

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### *Mission Statement*

*The Children, Youth, and Family Consortium was established in fall 1991 in an effort to bring together the varied competencies of the University of Minnesota and the vital resources of Minnesota's communities to enhance the ability of individuals and organizations to address critical health, education, and social policy concerns in ways that improve the well-being of Minnesota children, youth, and families.*

## Conquering the Internet

by Bill Bomash

The Internet is the most visible manifestation of a momentous change that is taking place in our lives; a change not only in the way we send and receive information, but a fundamental change in the whole role information, and access to it, plays in our lives. Increasingly information producers have looked to electronic distribution as an economical and efficient means of getting information into the hands of their audiences. What has made electronic distribution suddenly so attractive is the emergence in recent years of a worldwide telecommunications network over which such materials can be delivered, the Internet. With the phenomenal growth of the Internet, the promise of wide spread distribution of electronic information is becoming a reality.



### **What is the Internet?**

The Internet (the Net) is a vast network of computers and computer networks that allows millions of people all over the world to exchange data and information with one another. By far the most popular activity conducted on the Net is the exchange of electronic mail. The next most popular Internet activity is the dissemination and retrieval of information. While there are a number of other things people can do on the Net (play games, download software, etc.), these two items, e-mail and information retrieval, account for the great majority of all Internet activity.

Until a few of years ago, the Internet was an intimidating place that only hard-core computer jocks frequented. Then, with the development of easy-to-use information retrieval software like Gopher (developed at the University of Minnesota) the Net became a friendlier place to visit. About two years ago, a new standard for exchanging electronic information, the World Wide Web (WWW), began gaining popularity across the Net. Because of its simple graphical interface, the Web has become by far the most popular way for people to access information on the Internet. It is estimated that over 7 million Web sites and pages are currently available on the Internet.

## Consortium Connections

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## How Do I Get Connected?

There always has been an information gap between the haves and have-nots. This gap is only going to get larger in the new electronic information age as the amount of information available increases, the cost of the basic equipment needed to access the Internet (a microcomputer) remains beyond the reach of many, and the skills needed to access it are only acquired by the better educated. What can we do to mitigate against this trend? First, focus our attention on development of programs that help us to manage and deal with massive amounts of information. Next, encourage manufacturers to produce low-cost Internet terminals and encourage Internet providers to furnish access at low prices. Perhaps government subsidies could be offered to ease the financial burden on the economically disadvantaged. Finally, government and the private sector need to be encouraged to establish public access sites and locate them in places where people traditionally go to get information (libraries, schools, government centers, extension offices) or where they gather socially (shopping malls, youth centers, community education centers, elder care centers, etc.)

There are a number of ways to get connected to the Internet. Until recently, only people who worked in major research institutions or Universities had access to the Net. Today however, more and more commercial entities are providing Internet access for their employees. In addition, major efforts are underway to connect public institutions, especially libraries, schools, and state and local government agencies to the Internet. It is becoming increasingly apparent that easy and ubiquitous access to educational resources, research findings, and governmental information is crucial for the future viability of these institutions.

## What New Skills Do I Need?

There are many institutions (community and technical colleges, commercial training companies, libraries, community education programs, etc.) that offer computer and information literacy classes for the general public. A number of self-help materials are available in bookstores, libraries and computer stores. Many access providers have training materials and some even offer classes for their customers. Most important of all, computer and information literacy needs to be incorporated into all school (K-12 and higher education) curricula.

What kind of skills are needed to master this new technology? First of all, you need to have simple basic computer skills. You don't need to be a computer wizard; you do need to be comfortable using a mouse on a Mac or a PC running Windows. It helps if you know how to install new programs on your computer, but even if you're not entirely comfortable doing this, you should be able to install any of the newer Web browsers and communication software with little trouble. Also, your Internet provider should be able to help you resolve any set-up or connection problems you might encounter.

The new Web browsers like Netscape make it quite easy to navigate the Web. You will soon discover, however, that finding the information you want, not navigating the Web, is the real challenge. The first skill you will need to master is patience. It may take you quite a bit of time initially to locate quality information on any given topic. Over time, you will develop a list of your favorite sites, those places you will want to consult first. Also, you will become more adept in using the various programs that are available on the Web to help you find the kinds of information you are seeking.

There are several ways you can go about looking for information on the Web. The easiest, and the one most people use initially, is simply to browse through lists of resources, sampling (by clicking on the highlighted name) items that look interesting. Of course, this method presumes that you know a couple of quality sites like the Children Youth and Family Electronic Clearinghouse that have good resources to help you start your search. Browsing, is probably the best

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way for new users to become comfortable on the Web. After a while, however, you will want to be able to expand your searches.

Having the ability to conduct good on-line searches has been a necessary library skill for many years, but on the Net it is not enough just to be able to locate sought-after information; you must also be able to accurately assess the quality of the information you find there. Because anyone is free to place materials on the Web and there is no guarantee that the information found there is accurate, you must take special care to scrutinize closely the information. As you would with any other information, carefully assess its validity before accepting it. Make sure it is issued from or endorsed by reliable sources, known authors, or respected and trusted institutions.

