Surfing the Internet—
A members-only workshop

Event: How to get on and use the Internet—a practical workshop

Location: St. Paul computing laboratory of Metropolitan State University

Time: Four sections will be offered: June 20-23. All sessions are from 5-10 in the evening with a one hour introduction and four hours on computers.

Cost: anticipated: $10 to cover materials and expenses, scholarships are available

Contact: Tom Abeles, 3704 11th Ave South, Minneapolis, MN 55407, phone 823 3154, fax 825 6865, e-mail tabeles@tmm.com

MISF in conjunction with Minneapolis Telecommunications Network (MTN) will offer a workshop on how to use the Internet. The workshop will be for MISF members only and for selected organization representatives working with MTN’s new public access node on the Internet.

This workshop is hands on experience on both IBM PC’s or equivalents and Macintosh computers. Both standard connections and the use of document retrieval software, SLIP will be used.

Participants will be introduced to the mysteries and wonders of gopher, archie, veronica, fetch and other search engines. MISF has a membership on Meta Net and members will get the chance to meander through a number of public conferences and participate as the spirit moves.

The Meta Net Connection

Meta Net is a node on the Internet. In actuality it is a seminar or conferencing system. Some of the seminars are private and many are open to the public. Think about these as a giant conference room. When you leave the conference people continue to talk to each others. When you return, all the remarks which people have made in your absence are there in the order in which they were made. You can go around the conference and read everybody’s remarks and add your own new remarks. Or you can capture all the remarks on your printer and read them over a cup of coffee.

This is asynchronous conferencing where you join and leave at any time of the day or night. But it has other features. In a conventional conference only one idea or thought can be pursued at a time. In the on-line conference each thread can be a subconference or an item. Thus, you can have many conversations going at the same time and see them all.

Also, the conference is just that, for exchanging of ideas. Long lectures can be put where they belong, in a library. So, those who have a lot to say which is best said in an article will upload these to a library where all can retrieve them without having to "listen" to them in the conference.

For example, Meta Net has a number of public forums which may be of interest to MISF members:

Netsmarts, Explore and Guide are conferences for those who have questions about conferencing, using all the features on Meta Net or who want to explore the Internet and need to find a kindred soul who is having or has solved similar problems.
(MetaNet Connection, continued)

Chautauqua is a conference where guests and authors are invited in to explore interesting books and ideas; while Books is a conference where those on the net can list books they have read or found interesting and wish to discuss them with friends.

0D94 is one of a number of annually evolving conference on organizational development. Chaos is a conference for management persons, psychologists and others interested in the application of chaos theory to the social sciences and humanities.

Arts Wire is a conference for independent arts; Iris is a network for teachers; Matrix contains interesting items or topics floating around the Internet which people might want to explore further.

The Books conference reflects the broad diversity of those on the Net. The titles include, Pericles of Athens by Kagan, Farmer's A Barnstormer in Oz, Lifton's Nazi Doctors, Fritz's Creating, works by Fromm, Amy Tan, Toni Morrison and many others running the range from psychology to history and philosophy.

Meta Net has its own 'gopher' which can be searched and used for searching and many features to be discovered and appreciated- see you on the Net.

Discounts at Baxters

Thanks to Brian Baxter for making a 10% discount available to all Independent Scholars! We appreciate Brian's material contribution to our research and to our simpler reading pleasures.

Timeliness and Timelessness of Information

The Forum is a quarterly publication of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum. MISF also will publish a semi annual scholarly journal, Concept. Additionally, MISF members can join in conferences on the Internet; and, MISF is cohosting a workshop on "surfing" the Internet (see announcement in this issue). Thus, we are reflecting on how this publication can bring value in a world where the cost per bit of information is getting cheaper, but the cost for useful bit of information is getting dearer.

Relationships between people and groups provide long term linkages to enhance access to both volatile and more durable information and ideas. Coffee houses once provided a venue for such exchanges. The Forum is in the process of gathering a list of those intellectual watering holes where independent scholars might find other organizations, events and kindred souls. Additionally, MISF is looking for such venues where regular events can be scheduled which can build linkages (see this issue). We are also looking for coffee houses where computer terminals can be located so that one can visit similar congenial gathering places in virtual space.

The Forum is a quarterly publication of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum

The Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum is a non-profit organization formed to encourage and promote inquiry, research, discussion, writing and publication by independent scholars.

