully robust communications medium, transmission errors do occur. Bits of information may get lost along the way, or the transmission may be interrupted. If a Web page doesn't load completely the first time, try reloading it to fix the problem.

4.4 Home

Press the **Home** button. Netscape should return to the XU home page. This is just a quick way to get to whatever page you've designated as "home."

4.5 Search

Press the **Search** button. Netscape should display a Web page featuring different search engines. The topic of search engines is discussed at greater length toward the end of this tutorial.

4.6 Netscape

Press the **Netscape** button. Your browser should display the Netscape Corporation's Web page.

4.7 Images

This button only appears on the Mac version of Netscape.

Later in this tutorial, we'll discuss how you can turn off automatic image loading. Until then, this button won't make much sense.

4.8 Print

You can use this button to quickly print a page. Don't press it now — this tutorial doesn't cover printing.

4.9 Security

Press the **Security** button. A window called "Security Info" should appear. We won't explore this window in detail, but there is one feature that is worth noting quickly. When the window first

appears, it tells you whether the page you're currently viewing is encrypted. An encrypted page offers greater security if you are entering sensitive information (such as a password or credit card number). More and more websites are using encryption for this purpose. A page that is not encrypted offers less security, and any information you submit could be intercepted by a sneaky person.

Click **OK** or **Cancel** to close the Security window.

4.10 Shop

Bear witness to the ever-increasing, all-pervasive commercialization of the Internet.

4.11 Stop

Sometimes a page will take a long time to load. This can happen for a number of reasons: the page may be very large, or contain many large images; the server that is delivering the page to you may be overburdened or just plain slow; your connection to the Internet may be slow. Often you may grow impatient and decide you really don't want to see that page anyway. That's when you should use the **Stop** button. Pressing this button sends a message equivalent to: "Forget about it—I'm no longer interested. Ignore my request."

Once you've finished this section, use the **Back** button to return to the seminar page.

5. The Location/Netsite Field

One powerful tool, which you can and should use, is the **Location** field. This is the long, narrow, white rectangle just below the buttons at the top of your browser window.

> *Note:* Sometimes this field is labeled **Netsite** instead of **Location**. It displays the former label when you're looking at a Web page on a Netscape-brand server. Yes, Netscape makes servers too. What's more, Xavier University is using Netscape servers at the time of this writing.

This field displays the Universal Resource Locator (URL) of the current document, which should look something like this:

`http://www.xula.edu/Administrative/cat/workshops/introweb/index.html`

There's a lot of information here. Let's review the structure of a URL:

- *Service:* That's the first part, `http`, which stands for HyperText Transfer Protocol. Almost every Web page's URL begins with this, because this is the primary service used to deliver Web pages. Note the colon and double slash, which are required.
- *Host:* Each host on the Internet has a unique number, but numbers are hard to remember, so each host also has a name. In this URL, the host specified is `www.xula.edu`, which is the name of the XU Web server.
- *File details:* After the host name, we see a series of terms separated by slashes. These are folder names. The last term is a file name. This spells out the exact location of the current document on the Web server. In this example, the file details say: "We're looking at the file called *index.html* which is in the *introweb* folder. The *introweb* folder is located inside the *workshops* folder, which is in the *cat* folder, which is in the *Administrative* folder."

Whew.

Now let's enter a URL manually.

- Single-click in the **Location/Netsite** field, right inside the white rectangle.
- The current URL should now be highlighted. If not, manually select it with your cursor.
- To enter a new URL, simply begin typing.

Fortunately, we don't have to type the service if we want to use `http`, which we do. It's implied. Therefore, we can just enter a host name.

- Type the following host name:

  `www.state.la.us`

The field should now contain the above host name and nothing else.

- Now press the **Enter** key (or **Return** if you're using a Mac).

The INFO Louisiana home page should appear. Note that Netscape adds `http://` to the beginning of the URL. It also adds a trailing slash to the end.

Note that we did not specify any file details, although we could have. In the absence of file details, the server looks for a file named *index.html* or *index.htm* and delivers that file if it exists. In other words, the following URLs both refer to the same document:

`http://www.state.la.us/`

`http://www.state.la.us/index.htm`

- Use your **Back** button to return to the seminar page.