## Content

Dealing with unwanted or undesirable information on the Internet is not a new problem. What is different is the staggering amount of material that is readily available on the Net. It's hard to say whether or not the "junk" outweighs the valid information. Let me just emphasize that there is an astonishing amount of high quality information out on the Net. In order to "separate the chaff from the wheat", people need to discipline themselves to search every document they find for the commonly acknowledged signs of legitimacy. Before assuming whatever information you come across is valid, you need to ask yourself: Who produced the information? Is the information issued by or endorsed by a reputable institution? Is the author someone whose name I recognize, someone whose judgment I trust? Be suspicious of any information that lacks attribution to a reliable source.

Search tools that help people to cull relevant information out of the mass of data available on the Net are constantly being improved. The better search engines scan the content of the materials they find and place those items that are deemed to be most pertinent to the topic at the top of the list. Thus, even though a particular search engine might find several hundred documents that actually meet your search criteria, you probably need only look at the first ten or twenty of them, as they are the ones that are likely to be most relevant to your topic.

It is true that just because a document is relevant doesn't mean that it is reliable. But if you only have to look through a relatively small number of documents, the burden of having to verify their validity of each is minimal.

No other single information resource has the breadth and diversity of information that is found on the Internet. The Internet is not only a valuable and efficient information resource, it can also a fun place to visit. It is easy to get connected, and once there, you will find the Net extremely easy to navigate and use. Soon you will wonder how you survived before the Net.

## Learning the Language of Internet

WWW...http...URL...Much of what we read about the Internet looks like a foreign language, or, at its worst, like alphabet soup! Fortunately, the terms are easy to learn and use.

**Cyberspace** — the electronic world where computer users communicate, socialize and work. It is the "place" where electronic communication appears to occur. Not inside a phone or computer. The indefinite place "out there", where electronic information is exchanged.

**World Wide Web (WWW)** — a simple, ingenious system that lets users access documents on the Internet all over the world as if they were pages in one huge book. In the WWW, every document is linked to many other documents, and you can move from one to another by pointing and clicking.

**Web Browsers** — you access the WWW through a computer software program called a browser, such as Netscape, which provides point-and-click access to information.

**Graphical Interface** — computer software programs which allow you to access images or graphics. Most commonly used web browsers provide a graphical interface to the information on the World Wide Web.

**Home Page** — the page you select which will appear when you start your web browser. This location has links to other pages and documents, and is usually a site that is beneficial and comfortable to the user.

**URL** — every home page has a unique address called a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). You've seen them in magazine and newspaper ads. A typical URL looks like this:  
<http://www.fedworld.gov/>

**Search Engines** — Once you're on the web, there are many on-line directories and indexes you can use to find information fast. Two popular ones are YAHOO (<http://www.yahoo.com>) and Alta Vista (<http://www.altavista.com>).

A word of caution when you are browsing the web: the information you turn up can be out-of-date or inaccurate, so double check the data you find with a source you trust!

For additional information, contact Sandra Longfellow, Director, United Way of St Paul Area's Information Center at (612) 291-8824.

My family and I enjoy the excitement of using the Internet as a window on the world. We have explored other lands, seen dramatic visualizations of global environment conditions, shared e-mail with each other from around the world, and kept current on breaking news at the click of a button.

But the Internet is not just a window on the world, it is a gateway to the future that families can use to expand their opportunities, their education and their horizons. I urge all families to explore the Internet together, and find their own best use of this exciting world.

—Vice President Al Gore, Jr.

# Public Access to the Internet

People who want to see what the Internet has to offer them and their families can access the World Wide Web for free at any of the 62 Access Minnesota sites. The Access Minnesota project was initiated to give communities an opportunity to see what the Internet was all about. Most of the Access Minnesota sites are located in Minnesota Extension Service county offices, where they will also find knowledgeable staff or perhaps a volunteer to help them get started. People can search for topics, visit home pages, explore and browse through the Internet, download files and graphics or print information.

Altogether, the Access Minnesota computers are used by 700 to 800 people a week in Minnesota to access the Internet. Most of the sites are open primarily during business hours, but many sites offer some evening or weekend access.

The Access Minnesota project is funded in part by a 1994 grant from the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program, National Telecommunications and Information Administration U.S., Department of Commerce. Although federal funding for the project ends July 1, 1996, the Access Minnesota sites hope to be able to continue to offer public access after the project ends.

## How do people use the Internet?

Here's how some visitors to Access Minnesota sites have used the Internet:

Teachers have been using the Internet for lesson plans. Others have been looking up information about mental health issues, legislative information, favorite rock stars and rock climbing.

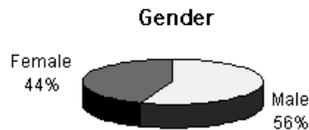
A fifth grader was given an assignment to design a trip. He spent a great deal of time planning a trip to Paris, France, complete with bus and subway information, hotel rates, tourist attractions and included in his report pictures he found on the Internet.

Someone who has a pen-pal from Russia came in because her friend was thinking about visiting her in the United States. She was able to find the Embassy pages on the Internet to get visa information for visitors.