Co-Editors: Lisa Foote, 15805 16th Ave N., Plymouth, MN 55447 (612) 375-3264; Tom Abeles, 3704 11th Ave S, Mpls, MN 55407 (612) 825-6867 (b), 823-3154 (w)

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(Timeliness and Timelessness, continued)

It has been said that he, who controls the present, controls the past. And he who controls the past, controls the future. These all intersect in libraries which are concerned with both the process of preserving content as well as effective vehicles for accessing, and even, creating information, John Parker has promised to help us understand the timelessness of information as our short term memory becomes more volatile in the informatics era. We can not escape McLuhan's pronouncements. Hopefully we can blow the dust off a few tombs while clearing the cobwebs from our cerebral gears which have our brains stuck in cyberspace.

Think of The Forum as a hard copy of a hyperstack directory pointing to subdirectories of the most efficient information storage and distribution devices extant, the brains of MISF members and associates. A friend of mine calls himself a weaver, connecting people to each other, creating dynamic evolutionary linkages as opposed to connecting people with information, a static linkage. Think of MISF and The Forum in this new light and ask how this vehicle can effectively fill its new direction.

Think of The Forum as Penelope's thread weaving and unweaving in a kaleidoscope of ever changing patterns and relationships sometimes similar, sometimes strange, often complex and chaotic- a pattern of permanence, yet ephemeral in nature, timeless, yet timely.

Tom Abeles, editor

Note: The Forum is prepared in electronic form. All articles are indexed starting with this issue and will be available on electronic media. For the physically impaired, the discs will be available at no cost.

Books, Books, Books...

A few years ago the Grolier Club in New York held a conference on the future of the book. Among the speakers was Robert Giroux, publisher. Acknowledging the opportunities emerging for the electronic transmission of texts and all the talk about a paperless culture, he was nevertheless optimistic. "Wherever there is a good poet," he said, "there will be a good printer."

His "good poet" was a metaphor for any worthwhile text. It would appear in book format. The constantly growing number of books and journals being published each year confirms the future of the book. And of course it has a glorious past, an intimate association with every great idea, event or literary creation that has come down to us.

As a center for creative writing, printing and publishing, as well as home to great libraries, Minnesota is in a favored position to celebrate all aspects of the book -- present, past and future. We would like this column of the newsletter to be a meeting place for members with bookish interests, a sort of occasional coffee house in print in which we can share interests, information, and ideas about books.

Minnesota Center for Book Arts

For starters, we call attention to the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA), a lively workshop of the traditional arts: papermaking, hand-set type, letterpress printing, hand binding, illustration, etc. MCBA is at the same time a museum displaying advanced artistic work in book design and production.

MCBA offers a wide range of courses in the book arts. These include a highly popular "dirty works" experience on Saturdays, an excellent opportunity to participate in several aspects of book production. Special discounts are available on courses for members, and exhibit openings and other programs are free. Well into its second decade, the MCBA has established itself as the best book arts center in the United States. It is an excellent place to stop in and meet a friend and have a good talk about books.

The MCBA is located at 24 North Third Street, Minneapolis; you can reach them at 338-3634.

Minneapolis Athenaeum

If you are more inclined toward the finished book that has counted for something in our past, move up North Third Street one block to the Minneapolis Athenaeum, the ancestor to the Minneapolis Public Library.
Established in 1859 as a private lending library, the Athenaeum has been housed for more than a century in the Minneapolis Public Library, but maintains an individual identity with excellent collections on the North American Indian, travel in North America, natural history, the history of the book arts, and one of the finest collections of Aesop’s Fables found anywhere.

You can reach the Athenaeum's Librarian, Edward Kukla, at 372-6612. If you have never seen Audubon's Birds in its elephant folio edition, this is the best place in Minnesota to do it!

All of these resources are within one block -- and in Minneapolis' restaurant district.

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Good Vacation Books

Want a few good books to take along to the lake this summer? Try Maiden Voyages: Writings of Women Travelers, edited by Mary Morris (New York, Vintage, 1993), or Sue Hubbell's Broadsides from the Other Orders, a Book of Insects (New York, Random House, 1993), or Michael Pollan's Second Nature: a Gardener's Education (New York, Dell, 1993).

