

Don Lancaster's

RESOURCE BIN

number seventy eight

Starting your own web page.

Our usual reminder here that the *Resource Bin* is now a two-way column. You can get tech help, consultant referrals and off-the-wall networking on nearly any electronic, *tinaja* questing, personal publishing, money machine, or computer topic by calling me at (520) 428-4073 weekdays 8-5 Mountain Standard Time.

I'm now in the process of setting up my new *Guru's Lair* web site you will find at (where else?) www.tinaja.com This is the place you'll go for instant tech answers. Among the many files in our library, you will find complete reprint sets for all of the *Resource Bin* and other columns. Plus a brand new **Research InfoPack Service**.

You will get the best results if you have both *Netscape Communicator* and *Acrobat Reader 3.0* installed.

Getting Started On the Web

This month, I thought we'd once again go over the fundamentals of what the Internet is all about. And how you can get further involved.

Basically, the internet is a bunch of computers that can talk to each other. Talking gets done 24 hours a day by way of an elaborate and a redundant high speed world-wide network.

Each computer is treated as a *peer*, and can either provide or request info from any other via the interconnected *web*. There is purposely no center to the net, nor is anybody "in charge".

Because of the redundancy, the net automatically routes itself around any crowded or broken links. As well as gleefully patching itself around any and all attempts at censorship.

What can go across the net? Just about anything...

email– Short for *electronic mail*. A way to quickly and cheaply send letters anywhere in the world. Normally, all these are kept short and to the point.

But you can *attach* most anything in the way of a file, animation, a sound clip, or whatever. The darker side of email is known as *spamming*, which is sending out unsolicited or unwanted email to others. Usually lots of others. Because of its illegality, stupidity, and annoyance, spam does not work.

hypertext– Hypertext is a method of sending a *page* of information. Often, this will be one scrollable computer screen worth of content. Such pages could typically be a mix of color text, graphics, and images. The pages can also offer instantly clickable *links* to other pages, to other internet sites, to movies, sound bytes, or animation. The pages can usually be printed as well. Hypertext pages have often been written in a rather simplistic language known as HTML. Short for *HyperText Markup Language*. But newer options such as Java, **Adobe Acrobat** PDF, and PGML are far superior.

search engines– These act as the "card catalogs" of the internet and let you find out exactly where precisely what can be found. While www.yahoo.com is the highest profile, my own favorite is www.hotbot.com And www.altavista.digital.com remains quite popular. There are hundreds of other search engines. One master engine listing is found at www.wp.com/resch/search.html, while a

NEXT MONTH: Don shows us how to locate unusual semiconductors and ic's.

useful snooping utility which gathers stuff together by inference appears at www.inference.com Links to these are at www.tinaja.com/webwb01.html

directories– Your best directories are nearly all free and fully web based. Mags at www.mediafinder.com Books at

www.tinaja.com/amlink01.html, and the telephone numbers (even backwards ones) through www.anywho.com:81, at www.lookupusa.com or any of a dozen competitors. People and their real and email addresses are findable through locales like www.whowhere.com. Maps are at www.mapquest.com and similar services. Even that good old Thomas Registry is now online at, of all places, www.thomasregister.com This service is now free but does require a password. Instant links to all of these are found at www.tinaja.com/webwb01.html

commerce– We're just beginning to see online commerce taking off. But within a year, you'll use your VISA card as routinely online as you'd do normally. Early web pioneers here have been books, tickets, porno, and flowers. Online commerce eliminates middlemen and makes all comparison shopping super easy. For low prices, wide selection, and faster availability. Which is certain to revolutionize how and where things get bought.

newsgroups & newsletters– A *Usenet* newsgroup is where individuals can post group messages on any special interest topic. You might visit to find everything there is to learn about, say, viscous couplings on 4WD blue 1987 VW Synchro diff locked vans. There are tens of thousands of newsgroups. Sometimes these are included in your basic ISP rate; other times there is a minor surcharge for use. For samples see www.dejanews.com Newsletters are targeted email sent to a subscription list. They tend to be moderated, more accurate, way more polite, and vastly more useful than newsgroups. These easily can overload you through their continuous barrage of messages.

porno– A lot of the more popular sites on the internet offer materials a few might consider offensive. These are often among the highest traffic and

most profitable of all web ventures, so lots of other somebodies obviously do enthusiastically approve of all their content. Over the past century or two, it has been typical for any emerging new technology to go on through a "pornographic phase". This has sure been true for photography, movies, cable, and most especially VCR's. As a technology matures, porno recedes.

chat lines— This one is teeny bopper paradise. Chat lines work like email, except that they all are real time and interactive. The old party line. These enormous time wasters are especially popular on AOL. Just be sure who you are talking to is really who they appear to be. Remember that nobody knows you are a dog on the internet. Woof. And don't be offended easily by flames (purposely hurled insults), trolls (intentionally outrageous points of view), or comments ranging from rude to way beyond obscene.