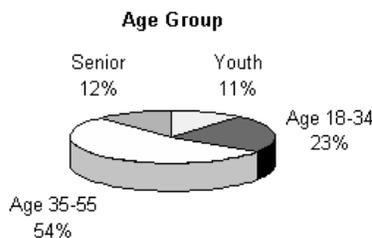
## Who uses the Access Minnesota sites?

A profile of Access Minnesota users shows:

Fifty six percent are male; 44% are female.

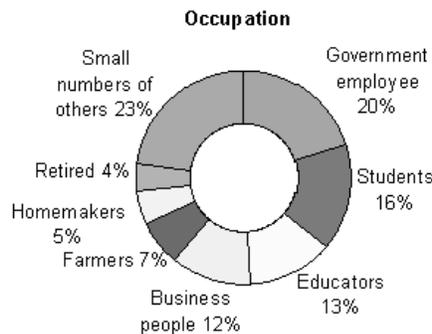


Nearly 1/2 (48%) are in the 35-55 age group; 21% are between 18 and 34; 10% are youth; 11% are seniors.



Visitors use the computer for an average of 70 minutes at a time.

Twenty percent are city, county, state or federal government employees; 16% are students; 13% are educators; 12% are business people; 7% are farmers; 5% are homemakers; and 4% are retired persons. The remaining



23% includes small numbers of artists, writers, clergy, health workers, news media, volunteers, moms, and unemployed people.

Seventy-one percent of the visitors find the information they are looking for.

One half are regular users of the Access Minnesota computer.

## What do people think about Access Minnesota?

People find the Internet useful as a resource and appreciate the public access (quotes are as the users typed them):

*People come into Access Minnesota sites and say "I don't even know what a mouse is!" Then they realize how easy it really is to use.*

*"Thanks to Access Minnesota for providing this site. It is a great demonstration site — of the Information Super Highway — I find it's easy to use — and fun too."*

*"For those of us who can not afford the home computer or/and Internet connections it's been educational and rewarding to explore the 'world' through this connection!"*

For more information contact Rae Montgomery, Access Minnesota Project Manager at (612) 624 2273.

## Wondering how to get connected, here's how...

Metronet web site lists Minnesota access providers. Check it out at

<http://www.maven.com/mn/provide.html>

Information literacy is a means of personal and national empowerment in today's information rich environment....It is therefore, the next logical step in all current programs to combat illiteracy. After we teach people to read, we must teach them how to locate and use the information they need.

— Patricia Seen Breivik

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# Equity on the Information Highway

For more than a century, America's libraries have been at the heart of the nation's information infrastructure, providing access to books and other resources to help people of all ages and backgrounds lead better lives. Today the information may be as likely to come from a computer terminal as from a book.

In the current explosion of people logging on to the vast global network known as the "information superhighway," what about those who don't have computers in their homes, or those who don't know how to use a computer? For them, the public library can serve as the "on-ramp" to the information highway, and librarians as the navigators.

In order to ensure public access to the new world of digital information, the Minneapolis Public Library (MPL) initiated a pilot project on February 12, 1996 to provide workstations for World Wide Web browsing at four library locations: Northeast and Southeast community libraries and the Sociology and Art/Music/Video Departments at the Central Library.

The workstations are available on a self-service, first-come, first served basis, with a half-hour time limit when others are waiting. On-line guides and printed information are furnished to help users find their way through the Web using "Netscape" software. For people who have little or no computer experience, "How to Use the World Wide Web" tutoring sessions led by volunteers are provided several times a week at each location.

MPL plans to continue public Internet access at the four pilot locations and to expand to other locations as resources become available. For more information, pick up a brochure on "Internet Access" at any Minneapolis Public Library or call Kristi Gibson at (612) 372-6500.

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## North Star

### Explore Minnesota government on-line

The Internet. The World Wide Web. With so many choices on-line where do you find information you really want? If you are looking for information about Minnesota, try North Star.

North Star is Minnesota government's home site on the World Wide Web. Its primary purpose is to build a user-friendly "front door" to the information that Minnesota public sector organizations are putting on the Internet. For anyone with access to the Internet, the web site address is:  
<http://www.state.mn.us>

Some features likely to be of most interest to children, youth, and families include:

1. "All About Minnesota" — Based on a flyer produced for students by the Minnesota Historical Society and the Office of Tourism.
2. "Explore Minnesota" — Includes links to travel and event information which families can use to plan future trips and identify cultural opportunities.
3. "Government Offices" — Lists on-line services from nearly 100 public sector organizations ranging from the Department of Children, Families, and Learning to local government in Minnesota.
4. "Tools of Democracy" — Highlights important resources which encourage citizen participation and a better understanding of government. You can locate the Governor's e-mail address or explore the detailed information the Minnesota Legislature has on-line.

While North Star currently helps you quickly find the "good stuff," opportunities exist for multiple organizations to create menus and presentations of content regardless of where the documents exist on the Internet. So if you are inspired by the possibility of helping craft a "children" or "student" menu on North Star, please send e-mail to: [northstar@state.mn.us](mailto:northstar@state.mn.us) or call Steven Clift, North Star Project Coordinator, at (612) 297-5561.

