

The World Wide Web: A New Resource for Psychology Students, Faculty, and Professionals

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THERE IS A NEW RESOURCE for psychology students, faculty, and professionals alike. You've probably heard of it. It's called the World Wide Web, and it's likely the most exciting event for information seekers since the invention of the printing press. If you have access to a computer with a modem or network connection, information on psychology in all its forms around the world are just a mouse-click away!

What is the World Wide Web?

The World Wide Web (also known as the WWW, or "the Web") is part of the Internet, a planet-spanning network of high-speed computers hooked together over lightning-fast connections. The Internet has been around for a long time, but because getting around the Internet used to be technical and tricky, it was too difficult for most people to use. The World Wide Web was created to overcome difficulties and make Internet exploration (i.e., "net surfing") easier. With the Web, people can now move effortlessly around the Internet, read stories and articles, look at pictures and short movies, listen to music and sound effects, and not have to type a single command! The Web has revolutionized the way we think about the Internet, changing it from a complicated and intimidating technical puzzle to a friendly and usable source of information and entertainment.

How to "Surf" the Web

The best way to get around the World Wide Web is by using a program known as a "Web browser." There are many different Web browsers available, but the most popular are graphics-based browsers such as Netscape (see Figures in this article), Microsoft Internet Explorer, and SPRY Mosaic. Web browsers work by reading files on the Internet called "Web pages" (also known as "home pages" or just plain "pages"), and displaying them on a computer monitor. Each Web page is connected to other pages by bits of text known as "hyperlinks," or "links." Clicking on these links will bring a connecting Web page onto the screen; it doesn't matter if the new page is on the same computer or a computer thousands of miles away, it all happens with one mouse click. By using this method, people can easily surf the Internet, bouncing around cyberspace without worrying about remembering complicated commands.

In addition to the aforementioned graphics-based browsers, a second type of browsers is entirely text-based. One such text-only browser is Lynx. Text-based browsers such as Lynx are useful when you are accessing the Web from a computer that doesn't support high-resolution graphics. You cannot see any of the pictures or sounds that the graphics-based browsers would display, but the information is the same. If you have an e-mail account on your school's network, you probably have access to

Lynx. If you cannot find Netscape (or a similar graphics-based browser) on your school's computer system, ask the system administrator if Lynx is available.

Getting on the Web is easy. Most universities have a direct connection to the Internet, so all you usually have to do to get on the WWW is visit a computer lab in your school. If you prefer to use a home computer, you can usually link up to the university's network with a modem. Many universities offer either free or discount dial-up Internet packages, so check with your school's system administrator to see how you can get one for your PC or Mac at home.

The "Look" of the Web

To get you started on your Web-surfing adventure, here are a couple of examples of typical World Wide Web pages. The Department of Psychology at the University of Colorado at Denver (CU-Denver) has two closely related Web pages: One for the CU-Denver Chapter of Psi Chi (<http://ouray.cudenver.edu/~tamacken/index.html>; see Figure 1), and one for the psychology department itself (<http://www.cudenver.edu/public/psych/index.html>; see Figure 2).

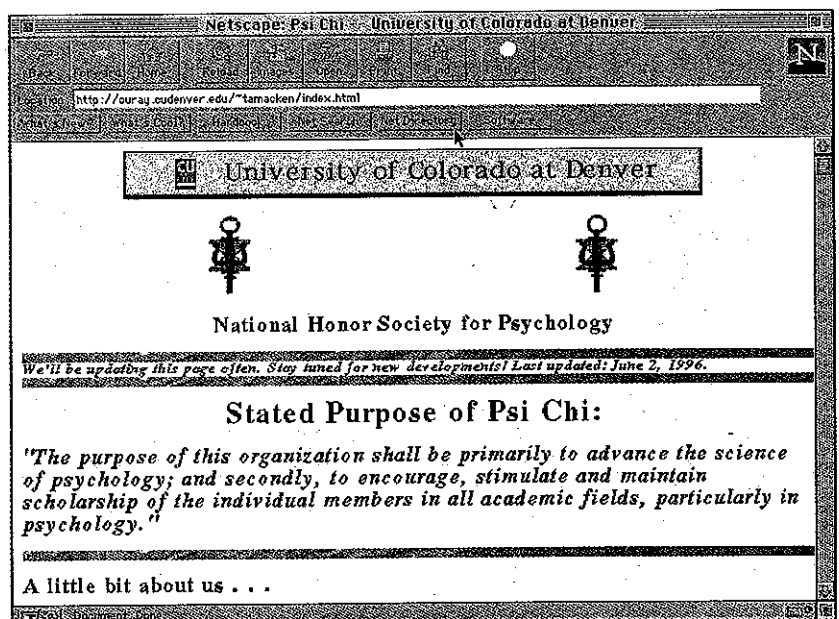


Figure 1. The CU-Denver Psi Chi home page.