...and just about everything else— This week's *fad du jour* seems to be live internet auctions. Since there's a lot of scam potential here (like buying your own product at list price), I personally don't expect this one to last too long. But they sure are popular right now. Especially for deep discount travel tickets. Live audio is now going great guns and is approaching CD quality. Many radio stations and short wave sites now offer live broadcasts. You now can make cheap phone calls over the net. Soon they should be totally hassle free as well. Video is still small and clunky, but I'd expect full VCR quality within the year at most. Live real time video cams are everywhere, watching everything from coffee pots to kinky hamsters to Art Bell.

Sneaking Up On It

It is *unthinkable* in this day and age not to gain at least some personal web access. For the net is where and how things are gonna happen.

There's different levels of Internet use access. The simplest is to borrow someone else's system. Or scam from work if you just occasionally want to surf. Except that work may be behind a *firewall* and restrict what you could reach. Most libraries and schools now offer free or cheap services as well. Intro Internet courses at a college can be a good deal. Especially if you treat them as a low cost site rental.

Your next step up is to become a largely "read only" site. Here you can grab stuff at your convenience. With

full email. But use no home page at all, or else provide a maintenance-free home page of limited content.

A *home page* is simply what is first seen when someone contacts your site over the net. Websites have one home page, but might stock thousands of other pages reached by appropriate clicking on the home page. Plus *hot links* to other pages from other hosts everywhere in the world.

Your next step up is providing your own home page but keeping it short, interesting, and simple. Beyond that, you can eventually move up to a full blown site that attracts visitors and gives them really useful content.

It's usually a good idea to pick up a lot of internet practice before you'll actually commit yourself to setting up your own web site.

Finding an ISP

Normally, you do *not* get on to the web directly by yourself. This can be costly and requires an awful lot of round-the-clock equipment. Not to mention leased lines and zillions of hours per week of your support time. Instead, you'll hire an *Internet Service Provider*, or ISP instead. You have a choice here of national services such as your phone company or *America Online*. Or of using a local ISP.

My overwhelming preference is to go with a local ISP. Regardless of the route you chose, *make sure your access is a local call*. Or otherwise is toll free without surcharges. This can be a bad gotcha in remote rural areas.

A local ISP may typically charge you \$19 per month for basic Internet service. There might be extra charges for excess storage, bandwidth, higher baud rates, or for use hours beyond generous minimums. Special services such as secure online transactions, T1 lines, referral logs, wireless access, or excessive handholding may also cause you premium charges.

You can find ISP's online or else through the ads in local community newspapers and shoppers. I've got a listing at www.tinaja.com/webwb01.html. Chances are you will want to change ISP's in a few months, so do *not* sign any long term contracts.

Your minimum net access system should be Windows 95 compatible. It should have plenty of extra RAM and hard disk space. I do recommend a minimum of 32 megs of RAM and a two gig drive. Most web users stick with 33K modems. The faster modems still have problems and may not give

new from DON LANCASTER

ACTIVE FILTER COOKBOOK

The sixteenth (!) printing of Don's bible on analog op-amp lowpass, bandpass, and highpass active filters. De-mystified instant designs. **\$28.50**

CMOS AND TTL COOKBOOKS

Millions of copies in print worldwide. **THE** two books for digital integrated circuit fundamentals. About as hands-on as you can get. **\$28.50** each.