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## Twin Cities Free-Net

The Twin Cities Free-Net (TCFN) offers free text-based Internet access to residents of the Twin Cities metropolitan area; the non-profit organization also runs a World Wide Web server filled with community-based information. One of the goals of the Free-Net is to ensure that Internet access is available to everyone, regardless of whether they own a computer or have Internet access through an employer or a college/university. Free-net is working hard to make public access terminals available throughout the cities.

Two of the primary benefits of becoming a registered Free-Net user, in addition to text-based browsing of the World Wide Web, are being able to have one's own electronic mail box and a personal home page. As well, non-profit organizations can publish their own Web pages on the Free-Net server.

You can check out Free-Net by typing in the address (URL) for Free-Net: <http://freenet.msp.mn.us>. Although Free-Net is in its public testing phase, they are now accepting registrations.

Free-Net is an all-volunteer organization supported by donations from individuals, corporations, and grants. To volunteer your time, talent, computer equipment, and/or dollars you can contact Becky Peterson at (612) 379-9144 or go through the Web site itself.

# The Internet — A Tool for Families

Every week, Americans are inundated with more hype about the Internet. Although less than 10% of Americans currently have on-line access, this new technology has both captured people's imaginations and amplified their fear. Beyond the magazine headlines, the Internet can be an excellent tool for families, improving communication, offering access to resources and providing education and entertainment.

As a communication tool, the Internet shows great promise. College kids e-mail their parents back home. Adult siblings stay in touch on opposite sides of the country (or the world!) Non-custodial parents in a different city can quickly communicate with their children. People who have never met face to face can provide support, share information and resources and develop friendships through e-mail, mailing lists and on-line chat services. The Internet can also help families, parents and children find information and resources.

Finally, the Internet has educational and entertainment sites geared specifically to children. Two services offer excellent starting points. Yahoo!igans! (<http://www.yahooigans.com>) has an excellent web links page. Categories include Around the World, Art Soup, Entertainment, School Bell and others. These are not necessarily "kids" sites, but are general sites of interest to kids.

The Lycos index (<http://www.lycos.com>) has a long A to Z list of sites for children, including international pages, on-line teen magazines and links to other lists of children's sites.

Parents, teachers and others can also

use Yahoo! as a jumping off point (<http://www.yahoo.com>). Under "Society and Culture - Families-Parenting," for example, you can find sites on adoption, books, child care, fathering, magazines, mothering, organizations and single parents.

Just like television, on-line content matters. The Internet is not inherently educational and beneficial just because a computer is involved. There are excellent resources along with much wasted disk space. While most sites are not harmful to children, parents should use the same kind of supervision they use for movies, books and music. A good guide to child safety on the web is available through Yahoo!igans! (<http://www.yahooigans.com/docs/safety/parents.html>).

There are also at least three software programs available that screen objectionable net sites. Net Nanny ([netnanny@netnanny.com](mailto:netnanny@netnanny.com)), Cyber Patrol ([info@microsys.com](mailto:info@microsys.com)) and Surf Watch ([info@surfwatch.com](mailto:info@surfwatch.com)) all provide screens so that children cannot reach sexually explicit, adult-oriented sites. Of course, the best screen is parental supervision.

## Impact of use by professionals

Professionals working in the child and family arena constantly feel the pressure of additional work and caseloads combined with less time to perform required duties. Many are finding living and working in the information age a Catch 22. On one hand new technologies can help us retrieve information and help us be efficient with our time. However, we are also drowning in too much information.

The Internet is a vast web of information that can be intimidating. But with time, training and patience, it can also be a boon to child and family professionals. The Net can be used for e-mailing your office from the field; checking in on the latest research on child abuse and neglect; or it can be used to post your agencies' critical information and make it available to the public.

Learning how to search effectively on the Internet can reveal programs available for a family with particular needs. For those professionals who perform information and referral activities, the upcoming FirstCallNet (see FirstCallNet article on page 7) will be of great use — and all at your desktop computer. Educators can find many activities for their classrooms or partake in an exciting initiative like the Web66 project (see Web66 article below). And there are storehouses of information that cut across individual disciplines and provide research as well as practical information to increase a professional's skills and knowledge base. The Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse and CYFERNet are two such Internet sites (see article on page 8). While many professionals will continue to use the Internet only for e-mail, the information super highway presents a new frontier for professionals yearning to work more effectively and efficiently. Take a look at a few of the programs that are already underway in Minnesota.

For more information, contact Diane Benjamin at Children's Defense Fund — Minnesota (612) 227-6121 or Michael Brott at The Children, Youth and Family Consortium (612) 626-1212.

## Web66 — College of Ed and Human Development K-12

Web66, an award-winning homepage launched in the fall of 1994, helps teachers worldwide integrate the Internet into their K-12 classrooms. Through the World Wide Web, Web66 posts



information about setting up Internet servers, links educators and students across cyberspace, and helps educators find and use resources available on-line.

Designed by Steve Collins of the College of Education and Human Development, the 1994 pilot site for Web66 was his wife Chris's sixth-grade classroom. After an overwhelmingly positive response to

their first assignment, student home pages, Chris assigned research papers with a twist: all information had to be collected from the Internet. Students found themselves conversing with NASA scientists about comets and geologists about dinosaurs.

