

Internet Access Options

BY RICH LARSEN, NETWORK SPECIALIST
(PART II, CONTINUED FROM SPRING 2001 NEWSLETTER)

Option 4— Cable Internet

Some cable television companies are now offering access to the Internet via the same cables that bring the signal to your television. This service is primarily for residential customers.

Transmission rates depend on the type of service offered. Similar to DSL, the service can be asymmetrical or symmetrical, again depending on the ISP. Maximum speeds conceivable are upwards of 10MB although 1.5MB is probably more true to fact.

Availability depends on what the local cable company has to offer. In one instance, the Web site stated that it wasn't available in the area yet, until a phone call directly to the vendor resulted in a discovery that it was indeed available.

Hardware required is provided by the cable company for either sale or lease. To lease, they tack on an additional charge to the monthly fee. They can also provide the network interface card (NIC) that needs to be installed in the PC.

The computer is configured as if it is sitting directly on a local area network that is connected to the Internet. An optional user interface is provided, or a Windows system can use the built-in Internet Explorer and e-mail programs. Because the system is connected directly to the Internet, it is a good idea to install personal firewall software.

Additional workstations can be configured and installed in a local network for an additional fee per workstation. It is possible also to use Internet sharing software to bypass this overhead, but it may be a violation of the end user agreement.

Pricing for this service starts around \$40 a month. This may include an e-mail address and possibly some personal Web

page space. Again, this is intended to be a residential service and may not be available in some business areas.

Option 5— Satellite or DirecPC

The company that provides the digital TV satellite dish service (DSS) DirecTV, has an Internet access service, DirecPC. The service is available across the nation with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii

DirecPC requires a small satellite dish, a MODEM, a Satellite MODEM, and either a USB port or an available PCI slot in the computer. Purchase of the dish and Satellite MODEM is required and start around \$200. Once the dish is installed and aligned with the Satellite, then the ISP service plan is chosen.

Communication with the Internet is accomplished through the MODEM and the satellite dish. Outbound data is sent through the MODEM to a local dial-up and received data is routed through DirecPC's servers, sent to the Satellite and "beamed" to the dish and subsequently, to the satellite MODEM. The downstream data is transmitted from the satellite at around 400K. Data being sent from the PC is limited to the rate of the dial up connection.

Pricing depends on the service chosen. Plans range from \$20 a month up to \$50 a month for unlimited access. It should be noted that the lower priced options do not include an ISP for the dial up connection. Business plans are also available, ranging from \$120 a month for 5 users to \$240 a month for 20 users.


Option 6— T1 / T3 Dedicated Connection

T1 and T3 circuits are the fastest and the most expensive options for Internet

access. These circuits are a dedicated communication line from your site to the ISP. T1 speeds range from 64K upwards to 1.5MB, whereas T3 can run up to 44MB.

The connection to the ISP is constant and therefore makes the Internet available at all times. This is useful if you plan on hosting your own Web site and or e-mail server, or transmitting and receiving large amounts of data. Options with the ISP may include just the connection or they may include full service with Web, domain and e-mail hosting.

Since connection to the T1 is made through a router and places the network directly on the Internet, a firewall is recommended. A firewall is a combination of hardware and software that examines the data being transmitted and allows only that which is authorized by the network administrator. For example, you may allow HTML data (Web pages) through, but restrict Telnet communications (terminal access).

Prices for T1 and T3 can range anywhere between \$400 to \$2000 a month. Installation can run from \$1,000 to \$1,800, plus hardware costs. 

If you have any questions, comments, feedback, or ideas for future newsletter articles, please call us at **(312) 849-3813** or send an e-mail to Mary Beth Sheehan at **MaryBeth@computer-bits.com**.

New CBI On-Site Training Facility Set To Open In October!

Computer Bits, Inc. proudly announces the opening of its brand new, state-of-the-art training facility. Beginning in October, 2001, this facility will give clients and non-clients alike access to superior hands-on training that will cover some of the most popular productivity software products available on the market today. Our facility will be equipped with brand new Dell computers and the latest

flat-screen monitor technology. All classes will be taught by seasoned industry professionals who have extensive experience with the software programs.

