Module 1

Introduction

The Internet provides many effective communication tools, including email, mailing lists, discussion groups, chat services, web conferencing, blogs, and RSS feeds. In recent years, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have also joined the mix. These various tools allow you to communicate one-to-one or one-to-many, depending on your communication needs. They also enable communication locally between people who know one another or worldwide with people who share common interests. Module 1 explores these online communication tools.

Email and Mailing Lists

Email

Email is one of the most popular Internet services. Email allows you to send messages to one person or simultaneously to a group of people. Email is convenient and widespread. It offers 24/7 availability and most people have at least one email address. Another advantage of an email account is that if your email provider offers webmail, it is accessible from any location that has Internet access. Don’t confuse email with course “mail” or messaging options often available in online course environments. They are not always the same thing.

In order to send email, you must know the recipient's email address. Email addresses consist of two parts: a username and a domain name. The username refers to the mailbox name, logon name, or user ID. The domain name is the Internet address of the computer where the user's email is stored (also called the mail server). The parts are separated by an @ symbol. For example, the email address for the President of the United States is president@whitehouse.gov.

There is no worldwide Internet directory of email addresses. However, there are several services, such as Spokeo that allow you to search for friends and relatives, as well as businesses and government officials. It is important to note, not all email search services are free.
Since there are many email programs and services available (e.g., Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo! Mail), instructions on using individual email programs will not be covered in this course. Generally, the following commands can be found in any email program or service:

- **compose**: create a message
- **send**: send the message you created
- **reply**: respond to a message you received
- **reply all**: respond to everyone who was copied on the message you received.
- **forward**: send a copy of the message you received to another person
- **attach**: attaches a document to the email message, either as text at the end of the message or as a separate file

Most email programs have an address book where addresses are stored along with a nickname. The nickname may be used in the To: field instead of typing the entire email address.

There are many free web-based email providers on the Internet, including Gmail, Outlook, and Yahoo! Mail. Free email services often put limits on storage space for messages, and some limit the size of messages and attachments.

**Mailing Lists**

Mailing lists (also called LISTSERVs) distribute information to an email subscription list. Many companies, professional organizations, recreational groups, and clubs rely on mailing lists to distribute their information. Postings, in the form of email messages, are automatically delivered to your email. You can simply read the contents of the messages, ask a question, give your opinion, or participate in an ongoing discussion. Mailing lists can involve just a few people or tens of thousands. There are thousands of mailing lists covering almost any conceivable topic.

Subscribing to a mailing list involves sending a message to the list’s administrator. Usually, as shown in the image below, you will need to include the word “subscribe” in the body of your message. For some lists, your subscription will begin immediately, but for others, you might have to wait for your subscription request to be approved by the list’s administrator or moderator. Once your subscription becomes active, you will receive a welcome/confirmation message, which you should save, since it will contain information on how to unsubscribe. The confirmation message will also provide the list name/posting address for the list.

There are many different types of LISTSERVs to which you can subscribe. There are professional LISTSERVs, which sometimes include job boards or notices. Other LISTSERVs are for news and different hobbies. Not all fields/communities use LISTSERVs as they are a little more dated use of communication.

To find mailing lists, try Catalist, a directory of mailing lists and newsletters on a wide range of topics.
Discussion Groups and Social Networking

Discussion Groups

Sites such as Yahoo! and Google allow users to create and join online discussion groups. Discussion groups are also referred to as forums or bulletin boards. These function very much like mailing lists, except they are easier to create and maintain. They are also less invasive than mailing lists since you go to a website to view and post messages. This reduces the strain on your email inbox. Discussion groups work very well for communication among local interest groups and clubs. You may have already encountered a discussion group in this class! To start looking for other discussion groups, try Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups.

Within a discussion group, a discussion on a particular topic is often called a “thread.” The following image is part of a list of discussion threads from the Apple Support website:

Clicking on the third thread, for example, would enable you to read the entire discussion on the topic of syncing an iPod classic to a MacBook Pro (see image below). You could also, if you wished, participate in the discussion by adding comments of your own. Many discussion groups require you to create an account and login in order to participate in a discussion and/or start a new thread.
Want to sync iPod Classic 5th 30GB to MacBook Pro 13.3 2GB...?

