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The Internet: Effective Online Communication

Tyrone Adams and Norman Clark
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The Internet: Effective Online Communication is the first textbook to explore the theoretical and practical aspects of the Internet from a communication perspective. The primary goal of the text is to provide students with the information and tools they need to be effective online communicators. In order to be effective communicators, students need to be able to evaluate the vast amount of information available online. Therefore, a secondary goal of the text is to enable students to think critically about online communication. The authors balance the practical aspects of building web sites, using email and participating in net conferences, chatrooms, listserves, MUDs, etc. with the theoretical implications of these activities. The text has a conversational tone and uses plenty of examples, making it a good choice for undergraduate communication students.

The text is divided into five sections. Each section is augmented by a number of Internet links listed on the text's [website](#). Students and faculty alike are encouraged to use the website to obtain additional information and receive chapter updates. Given the constantly changing nature of the Internet, the website has the potential to be an invaluable resource for instructors wanting to include the most recent information in their courses.

Part one provides a thorough historical overview of the internet, discusses the key characteristics of this new communication medium, and compares and contrasts the internet with other communication media.

Parts two, three and four focus on the how-to aspects of the internet. Part two explains how to communicate effectively using the familiar interpersonal interfaces of the internet including email, listserves and newsgroups. This section also explains net conferencing and the lesser known text-based multiuser synchronous interfaces such as MUDs, MOOs, MUSHs, and MUCKs.

Part three discusses conducting research online using search engines, meta search engines, bibliographic databases, directory outlines, expert inquiries, and topic rings. The authors provide information for conducting systematic research using these tools, evaluating the information gathered and citing on-line sources.

Part four moves from online interpersonal interfaces to online public communication. It gives practical advice for creating webpages using HTML and HTML editors. The authors also give general information about design principles and the incorporation of graphics, audio and video. The text includes a 30-day trial version of three popular web editing programs, Macromedia's [Dreamweaver 3.0](#), [Fireworks 3.0](#), and [Flash 4.0](#) so students can have a hands-on experience creating their own websites.

The final section of this text discusses the implications of the internet. The internet's impact on traditional media, U.S. law and society are discussed using provocative examples and hypothetical scenarios.

This text could be strengthened by the inclusion of a section on PC hardware and software basics. The authors provide a great deal of detailed information on how to set up and participate in effective online communication. However, some of the terminology they use (such as motherboard, CCD chips, GUIs, DSPs, full-duplex sound cards, and USBs) will be unfamiliar to many students who are novice computer users.

This text also could be strengthened by a greater emphasis on effective online communication strategies in business settings such as how to determine the online communication norms of an organization or how to effectively communicate with a supervisor that works in a remote location. Such information would be very useful to students as they prepare to enter the business world.

Overall, this text is a good source of information on the communicative aspects of the internet and is appropriately adapted to the undergraduate audience. It provides practical advice as to how to effectively use the internet while being firmly grounded in communication theory.

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