Please review the class schedule below, and then let us know if you or someone else in your organization is interested in attending one of these classes. To celebrate the opening of our facility, all attendees who sign up for a October and/or a

November class will receive a \$25 discount per attendee if they reference our newsletter name, *Bits You Can Use...*, when signing up.

Finally, please note that in order to provide excellent instruction, class size will be limited, so get your reservation in today.

Questions? Please contact Mary Beth Sheehan at **(708) 243-5589**.

TRAINING SCHEDULE: OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

<p>MS Word 2000 <i>Beginning</i> Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3 MS Word 2000 <i>Intermediate</i> Oct. 8, Nov. 12, Dec. 10 MS Word 2000 <i>Advanced</i> Oct. 15, Nov. 26, Dec. 17</p>	<p>MS Access 2000 <i>Beginning</i> Oct. 4, Nov. 8, Dec. 6 MS Access 2000 <i>Intermediate</i> Oct. 11, Nov. 15, Dec. 13 MS Access 2000 <i>Advanced</i> Oct. 18, Nov. 29, Dec. 20</p>
<p>WordPerfect 9 <i>Beginning</i> Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5 WordPerfect 9 <i>Intermediate</i> Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 12 WordPerfect 9 <i>Advanced</i> Oct. 17, Nov. 28, Dec. 19</p>	<p>MS PowerPoint 2000 <i>Beginning</i> Oct. 5, Nov. 9, Dec. 7 MS PowerPoint 2000 <i>Intermediate</i> Oct. 12, Nov. 16, Dec. 14 MS PowerPoint 2000 <i>Advanced</i> Oct. 19, Nov. 30, Dec. 21</p>
<p>MS Excel 2000 <i>Beginning</i> Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4 MS Excel 2000 <i>Intermediate</i> Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11 MS Excel 2000 <i>Advanced</i> Oct. 16, Nov. 27, Dec. 18</p>	<p>MS Outlook 2000 Oct. 24, Nov. 1 MS Internet Explorer 5.0 Oct. 22, Nov. 19 iManage Oct. 23, Nov. 2</p>

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Handheld Technology: The Power of PDAs

BY JUSTIN HURTADO, JR., SENIOR CONSULTANT

On June 27, 2001, CBI held its inaugural Breakfast Technology Series seminar, entitled, "Handheld Technology: The Power of PDAs". The following information is excerpted from the handout that was distributed to all seminar attendees. Please note that CBI will be co-presenting another PDA seminar, entitled "Everything You Always Wanted To Know About PDAs, But Didn't Know Who To Ask", on September 26, 2001 at the offices of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council in Chicago. If you or someone from your organization is interested in attending, please contact Mary Beth Sheehan at (708) 243-5589, or visit our Web site at www.computer-bits.com as soon as possible, as seating is limited.

Graffiti:

One of the most common problems that people have using their PDA is mastering *graffiti* writing.

The illustration above shows you how to write letters and numbers on a Palm Handheld device. By simply starting your stroke on the heavy dot and continuing at a natural writing speed, you have mastered Graffiti writing.

"If I have mastered Graffiti, why doesn't my Palm Pilot recognize what I am writing?" There are some simple rules that will help your Palm Pilot. They are:

- Write big and press firmly. Some Palm Pilots

become desensitized and it may be necessary to increase the pressure of your writing as time passes.

- Be sure to write within the designated lines. This will help improve accuracy.

- As mentioned above, write at a natural speed.

Writing at slower speeds may make the Palm Pilot unable to discern when your letters stop and start.

- Calibrate your touch screen often. From your Palm Pilot's applications menu, choose *Preferences*. In the upper right hand corner, choose *Digitizer* from the drop-down menu. Follow the prompts on screen.

- Practice!!! Enter birthdays, anniversaries, contacts, or even notes to yourself so you can become more familiar with Graffiti. You can use various writing games that help you become a proficient PDA user. Palm provides the "Giraffe" writing game to help you practice your graffiti skills.

- Entering Graffiti Shortcuts—

The graffiti shortcut feature is similar to Microsoft Word's Autotext feature. This feature is helpful for writing often used words or phrases, such as: "Review correspondence and make notes to file". You can create a graffiti shortcut "RC" and with 3 simple strokes, you can have the full text "Review correspondence and make notes to file".

