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## “INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNET”: A TRAINING SCRIPT

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*Technology for Teaching ... is a regular feature of Perspectives, designed to introduce and describe the ways in which teachers of legal research and writing are using technology to enhance their teaching. In this issue, we present a training script designed for teaching Internet research to attorneys and staff in a law firm setting. Readers are invited to submit their own “technological solutions” to the editor of the column: Christopher Simoni, Associate Dean for Library & Information Services and Professor of Law, Northwestern University School of Law, 357 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611-3069, phone: (312) 503-0295, fax: (312) 503-9230, e-mail: csimoni@nwu.edu.*

I invited the attorneys and staff members in my firm to attend a lecture titled “Introduction to the Internet” in November 1998. This article consists of the script I used and the URLs<sup>1</sup> for the Web sites visited during the presentation. The lecture was followed by a weekly hands-on class that focused on the Web evaluation and search methods provided in the latter part of the script. The class was given for several months until approximately one-third of the firm had been trained on the Internet. Individual training was also provided to those who could not attend the hands-on class.

I decided to use live Web sites instead of a PowerPoint presentation for two reasons. First, live sites best demonstrate how the Internet works (or doesn’t work!). Second, live access provides the ability to link to and search other sites if there are questions for which such a search would be useful. However, if you are not up to living dangerously, you can create a PowerPoint demonstration of the sites. At the very least, bookmark sites first to avoid typing pauses in the lecture.

Whether static or live, the use of Web sites

with the script serves several functions. It demonstrates that much of the information provided in the lecture has been obtained from the Internet, it gives credit to the information source, and it allows for collaboration by having another person operate the equipment. Finally, using Web sites provides a constant stream of action—sometimes very entertaining—to keep the audience’s attention. One caveat: watch out for being upstaged!

### Introducing the Internet

#### 1. Davis Wright Tremaine LLP

<[www.dwt.com](http://www.dwt.com)><sup>2</sup>

I am very pleased to see such interest in the Internet. And well we should be interested. The Internet is changing the way we do business, the way we communicate with each other, and the way we practice law. It’s changing our expectations about information, freedom of speech, and how we view politics.

#### 2. Report of the Office of the Independent Counsel

<<http://icreport.access.gpo.gov/report/2toc.htm>>

For instance, does the name Monica Lewinsky mean anything to you? Some experts believe that President Bill Clinton’s relationship with Lewinsky would not have had such political ramifications were it not for the Internet. The story was first published on the Internet, the Internet allowed for full coverage of Kenneth Starr’s report, and traditional media had to follow suit to compete. But nothing can compete with the Internet as a communication medium.

#### 3. President’s Information Technology Advisory Committee, PITAC – Interim Report to the President: Information Technology: Transforming Our Society

<[www.ccic.gov/ac/interim/section\\_1.html](http://www.ccic.gov/ac/interim/section_1.html)>

Print, CD-ROMs, video, television, radio, fax, and the telephone are being supplemented and, in some instances, replaced by the Internet. Shopping, banking, and even medical diagnosis are available online. In legal practice, the Internet is used to file cases, briefs, and trademark applications, for voir dire preparation, for due diligence searches, and to discover information uncovering fraud.

<sup>1</sup> The URLs were updated as of March 15, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Use the Internet or intranet page for your institution.

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**4. Next Generation Internet (NGI) Initiative, *Potential NGI Applications***  
<[www.ngi.gov/apps](http://www.ngi.gov/apps)>

These uses of the Internet do not begin to address the research being done on the Internet in biomedicine, environmental monitoring, manufacturing, engineering, education, national security, and energy.

**5. Barry M. Leiner et al., *A Brief History of the Internet*** <[www.isoc.org/internet-history/brief.html](http://www.isoc.org/internet-history/brief.html)>

How did the Internet arise? In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first artificial earth satellite. The potential a satellite gave the Russians to command and control missiles and bombers during a nuclear attack was not lost on the U.S. Department of Defense. In response, the federal government formed the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) to establish the United States as a leader in science and technology for military applications. Charged with the task of creating a more sophisticated communication system than that of the Russians, ARPA developed a backbone of communication centers with a loose association of networks hooked up to computers that share information. The idea was that if a command were sent to a communication center that had been decimated by a nuclear attack, it would automatically be shunted on until it reached its destination.