MacUser10
Apr 18, 2012 7:01 PM
I have about 4.1 GB on my iPod Classic, but I want to get a new one because mine is old and doesn't stay charged that long and the click button is messed up. I've had mine for about 7 years and am looking to get an iPod touch. I have over 602 songs, but I do not, I repeat: DO NOT want to lose any of my music! Can I sync my music to iTunes and not make my MacBook as slow as a snail? I have over 250 songs on my MacBook iTunes...

Kenichi Watanabe
Apr 18, 2012 8:49 PM (in response to MacUser10)
I have over 602 songs

Are those songs currently synced from a computer, or at this point, do they only exist for you on that old iPod?

If they exist in the iTunes music library of a computer (that your old iPod syncs to), PLUS they are on the iPod, then you can transfer them from that computer to the MacBook using a number of methods. And running iTunes on your MacBook should not make it "as slow as a snail." 😊

If those songs are only on your iPod, you will need to transfer them to the MacBook. iTunes does not perform this function (except for songs that were purchased from the iTunes Store by your account). However, there are third-party (non-Apple) utilities that can transfer songs files from the iPod to computer. You can find them using a Google search, like "ipod transfer mac." (One of them is called Senuti.)

MacUser10
Apr 18, 2012 9:01 PM (in response to Kenichi Watanabe)
I've never synced my iPod Classic to any computer. I have it on manual for all music, photos, videos etc. etc. Thank you for your help 😊

Kenichi Watanabe
Apr 18, 2012 9:22 PM (in response to MacUser10)
I guess my actual question is, do the song files exist somewhere else, like on the hard drive of a computer you used to transfer the songs (manually) to the iPod? Or are the song...
Social Networking

As computers have advanced and broadband has expanded, new social networking sites have developed on the Internet. Social networking sites allow users to share files, pictures, and music, communicate by email or instant message within the site, and develop networks of friends or associates. Popular social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Increasingly, large corporations have become more attracted to social networking sites because of advertising revenue and the ease of marketing products and services.

The following descriptions of popular social networks were adapted from Wikipedia, Webopedia, and Mashable:

Facebook, the world’s largest social network, provides a place for social connection via the sharing of photos, videos, and text updates. Users create personal profiles and establish relationships with other people and companies. Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his roommates at Harvard University. The site’s membership was initially limited to Harvard students, but was expanded to other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and Stanford University. It gradually added support for students at various other universities before opening to high school students, and eventually to anyone over the age of 13. In April 2007, Facebook was the primary vehicle for student communication during the Virginia Tech shooting tragedy. The name of the service comes from paper “facebooks” that used to be distributed at some universities at the start of the academic year to help students get to know each other.

Twitter, which launched in 2006, is a “microblogging” platform that allows users to communicate through brief messages (known as “tweets”), which are limited to 140 characters. The original idea behind Twitter was for users to post messages in response to the question, “What are you doing?” The prompt has since been changed to the more generic “What’s happening?”, but users can post anything that’s on their minds, and often use Twitter as a way to share links to websites, photos, videos, and other web-based content. Users subscribe to (or “follow”) tweets posted by others with similar interests, and can, if desired, send and receive tweets through SMS text messaging. Because of the immediacy and brevity of Twitter, it has helped to shape events pertaining to social movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring. In 2010, the Library of Congress announced its plan to create a digital archive of every tweet ever posted.

Twitter employs a convention called a “hashtag,” which is a word or phrase immediately preceded by a # symbol. By placing a # symbol in front of a word in a tweet, the word is
automatically turned into a hotlink which, when clicked, will perform a search of recent tweets containing that word. The ability to group together tweets containing a particular word or phrase has contributed to a phenomenon known as the “Internet meme”. A meme can be a word, phrase, idea, image, video, or anything that spreads very rapidly via Twitter or any other means of Internet communication. Since memes spread across the Internet in much the same way that diseases spread through a population, a meme is sometimes referred to as “viral” if it reaches an unusually large number of Internet users. One example of a famous Internet meme is LOLCats, humorous images of cats with semi-literate captions. A more recent example is Doge, which are images of a Shiba Inu with comic sans writing added, like the image below.

When a large number of people include the same word or hashtag in their tweets within a short period of time, the topic they’re tweeting about begins to “trend.” When pop star Michael Jackson passed away, for example, his name became a “trending topic” on Twitter. Trending topics usually pertain to current news events and come and go very quickly, while memes can remain popular for long periods of time. KnowYourMeme is a website that documents popular memes, viral videos, and other online phenomena.