"One kid said afterward that this was his first glimpse of what it

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## WinonaNet

Winona, Minnesota is a small town with large visions — and the commitment of the community to make these visions a reality.



With a high-speed fiber-optic ring connecting its schools, universities, hospital, and city hall plus a local link to the Internet, Winona is using technology to strengthen the community and enhance education.

The telecommunications are managed by Luminet, a local non-profit organization.

Whereas Luminet maintains the conduit, WinonaNet provides the information content. Web-based WinonaNet provides free local news, events, visitor information, business and e-mail directories, and sections devoted to schools, college, teens, and the family. Local students, teachers, and others contribute to these sections. Interactive forums encourage Winonans to discuss community issues, ask questions, and respond to controversial topics.

Through WinonaNet and Luminet, Winona is bringing back the kind of in-depth and intimate communication that used to take place in town halls and around the potbelly stove in the local store and is changing the daily lives of Winonans, from kids in grade school to senior citizens.

### **It's for kids and families...**

Kids love to use the Internet as a research tool. For example, a geography class in the Winona Middle School is using Internet search tools to research European countries to make slide show presentations, and a life science class gathered information on daisies, roses, cacti, and other plants from Web sites around the world.

Even after school, students frequent the Media Centers, both to do homework and to pursue more personal interests in sports, fashion, and music. Some of the kids don't want to leave. Parents even volunteer in some of the Centers so students can use the computers in the evening.

### **...and Seniors, too!**

At the other end of the age spectrum, Winona's senior citizens are also fascinated by cyberspace. The Winona Senior Friendship Center has several computers which are used to send e-mail to grandchildren across the country and to research topics of interest to Winona's seniors. Topics are as unique as the individuals interested: Arabian stallions, Romanian genealogy, gardening, space exploration, and vitamin deficiencies.

The Senior Center computers are in such high demand that sometimes folks are pounding on the door before opening time, and a fist fight almost occurred once over a scheduling conflict.

### **Personal Home Pages and Interactive Forums**

Besides e-mail and surfing the Net, many Winonans create their own personal home pages. Talented teens, business people, and families use these pages to describe themselves and their interests.

Bicycling, bicycle trails and the Winona Bike Trail Committee are the subjects of "The Winona Connection" Web site by Rene Woodworth.

Al Mueller maintains information on his home page for criminal justice students and others interested in the Winona Police Department. Jim Carroll and others from Winona's medical professions are working on a Web site to

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## FirstCallNet™

Information and Referral (I&R) programs, such as United Way's First Call for Help® and Dakota County's Information and Referral system, exist to link people (families) in need with the best suited agency or service in the community to meet that need. The programs accomplish this goal by referring callers to community resources to meet their health and human service needs, assessing situations and serving as a conduit to community agencies, and providing support services such as coordination with agencies and troubleshooting for community residents.

Currently, the two programs maintain separate computerized databases with information on over 2500 health and human service organizations throughout the seven county metropolitan area. These databases are the foundation for the information and referral programs which annually serve over 130,000 people through five core sites and over 170 network sites. FirstCallNet will combine the existing databases into one comprehensive, easy-to-use information base where all partners and collaboratives will have a single generic source to meet their information needs. Developing this infrastructure will eventually allow many access points throughout the state, making information on resources available to all Minnesotans while eliminating duplication in maintenance of the data.

FirstCallNet is a collaborative effort of Dakota County/Fast Forward, United Way of Minneapolis Area and United Way of the St Paul Area in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Minnesota Information and Referral Alliance and the University of Minnesota. Funding provided in part by The McKnight Foundation and ACCESS Minnesota Project/Department of Commerce.

For more information, contact Kathy O'Connor at United Way of Minneapolis, (612) 340-7638.

# U on-line connects rural, urban youth

The 40 "University On-Line" students who sprawled on dorm couches to write e-mail and surf the Net were younger than the average University of Minnesota-Crookston student by at least eight years.

The soon-to-be-seventh graders spent a week on the Crookston campus this summer where they learned about computers, the Internet, and each other. Half hailed from rural areas in northwest Minnesota, the other half from urban St. Paul. The racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse group also had equal numbers of boys and girls.

That carefully selected mix of students helped University On-Line, a pilot program sponsored by the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Extension Service, the Crookston school district, and the Northwest Minnesota Initiative Fund, meet one of its primary

goals: to promote understanding and acceptance of difference.

"We all had our own thoughts about what the people from the different towns are like," Crookston student Amanda Carlson said. "Many of the Ramsey County kids thought that we

Crookston people would be like Hillbillies. Everyone is different here but we are all getting along together."

University On-Line also exposed the students to computers as communication and information tools. Students practiced writing and sending e-mail messages, learned how to use Microsoft Word for Windows, explored the Internet, and desktop published a newsletter.

"Kids see computers in terms of games," says Trudy Dunham, a research fellow with the Center for 4-H Youth Development who helped plan the program. "We wanted to help them have a bigger view of computers and what they can do."

Coordinators plan to offer the program again next summer if funding can be secured.