6. Menus, Menus, and Keyboard Shortcuts

If all you ever did was follow links, push buttons and bookmark pages, you could get around the Web. Nevertheless, to really take advantage of all the things Netscape Navigator can do, you have to be more adventurous.

We'll soon see that, as with most computing applications, there are a number of different ways to perform any given task. For example, to return to the previous document, you can:

- press a button
- use a drop-down menu
- use a pop-up menu
- use a keyboard shortcut

Use the method that is most comfortable for you, but don't forget to explore other methods and try them on for size.

The following section explores the use of drop-down menus. These menus appear at the top of the browser window (or the top of the screen if you're using a Mac).

6.1 The File Menu

Use the **File** menu to access filing functions. Remember that Web pages are also data files. Each image that you see in a Web page is actually a separate file of its own.

New

- Choose **New > Navigator (Window)**. A new browser window should appear.
- Choose **New > Message**. An e-mail composition window should appear.

These commands are convenient, so you should probably take a moment to memorize the keyboard shortcuts.

> *Hint:* Keyboard shortcuts are listed on the right-hand side of the drop-down menus to help you learn.

- When you're finished, close the new windows you created.

Open

- Choose **Open > Page**. (Mac users should choose **Open > Location in Navigator**.)
- A dialog box should appear. Enter this host name:

  `www.w3.org`

- When you're finished typing, click the **Open** button or simply press **Enter/Return**.

The browser will send a request to the server on the `www.w3.org` host. If the network is functioning properly, the host will respond by sending back a document, and soon you should be looking at the home page for the World Wide Web Consortium.

- When you're finished, use your bookmark to return to the seminar page.

Save As...

- Make certain that you are viewing the seminar page.
- Choose **Save As...**.

A dialog box should appear. Now you have to choose a place on the hard drive to save this file.

- Navigate to the *tutorial* folder which you created (it should be on the desktop) and open it.

Now you're ready to save the file, but you have one last choice to make — You have to pick a format for saving the file. In Windows, this option is labeled **Save as Type**. On the Mac, it's labeled **Format**. It's the same thing. You can save the file as an HTML file or as plain text file.

First, save it as an HTML file.

- Windows users should choose **Save as Type > HTML Files**; Mac users should choose **Format > Source**.
- Name the file *index.html*
- Click the **Save** button.

Now, save the same page as a plain text file.

- Choose **Save As…** A dialog box should appear.
- Windows users should choose **Save as Type > Plain Text**; Mac users should choose **Format > Text**.
- Name the file *index.txt*
- Click the **Save** button.

You've just saved the same page in two different formats. Those letters at the end of the filename are very important. They're called filename extensions, and they indicate the format of the file. A file that ends with .html is an HTML file (a Web page), while a file that ends with *.txt* is a plain text file. If you're interested in exchanging files over the Internet — including publishing on the Web — you always pay attention to filename extensions.

Open Revisited

Before, you used the **Open** command to open a location from the Internet — to retrieve a file from a machine "somewhere out there."

You can also open files directly from your hard drive (or a floppy drive, for that matter). In other words, you can browse files that are on your local machine as well as files that are on remote servers. Be certain that you understand this important distinction!

Since you just saved two files to your hard drive, examine them.

- Choose **Open > Page**. (Mac users should choose **Open > Page in Navigator**.) A dialog box should appear.
- Navigate to the *tutorial* folder that you created on the desktop. (Windows users will have to click **Choose File**.)
- Choose the *index.html* file and click the **Open** button.

You should see the seminar page again, only now it probably looks a little different. That's because we only saved the HTML file itself, and none of the associated files. Remember that each image in a Web page is a separate file.

- Choose **Open > Page** again. (Mac users should choose **Open > Page in Navigator**.)
- This time, choose the *index.txt* file. (Windows users will have to click **Choose File** and then select **Files of Type > Text**.) Click the **Open** button.

You should see the seminar page yet again, only this time it should look *really* different. That's because this is a plain text document. The entire HTML "markup," which contains special formatting instructions, has been stripped away, and only the textual content remains.

Send Page

You can choose **Send Page** to quickly send the HTML document you're viewing to another person via e-mail. Don't do it now, though.