Google+ (Google Plus) was launched by Google in 2011 as an attempt to compete with Facebook. Features of Google+ include “Circles” for sharing information with different groups of people (like Facebook Groups) and “Hangouts” for video chatting with a friend or groups of friends. Google Hangouts merged with Google’s Talk program, Google+ Messenger, and Hangouts, which was way to video chat using Google+. This created a single location for all text, video, and image sharing between friends.
Tumblr, which launched in 2007, is a “microblogging” platform that gives users a quick way to post text, images, audio, video, links, and quotes in a community setting. Unlike regular blogs, Tumblr blogs (also called “Tumblogs” or “Tumblelogs”) are frequently used to share the author's creations, discoveries, or experiences while providing little or no commentary. Some have described Tumblr as a kind of online scrapbooking tool that allows users to curate web-based content they find interesting. Taking on the features of other social networking sites (most notably Twitter), Tumblr allows users with similar interests to “follow” each other, and offers the option of “liking” or “reblogging” other blog posts. David Karp, founder of Tumblr, explains what makes this platform different on CNN. You can watch the video [here](https://www.cnn.com/2014/12/09/tech/tumblr-founder-david-karp/index.html).

Foursquare is a location-based mobile application that combines aspects of social networking and gaming. Users “check in” at a venue (such as a store, restaurant, library, etc.) and can connect with friends in nearby locations. Users are encouraged to be hyper-local and hyper-specific with their check-ins – one can check into a certain floor/area of a building, make recommendations, or indicate a specific activity while at a venue. Users can choose to have their check-ins posted on their accounts on Twitter, Facebook, or both. Points and other distinctions are awarded for check-ins, and some businesses offer additional incentives, such as coupons, for checking in at their locations. A screenshot of what Foursquare looks like on a mobile device is shown below.
LinkedIn launched in 2003 as a social network for work professionals, and has become the standard for employers looking for new talent. Through LinkedIn, users can search for jobs, submit applications, and join work-related groups.

MySpace was launched in 2003, and was, at one time, the most popular social networking site in the world. It has since been surpassed by Facebook, but continues to be used, most notably as a way for independent bands to share their music. In 2011, MySpace was sold to Specific Media and pop star Justin Timberlake for approximated 35 million dollars.

YouTube dates only from 2005 but has grown exponentially since then. It was purchased in November 2006, for $1.65 billion in Google stock. Users may register with YouTube to upload videos, rate them, and participate in different user groups, but it is not necessary to register in order to view video clips, send them to others, or embed them in other websites. YouTube has quickly become the preeminent video-sharing site on the Internet, though its success has created competitors. Increasingly, advocacy groups and political parties have also used YouTube to get their messages out. YouTube helped create the concept of viral video, in which videos may be easily shared with millions of people through other forms of Internet communication.

Social Networks for Photo Sharing

Popular services for hosting and sharing images include Flickr, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Flickr is an image and video hosting website and online community launched in 2004 and acquired by Yahoo! in 2005. In addition to being a popular website for users to upload and share personal photographs, the service is widely used by bloggers to host images they embed in blogs and other forms of social media. Services similar to Flickr include Photobucket and Google’s Picasa.
Instagram is a photo sharing application launched in 2010 that allows users of mobile devices to take a photo, apply a digital filter to it, and then share it on a variety of social networks. A distinctive feature confines photos to a square shape, similar to old-fashioned Kodak Instamatic and Polaroid images. In 2012, Facebook acquired Instagram for approximately $1 billion in cash and stock, with plans to keep it independently managed.