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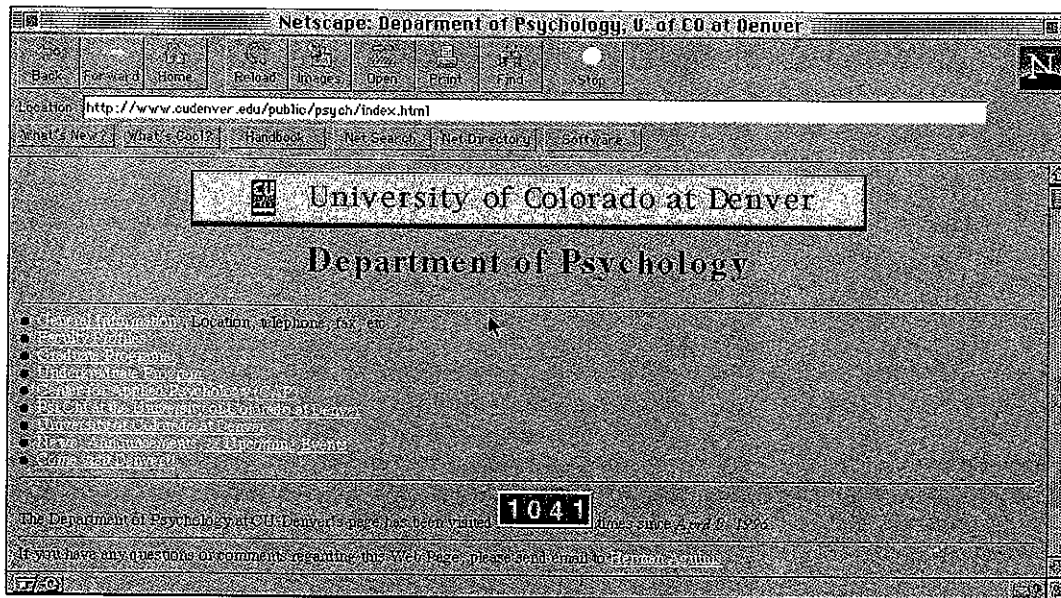


Figure 2. The CU-Denver Department of Psychology home page.

The CU-Denver Psi Chi Web page features Psi Chi application information, office hours, and information, an events and activities calendar, and officer biographies. It also contains links to psychology and student-oriented resources on the Web.

No Web page exists in a vacuum; instead, most pages are connected to other, similar pages. The psychology department's page is similar to the Psi Chi page in this regard: It contains information such as faculty profiles (and their research interests), office hours, undergraduate and graduate programs (including a detailed catalog of courses and major requirements), advising information, a section highlighting the Center for Applied Psychology at CU-Denver, and links to information about the City of Denver.

Psychology Resources on the Web

Informative psychology-related pages on the Web are plentiful. If you are thinking about visiting the World Wide Web, here are a few sites you might find useful:

PsychNETSM, the Internet Service of the American Psychological Association (APA) (<http://www.apa.org/>). This page features lots of APA-specific information, including stories from the *APA Monitor*; science, practice, media, and educational information (among many other categories); and APA public policy information.

The American Psychological Society (APS) (<http://psych.hanover.edu/APS/>). The APS home page displays general information, officer information, and convention information. It also features excerpts from the *APS Observer*, employment bulletins, psychology department home pages, and an extensive listing of psychology resources on the Internet.

Psych Web (<http://www.gasou.edu/psychweb/psychweb.htm>). The Psych Web page at Georgia Southern University is a gigantic repository for psychology-related information on the Internet. It features online, browsable books such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (3rd ed.) by Sigmund Freud; articles; discussion pages; tip sheets for psychology majors; and much more.

