

Part Two: Harddrives, modems, and software, oh my!

BY DANIEL CLARK

The inspiration has now undoubtedly struck that everyone needs to be on the net. That is what this three piece series is all about. If you want to go all the way into this amazing 21st century technology, equipment will have to be purchased, and services ordered. Money will have to be spent — unless you have a hacker friend.

The Internet is constantly expanding and growing. Plans are currently underway to give birth to a second network that will be designated specially for non-commercial uses. The other major development in the Internet is the involvement of cable companies in its expansion.

The easiest — and least flexible — way to get onto the Internet is to buy a special attachment (which includes a keyboard and a telephone outlet) for a television set which turns the TV into a very limited computer. It can only be used for the Internet, but only costs about \$700, plus \$30 per month. This service is not yet available in Halifax but will be soon. However, what you can do may be limited by this service.

Since the above service isn't available locally, one might want to consider the most popular method of accessing the Internet, via personal computer. This allows for the depth and flexibility of computer access, and also provides the more standard uses with which computers are associated (word processing, games, etc.).

The computer used to access the Internet should have the following: a Pentium, Power Mac (at least 75 MHz) or one of the new

686 processors; 12 to 32 megabytes of RAM (the more the better); a modem (at least 14,400 Bytes Per Second (14.4 K)); a phone line, and an Internet connection.

Dalhousie students already have access to an internet connection as they can call the Dalhousie server for free. However, the Dalhousie server tends to be slightly busy, slow, and sometimes hard to access.

For a possibly faster and less busy connection there are several private Internet providers in the Halifax area. Connections can cost as little as \$5 per month. If one lacks patience, these services are more convenient than the Dal server, and most of them will provide all the necessary software for free. Some even have 24 hour support.

The other options are conglomerate services (like AOL, Compuserve, and Prodigy). These services are primarily slanted to providing their own services first and Internet access second. Most conglomerates specialize in chat rooms, online periodicals, and other specialized services. They are notoriously busy, and their service and support is often brusque, but they are usually very reasonably priced and offer certain extras (anonymous Email, World Wide Web page space, and more).

When choosing an Internet Provider there are several things that must be kept in mind: cost, service, access availability, and support. Smaller providers will often be cheaper, less busy, and be willing to go further for your business. Large national providers like Sympatico or AOL Canada may be busier but will usually

compensate with larger modem banks. They also may be more expensive, but will probably offer 24 hour support.

If at all possible a person new to the Internet should never choose a service which does not offer a locally dialled access number, or a 1-800 number. Most Internet connections deal in hours, not minutes, and this can be quite taxing to the phone bill. This is the one area where Dal's free local service is definitely superior.

There are several different types of Internet connections, each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and each has its own requirements. For all intensive purposes they break down into two categories: graphic connections, and text connections. Text connections are usually available for free (like the Dal IS2) while graphic connections are more expensive. Graphic connections support text data, but not vice versa.

There is an interesting way around these administrative taxes. Free graphics hookups and viewers that work through your e-mail account can be found on the internet and are available to download through ftp. This is where having a friend who is a computer science major can be beneficial.

As for software one rarely has to worry about it. Most Internet providers will supply it as part of their startup fee. Even if they don't, Internet software is widely available, both commercially and for free on the Internet. It is advisable to get the absolute minimum needed, and then update once you have your connection.

There are many versions and brands of software that are available for Internet use. The following is a list of software one should acquire along with the WWW addresses where the software is available for free:

— Netscape (www.netscape.com) or Microsoft Internet Explorer (www.microsoft.com) is needed to browse the WWW.

— WSFTP (www.ipswitch.com/pd_wsftp.html) is needed for file transfer or FTP.

— There is a good Telnet program available at (www.teleport.com/~rsi/anzioscl.html).

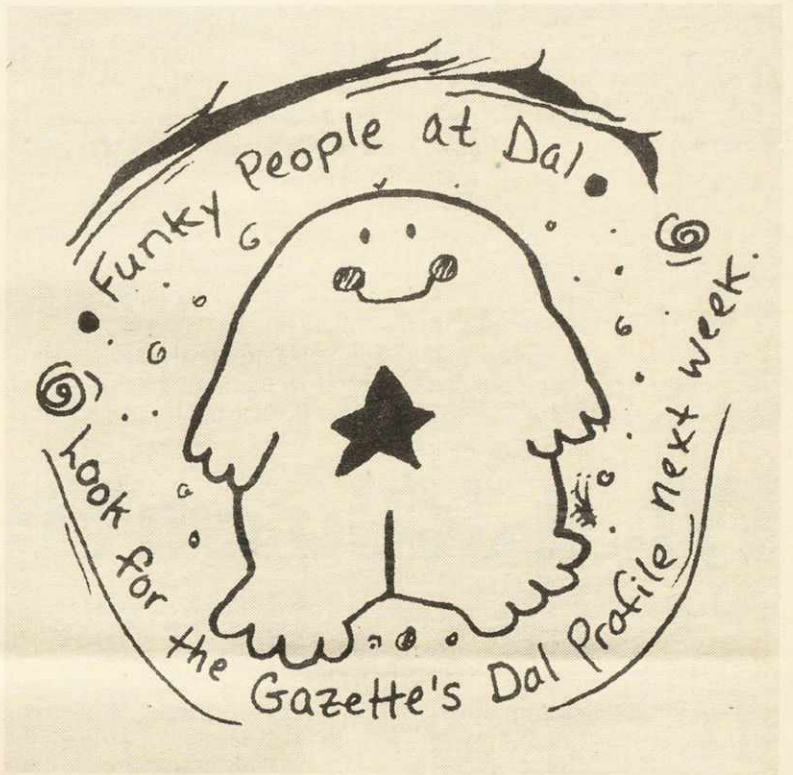
— The excellent Email program, Eudora, can be found at

(www.eudora.com).

The Internet can be a daunting place for the uninitiated, but it does not have to be. Dal offers all sorts of facilities and services to make one's ride a little easier. Most Dal computers have free access to the Internet where skills can be learned and practiced.

If confusion should strike, then try talking to the kind folks in the basement of the Killam Library. They are more than happy to help with any problems users might have. If looking for a place to go on the Internet try the Gazette Online at <http://is2.dal.ca/~gazette/>.

Next week: Dan discusses surfing superpowers — and you thought the Silver Surfer was cool!



LOOKING FOR A SUMMER JOB!!!

HOUSING AND CONFERENCE SERVICES SUMMER JOB POSTINGS ARE AVAILABLE AS OF JANUARY 20, 1997 AT THE STUDENT EMPLOYMENT CENTRE IN THE STUDENT UNION BUILDING.

YOU MUST BE A DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF KINGS COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF N.S. STUDENT TO APPLY.

THE DEADLINE FOR APPLYING IS FEBRUARY 7, 1997 AT 4:30 PM.

Please Note: An information session has been scheduled for January 22, 1997 from 4- 5:00pm in room 224/226 of the Student Union Building.

Lookin' for a date?

JAN. 20

- Last day to register without late fee.
- Last day to add/drop B classes.
- Last day to withdraw from R classes without a W on your transcript.
- Last day to change R classes from credit to audit and vice versa.

FEB. 7

- Munro day — school closed.

FEB. 17

- Last day to withdraw from B classes without a W on transcript.

FEB. 24-28

- Study break — school closed.

MARCH 3

- Classes resume.

MARCH 17

- Last day to withdraw from B and R classes.

MARCH 28

- Good Friday — school closed.

APRIL 11

- Classes end.

APRIL 16

- Exams begin.

APRIL 30

- Exams end.