What Do Students Need to Know
to Use the World Wide Web Effectively in Your Library?
(The Far-From Exhaustive List)

Of course, the more students know, the more effectively they'll be able to search the Web, but here are a few basics they will need to know:

1. Basic Computer and Software Skills

- How to use a mouse
    (and/or arrow keys if you use a text only browser like Lynx)
- How to place the cursor in an entry or search field
- How to use pull-down & pop-up menus
- How to use the tab key to move from field to field on a web form
- How to copy and paste
- How to navigate on the local computer
    How to open and close application software
    How to reboot computer if it hangs
    Where personal files can be saved (diskette only? special folder on hard drive? etc.)

2. Some New (and Old) Vocabulary

- Internet
- World Wide Web
- web "page"
- web "site"
- web "browser"
- URL
- download
- cursor
- subject directory
- search engine
- listserv
- Usenet

- copyright
- authority
- bias
- source [of data]

[If they will be working at home:
- Internet Service Provider
- Modem
- Baud Rate
- PPP
etc.]

3. Browser Mechanics

How to:

- Follow a link
- Input a URL directly
- Move forward and backward among sites visited
- Turn image loading on and off in a graphical browser to improve speed
- Find a particular word or phrase on the current web page
- Save a file to disk (if allowed)
- E-mail a document (if allowed)
- Print all or part of a web page

[From home:
- Set bookmarks

• Organize bookmarks
• Set or modify browser options]

4. Electronic Search Engines

  a) Understand the Search Engine Context

  • Know what a search engine is/isn't searching
  • Understand how search engines build their databases
  • Understand some of factors which determine relevancy ranking
  • Understand how search results are affected by:
          Keyword (as opposed to controlled vocabulary) searching
          Index spamming
  • Determine whether a "simple" or an "advanced" search is more appropriate

  b) Search Engine Mechanics

  Know how and why to:

  • Type in word(s) or phrase(s)
  • Indicate a phrase rather than a word
  • Use truncation and wild card features
  • Use linking options (Boolean or other)
  • Exclude certain facet(s) of a topic
  • Limit search by date (when possible)
  • Use other limiting or constraining features of a particular search engine
  • Find instructions and help re. the search engine

  in *this* search engine

5. Information Literacy Skills

  How to:

  • Identify what information is needed to answer a question.
  • Pick out key concepts or words and phrases in a topic
  • Determine how best to connect key words or concepts (*and, or, not, phrase)*
  • Determine what are logical places to look for the information needed
          How much is already known about the topic?
          How much information is needed?
          Is information needed current or historical?
          Where is information in this subject or discipline area likely to be published?
          Is primary source material needed?
          etc. (Same B.I. stuff as usual)
  • Understand the nature of the Internet and the Web, i.e. how the Web differs from a
     library
          What's there is whatever anyone puts there (i.e. a "hodgepodge," not a
          collection)
          No one's in charge (and what that means re currency, info quality, etc.)
          Few content restrictions
          No authority or policing
          Not organized

Much is *not* there.
Not much free access to copyrighted materials
"Change is a constant"
STUFF happens (network problems, crashes, unintelligible error messages...)
No centralized help
Entire responsibility for evaluating information quality is on the user

• Determine the source of a document (Who put it there? How do you tell if the author is not named on the page?)
• Determine authority of document's source
• Determine if information on page is relevant
• How to cite documents found online.
• Privacy and safety issues (Who is collecting info on you? What happens to that info?)

6. Coping & Troubleshooting Skills

• Accept that change is a fact of life on the Web

• Know what to do if:
    Netscape seems to stop
    The whole computer freezes
    Error message appears (Netscape error type xx; domain server can't find URL, can't open telnet, etc.)
    I can't figure out what to do next
    A page won't print
    I can't find what I'm looking for with a search engine
    How to open browser if someone else has closed the application
    What to do if someone has closed browser window but left application active
    How to return to the page from which you want them to start (e.g. your library's home page or class page)

7. Miscellaneous **:-)**

    How to:

• Spell
• Type
• Read
• Think

What do *You* Need to Know for Students to Use the Internet Effectively in Your Library?

• All of the above
• How to reboot a computer
• How to get technical support quickly
• How to calm frustrated students
• How to calm frustrated librarians
• How to roll with the punches
• How to keep your knowledge and skills current
• How to answer more sophisticated search and technical questions from the several students who *will* ask them.

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Random Tips and Suggestions:

Have a clear understanding yourself re. what & how much you want students to learn in your course before you design the course.

Provide as many different levels of instruction as you can, e.g. self-paced and simple as well as more thorough and structured in-class.

Don't try to reinvent the wheel

Draw from resources already available on the web, including *many* good tutorials, glossaries and guides. (Some are listed on SRJC Library's "About the Internet" web page, **http://www.santarosa.edu/library/Refs/int.shtml** Many other useful sites are linked from Carol Leita's excellent *Librarians Index to the Internet,* at **http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/InternetIndex/** under "Internet Information."

Handouts and Exercises

Keep them as general and flexible as possible.

As you know, things change in the blink of an eye in the Internet World; if you don't choose sites and assignment topics carefully, you will be spend *lots* of time changing handouts and exercises.

Design assignments that are easy to grade or score. Make the basis for course grades clear in the very first class. (Put it in writing.)

Mechanical instructions:

Tell them what they're going to do; THEN how they should do it., e.g. "To connect to the WebMuseum, click on the ...., then select...", not "Click on the .... , and select .... to connect to the WebMuseum." Otherwise, students get lost in the mechanics and lose site of what they're trying to do.

Use conventions such as **bold** type to indicate something students are supposed to type or select themselves.

Follow the same format for all handouts in the same class.

List assignment objectives or goals at top of handouts so that students know what you expect them to learn in each section.

Side labels make it easy for students to identify a section when they want to go back and look at it again.

Side boxes are a good place to highlight special instructions, terminology or anything to which you want to draw extra attention.

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