For more information contact Stacey Halpern (612) 626-1601



Terry, Josh and Kyla try out the U On-Line

## The University of Minnesota commitment to children youth and family electronic outreach

The University of Minnesota has a long history of commitment to the well-being of children, youth and families through teaching, research and outreach. One way the University demonstrates their commitment is through sponsorship of the Cooperative Extension System's CYFERNet and the Children, Youth and Family Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse (CEC), the union of information technology and children, youth and family research. These information services can help professionals and families find answers to questions about parenting, models for program development, and support materials for grant writing.

CYFERNet provides unique access to information and resources developed by the Cooperative Extension Service Children, Youth and Family Network in the areas of child care, community collaborations, family resiliency, health, and science and technology literacy.

Two examples of resources on CYFERNet are the full text:

*Welfare Reform and the Role of Extension Programming:* a wealth of statistical information on the well-being of families in the USA, interesting insights into the diversity of families "on welfare" and poverty in our country, and the implications for children, youth and family programming.

*Collaboration Framework ... Addressing Community Capacity:* a tool to assist individuals and communities in understanding the complexities of collaboration.

CYFERNet's web address is: <http://www.mes.umn.edu/CYFERNet>

CEC's information is organized into dynamic collections of current materials which showcase work of the University, the community and the Consortium in theme areas such as Fathering, Adoption, Diversity, and Young Children. Other features

of CEC include a calendar of events, and a list of University experts in family issues.

Two examples of resources on CEC are the full text:

*Minnesota Kids: A Closer Look 1996 Data Book:* a joint project of the Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota and Congregations Concerned for Children providing a statistical profile of Minnesota's children and suggestions for action on their behalf.

*Children in the Shadows: The Fate of Children in Neglecting Families.* Proceedings of the conference held at the University of Minnesota.

CEC's web address is: <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu>. We invite you to take a look and pass on your comments and suggestions. For additional information on CEC call Lori Bock at (612) 625-7251.

For additional information on CYFERNet call Trudy Dunham at (612) 624-2247.

## Challenge of Information Competence

Now that we've splashed, surfed and virtually drowned in that sea of information, experience confirms the imperative — even urgency — of serious attention to the complex challenge of information competence. Though definitions of information literacy abound, they commonly incorporate and build on text and computer literacy:

An information literate person is one who:

- recognizes that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision-making;
- evaluates information;
- integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge;
- uses information in critical thinking and problem solving

— *National Forum on Information Literacy: Summary of findings, 1992 (list is not complete).*

Why now? The time is right - and fleeting - to focus on information competence. The vast resources we are investing in information and communications technology will be realized only when users understand not only the hardware but the content of the information they locate, apply and create. Inattention to content and user skills builds systems that fall short of their full potential. Concerted attention to the competence of information users and creators capitalizes on a singular opportunity for creative and systemic change in the ways that Minnesotans approach their economic, educational and political future.

Who? Though information competence is at the very core of education reform at the K-12 level, it neither begins nor ends there. The skills and attitudes of inquiry are instilled and nurtured among the very young; and the essence of the lifelong learning experience demands and constantly refines information competence. The difficulty is that information literacy is implicit, ubiquitous and little understood. This tremendous jungle of information, combined with the constant need for more information, creates a unique challenge which has yet to be addressed and a potential yet untapped.

How? To a great extent, we've mastered the easy strokes of the information age. We can and we will do more of the same - buy more tools, improve the infrastructure, facilitate access and expand the sea of information. We need now to design, create and put in place systems based on information competence as a priority. Only then will we craft learning strategies and shape institutions that focus on the potential, not just of the technology, but of Minnesotans themselves.

For additional information, contact Mary Treacy, Director, Metronet at (612) 646-0475.

## Telecommunications and Information Society Policy Forum

The Telecommunications and Information Society Policy Forum at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute was launched in the fall of 1995 and is directed by Dr. Milda K. Hedblom, Senior Associate at the Institute. It was founded in response to a great transformation, one which is leading to an information society.

Life at home, school, and work will be profoundly different as information services and telecommunications tools continue to weave themselves ever more deeply into the fabric of our lives. In order to benefit from this change, families need affordable access, they need training for navigation on information networks (rather like driver's training) and they need diverse content. However, not everyone agrees about the best policies and choices for assuring this.

The Forum is a neutral arena where varied stakeholders come together to clarify key issues and desirable outcomes in the search for a better information future for Minnesota.

For further information, or to join our mailing, fax, or email list, contact program assistant, Greg Earhart, (612) 625-2099 or gearhart@hhh.umn.edu.

*Data, data everywhere, and not a thought to think...*

—Jesse H. Shera

## Traveling the Internet together

### Internet training for beginners

The Children, Youth and Family Consortium offers training sessions on how to access and use the information available on the Internet. Sessions are customized to fit your expertise level and time requirements.

Sessions can include:

- a basic explanation of what the Internet is and how it works
- hands on experience accessing the Internet
- demonstrations of existing web sites
- instructions on how to use web browsers and search engines
- information about list serves, discussion groups and Internet email capabilities
- an introduction to creating your own web page

If your group, department, organization or agency is interested in scheduling training sessions call the Consortium at (612) 626-1212 or Lori Bock at (612) 625-7251 for additional information.

