

Using the Internet

The Internet is a vast, expanding, worldwide network, available to anyone with access to a computer, modem and telecommunications. It provides access to both email and the World Wide Web (**www** or 'the web'). This consists of many millions of screen pages of text, images and sound files, made available by individuals or organisations including governments, companies and NGOs. The information is made available on 'web pages' which are located at a specific addresses called a 'website'.

Websites are viewed by a computer programme called a browser, of which two popular ones are Internet Explorer and Netscape. Exploring the web is called web-surfing or surfing.

Every website has a unique address, known as a domain. The address generally starts with **www** and ends with certain letter combinations. Domains can be registered (owned) by governments, organizations or individuals. Normally, the letter combinations **.com** and **.biz** are used by companies and individuals, with **.org** and **.net** used by non governmental and international organizations, and **.ac** and **.edu** by academic and educational institutions. National governments, government agencies and ministries usually use **.gov** or **.gouv**. Sometimes an address ends with a suffix denoting its country such as **.tz** (Tanzania), **.ke** (Kenya), **.mu** (Mauritius) or **.za** (South Africa).

GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR FINDING INFORMATION

The Internet is a mine of information, but often the information being sought is hidden amongst thousands of irrelevant websites. To visit a known website, open the web browser, connect to the Internet, and type in the website address. It is very important to use precisely the correct spelling, including full stops (i.e. dots) and any underscores. Any typing error will prevent the web browser from locating the website. Lower case letters are generally used for website addresses. Where **http://** is written in front of **www** in a website address, it signifies the protocol or language used by computers. Normally browsers will accept a website address starting with **www** only.

Frequently-used website addresses can be stored in the browser memory, typically under the heading 'Favourites'. This means that the address does not need be typed in each time a user wishes to access the website.

Internet users searching for sites for which no details are known, should use 'Search Engines' and 'Directories'. Web directories are organized website listings put together by human reviewers. By comparison, a search engine indexes websites and allows users to search its database for sites on particular subjects. Hundreds of search engines are available on the Internet, in many languages. However no single search engine has a complete index of all existing websites. Some of the main English language search engines are Google (**www.google.com**), and AltaVista (**www.altavista.com**). Directories such as MSN (**www.msn.com**) and Yahoo (**www.yahoo.com**) list sites organised by subject. The site **http://directory.google.com** may also prove useful, being a 'search engine of search engines', comprising a database of hundreds of search engines, covering a wide range of topics in different languages. For example, a typical subject-specific search engine, held in this database and of use

to MPAs is **www.globalislands.net**. Within the Toolkit, there are some website addresses that appear very long and complicated, such

as:**www.leeds.ac.uk/civil/ceri/water/tphe/publicat/pdm/india/india.html**. These are short cuts that direct the browser to a specific page of the website producing the information, in this case, Leeds University in UK **www.leeds.ac.uk**.

The specific location of a page on a website changes frequently unfortunately. Thus, if a website address does not work, users should try accessing the main organisation, and searching through their index and contents to find the right page. When searching for a specific item such as a publication or report, many websites have their own search programmes that reduce search time.

USEFUL TIPS

Surfing the Internet for information can be very time consuming especially when connection speeds are slow, as is often the case in the WIO. The following are some tips to help speed up information retrieval:

- Use the correct spelling. Some search engines like Google will deduce a spelling mistake and suggest alternative words, others will not.
- Be specific and group key words. Typing 'marine protected areas' rather than 'protected areas' will result in a much smaller and more relevant set of websites.
- Use quotation marks around a group of words to search for the group in that particular order.
- Use more than one group of words, in separate quotation marks. This makes the search even more specific. e.g. "'marine protected areas' and 'eco-tourism'".
- Use capital letters for names and proper nouns. e.g. 'Reunion' will access information on the country, whereas 'reunion' will also include meetings of old friends and colleagues!
- If searching for a specific website, type the name but omit the 'www' and '.com' which are not regarded as search engine terminology.
- Try out the advanced features of the search engine. Advanced search filter options, such language, text, video or images can again reduce the unwanted material.
- Try out features of the Internet browser, such as the 'Find on Page' command, to locate the specific reference to the content being searched for. This feature can help determine quickly if a website is useful or not and save a lot of time.