**6. CNET, *What Is the Internet?***  
<[www.cnet.com/Content/Features/Technology/Networks/ss01.html](http://www.cnet.com/Content/Features/Technology/Networks/ss01.html)>

Over the next 40 years, technology made it possible to hook up millions of computers to a loose association of thousands of networks, and advances in software made it possible for just about anyone to access information on the Internet. During this time, government agencies, educational institutions, and commercial enterprises worked together to support Internet research. Yet no one person, company, institution, or government organization owns, governs, or has a controlling interest in the Internet. It remains a collaborative, collective effort. What began as a communication system for use in a nuclear attack became, in the words of Judge Dalzell in an opinion holding the Communications Decency Act unconstitutional, “the most participatory

marketplace of mass speech that this country—and indeed the world—has yet seen.”<sup>3</sup>

**7. Philip Greenspun, *Why Bill Gates Is Richer Than You***

<<http://photo.net/philg/humor/bill-gates.html>>  
Much has happened since Sputnik. Global leadership has shifted from a measurement based on military strength to a measurement based on economic strength. And what determines economic strength? Having, knowing, selling, and using science and technology. And what software is almost ubiquitous, and who is the richest man in the world? Microsoft® Windows® and Bill Gates, respectively. But the rapid increase in Internet use may change this picture.

**8. CommerceNet, *CommerceNet and Nielsen Media Research Issue Results of Spring 1999 Internet Demographic Survey: Electronic Commerce Grows 40% in Nine Months with 55 Million Internet Users Shopping Online***  
<[www.commerce.net/news/press/ann061699.html](http://www.commerce.net/news/press/ann061699.html)>

According to the Nielsen Media research report of June 17, 1999, nearly half of the population of North America uses the Internet.

**9. A.C. Nielsen, *Who Is Using the Internet?***  
<<http://acnielsen.com/products/reports/netwatch/pg2.htm>>

Approximately 25 percent of the U.S. population is online.

**10. CNET, *Who Controls the Net?***  
<[www.cnet.com/Content/Features/Technology/Networks/ss06.html](http://www.cnet.com/Content/Features/Technology/Networks/ss06.html)>

If you’ve managed to stay awake during this history lesson, you will have a head start toward knowing how to search the Internet. Knowing that the Internet is a largely unregulated global community providing access by anyone with an Internet connection to a wide range of information regardless of location helps to explain why the core competencies in searching the Internet require creativity, problem-solving ability, intuition, sociability, active learning, and the wisdom to know when to give up!

“ [U]sing Web sites provides a constant stream of action— sometimes very entertaining— to keep the audience’s attention. ”

<sup>3</sup> American Civil Liberties Union v. Reno, 929 F. Supp. 824, 881 (E.D. Pa. 1996).

## Advantages

What advantages do legal professionals gain by using the Internet? Let's look at a few.

**11. Washburn University School of Law, *StateLaw: State Govt. & Legislative Info.***  
<[www.washlaw.edu/uslaw/statelaw.html](http://www.washlaw.edu/uslaw/statelaw.html)>

- **Timely access to original sources** —

Every state has one or more Web sites on which it typically publishes the most current appellate court opinions, statutes, legislative information, agency documents, and attorney general opinions. Many federal agencies also have Web sites, and there is discussion that someday federal agencies will publish *only* on the Internet, saving printing and distribution costs and providing more timely public access to government documents.

- **Timely communication** — How many of you check your e-mail first thing in the morning? Instant communication is already revolutionizing how we conduct business, and the Internet revolutionized timely communication by changing our expectation of access to the most current and complete information.

**12. Chicago-Kent College of Law, *United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit***  
<[www.kentlaw.edu/7circuit/1995/95-1292.html](http://www.kentlaw.edu/7circuit/1995/95-1292.html)>

In a 1995 case from the Seventh Circuit, the court rejected the plaintiff's claim of the great burden imposed to uncover fraud, saying the information was easily accessible on the Internet.<sup>4</sup>

**13. INFACT, *Campaigning for Corporate Accountability*** <[www.infact.org](http://www.infact.org)>

In Minnesota, a biology professor was selected as a juror in a trial against a number of tobacco companies. After voir dire, the attorneys for the tobacco companies went online to check out an organization called INFACT to which the professor belonged. The attorneys found that INFACT was, in fact, a "staunchly anti-tobacco" group. The attorneys made a motion to exclude for cause, which the county district court denied.