The Industrial/Organizational Psychologist (<http://cmit.unomaha.edu/TIP/TIP.html>). A very useful information source for I/O psychologists, the TIP home page contains information

about SIOP (Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology), graduate programs, grant resources, conferences, and more.

Cognitive and Psychological Sciences on the Internet (<http://www-psych.stanford.edu/cogsci/>). Those interested in cognitive science and psychological research in general will find this index useful. It contains extensive links to academic programs, organizations and conferences, journals and magazines, discussion lists, and more.

Clinical and Counseling Psychology (<http://server.bmod.athabasca.ca/html/aupr/clinical.htm>). Focusing primarily on clinical psychology, this page

provides links to abuse-related psychology resources, an Attention-Deficit Disorder information archive, an Applied and Interactive Theater guide, a "frequently asked questions" document on autism, and more. It also features links to other clinical psychology resources on the Web, as well as links to many other disciplines in psychology.

Psychology at the University of Albany: Psi Chi Help Manual (<http://www.albany.edu/psy/psychi2.html>). Especially useful for students, this online guide contains a wealth of information on the psychology major, careers in psychology, and how to make the most of your college experience.

Yahoo—Science: Psychology (<http://www.yahoo.com/Science/Psychology/>). A great place to start your Web surfing experience. Yahoo offers an extensive index of many different categories of psychological resources. An example would be their subcategory, Science: Psychology: Experimental Psychology: Online Experiments (http://www.yahoo.com/Science/Psychology/Experimental_Psychology/Online_Experiments/). This subsection features psychology experiments you can actually do over the Internet!

PSYC SITE—Science of Psychology: Resources (<http://www.unipissing.ca/psyc/psycsite.htm>). This page is a good "launch pad" for psychology students and faculty. It contains many different categories of links to journals, abstracts, and list servers, as well as an index of volunteers willing to provide expert information on psychology-related topics.

Listing of U.S. PhD Psychology Programs (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/psyc260/ranking.htm>). This useful page features hyperlinks to 185 academic departments in the United States offering a PhD degree in psychology. Very useful for students seeking a graduate program.

Links to Social Psychology Topics (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/psyc260/social.htm>). Devoted to social psychology, this page contains links to pages under the categories of Prejudice and Discrimination, Gender Issues and Discrimination, Persuasion, and more.

Disney Home Page (<http://www.disney.com/>). Come on, psych majors—a little fun is good for the mind!

How to Conduct a Search on the Web

You now know that the WWW is an incredibly rich source of information. However, given your interest in a particular topic, how can you efficiently find relevant information? There is a very easy way to conduct a search on the WWW. This can be accomplished by visiting the home page of what is commonly referred to as a search engine or an Internet guide. Search engines and Internet guides are similar in that both maintain huge databases of sites you can access on the WWW. So, in practice, both can be compared to electronic encyclopedias. The difference between a search engine and an Internet guide is that search engines take the information you input, "crawl" around on the Web, and finds applicable Web pages. On the other hand, Internet guides are browsable catalogs that contain different categories of Web pages.

Using search engines and Internet guides is easy. Most Web browsers come equipped with a button labeled "Net Search." All you have to do is click on this button, and you will be offered a choice of several search engines to use. One such engine is called Alta Vista. Assume we choose Alta Vista. Moreover, assume we are interested in the topic "clinical psychology." Figure 4 shows that we typed the words "clinical AND psychology" (by including the word "AND" we insured that the engine searches for both words together) in the space provided. We then clicked the "GO" button, and the engine took care of the rest! After searching a gigantic database of Web pages, the Alta Vista engine provided us with some 200,000 links to relevant Web sites! All we would have to do now is click on a site's name, and we are there.

The various search engines available catalog the Web in different ways. Some, like WebCrawler, maintain a database using key words selected from the Web pages themselves. Others, like Alta Vista, maintain a cross-referenced index of every word in the Web pages. The engine you decide to use is determined by the extent to which you wish your search to be more or less detailed. Also, Internet guides, such as Yahoo, do not maintain a comprehensive database of the WWW. Instead, they create categories of Web pages, and fill those categories with the best, most usable pages they find.

The following is a list of a few useful search engines and Internet guides to start you off:

Alta Vista (<http://altavista.digital.com>). This search engine maintains a gigantic database of over 8 billion words in 30 million Web pages, as well as an index of over 13,000 Usenet newsgroups.