Launched in 2010, Pinterest is one of the fastest growing social networks on the web. Pinterest allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections by uploading their own photos, or by importing (also known as “pinning”) images from elsewhere on the web. Users can browse and/or “follow” other pinboards for inspiration, and can “like” and/or “re-pin” images to their own collections. Users can also share their “pins” on both Twitter and Facebook. A screenshot of Pinterest is shown below.
Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to organize, store, and share links to online resources. Prior to the proliferation of social bookmarking services, the only way for Internet users to save (or “bookmark”) links to web content that interested them was to add them to a list of favorite links stored on their computers. If they typically used more than one computer (one at home and one at work, for example), they had go through the inconvenience of saving their favorite links on both machines. Social bookmarking sites now enable users to gain access to their favorite links from any device with an Internet connection, and to share links with other users. Delicious, founded in 2003, popularized the terms “social bookmarking” and “tagging.” Tagging, which is the practice of assigning descriptive keywords to a bookmarked resource, is a significant feature of social bookmarking systems, enabling users to organize their bookmarks in flexible ways and develop shared vocabularies known as “folksonomies.” Other popular social bookmarking services include StumbleUpon, Diigo, and BuzzFeed. Social bookmarking services such as Reddit give users the ability to vote on bookmarks submitted by others by giving a virtual “thumbs up” or “thumbs down.” Resources with the most “upvotes” are given prominence on the service’s website. Twitter and Pinterest are also considered social bookmarking services, because of the ease with which users can organize and share content found elsewhere on the web.

Internet Chat, Web Conferencing, and Ask a Librarian

Internet Chat

In Internet chat, people view and respond to messages from one another instantaneously, much like a telephone conversation. Although some chat software includes audio and/or video aspects, most chat and instant messaging programs are text-based. One person types a message on the screen, and the other person sees the message either as it is being typed or immediately after it has been typed.

There are two forms of Internet chat that are frequently found on the web: chat rooms and instant messaging. Chat rooms tend to be open forums where a number of people chat with one another simultaneously. Often the people who meet in a chat room are people that have not met each other in the "real world." Instant messaging (IM), on the other hand, is a one-on-one form of Internet chat. Although you can choose to IM with strangers, often it is used to communicate with friends and family. Examples of instant message services include AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger (see screenshot below). Some social networks, such as Facebook, have their own instant messaging components. Services known as Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP), such as Skype and Google Hangouts, enable users to place phone calls over the Internet to communicate by voice, video, or instant messaging.
Web Conferencing

Many institutions are discovering new ways to integrate Internet communications into their organizations. One of the most frequently encountered is Web Conferencing, which takes Internet chat to a new level. Web conferencing is currently being used by businesses for employee training, meetings, and general communication. Educational institutions are using web conferencing as a way to enhance on-site classes or distance education classes.

Popular conferencing programs include AnyMeeting (a free service for hosting meetings of up to 200 participants), and fee-based services Blackboard Collaborate and GoToMeeting, which provide programs specifically designed for businesses and educational institutions.

The illustration below is an example of a web conference using the Elluminate software. In the column on the left is a list of conference participants, a chat box where participants can engage in live chat, and a “talk” button, which allows participants using microphones to communicate by voice. In this example, it looks like the conference participants are collaborating to solve a mathematical problem.
Web conferencing programs can be particularly useful for group work. Students can use programs such as Google Hangouts and Skype. Many people use their smartphones for this purpose since they have cameras and microphones built into the devices.

Ask a Librarian

In July 2003, the state of Florida created a library information service that uses several methods of Internet communication to provide information to all Florida residents. The Ask a Librarian service is part of the Florida Electronic Library and provides "virtual reference" service. The goal of a virtual reference service is to provide information seekers with free, convenient, real-time access to a librarian who can answer reference questions and assist the questioner in locating information on the web.

Special software is used to enable the questioner to communicate with a librarian via live chat, text messaging, or email. The librarian can send handouts, help files, spreadsheets, or slide presentations to the questioner. Since an increasing number of library resources are available online, librarians can also recommend and provide assistance with databases, eBooks, and other online reference sources. A knowledge base has been created to provide answers to questions about local libraries. By selecting a local library, questions may also be emailed to that library. Some institutions have desk hours where their own institution's librarians are on Ask a Librarian.
When you see the Ask a Librarian icon on a Florida library website, simply click to access chat, email, or query the knowledge base. To log in to chat, make sure you disable your pop-up blocker or set it to allow pop ups from the Ask a Librarian site.

If you are having trouble researching a topic for a paper, you can ask a librarian what other sources are available to you or what other search terms you may have overlooked.

Blogs, RSS Feeds, and Podcasts

Blogs

A blog is a website that allows a web author to simply and easily share thoughts and ideas with other web users. The word blog comes from weblog, which refers to a log of dated postings by a particular author or group of authors. Blogs can cover any topic or can just be someone’s daily, weekly, or occasional diary of thoughts and opinions. Blogs can be interactive when readers add comments and a discussion is created. Many blogs are topic specific, such as Inside Higher Ed or Simply Recipes. You can find blogs on almost any topic.

