

4 Getting online

The basic technical requirements for getting online are relatively simple. You will need a modern computer, a modem, which mediates between your computer and the telephone system, and a telephone link. Your school can access the Internet through an ISP (Internet Service Provider), which may offer a special arrangement for the school. These commercial organisations will provide you with all the necessary software, plus an email facility and space on a server if you wish to ‘publish’ material on the Web.

Many organisations such as universities and some schools subscribe to a system which gives their members free access to the system.

Depending on your school’s arrangement with the ISP, there may be a charge for the time you are connected to the telephone system. Currently this is at local telephone call rate, even though the server you might be contacting could be in Japan! The best person to advise you on initially setting up as a user and getting online is your ICT coordinator.

Becoming really familiar with the business of being online can only be done by actually using the programs and functions. There are two basic ways of finding your way around the Internet – browsing and searching – known in combination as ‘surfing’.

Browsing

Once online, the user can move around the Internet by means of a program called a ‘browser’. This is a client program (ie a program sitting in your computer) that enables you to search through the information provided by a specific type of server and generally used in relation to the World Wide Web.

A browser is one of the key components of the World Wide Web which makes the Internet accessible and useful to the ordinary user. Although there are many browsers available, the two most widely used are Microsoft® Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. These programs are widely available (free) and one of them will no doubt be provided with your ISP start-up package.

All browsers have a few essential common features including:

- a scrollable window which allows you to move up and down pages
- back and forward buttons which allow you to move backwards and forwards through the sequence of pages you have seen in your current session (this will usually happen without reloading the pages from the remote computer because your browser stores – or caches – them in memory and/or on disk)
- a Home button to take you back to your own or default home page
- somewhere to type in the URL (the Internet address, which normally starts with ‘http://’ for Web pages) of any page you want to see
- a bookmark facility, sometimes called favourites, which allows you to find useful pages again quickly and efficiently
- a method of saving any information you find and want to keep on disk.

If you can use these basic facilities, you will be able to find, copy and use information from anywhere on the Internet. All this is possible because what the browser is actually doing when it displays a page is interpreting HyperText Markup Language (HTML); this is a system of ‘tags’ which are embedded in the text of the pages to control how it is displayed, the placing of graphics and how hypertext links work.

Student sheet 3 (page 20) offers a specific example for students to try. Another option would be working with Chaucer texts. The best starting point for these is probably the Chaucer MetaPage at: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/chaucer/index.html>

Full text projects

As well as working with short pieces of etext it is also possible to download the full text of novels, plays and poetical works. There is a vast amount available and they do not take long to download from a good Web site. Typically a full-length Shakespeare play may take up to four minutes on a slow day.

Examples of projects include:

- Download the whole text of a Shakespeare play and use the 'find' facility of the word processor to research particular imagery, eg from *Macbeth* identify all references to 'blood', 'light', etc.

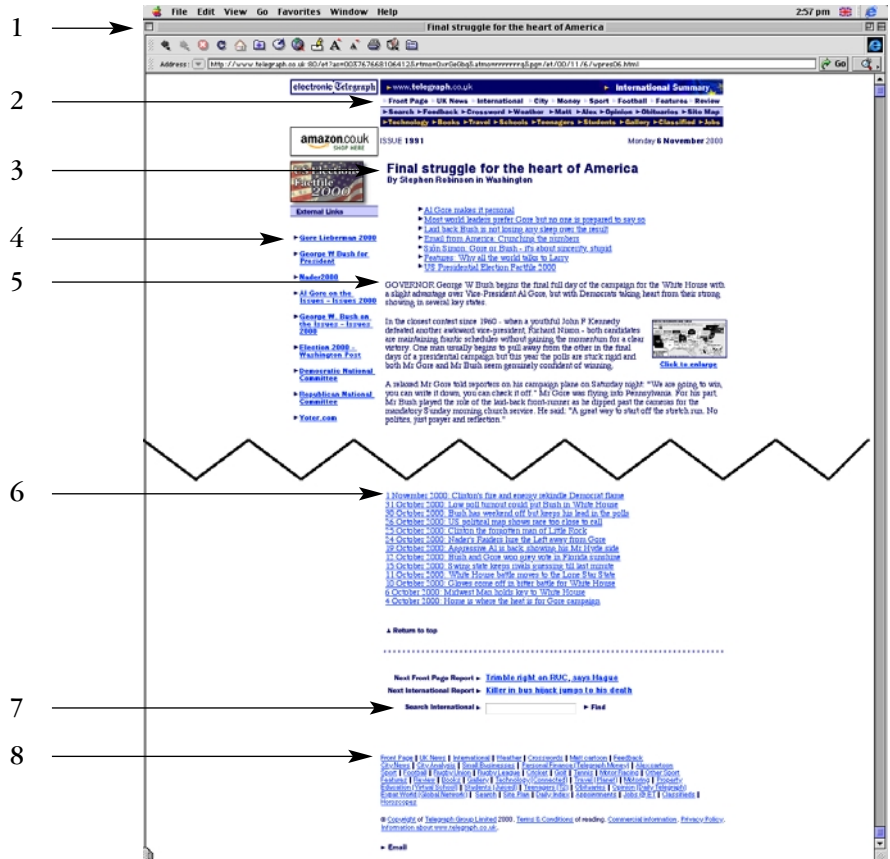
Student sheet 4 (page 21) offers a specific example based on imagery in *Macbeth*.