RESEARCH INFOPACKS

Don's instant cash-and-carry flat rate consulting service. Ask any reasonable technical question for a detailed analysis and complete report. See www.tinaja.com/info01 for specifics. **\$75.00**

INCREDIBLE SECRET MONEY MACHINE II

Updated 2nd edition of Don's classic on setting up your own technical or craft venture. **\$18.50**

LANCASTER CLASSICS LIBRARY

Don's best early stuff at a bargain price. Includes the CMOS Cookbook, The TTL Cookbook, Active Filter Cookbook, PostScript video, Case Against Patents, Incredible Secret Money Machine II, and Hardware Hacker II reprints. **\$119.50**

LOTS OF OTHER GOODIES

Tech Musings V or VI	\$24.50
Ask the Guru I or II or III	\$24.50
Hardware Hacker II, III or IV	\$24.50
Micro Cookbook I	\$19.50
PostScript Beginner Stuff	\$29.50
PostScript Show and Tell	\$29.50
Intro to PostScript Video	\$29.50
PostScript Reference II	\$34.50
PostScript Tutorial/Cookbook	\$22.50
PostScript by Example	\$32.50
Understanding PS Programming	\$29.50
PostScript: A Visual Approach	\$22.50
PostScript Program Design	\$24.50
Thinking in PostScript	\$22.50
LaserWriter Reference	\$19.50
Type 1 Font Format	\$16.50
Acrobat Reference	\$24.50
Whole works (all PostScript)	\$380.00
Technical Insider Secrets	FREE

BOOK-ON-DEMAND PUB KIT

Ongoing details on Book-on-demand publishing, a new method of producing books only when and as ordered. Reprints, sources, samples. **\$39.50**

THE CASE AGAINST PATENTS

For most individuals, patents are virtually certain to result in a net loss of sanity, energy, time, and money. This reprint set shows you Don's tested and proven real-world alternatives. **28.50**

BLATANT OPPORTUNIST I

The reprints from all Don's Midnight Engineering columns. Includes a broad range of real world, proven coverage on small scale technical startup ventures. Stuff you can use right now. **\$24.50**

RESOURCE BIN I

A complete collection of all Don's Nuts & Volts columns to date, including a new index and his master names and numbers list. **\$24.50**

FREE SAMPLES

Check Don's Guru's Lair at <http://www.tinaja.com> for interactive catalogs and online samples of Don's unique products. Searchable reprints and reference resources, too. Tech help, hot links to cool sites, consultants. email: don@tinaja.com