You can also create your own blog. There are many software programs and web-based blog hosting services, such as WordPress, Blogger, Weebly, and Squarespace. Blogs are created using a simple-to-use content management system that offers such features as organization of postings into categories, a calendar view of postings, password protected posting, file uploads, and comment moderation. If you do decide to develop your own blog, remember that the information you post can be viewed for a long time by just about anyone, including future employers.

Twitter is an example of a “microblogging” service, because it allows users to share (or “tweet”) their thoughts, but limits them to 140 characters per tweet. Although Tumblr doesn’t impose such strict limits, it is also considered a microblogging platform because users tend to be brief when posting content to their Tumblr blogs. However, some use Tumblr blogs as "full format" blogs, and post opinions, criticisms and longer form articles.

RSS Feeds

RSS is an acronym for several phrases; the most common is Really Simple Syndication, but it is sometimes referred to as Rich Site Summary, or RDF Site Summary. An RSS feed allows you to track new content on a website or blog or to keep up with the latest news stories. An RSS reader or browser is required for you to read the headlines or updates.

Instead of visiting your favorite blogs and websites independently to check for new content, it is much more convenient to subscribe to each blog’s RSS feed. Then, new
content will automatically be delivered to your RSS reader, providing you with a one-stop shop where you can monitor all of your favorite sites.

The popularity of RSS has declined in recent years. Some browsers, email services, and websites have discontinued supporting RSS. For example, Google’s RSS reader, Google Reader, has been discontinued. There are still ways you can access RSS feeds including via browser extensions for your computer or apps for your smart phone. Feedly is a popular RSS aggregator offering a browser extension and apps for Android and iOS.

Increasingly, web users are finding that social media sites such as Twitter can be used in place of RSS readers. Since many news sites and blogs tweet links to their latest posts, you can simply follow them on Twitter to keep track of new content.

**Podcasting**

A podcast is a series of computer files, usually in audio or video format, to which users can listen to via streaming or download. It is helpful to think of a podcast as being similar to a radio or television series, but instead of having to remember to tune in at a particular time to listen to or watch your favorite program, a podcast is a program to which you can subscribe, and have each episode automatically delivered to your computer. You can also visit a hosting site, at your convenience, and stream or download episodes. iTunes is an example of software that can be used as a podcatcher (an RSS aggregator that supports multimedia). Other popular podcatchers include gPodder and Juice. iTunes is also a good place to search for podcasts that might be of interest to you. You can also find many podcast directories on the web, including Digital Podcast. As with blogs, there are podcasts on almost every conceivable topic.

Anyone can start his or her own podcast. To create an audio podcast, you would need a microphone, a computer, and some kind of sound recording software such as GarageBand (an application for Mac computers and iPhones), or Audacity (freely available on the web for Windows, Mac, and other operating systems). You would then have to publish your recordings on the Internet. There are many audio/video hosting services, such as iTunes and Podbean, that will help you accomplish this.

There are differing opinions as to the origin of the word “podcast.” Some say it is a combination of the words “iPod” and “broadcast.” According to others, it comes from the acronym P.O.D., which stands for “portable on demand,” or “personal on demand.” This refers to the fact that podcast episodes are available on the web for users to consume at their convenience. It is important to note that you do not have to have an iPod in order to receive or create podcasts. Podcasts can, however, be downloaded to iPods and other mobile devices for listening on the go.
Wikis

A wiki is a collaboratively developed website that allows users to edit the site’s content using a web browser. The most famous example of a wiki is the Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that is continuously maintained by a worldwide community of tens of thousands of volunteer contributors. Many businesses, educational institutions, and social groups use wiki software to collaborate on various projects.

The Wikipedia was created using a free software program called MediaWiki. If you want to start your own wiki, you can use the same software, but a certain amount of technical knowledge is required. There are other, easier-to-use wiki services such as PBWorks, Wikidot, and WikiSpaces. Here is a video that provides a brief overview of how wikis work:

The first wiki software, known as “WikiWikiWeb,” was invented by computer programmer Ward Cunningham in 1995. He chose the word “wiki,” which in Hawaiian means “quick,” because of the ease with which users can edit wiki sites.