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■ To create Graffiti shortcuts, choose *Preferences* from the applications menu. In the upper right hand corner, choose *Shortcuts* from the dropdown menu. Tap *New*. Enter a name for your shortcut and the desired text.

Extending Your PDA to the Internet:

By extending your PDA to the Internet, you can share calendars, to do's and more with co-workers, staff and family. Depending on your work environment, this technology can be customized to suit your needs. You can have access to current information from any place that has Internet access.

If your company utilizes technology such as Lotus Notes or Microsoft Exchange, your company's valuable information can be delivered to your Mobile PDA enabled work force. If your company only has a few PDA enabled users, you may want to try free services such as Yahoo Calendar and Palm Inc.'s MyPalm Portal.

Capabilities:

Your PDA can do more than just contact management and calendaring; there is a plethora of uses. Knowing **WHAT** your PDA can do for you is as important as knowing **HOW** to use it.

Information Overload—Have daily news, stock information, weather or almost anything downloaded to your palm when you synchronize. Companies like "Avantgo", offer predefined channels that you can select and download to your PDA. The Wall Street Journal, GigaLaw, The Weather Channel and CBS Market Watch are only a few of the hundreds of channels available. Even if your favorite website is not a predefined channel, you can add it as your own customized channel.

Backup—Backup, backup, backup!!! It is a well-known fact that backups are very important for your personal computers and network servers. Why wouldn't you want to back up your PDA? There are different hardware and software options available depending on your PDA.

Presentations—Handspring users have the option of transforming their PDAs into a mini projector. The Handspring solution involves an add-on card and software to give you presentation abilities. Although the video appearance is not the best quality, the convenience and mobility is handy. The software is compatible with Microsoft PowerPoint and other popular presentation software.

e-books—PDA users can have the option of reading e-books. There are also great reference materials available such as Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Franklin Electronics' Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine.

Multimedia—You can "convert" your PDA into a multimedia device such as an MP3 player, Digital Camera or Digital Voice Recorder. As with the presentation capabilities mentioned above, while convenient, the quality is not as good as an

actual multimedia device.


"Pocket Versions"—There are many "pocket versions" of your favorite software titles such as Word, Excel, Internet Explorer and Windows Media Player.

Creating and Beaming a Palm Business Card:

Creating

- Create an address for yourself
- Tap the menu icon
- Tap "Select Business" Card
- You will be prompted to confirm your choice of business cards

Beaming your business card

- Verify that both Palm devices are on
- Align them so that the infrared ports are facing each other
- Press and hold the Address Button
- A confirmation message will appear on the receiving Palm Pilot 

Useful Websites:

- <http://in-span.pda.tucows.com/index.html>
- <http://palmtops.about.com/gadgets/palmtops/>
- <http://www.casio.com/personalpcs/>
- <http://www.compaq.com/products/iPAQ/>
- <http://www.handango.com/>
- <http://www.handheldnews.com/>
- <http://www.handspring.com/>
- <http://www.hp.com/jornada/>
- <http://www.palm.com/>
- <http://www.palmgear.com/>
- <http://www.palmspot.com/>
- <http://www.pdabuyersguide.com/>
- <http://www.pdastreet.com/>
- <http://www.royal.com/content/pda/>
- <http://www.zdnet.com/special/filters/sc/pda/>
- <http://www.vtechinfo.com/>
- <http://www.sharp-usa.com/products/ProductsAndSupport/0,1041,,00.html>
- <http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/pilotsoftware/awards/awards.html>

Ask the Experts

BY JUSTIN HURTADO, JR., SENIOR CONSULTANT

A client recently e-mailed...

Q: Dear Justin,

How complicated and expensive would it be to have our new copier configured to be a printer on our network? What experience have you had with these set-ups—good or bad, reliable or not, etc.?

There is a substantial extra cost for the copier if I have the software and micro-processor added so that it can be configured as a printer, and I am trying to decide whether to do it. What do you think?