This feature has a major drawback: The recipient must be using an e-mail client that is capable of rendering HTML documents. Netscape Messenger can do this, but not all e-mail clients can.

Personally, I recommend copying the URL from the Location field and pasting it into the body of your e-mail message instead of using the **Send Page** feature.

Print Functions

Don't choose the **Print** option. This tutorial doesn't cover printing.

However, it's worth noting that printing a Web page is much like printing in other applications. There are a few caveats:

- ❖ Printing a page with many images can tie up the printer for a long time.
- ❖ Some Web pages may not print very well if they were designed for the screen only.
- ❖ Sometimes it's better just to bookmark the page so you can review it whenever you like. Save a tree!

6.2 The Edit Menu

Use the **Edit** menu to access Netscape's editing functions. These are very similar to the standard Windows editing functions—which, in turn, are very similar to the editing functions of the Mac OS. This only makes sense, because Windows is a rip-off of the Mac operating system circa 1984.

Copy

- Use your bookmark to return to the seminar page.
- Select some of the text on the page with your cursor (click and drag).
- Choose **Copy** from the **Edit** menu.

> *Hint:* If the **Edit** option is gray, that means it's unavailable because you don't have anything selected.

You've now put a copy of the selected text into your computer's short-term memory (sometimes referred to as "the clipboard").

Paste

The only purpose of copying text is to paste it somewhere else. Often it's handy to paste some text into a word processing document or an e-mail message. Just for the sake of practice, paste the text you just copied into a text editor. Text editors are very useful for Web authoring, so it's good to be familiar with them.

First, you have to start a text editor. Windows users can use Notepad. Mac users should be familiar with SimpleText.

- Launch a text editor:
    - *Windows users:* Use Notepad. From the Windows **Start** menu, choose **Run…** and enter *notepad*.
    - *Mac users:* Use SimpleText. This application can usually be found on the hard drive, in the *Applications* folder.

Once you've started your text editor, a blank window should appear.

- Select **Edit > Paste**.

The text you copied from your browser should appear in the window of the text editor.

- Return to Netscape.

You may observe that Netscape also has a **Paste** function. This is often useful for pasting a URL into the **Location** field, for example, or pasting some text into a form on a Web page.

Select All

- Choose **Select All** and all the text on the page should be highlighted.

This is just a quick way to select all the text so that you can copy it for pasting elsewhere.

Preferences

- Choose **Edit > Preferences** and a complicated dialog box will appear.

Don't be frightened! By changing these preference settings, you can customize your browser to your own personal needs.

Since you are probably doing this tutorial on a shared computer, you shouldn't make any drastic changes or it may inconvenience the next user.

> *Hint:* You can still get a bunch of information on how to customize your browser by choosing **Help > Help Contents** (Mac users just choose **Help > Help**). Scroll down until you see the section entitled "Customizing Your Browser".

Close the preferences windows to continue with the tutorial.

6.3 The View Menu

The **View** menu puts you in control of how you see information as you browse the Web.

Show

There are a number of options available under the **Show** submenu. These allow further customization of your browser, so that you can make that row of buttons disappear, for example.

- Feel free to experiment.

When Netscape is restarted, it will return to its original configuration.

Increase/Decrease Font Size

These menu options pretty much speak for themselves. Sometimes you have to repeat the command a couple of times in order to see any change. If you find yourself increasing the font size a lot, you might want to look into resetting your font preferences.

- Feel free to experiment.

When Netscape is restarted, it will return to its original configuration.

Reload

This command is the same as hitting the **Reload** button (see section 4.3 above).

Stop Loading

This command is the same as hitting the **Stop** button (see section 4.11 above).

Stop Animations

If you ever run across those annoying animated ad banners, which can make a page very hard to read, use this option to make the madness stop. (This option only appears on the Mac when there actually is an animated image on the page.)

Page Source

Perhaps you're wondering what this HTML stuff is all about, anyway. You're about to find out.

- Choose **Page Source**.

A new window opens, displaying the actual HTML source for the current page. Take a moment to look and you'll see that it isn't really as weird and frightening as it might first appear. You'll learn more about HTML in a later seminar in this series. Anytime you see something on the Web and wonder "How did they do that?" just choose **View > Page Source** and you'll see the answer.