In the next newsletter we will do some book-hunting in St. Paul. In the meantime, if you have done some of your own and want to share your finds, or if you have others news to share from the Minnesota book scene, let us hear from you!

Hoping to hear from you.

John Parker
2348 Seabury Ave
Minneapolis, MN  55406

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Internet Marginalia

When Tom Abeles asked me to write about Internet, I found myself torn between offering a selection from the exploding variety of philosophical musing about the Net, and hard information on using the Net. Although you will, of course, pick and choose among the offerings, I urge you to read both about the Net and how to use the Net. First, some recent philosophical thoughts.

Philosophers Who Hate It...

New Yorker, April 8, 1994. Nicholson Baker, "Discards." Baker loathes recent moves toward the electronically-accessed library, which he calls "self-inflicted on-line hell." (See also letters in response to Baker in the May 2 issue.) After reading his article, you might be persuaded to start a "save the card catalog" movement.

Harper's, May, 1994. Two essays paired under the title "The Electronic Hive: Two Views." Sven Birkerts believes that "in our technological obsession we may be forgetting that circulated interconnected-ness and individualism are, at a primary level, inimical notions, warring terms. ...Electricity and inwardness are fundamentally discordant."

...and Those Who Love It

Harper's, May, 1994. Kevin Kelly's piece, adapted from Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization, rushes to embrace "The Net." Far from viewing the net as a convenient electronic appliance, Kelly believes the Age of the Atom is passing, and that the Age of the Net has arrived.

"The Net is the archetype displayed to represent all circuits, all intelligence, all interdependence, all things economic and social and ecological, all communications, all democracy, all groups, all large systems. This icon is slippery, ensnaring the unwary in its paradox of no beginning, no end, no center." Yipes -- and I thought it was just alot of electronically-enabled chat!

Gleick is perhaps the most accessible and fresh of all the authors listed here. He’s honest about the real-life inconveniences of a new and raw technology. He’s also excited by what he sees as its boundary-smashing, democratic potential. If you want a brief, breezy, and accurate overview of the Net and some of its potential, Gleick’s article is a great place to start.

Nuts & Bolts
Here’s the overview for those of you who want to "Just Do It," and dive into the deep end of the Information Super-highway swimming pool.

For the Technically Adept:
Know all about TCP/IP? Already chummy with your Hayes modem? Know how to pronounce "I"? You’re ready to jump in with just a little raw information.


Help Line: 1-800-277-0414
E-Mail: info@tmn.com
Modem: 703-243-9696
Fax: 703-841-9798

For very current info regarding various bulletin boards and mailing lists, Online Access magazine is a great resource. (You can’t miss the April, 1994 issue on the newsstand: just look for the blue, yellow and red "Internet Special Issue" that looks like a refugee from a Ren & Stimpy cartoon.)

"For the Rest of Us..."
Bollixed by bytes? Muddled by modems? Not even sure you want to do this, but afraid of becoming road-kill on the Information Superhighway?

I highly recommend The Internet for Dummies. John R. Levine & Carol Baroudi. This is an easily-accessible, fun, informative book that doesn’t talk down to the technically illiterate. It’s broken down into how-to-do-it sections that will guide you through each step in accessing the Net. Lots of helpful tips and shortcuts ease you into using the Net without tears.

Comments? Call me -- Lisa Foote, 426-2460.

President’s Column
by Bob Thimmesh

The Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum is taking steps to enter the electronic age by enrolling in Meta Net (with access to Internet), putting on training sessions and enlisting speakers who will give us practical guidance. I want to make several comments, some of which are repeating the obvious, about the Forum’s new endeavors.

(a) I do not see the established practices and programs of the Forum being superseded by this new technology. We humans must still do the thinking, writing, editing, etc. We now have additional technical tools at the disposal of those who wish to use them. I expect to use them sometimes, but I will continue to use "old fashioned" pen and ink at other times (such as writing this column).

The technology will not make a good writer out of a poor one (although some spelling may improve), it will not deliver a "eureka" (the flashing light bulb signifying an intellectual breakthrough), but it may deliver you more time in which to become a good writer or to have an "eureka" attack.

(b) The technology is fundamentally value-neutral in the sense expressed above and in its relation to intellectual and literary history. Computers have been criticized by some because they do not leave a literary trail of an author's changes. This may be true in a number of cases but if so it's because the author chooses to erase output rather than save and print it.