- **The Internet is an inexpensive source of information** — While the Internet is not a substitute for all print and online materials, it does give a heck of a punch for your information dollar, particularly as a general information and

communication tool.

**14. *The Internet Lawyer***  
<[www.internetlawyer.com](http://www.internetlawyer.com)>

- **Some information is only available on the Internet** — Issues in new areas of the law—the Internet or computer and telecommunications law— as well as new issues in existing areas of law are readily found on the Internet. Moreover, a growing number of e-journals, discussion groups, and newsletters are found only on the Internet.

**15. Microsoft** <[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)><sup>5</sup>

- **Use the Internet to keep up with your clients and other professionals** — It is good business practice to be familiar with your clients' business by looking at their Web sites and to know what information they and their adversaries are accessing on the Internet.

## Disadvantages

**16. White House home page**  
<[www.whitehouse.net](http://www.whitehouse.net)>

The most important reason not to use the Internet is that the information is not always credible or accurate. Every Web site must be evaluated to make sure it is objective, authoritative, accurate, authentic, and current. Here are questions to ask and things to look for when evaluating a Web site:

Ask ...

- Is the information authoritative so that it can be cited in court?

- Is it from an authoritative jurisdiction?

- Is the case, law, or other information the most current?

- Can a slip opinion be cited in your state?

- Is the information authentic? Were the persons who published on the Internet who they said they were?

- Does the information appear to be objective, opinion, or propaganda?

- Is the information source reliable?

Look for documentation of ...

- Author's or publisher's credentials: education, experience, other publications, cited in other sources, reliable government agency, educational institution, commercial enterprise

- Jurisdiction

- Publication date

<sup>4</sup> Whirlpool Financial Corp. v. GN Holdings, Inc., 67 F.3d 605, 610 (7th Cir. 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Use a client Web site of your choice.

- Date of the most recent update and frequency of updates
- Database coverage
- Rules on whether slip opinions can be cited as authority
- Names, addresses, and contact information for persons, agencies, institutions, and businesses
- Links to other information about contacts
- Objective information: information that appears well researched and supported by evidence, reasonable assumptions, and an objective and impartial point of view
- Integration of Web sites, ease of use, accessibility, and customer support

**17. CNET, *Internet Errors Explained***  
<[www.cnet.com/Resources/Tech/Advisers/Error/index.html](http://www.cnet.com/Resources/Tech/Advisers/Error/index.html)>

The second disadvantage to using the Internet is that it requires a computer system that works! Power outages, system failures, server crashes, bandwidth blues, underpowered computers, and other technical difficulties can preclude Internet access. Next Generation Internet or Internet 2 should help alleviate some of these problems, but technology is not yet foolproof.

The third disadvantage is that not all information is available on the Internet, notwithstanding the popular misconception to the contrary. Typically, archival materials and full-text secondary materials, such as encyclopedias and treatises, are not on the Internet. This is changing because of two developments: (1) better screen resolution, which makes online reading easier on the eyes, and (2) authors publishing “carrots” on the Internet with the hope of hooking readers into subscribing to other materials.

**18. Scroll down on Web site 17, CNET, *Internet Errors Explained*, to show 404 example**

The fourth disadvantage is that information on the Internet can be difficult or impossible to locate. The Internet has been likened to a library with all the books on the floor. Accessibility is hampered for three main reasons: (1) the Internet is not cataloged, although there has been talk of such a project; (2) Internet indexes can be haphazard and are only as good as the data available and the skills of the indexer; (3) sites can be volatile: they change addresses, are under

construction, need a password, or are fee-based, or the host or proxy servers may be busy or down.

The fifth disadvantage to using the Internet is that not all of it is free. You need to consider the cost of hardware, software, research time, Internet service provider (ISP), and communication line, among other things. You also need to perform a cost/benefit analysis to determine the best research tool: some Internet sites charge for premium information. Westlaw or LEXIS, print, or CD-ROM might be the better search tool depending on what you need and how fast you need it.