FREE US VOICE HELPLINE VISA/MC

SYNERGETICS
Box 809-NV
Thatcher, AZ 85552
(520) 428-4073

FREE Catalog: <http://www.tinaja.com>

SOME WEB SITE RESOURCES

Adobe Acrobat

1585 Charleston Rd
Mountain View CA 94039
(800) 833-6687

Boardwatch Magazine

8500 W Bowles Ave #210
Littleton CO 80123
(800) 933-6038

Computer Telephony

12 W 21 St
New York NY 10010
(212) 691-8215

CTI

One Technology Plaza
Norwalk CT 06854
(800) 243-6002

Free-Loader Monthly

PO Box 6615
Warner Robins GA 31095
(912) 328-6589 FAX

IEEE Internet Computing

10662 Los Vaqueros Cir
Los Alamitos CA 90720
(714) 821-8380

Inside the Internet

9420 Bunsen Pkwy
Louisville KY 40220
(502) 491-1900

Inter@ctive Week

One Park Ave
New York NY 10016
(800) 825-4237

Interactive Developer

209 Hamilton Ave
Palo Alto CA 94301
(415) 833-7100

InterActivity

600 Harrison St
San Francisco CA 94107
(415) 905-2200

Internet Advisor

5675 Ruffin Rd
San Diego CA 92123
(800) 336-6060

Internet Shopper

20 Ketchum St
Westport CT 06880
(800) 827-4812

Internet Telephony

One Technical Plaza
Norwalk CT 06854
(800) 243-6002

Internet World

20 Ketchum St
Westport CT 06880
(800) 635-5537

Internic Registration

505 Huntmar Park Dr
Hernon VA 22070
(703) 742-4777

Kleper Report

134 Caversham Woods
Pittsford NY 14534
(716) 381-3428

The Net

150 N Hill Dr
Brisbane CA 94005
(415) 468-4684

Network Computing

600 Community Dr
Manhasset NY 11030
(516) 562-5071

NetworkWorld

161 Worcester Rd
Framingham MA 01701
(508) 875-6400

New Media

901 Mariner's Bl #365
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 573-5170

Online Magazine

462 Danbury Rd
Wilton CT 06897
(800) 248-8466

Synergetics

Box 809
Thatcher AZ 85552
(520) 428-4073

Visual Developer

14455 N Hayden Rd #220
Scottsdale AZ 85260
(602) 483-0192

Web Apps Magazine

71 West 23rd St 3rd Fl
New York NY 10010
(212) 246-7447

Web Developer

20 Ketchum St
Westport CT 06880
(800) 556-9184

Web Techniques

411 Borel Ave
San Mateo CA 94402
(800) 365-2210

WebMaster

1601 Civic Center #200
Santa Clara CA 95050
(800) 343-4935

WebServer Magazine

320 Washington St
Brookline MA 02146
(617) 739-7001

Wired

520 3rd St 4rd Fl
San Francisco CA 94107
(415) 276-5000

Yahoo! Internet Life

1 Park Ave
New York NY 10016
(800) 825-4237

you that much additional speed.

Special software called a *browser* is needed for internet access. Two free choices are *Netscape* or else *Internet Explorer*. I very much prefer Netscape. I use their latest version 4.4 for my actual browser. But I still use good old *Netscape Gold 3* as my editor.

Getting started is simple enough. You find a local ISP and pay them for a month or two. They should give you some useful software and numbers to punch into all of your Netscape and networking preferences. Which gives you passwords, dialup access, and a valid internet address.

Every internet site has its *address* that tells the other computers on the net how to access it. There will be two forms to this address. The *numeric* form might be *204.17.39.115*, while the more humanly useful *name* form may be *http://www.yoursite.com*.

That *http://* is short for a *hypertext transfer protocol* and states the rules for sending bytes over the net. That *www* is simply the web. The *yoursite* is your actual site name. The *.com* trailer states you are a commercial venture.

The other older options are *.org* for organization or the *.net* for network, among others. There are several new naming conventions coming down, but these aren't yet fully in place.

Subpages are marked by a trailing slash, such as the *http://www.tinaja.com/barg01* leading you to my surplus bargain page. If there is no trailing

slash, a filename of either *default.htm* is assumed on a Microsoft server or *index.html* on an Apache server.

Yes, you can have sub-sub-pages as deep as you want to. Ferinstance, the online version of this column can be found as *http://www.tinaja.com/glib/resbn78.pdf* But its easier to just click on *www.tinaja.com/resbn01.html*

You have two choices for your *url* or *uniform resource locator*. You can get a free add-on or "sub lease" to your ISP's existing url. For instance, if the ISP is *xerxes.net*, your web address might be *xerxes.net/~you* This route is instant and free, but has the major disadvantage that your address will have to change if you switch ISP's

Instead, you might opt for the full internet registration using your own unique and "portable" url. The charge is \$100 for the first two years, and \$50 per year after that.

Your ISP can do the registration for you. Otherwise, you do it yourself at *www.internic.net*. Their *whois* feature tells you if the name is taken. Besides letting you find out who owns other sites and how to reach them. The term *virtual host* means that all your traffic really goes through the ISP's *server*. A typical ISP might host dozens or even hundreds of accounts. To the web, they all look like separate url's. But these are all really one server.

You can decide how conspicuous you'll want to make your relation to your ISP's host site. You can ask to be

listed on their home page, or you can keep your involvement with any ISP totally invisible. The former gives you more local hits; the latter looks far more professional. Besides letting you move away at any time.

Set Some Goals

The single most important step in setting up a web site is deciding what you want those pages to do for you. A very good starting point is to gather together all those tools you need for your own personal web access. If you let your site serve as your personal gateway to the net, chances are that others also will.

Plain old lists of links tend to be dull and dumpy. Especially those that are ripped off from another site. But fewer links carefully chosen and well annotated can be welcome.

If you are going to provide lots of links, do try to become *the* definitive gateway to some area of expertise.

And test *all* those links often.

The three most important features to offer on your web site are *content*, *content*, and *content*. Unique and well thought out *sole sourced* content that simply is not found elsewhere. This always was and still remains the key secret to a successful site.

It's very important to continuously update your site. Adding new stuff so visitors have a good reason to come back. The key rule here is *continuous small improvements*. Budget at least

twenty hours per week for work on a site of medium complexity.

Do avoid all excessive glitz. Cutsey animation, fancy sound clips, frames, and humongous images only annoy and slow down your viewers. Besides getting old in a real big hurry.

Remember that a bored viewer or an impatient viewer is a gone viewer. It's far better to have somewhat of a "retro" look in a fast and elegant site than it is to overload it with the latest of useless "gee whiz" gee-gaws.