- Most texts download as simple text (ASCII) with very little formatting. Another project would be to prepare such a text as a performance script by working through it with a word processing template or pre-set style menu.

Students could prepare a working text for performance by going through the steps outlined on Student sheet 4 to download a file of the complete text of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. They could then load it into a word-processing file. They should end up with the text looking like this:

The Merry Wives of Windsor
Act 1, Scene 1
Windsor. Before PAGE's house.
[home page][next scene]
Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS
SHALLOW
Sir Hugh, persuade me not; I will make a Star-chamber matter of it: if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, esquire.
SLENDER
In the county of Gloucester, justice of peace and 'Coram.'
SHALLOW
Ay, cousin Slender, and 'Custalourum.
SLENDER
Ay, and 'Rato-lorum' too; and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself 'Armigero,' in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, 'Armigero.'
SHALLOW
Ay, that I do; and have done any time these three hundred years.
SLENDER
All his successors gone before him hath done't; and all his ancestors that come after him may: they may give the dozen white luses in their coat.
SHALLOW
It is an old coat.
SIR HUGH EVANS
The dozen white louses do become an old coat well; it agrees well, passant; it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love.

The *Electronic Telegraph* site is a good example of the kind of information you will find on a typical page of an online daily ‘paper’. The example below is a screenshot taken from a recent edition of the *Electronic Telegraph*, showing the various elements of the electronic page as they are displayed onscreen. The reader is able to link to sites which have support materials and also link to previous editions of the paper. It is also possible to search the archives of the newspaper:



- 1 Page title
- 2 Links to other sections of the newspaper
- 3 Story headline
- 4 Links to support material; these sites may be outside the *Telegraph's* domain
- 5 The story
- 6 Links to related stories in the back numbers of the paper
- 7 Archive search
- 8 Links to other sections

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Another variant is that of the *Guardian Unlimited* site – the combined site of the *Guardian* and the *Observer* newspapers. They have abandoned the newspaper ‘look’ and have gone for a kind of electronic news service.

As can be seen from the screenshot on the right, they have organised their news page into a series of sections.



Using the material

What is actually done with the news material to be found on the Web is bound solely by the imagination of the teacher and the class. The Web provides an opportunity to use actual live news to follow a story across the world, to construct an instant news-sheet of that day’s news, or to trace how a story has developed over a period of time. It is certainly worth organising a ‘news morning’ for a class with this quality of material available, live, onscreen!

Project 3: Language change

Language change is an area for which it is always difficult to find interesting or original material. The Web provides plenty of opportunity for finding such material. We can study language change by comparing texts of different periods. You can find plenty of older texts on the Internet. Most have been scanned and converted to text by enthusiasts and researchers, and they are often indexed on sites like the Internet Public Library at <http://www.ipl.org/>



This is a good place to start because it allows you to search for texts according to Dewey subject categories. Searching on the keyword ‘Biography’ will take you to Dewey category 920 and a list of titles that you can open to check the period they were written in – there is likely to be something interesting in the subject area of your choice.

You might even be able to find a small group of texts from different periods; one example is a text from 1581 called *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* by Richard Mulcaster, the first Master of the Merchant Taylors School. This is a very long and detailed document; the following short sample is from Chapter 36:

That both young boyes, and young maidens are to be put to learne. Whether all boyes be to be set to schoole. That to many learned be to burdenous: to few to bare: wittes well sorted civill, missorted seditious. That all may learne to write and read without daunger. The good of choice, and ill of confusion. The children which are set to learne, having either riche or poore freindes: what order and choice is to be used in admitting either of them to learne. Of the time to chuse.

Now that the thinges be appointed, wherwith the minde must be first furnished, to make it learned, and the bodie best exercised, to keepe it healthfull, we are next to consider of those persons, which are to be instructed in this furniture, and to be preserved by this exercise: which I take to be children of both sortes, male and female, young boyes and young maidens, which though I admit here generally, without difference of sex, yet I restraîne particularly upon difference in cause, as herafter shall appeare. But young maidens must give me leave to speake of boyes first: bycause naturally the male is more worthy, and politikely he is more employed, and therefore that side claimeth this learned education, as first framed for their use, and most properly belonging to their kinde: though of curtsie and kindnesse they be content to lend their female in youth, the use of their traine in part, upon whom in age they bestow both themselves, and all the frute of their whole traine.

Language extracts from this text could be compared to later examples from child-raising manuals including some from the present day. The Internet Public Library pages have links to other collections of online texts.