**19. Center for On-Line Addiction**  
<[www.netaddiction.com](http://www.netaddiction.com)>

The sixth disadvantage is that it can become addictive!

### Search Methods

**20. ZDNet, *Net E-Z User, Getting Around the Web***  
<[www.zdnet.com/yil/content/surfschool/howto/basic/basicoc.html](http://www.zdnet.com/yil/content/surfschool/howto/basic/basicoc.html)>

There are more than 300 million uncataloged pages on the Internet, and the number is growing as we speak. How do you find anything?

[Conduct a show-of-hands survey of the participants]:

- How many have been on the Internet?
- How many have found what they were looking for on the Internet?
- How many have been frustrated by the Internet?

The easiest way to find something is to have a direct address to the site. One finds the URLs for sites everywhere—radio, television, newspapers—and some of the most useful sites are produced by special-interest groups, whether professional or recreational. Much of the information in this presentation was found on Web sites I got from the law library listserv. There is a Web site in the bibliography for finding listservs. There are thousands to serve your every need.

**21. Search Engine Watch**  
<[www.searchenginewatch.com](http://www.searchenginewatch.com)>

Search engines are another way to find information. A search engine is a discrete database with its own index and search term capabilities. Its advantages are relevancy ranking and

sophisticated syntax.

**Relevancy ranking** — The problem with searching on computers is that they're not very bright when it comes to understanding meanings of words. What computers can do, and do very well, is count. Computers use an algorithm, or mathematical formula, to count the number of times a search term appears in a document and then applies a statistic. This is called relevancy ranking. There is software developed that allows natural language searching, but it still works on the same principle. Relevancy ranking is a useful tool but not foolproof.

Relevancy ranking can be skewed by "spoofing" and paying for ranking. Spoofing is the act of putting frequently searched words such as "sex" in the white space of a document during the construction of the Web site. The result is that the word is not visible but it is still searched. For instance, in a search for sexual harassment, many irrelevant documents that have to do with sex and not sexual harassment will be retrieved. Some search engines say they use "anti-spoofing," the practice of assigning a document a lower relevancy ranking if it's suspected of being spoofed, to ensure that such documents are not retrieved by as many searches.

**Syntax** — Syntax is the structure that binds words into a sentence. In online searching, syntax refers to the structure needed for software to interpret search terms. Search engines use tools such as Boolean operators and quotations to form exact phrases and meta-tags to limit searches by fields such as domain, date, or language. The term Boolean comes from George Boole, a 19th-century mathematician who had the idea of representing information with only two logic states: true and false. Thus was created the rudiments of the binary system upon which electronic circuits and, ultimately, computer processing units are based. Today Boole is known for the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT.

## 22. FindLaw <[www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com)>

**Meta-sites, meta-indexes, meta-databases** — The newest search strategy uses huge indexes and multiple search engines. These sites profess to "search the Web" by running a search query through a number of search engines, compiling the results into a relevancy ranking, and sending them back to the searcher in a cohesive manner.

Indexes can cover either general or specific information, such as law. Examples of legal meta-sites are FindLaw, CataLaw, Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute, and LawRunner. Typically, these sites provide links to international, federal, state, and local law; judicial opinions; government agency information; law journals; bar and legal practice directories; bar associations; and law library catalogs.

Meta-indexes are a great tool if you don't know where to start, or if you need unique information and your search terms are simple. The problem is that they can't handle complex searches like search engines because they reduce the search to its simplest form so that multiple search engines can read and translate it.

### **Guessing** —

- Determine name of subject, search engine, commercial enterprise, government agency, educational institution
- If not finding by name, try abbreviation or acronym ([www.kbb.com](http://www.kbb.com))
- Add domain name: gov, edu, com, mil, net, org, int (international)
- 404 backup: try backing up when address isn't found:
  - drop the file name (.html), directory names (between slashes) to stem name
  - typical stem name: machine name (www), institution identifier, domain name

## **Conclusion**

The only way to learn about the Internet is to play around, so happy surfin'!

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