- When you're done, close the window with the source code and proceed.

Page Info

- Choose **Page Info**.

A new window opens, displaying information about the current page, such as:

- ❖ All the images embedded in the page.
- ❖ The URL for the page.
- ❖ The location of the page in your disk cache (see section 1).
- ❖ The date the document was created.
- ❖ The date the document was not modified.

Unfortunately, this information is not available if the server did not supply it, so this feature is of somewhat limited utility.

> *Hint:* Both this command and the previous one are available through the pop-up menu. Although this tutorial does not cover the pop-up menu in depth, you should be aware of it. Access the pop-up menu by clicking anywhere in the browser window with the right mouse button. (Mac users will need to click and hold down.)

6.4 The Go Menu

The **Go** menu gives you access to Netscape's navigation functions.

Back/Forward

These commands are the same as hitting the **Back** or **Forward** buttons (see sections 4.1 and 4.2 above).

Hint: These functions are also accessible through the pop-up menu.

History List

This menu also lists the documents you recently visited. This is the same as clicking and holding down the **Back** button (see section 4.1 above).

6.5 The Communicator Menu

You'll recall that Netscape Communicator is actually a suite of programs. You can access other parts of the suite from the **Communicator** menu. Here's a quick guide:

Navigator	WWW client (browser)
Messenger	e-mail client
Composer	HTML editor
Radio	This is nothing more than a link to Netscape's streaming audio features page.
Address Book	used by Messenger to store your frequently used e-mail addresses
Newsgroups	news client
Tools	The only interesting item here is **History**. Choose it and you'll see a much more comprehensive version of your browser's history list. The Windows version is much more fully developed than the Mac, alas.
Windows	You can jump to any open Netscape window.

6.6 The Help Menu

Use the **Help** menu to access Netscape's support features. Only a few of the most salient options are discussed below.

Help (Contents)

- Choose **Help > Help Contents** (or just **Help > Help** on the Mac).

A help interface appears. Personally, I think it's somewhat poorly designed, and I don't like it or find it very helpful. If you find some useful information here, more power to you.

- Close this window and proceed.

About Communicator

- Choose **Help > About Communicator** (the last item on the menu).

A page should appear. It may look like a Web page, but it's actually generated internally by Netscape.

At the top, it should say something like *Netscape® Communicator 4.73*. This is the version number for the particular release of Netscape that you're using, and this information is the primary reason you want to look at this page.

- Make a mental note of the version number and proceed.

Software Updates

Netscape periodically updates its product, releasing new versions that are — hopefully — better. As of this writing, the latest release is 4.73, so if you noted a lower number in the previous step, you might want to consider upgrading. That's now easier than ever, thanks to something called SmartUpdate. If you're working on your personal computer, just choose **Help > Software Updates**. A Web page appears. Follow the link to the first step, and follow the instructions.

7. Finding Information on the Web

One of the biggest challenges in using the Web is finding the information you want. Sometimes you will not know a specific URL or have any idea where to find the information you're looking for. Nevertheless, there are so many Web pages out there that your topic of interest is probably addressed somewhere. If only you knew where to look...

Fortunately, there are Web directories and search engines. These on-line services can help you find the information you're looking for. It's worth taking some time to learn how to use them.

There are many directories and search engine services available. You should use the one that you like the most and that best suits your needs. In the following section, we examine one example of each.

7.1 Directories

A directory is sort of like the Yellow Pages. It's a subject-by-subject listing of websites. Probably the most famous Web directory is Yahoo! Today you'll look at the similar but less well-known Open Directory Project.

- Point your browser to:

  `http://dmoz.org/`

(Remember that you only have to enter the host name.)

Take a moment to look over the categories listed on the main page. This is a noble attempt to impose some order on the chaos of the Web. Note that all the listings in this directory are collected, compiled, and edited by human beings.

One thing that's kind of cool about the Open Directory Project is that you can volunteer to be an editor. If there's a particular subject that's close to your heart, and if you like to surf the Web, you might want to consider volunteering.

