

## E-mail and the Internet demystified

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### Introduction

This article is for any members who are uncomfortable with the idea of using our website or communicating by electronic mail (e-mail). It is intended to give them some background and show how easy it is to get onto the information superhighway. Most public libraries run introductory courses for complete novices and hospital librarians are also usually very happy to help staff in this way. Of course, it is not compulsory to have your own computer equipment because you can use any public or shared terminal (e.g. those at work or in the library, or even that of a neighbour or friend) to look at our website and to set up an e-mail account. The next section is intended to explain *how* it works, but if you just want to *do* it, skip this and follow the instructions below!

### The Internet and the World Wide Web

E-mail delivers correspondence sent from the computer you are using to any other machine in the world, as long as both terminals are connected to the Internet via a telephone line. To send and receive e-mail, you need to open an e-mail account. When a message is sent, it is saved in the mailbox of your Internet service provider (ISP), and then delivered to the recipient(s) the next time they log on to their e-mail accounts. Documents can be sent along with the message as attachments. Once received, these documents can be amended if desired and/or printed out. The same e-mail message can be sent to multiple recipients simultaneously and will be delivered in seconds. The account holder can use any computer in any country to send or view e-mail.

The term Internet is derived from the international network of computers that are accessible to anyone, anywhere, who has access to a computer and a telephone line. The terminal has to be connected via the telephone line to an ISP. All ISPs are linked to each other across the globe, creating a world-wide interconnecting network called the World Wide Web (WWW) or Web for short. The Web stores information in the form of websites, each with its own 'address'

to specify its location within the WWW. To tap into this vast repository of information, a few pieces of equipment are required, i.e. a computer, a modem, a telephone line, an internet account and a browser. Modem is short for modulator-demodulator, a device that converts digital signals generated by a computer into analogue signals that can travel along a telephone line and *vice versa*. A browser is a computer program, such as Microsoft's Internet Explorer, that allows you to visit websites around the world. It decodes documents written in HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and displays the pages of the website on your computer screen. Websites can be created by anyone, from large commercial concerns, professional bodies and government agencies to shops and small businesses to private individuals with something that they want to share with the world.

### Using e-mail

The first step is to set up your e-mail account. You will have to come up with the name you want to use, i.e. your username. For example, someone named Alison Pamela Jones might choose 'AlisonPJones' as her username. Common names will usually have been taken by someone else already, so you might have to be imaginative and create something like 'APJ123'. Next, you have to choose where your account will be held in the same way that you select a bank to hold your money. Popular places, i.e. domains, are Gmail at Google, Hotmail from Microsoft, BT Internet and Yahoo. You need to go to the website of the domain you have chosen in order to set up the account.

Probably the easiest way to get started is by using the computer of a friend or relative who can point you in the right direction, and unravel such mysteries as single- or double-clicking with a mouse or keypad. The computer will already have something called a search engine installed. This is a program that will search the Internet for the website you require. If the search engine is Google, for example, then it will be easiest to choose 'Gmail' for your e-mail account because, when the homepage of Google is on the screen, there will be an option right in front of you to

click on Gmail. This will open up a new page with an invitation to 'Create an account'. From there, you simply follow the instructions on each page. Your e-mail address will then be something like 'APJ@gmail.com'. Gmail has a help button you can click on that will walk you through how to manage your e-mail account, and how to compose, send and receive messages.

### **Visiting the ACPWH website**

The easiest way to look at our website (<http://acpwh.csp.org.uk/>) is to open the search engine installed on the computer (e.g. Yahoo or Google). The homepage of the search engine will feature an empty box where you can type in keywords; in this case, you might type 'ACPWH'. Then press the 'Enter' key on the computer keyboard and a new page will come up with a list of search results. At the top of the list is likely to be '[acpwh.csp.org.uk/](http://acpwh.csp.org.uk/)'. The search engine is smart enough to deliver the desired result whether you know the exact address of the

website or whether you type something like 'women's health physiotherapy'. The headline of each result is a hyperlink, i.e. a reference to a document, which takes you to that website when clicked on.

You may notice a narrow address bar showing the *exact* address of the particular page you are viewing at the very top of any Internet page. This usually begin with 'http://www', followed by name of the website and then the '/' symbol (i.e. a forward slash), and then other symbols and letters denoting the specific location of that page on the WWW. Having arrived at our website, click on the menu of options to navigate around the pages of the site. Remember that the 'Members Only' section can only be accessed if Fitwise Management Ltd has a record of your CSP number. If you are having problems using the site, you can contact Fitwise by telephone or by using your newly acquired e-mail account!

**Karen Radford**

*Journal Websites Editor*