—Bruce

A: Dear Bruce,

First, I think it's great that you are interested in the idea of using your new copier as a printer. It really isn't too complicated. Once connected, all of your computers will view the copier as a printer. One advantage is that your "printer/copier" would have advanced features such as collating, double sided printing, etc. when used as a printer or copier. Other advantages are that you would have an additional printer in case of equipment failure, etc., you would have higher speed printing, and you would also have the means to perform some cost recovery. Basically, you'll gain additional resources, but with a minimal increase of maintenance, toners and other miscellaneous expenses.

The hardware cost depends on brand/model, capabilities, and a few other specifics. Some copier models have the network/printer capabilities built directly into the copier unit, while others require an additional computer (or "network box") to provide the network/printer capabilities. Oftentimes, the required set-up services can be provided by either the copier

vendor or the "network box" vendor. They usually ask for certain network information and configure the copier to connect to the network. They also may configure the workstations. The workstation configuration is as simple as adding an additional printer. If they are unable to provide any of those services, we can assist.

Like I mentioned, the configuration is fairly simple. Reliability-wise, I would say it's as reliable as your shared laser printer. Expect a slight increase in costs such as toners, paper, and electricity. Your networked copier can be used to print research materials (and other large documents) quickly, while leaving your other printer available for staff to print their documents.

I have implemented this solution with clients of your size and have had great results. I have also dealt with these issues for larger firms, and they generally don't go with this solution. Their reasoning is that they typically have copy rooms/attendants who manage the flow of documents, operations issues, inventory control, etc. The solution that you are investigating seems to fit best with small- to mid-sized organizations.

Good luck, and let us know if we can be of further assistance to you!

—Justin

Do you have a question that you would like to submit for consideration and publication in a future issue of *Bits You Can Use...?* If so, please e-mail it to MaryBeth@computer-bits.com.

Hints & Tips Microsoft Word—AutoText

BY JAMES J. MARTINEZ,
NETWORK CONSULTANT

AutoText offers a way to store and quickly insert text, tables, and other items that you use frequently.

Microsoft Word comes with a number of built-in AutoText entries that are divided into different categories. For example, if you're working on a letter, Word can offer letter-specific AutoText entries, such as salutations and closings.


In addition, you can create your own AutoText entries. This is useful if you often use the same large or complex item and don't want to have to reinsert or retype it. AutoText can also be useful if you need to quickly generate a fax cover sheet or a form letter. AutoText entries can store from 5 characters to multiple pages, and are stored in the Normal template, making them available to all documents.

To create and store an AutoText entry:

- Highlight the text you want to store as an AutoText entry.
- Press and hold the Alt button, then press F3.
- When Microsoft Word suggests a name for the AutoText entry, accept the name or type a new one, then click **OK**.

Hint: Try to avoid commonly used words or names when naming your AutoText entries.

To insert an AutoText entry:

- Click in the document where you want to insert the AutoText entry.
- Type the first few characters in the AutoText entry's name.
- When Microsoft Word suggests the complete AutoText entry, press Enter or F3 to accept the entry, To reject the AutoText entry, keep typing.
- Once the AutoText entry is inserted, you can make edits as necessary. 

Did You Know...

Computer Bits, Inc. (CBI) is a firm that specializes, and has a great deal of experience with, networking, system analysis, database development, training and Web development.

Did you know, however, that CBI can also help your organization with the following eclectic list of I.T.-related challenges?

- ✓ Audio/Visual support for meetings and conferences (setup and integration of projectors, laptops, etc.)
- ✓ Digital video production
- ✓ Direct mail management (holiday lists, special mailings, etc.)
- ✓ Formalized reviews of current I.T. status (hardware, software, personnel)
- ✓ Litigation support (Summation, Live Note, e-Binder)
- ✓ Personal digital assistant (PDA) consulting/integration
- ✓ Physical maintenance of networks
- ✓ Relocation of I.T. equipment
- ✓ Short/long term I.T. Planning
- ✓ Virus protection planning
- ✓ Etc.

Remember, **when you think I.T., think CBI.** If you have questions on any of the services listed above or any other I.T.-related service, please contact Mary Beth Sheehan at **(708) 243-5589.**