(c) The Internet and Meta Net permit communications with persons with whom it would have been quite improbable to have communications with, absent these nets; one of the main problems being the knowledge of their existence; i.e., in a dimly lit room in the Australian outback.

This communication may be serious or just frivolous, as is our off-line communication. The nets draw a variety of persons to them, around the world, and this is where a new intellectual adventure may begin or another manifestation of boring pedantry.
Member News

As an Independent Scholar, on April 30 Gloria Morris-Grothe presented a paper at the 84th Conference of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, held at Augustana College, IL, and at Davenport, IA. The paper was entitled The Swedish Heritage of Dr. Howard Hanson and his Contribution To American Music. Support for an Independent Scholars’ section within SASS (an international group) helps provide encouragement and opportunity for active participation in continued research. Colleagues believe that Independent Scholars have greater flexibility for inter-disciplinary research and investigation of topics beyond the scope of language, history and literature courses.

For more information, call: Gloria
487-0362

Report from The Board of Directors... 5/5/94

By Gloria Morris-Grothe

Your Board of Directors has been meeting regularly on a monthly basis following the December Annual Meeting. The present Board is comprised of Robert Thimmesh (President), Donna McGarry (Vice President) David Megarry (Secretary/Treasurer), Tom Abeles, Lucy Brusic, Ginny Hansen, Alex Johnston, David Juncker, Gloria Morris-Grothe, John Parker, and Lucy Smith.

As outlined by President Thimmesh in earlier correspondence, this year's projects and goals include development of coffeehouse discussions, expansion of study groups, continued sponsorship of public programs presented by members and others, regular publication of a journal, sponsorship of a major seminar/conference on effective use of METANET, investigation into grant opportunities and implementation of fiscal accountability for independent scholar-members.

All of the above require that highest priority be awarded to improving communication and opportunities for members. To ensure that paid members have access to benefits they are entitled to, membership policies have been systematized to more accurately reflect active membership. To increase present membership, our present P.R. campaign has been expanded. We also encourage all of you to initiate your own enlistment of new members.

Susan Smith, Brian Mulhern and David Wiggins have been asked to search old Board Minutes to determine policy decisions that helped provide a sense of direction for successful MISF development to date. Their search will facilitate preparation of a policy handbook. The handbook will help orient new members; it will also improve consistency in decision-making and prevent loss of past progress as MISF moves forward.

With each year that passes, your successful organization is developing beyond its initial brain-storming stage to one that looks toward the future. In the process of establishing structure, your Board is cognizant that spontaneity, creativity and motivation can easily be absorbed and disappear if the structure becomes rigid or elitist. For that reason, we invite you to participate actively in the development process.

If you have an idea or project that interests you, contact a Board Member, or "rough out" some plans and bring them to a Board Meeting for discussion. (The Board meets regularly at 7:30 p.m., the Second Thursday of each month.) The merits of your idea can then be explored informally in a brain-storming format. (Details would be worked out within a subcommittee for report back.) Discussion of new ideas has high priority on each month’s Board Meeting agenda. Please feel welcome!
Top Ten Reasons to Join Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum...

10. You've always wanted an outlet for discussing great ideas

9. You won't get any free mugs, keychains, T-shirts, bumperstickers or umbrellas for joining

8. Free subscription to a swell newsletter

7. Borrowing privileges at the Univ of MN Libraries

6. Did we mention you won't get any free mugs..?

5. Your mom would be so proud...

4. Notification of events and meetings (including cool stuff like the upcoming InterNet Surfing class)

3. Great discounts at Baxter's Books

2. Fiscal agency

1. No salesman will call

Yes, I would like to join the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
City / State / ZIP: ____________________________
Telephone (home): ____________________________ (work) ____________________________

I enclose my check in the following amount: ____________
Regular Membership:
$40 (regularly employed) $16-$39 (not regularly employed)
$15 (under-employed) $10 (unemployed)
Household:
$50 (regularly employed) $21-$49 (not regularly employed)
$20 (under-employed) $15 (unemployed)

Mail to Curt Hillstrom, 715 E. 57th Street, Mpls, MN 55417
Surfing the Internet --  
A members-only workshop

Four sessions offered June 20 - 23, all sessions from 5 - 10 p.m., St. Paul computing laboratory, Metropolitan State University. See article, p. 1, for more information.

MISF Calendar 1994

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