# Connection Corner

## **MENTORING OPPORTUNITY:** Young Women's Leadership Project (YWCLP)

The League of Women Voters of Minneapolis (LWVMpls) is looking for mentors for its new Young Women's Community Leadership Project (YWCLP). The project, designed to help young women ages 14-18 develop their leadership potential, grew out of concern over recent findings that many adolescent girls lack self-esteem, self-confidence and opportunities for personal development. The League has been a training ground for women leaders for the past 75 years, and this project will bring the strength of its experiences to young women in our community.

The LWVMpls is working with Minneapolis schools to identify young women who have the potential for community leadership. The 27 young women selected for this year's program are a diverse group from four Minneapolis public high schools — Edison, Henry, Roosevelt and Washburn. Plans are being

developed to expand the project into other Minneapolis high schools and to work with approximately 60 young women next year.

A vital component of the YWCLP is the mentorship program. Its focus is to provide the young women with a positive, on-going relationship with caring adults. In addition to contributing directly to the future of our community, mentors will have the opportunity to come together with other women leaders serving as mentors. A year long commitment is requested. Mentor training will be conducted by Twin Cities One to One and the League will provide follow-up discussions to support the work of the volunteer mentors.

Please contact the LWVMpls (333-6319) if you are interested in becoming a YWCLP mentor.

## **Summer School Opportunity in Child Abuse Prevention Studies (CAPS)**

A graduate 3 credit class in Child Abuse Prevention: Research and Theory (SW5301) will be offered during a special term, June 17, 1996 through June 21, 1996 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in McNeal Hall on the St. Paul Campus. This interdisciplinary course distinguishes

risk and protective factors in understanding abuse and violence against children. The course focus is primary and secondary interventions, and designing resilience strategies for children and families. Former CAPS students repeatedly state that "everyone working with children and families should take this class." Marti Erickson, Director of the Children, Youth and Family Consortium, was the co-developer of this successful CAPS core curricula and continues to be a valued guest faculty. SW5301 is the prerequisite course for the CAPS Level I and Level II certificate in child abuse prevention or child abuse protection. Professionals working in, or interested in social work, early childhood education, child psychology, family social services, child protection, law, child and family advocacy, human services, preschool and elementary educators, and others working with families, will find this course both stimulating and helpful.

For further information or a brochure on the program, call Ann Ahlquist, School of Social Work, Director of the CAPS program at (612) 624-2742. There is not a prerequisite for this course, however, attendance is limited. To register, call the University of Minnesota CEE at (612) 625-3333.

# Consortium Update

## **Advisory Council Members Conclude Terms**

The Children, Youth and Family Consortium extends a big thank you to Don Fraser, John Couchman, Carol Ericson, Colleen Landkammer, Jane Ranum, Wanda Miller and Jack Rossman as they conclude their three-year term of service on the Consortium's Advisory Council. Their unique strengths and contributions will be missed. It is comforting to know, however, that although they may not be serving in an official capacity, they will remain connected to the Consortium and committed to the well-being of children, youth and families.

## **'Seeds' Public Education Project Launched in April**

Child and youth development experts agree that the causes of increased violence in our society can be

attributed in part to increasing challenges children and youth face during their developmental years. These challenges and ways to "protect" children are outlined in a series of reports called "*Seeds of Violence or Seeds of Promise*," which will be published by the Consortium throughout 1996. The reports, designed in a photo-journalistic format, have been developed to educate and motivate people about the critical issues facing children in Minnesota and throughout the United States.

The first report was released on April 5. For more information about ordering the report, call the Consortium office at (612) 625-7248. Questions about orders larger than 500 copies or project sponsorship can be addressed to Lynn Nelson at (612) 822-8471 or e-mail: [lnelson@hhh.umn.edu](mailto:lnelson@hhh.umn.edu)

## **Who's the Consortium**

**Pauline Iacono** is the Support Services Librarian at the Ramsey County Public Library. Pauline has been on the Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse (CEC) Board for just over a year and a half and particularly enjoyed working on the organization of the Web page

**Robert T. Schultheis** provided his computer technical expertise to the CEC during its annual retreat and subsequent meetings. Formerly with the Management Assistance Project, Bob now has his own computer consulting business for nonprofit agencies.

**Bob Rubinyi**, Associate Professor and Extension Educator-Computer Systems in the Minnesota Extension Service, has served on the CEC Advisory Board for several years. Bob is a great resource to organizations on how the World Wide Web can be used to access children, youth and family resources.