Creating the Pages

Actually making your web pages is not that big a deal. The simplest and easiest way is to steal the plans from sites you like and modify them using Netscape Gold. Just do be sure your editing is heavy enough that the final product bears no resemblance to the original. Then carefully look at your HTML code using an editor to make certain nothing is present but routine, stock, and fully legal code. Never use any image that is not clearly public domain or otherwise legal.

Just find a page you like and click on *edit*. This will download the code to your site for modification. No, you don't necessarily have to learn HTML. But the more HTML you do learn and the better you use it, the more easily you can resolve page problems and perform more unusual page tasks.

Tricks using *tables* are especially useful in formatting a page so it looks the way you want it to.

There's scads of "build your own home page" software packages out there. I personally do not use any of them. When I must use HTML, I rely on good old Netscape Gold to create the site pages, helped along by an occasional touchup of my raw HTML code out of a text editor.

Otherwise, I will use the infinitely superior *Adobe Acrobat*. I send all my raw PostScript "gonzo" routines to Acrobat Distiller. This gives you total control of exactly what your end user

will see. Fully searchable, expandable, and smoothed. In a wide variety of high quality fonts and graphics of stunning quality. All byte served from a single and short file.

Using free readers that are widely available online.

Promoting your Site

There are untold millions of web pages. How do you let others know about yours?

First and foremost, you'll want to go to the major search engines and hit on their *register url* buttons. Start with www.hotbot.com and www.altavista.digital.com. Then you mine that long list at www.wp.com/resch/search.html

There are commercial services that, for a fee, list your site with dozens or hundreds of search engines. One site that also will do a free registration for you of the dozen biggest services is at www.2com.com

A tutorial and promotion links are at www.ep.com/faq/webannounce.html

Your second free promotion ploy is often overlooked. Be sure your *sig file* on your email has your home page and a mini-advetorial in it.

Many of the newsletters and mags in the sidebar do site reviews. Make sure they're all aware of your site. A simple "please review my site" will almost always work far better than many pages of hard sell.

It is important that all the major keywords for your site show up early on your home page. Or are otherwise included in your HTML code. Trying to trick any search engine into giving you an earlier listing is usually futile and often will have the exact opposite effect. Note that many search engines can not find dynamic pages.

Printed Resources

Most of the better info about the web is in fact on the web. So, surfing should be your foremost route for resource tapping. There are bunches of mags and newsletters about web

topics. I've gathered up a sampling of them for you in the sidebar.

There are literally tons of books on starting your up own web page. But some of them are appallingly bad. You can search for the better ones at <http://www.tinaja.com/amlink01.html> To spot the more useful texts, pay careful attention to the user reviews.

For More Help

Useful links to the search engines, newsgroups, directories, reference sites, registration, promotion, clip art, and other web-oriented utilities are found at www.tinaja.com/webwb01.html Free web related insider tutorials are at www.tinaja.com/weblib01.html

Step-by-step info on getting online appeared back in [RESBN56.PDF](#), while hints on web surfing and research are found in [RESBN55.PDF](#), [RESBN60.PDF](#), [RESBN61.PDF](#), [RESBN64.PDF](#), as well as in [RESBN71.PDF](#).

Lots of Acrobat help is found at www.tinaja.com/acrob01.html One good Acrobat newsgroup is [comp.text.pdf](#) One of the many sources for free Acrobat readers is www.adobe.com Extensive free technical notes and development kits are also offered.

Finally, web page design help is found at www.tinaja.com/info01.html

Let's hear from you. ♦

Microcomputer pioneer and guru Don Lancaster is the author of 35 books and countless tech articles. Don maintains his no-charge US tech helpline found at (520) 428-4073, besides offering all of his own books, reprints, and consulting services. Don also offers a free catalog full of his unique products and resource secrets. The best calling times are 8-5 on weekdays, Mountain Standard Time.

Don is the webmaster of his Guru's Lair found at <http://www.tinaja.com>

Full reprints and preprints of all Don's columns and ongoing tech support appear here. You can reach Don at Synergetics, Box 809, Thatcher, AZ 85552. Or send any messages to don@tinaja.com

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO...



Get a Synergetics catalog



Send Don Lancaster email



Start your tech venture



Pick up surplus bargains



Sponsor a display banner



Find out what a tinaja is



Find research solutions



View recommended books