Now let's pretend that you have a burning desire to find out about the use of drugs to treat mental conditions. As an exercise, see if you can find your way to a listing of websites on this topic.

If you're stumped, try your best guess. If you still can't find it, you might use the search feature, which is at the top of each page. Keep in mind that this search engine is limited in scope; you're only searching the directory, not the entire Web.

Still can't find it? Turn to the final page of this tutorial for the answer.

7.2 Search Engines

Now let's turn our attention to an entirely different mode of accessing information on the Web: the search engine. As we noted earlier, Netscape maintains a listing of many search engines (and directories) on their website, and you can access this list at any time just by clicking the **Search** button.

Instead, let's go directly to one of these search engines.

- Point your browser to:

  `http://www.google.com/`

This is one of the newer search engines, and it's very easy to use.

On the Google home page, you may notice that there's an option to "browse web pages by category." Yes, Google has a directory too. However, today we'll focus on the search engine.

Here's the basic concept. Google and all the other major search engines (such as AltaVista and HotBot) use automated programs that crawl around the Web, reading pages and following links.

These programs are called robots or just bots for short. All the information is collected into a huge database, which you can search. Note that there is no human editing. You're just searching the text of the pages themselves. Therefore, if you search for a common word (like *love*) you'll get a huge number of results (something in the neighborhood of 7 million pages). If you search for a less common word (like *lovefest*), you'll get fewer results (about 3,000 pages).

Google is a unique in that it sorts pages based on how many links around the Web point to any given page. Popular pages will be listed first.

- As a test, type the word *xavier* into the search field and click the button marked **I'm Feeling Lucky**. Google searches its database, picks its best guess, and sends you directly to that page.

Easy, huh? But perhaps the result was not what you're looking for. Perhaps you weren't so luck after all.

- Now go back to Google. (Use your **Back** button.)
- Your search term should still be visible; if not, re-enter it.
- This time, click the button marked **Google Search**.

You'll see a listing of Web pages. Note that the Xavier University Web page is listed near the top.

Take a moment to examine the information near the top of the page, just below the horizontal rule. You should see something telling you how many results your search yielded, as well as how many are being displayed on the current page (usually only ten at a time). Near the bottom of the page, you should see option for advancing to the next ten results, and the next ten, and so on.

Also, note that each listing displays a title, which links to the actual page, as well as some text from the page that contains your search term (displayed in boldface). There may also be category listings so you can jump to the Google directory and find other pages on the same topic. (There's also a link to **Similar pages** at the end of the listing.) The URL for the page is listed in green type, usually followed by a link to **Show matches (Cache)**. Since the pages are all stored (or cached) in Google's immense database, you can opt to view the cached version on Google's server rather than the real page on some other server.

You can also combine search terms to refine your search. For example, enter the word *teaching* after the word *xavier* (leaving a space between the terms) and search again. Note the different results.

8. Cleaning Up

That's it! If you have any questions, be sure to let me know, either during the seminar or afterward. My e-mail address is `bpeverso@xula.edu`.

When you're finished, quit Netscape. Find your "tutorial" folder on the desktop and drag it to the Recycle Bin or the Trash. Then shut down your computer.

- You may now close all running applications.
- If you are doing this tutorial in a lab, take a moment to clean up the desktop as a courtesy to the next user. Simply drag your *tutorial* folder to the Recycle Bin (Windows) or the Trash (Mac).
- Shut down your computer.
- Don't forget to turn off the monitor! It has to be turned off manually.
- Please complete and turn in an evaluation form before you leave.

Keep in touch! Remember that the Center for the Advancement of Teaching is here to help faculty as they learn about using information technology and new media. If you have questions or need help, or if you just want to talk, please give us a call, send an e-mail, or just stop by the office. I personally am always happy to help faculty plan their projects, critique their work and learn new skills.

SOLUTION TO DIRECTORY EXERCISE:

The best path to find information about the use of drugs for the treatment of mental conditions is:

Health > Medicine > Pharmacology > Psychopharmacology

However, this may not be the only path, as there are plenty of cross-references throughout the directory.

This tutorial was prepared by
Bart Everson
Multimedia Specialist
Center for the Advancement of Teaching
Xavier University of Louisiana

bpeverso@xula.edu