**And the Consortium is You!**

# Consortium Calendar

- May 28-30 “*Challenges of Change*,” the Fourth Annual Statewide Children’s Mental Health Conference. Northland Inn Executive Conference Center, Brooklyn Park, MN.
- June 1 National Day of Commitment for Children, Washington, D.C. Plans are being made for over 1 million children to attend. Call Children’s Defense Fund (612) 227-6121.
- June 1 “*Co-Parenting: Information and Guidance for Divorcing Parents*.” Sponsored by Storefront/Youth Action. Held at Family Resource Center, Hopkins; \$30.00. For more information, call (612) 830-1331.
- June 3 - July 26 University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research, 49th Annual Summer Institute. Graduate level courses in survey research techniques conducted by staff of the Survey Research Center. For more information, call (313) 764-6596.
- June 6 - 8 “*National Conference on Children Exposed to Family Violence*.” Austin, TX. For more information, call (903) 595-6600.
- June 14 Family Night at the Minnesota Twins games. Fathers and their families can have fun and acknowledge important roles of parents in lives of children. Contact Edward Owens, Urban Ventures Center for Fathering (612) 822-1628 or Tim Balke, the Consortium (612) 625-7243.
- June 15 Community Celebration of Fatherhood. Father-Child and Fathers group activities. St. Cloud; 9:30 - 12:30. Contact Glen Palm at (612) 255-2132.
- June 29 - July 2 “*Supporting Families in a Changing World*,” Fifth Annual International Conference sponsored by Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. St. Louis, Mo; \$195. For more information, call (314) 432-4330 or email at patnc@cyborgnet.com
- July 4 - 7 The 17th Annual GLPCI and COLAGE Conference, a conference for Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Gay Parents, their Children, Friends and Family. Regal Hotel, Minneapolis. For more information, call (612) 924-3049.
- July 15 - August 9 “*Promoting Resiliency in Families and Children at Risk: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*,” University of Wisconsin-Madison. Open to the public; no charge. For more information, email Jo Futrell at jfutrell@facstaff.wisc.edu
- August 17 “*Fifth Annual Festival of Fathers*.” Bethune Park, 919 Fremont Avenue No., Mpls; 11:00 - 3:00 pm. For more information, call Patrick Morley at Camden’s Future, Way to Grow (612) 529-5403 or Neil Tift at Fathers Resource Center (612) 874-1509 or Dwaine Simms at MELD (612) 332-7563.
- September 13 National Restorative Justice Training Institute; Engaging the Community in Restorative Justice. Earle Brown Continuing Education Center, St. Paul. For more information, call School of Social Work (612) 625-4209 or email ctr4rjm@che2.che.umn.edu
- September 16 - 21 Eleventh National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, Washington, DC. For more information, call Research Assessment Management, Inc. (301) 589-8242.
- September 25 - 27 Sixteenth Annual National Rural Families Conference: “*Changing Realities of Working with Children and Families*.” Manhattan, KS. For more information, call (913) 532-5575.
- November 6 - 8 “*Common Challenge/Common Ground*,” Campus-Community Collaborations for Change. Sponsored by the Minnesota Campus Compact. For more information, call (612) 962-4951.

If you have items for the Connection Corner or Calendar of the Fall issue, Please send them to the Consortium office by September 30, 1996.

## WinonaNet - continued from page 6

provide the community with practical medical information and assistance.

Some of these home pages draw in readers from far-off places, either because of ties back to the Winona area or because the topics are of specialized interest.

The WinonaNet forums provide yet another way that Winonans use the Internet. Whether discussing why the new drive-through MacDonalds doesn’t have a full menu, betting on when the first barge will break through the ice, or debating the merits of a new school, Winonans can voice their opinions in “real time.”

For more information, contact Cheryl Davis at (507) 453-3555.

## Web66 - continued from page 6

would be like to be an adult,” says Chris.

The site has won awards, attention, and accolades from people like Vice President Al Gore, media like PC magazine and PBS, and—most importantly—students, teachers, and adults around the world. Web66 currently makes about 20,000 connections a day.

For more information, contact Stacey Halpern at (612) 626-1601

## Quick reference guide

### WWW free access

#### Free-Net

<http://freenet.msp.mn.us>.  
Although its in the public testing phase, they are now accepting registrations.

#### Access Minnesota

<http://www.mes.umn.edu/accessmn>

### Starting points for children

#### Yahooligans

<http://www.yahooligans.com>

#### The Lycos index

<http://www.lycos.com>

### UofM Internet resources for children youth and family issues

#### CEC

<http://www.cyfc.umn.edu>.

#### CYFERNet

<http://www.mes.umn.edu/>

#### WEB66

<http://web66.coled.umn.edu>.

### WWW screening sites

#### Yahooligans

<Http://www.yahooligans.com/docs/safety/parents.html>

#### Net Nanny -email

[netnanny@netnanny.com](mailto:netnanny@netnanny.com)

#### Cyber Patrol -email

[info@microsys.com](mailto:info@microsys.com)

#### Surf Watch -email

[info@surfwatch.com](mailto:info@surfwatch.com)

### Other Information

#### Minnesota

<Http://www.state.mn.us>

#### List of Access Providers

<Http://www.maven.com/mn/provide.html>

#### Whitehouse

<Http://www.whitehouse.gov>

## Consortium Connections On-line

This newsletter is available on the Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse (CEC) on the Internet at <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu> approximately one week before the paper copies are mailed.

If you would prefer to read the newsletter on our web site and NOT receive the paper copy please call the Consortium at (612) 626-1212. You can request that your name be removed from the newsletter portion of our mailing list. You will continue to receive all other mailings.

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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