Excite (<http://www.excite.com>). Excite takes a different approach from most search engines. Rather than restricting searches to keywords, Excite also allows you to search the full text of 11.5 million sites by concept. Very useful if you don't know the exact keywords you are looking for.

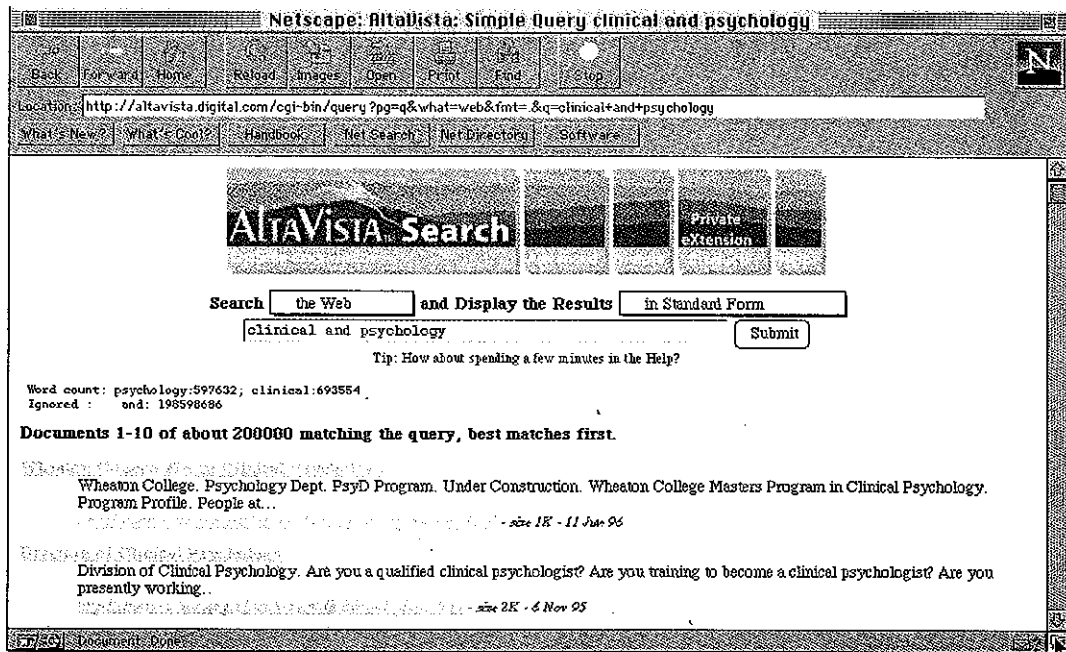


Figure 3. Alta Vista, performing a search for the key words "clinical AND psychology."

Infoseek (<http://guide.infoseek.com/Home?pg=Home.html&sv=NI>). Infoseek, a very fast and efficient search engine, allows you to perform keyword searches on its large database of Web sites. It cross-references similar sites to make your search easier, and maintains a comprehensive Internet guide as well.

Lycos (<http://a2z.lycos.com>). Actually two engines in one, the Lycos and A2Z search engines make finding elusive information easy. While Lycos is great at finding specific information, the A2Z engine offers searches by category, and cross-references links to related subjects.

Magellan (<http://www.mckinley.com>). A very useful search engine, Magellan maintains a large database of Web sites, and allows you to conduct searches based on keyword or category. Magellan also provides a rating system, allowing you to select only the best pages for your perusal.

WebCrawler (<http://www.webcrawler.com>). WebCrawler is a comprehensive, fast search engine that allows you to surf the net using keywords. They also maintain a random-links feature that allows you to find unusual sites on the Web, a large Internet guide, and a listing of the 25 most-visited sites on the World Wide Web.

Yahoo (www.yahoo.com). One of the first, and definitely the most famous of the Internet guides, Yahoo offers a huge, searchable index with many, many categories and subcategories of Web sites. Very up-to-date and useful.

A Closing Message

Given the amount of information available on the Internet, it is easy to see why it would be an intimidating experience for some. However, the child of the Internet, the World Wide Web, has opened avenues of information to people that many would have thought impossible even five years ago. Hopefully, the Web will continue to grow. Even at present, however, it is a vast resource of information waiting to be tapped by intrepid psychology students, faculty, and professionals alike. All you need is a good computer and a Web browser to guide you around. We'll see you in cyberspace! ☺