

# Effective Internet Use in Career Services

James P. Sampson, Jr.  
Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development  
University Center, Suite A4100  
The Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1035  
(850) 644-6431 (voice) (850) 644-3273 (FAX)  
<http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/>  
jsampson@admin.fsu.edu

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The Internet provides individuals with access to an enormous quantity of data. The problem is that individuals can easily become overwhelmed by the amount and diversity of data available. What is needed is a simple model that helps individuals to select Internet functions that relate to their needs. Internet use can be categorized into one of the following four functions:

- (1) **Identify** problems and possibilities by using links to surf among Internet sites to discover the range of data that is available, e.g., surfing serendipity.
- (2) **Search** for information to solve a problem by using a search engine or an Internet site.
- (3) **Obtain** information when users know what they want by accessing a specific Internet site or by using a search engine to link to a specific Internet site address.
- (4) **Communicate** with others via e-mail, file transfer, chat mode, and eventually videoconferencing.

## Using the Internet to Support Career, Educational, and Employment Decision Making

Individuals can use the Internet to obtain information needed for career, educational, and employment decisions. The following examples of Internet use are categorized according to the four Internet functions described above.

### (1) Identify Problems and Possibilities

- **Surfing** the Internet using the term "career" and becoming aware of new work options
- **Reading exchanges** on a usenet newsgroup and becoming aware of emerging occupations

### (2) Search for Information

- Links to **career services** via gateway sites or individual sites (e.g., Parachute)
- **Reference information** sources (e.g., Parachute, Riley Guide)
- **Occupations** that match specific interests and skills (e.g., CACG system files)
- **Networking** opportunities (e.g., directories, usenet newsgroups, mailing lists, Riley Guide)
- **Employers** by occupation (e.g., Parachute, Riley Guide)
- **Job openings** by occupation and geographic region (e.g., America's Job Bank - AJB)
- Potential **employees** by occupation (e.g. America's Talent Bank - ATB)

**(3) Obtain Information**

- **Occupations** (e.g., Occupational Outlook Handbook homepage, professional association homepages, Riley Guide, Parachute, special interest group mailing list)
- **Educational institutions** (e.g., institutional homepages, Riley Guide, Parachute)
- **Wages** (e.g., AJB, Parachute, Riley Guide)
- **Employment outlook** (e.g., Bureau of Labor Statistics homepage, AJB, Riley Guide, Parachute, employer homepages)
- **Special population** information (e.g., Parachute)
- **Professional associations** by occupation (e.g., directories, Riley Guide)
- **Individual** information (e.g., directories)
- **Employers** (e.g., AJB, employer homepages, Parachute, Riley Guide, special interest group mailing list)
- **Job search strategies** (e.g. Riley Guide, service provider homepages)
- Content & process of **resume writing** (e.g. service provider homepages)

**(4) Communicate With Others**

- E-mail an **information request** to a networking contact
- E-mail **scheduling** of an information interview
- **Chat** with a networking contact
- Post a resume on a **talent bank**
- E-mail or FTP a **cover letter and resume** to an employer
- E-mail or FTP **thank you letters**

**Effective Use of the Internet**

Experience with using the Internet as a data source for decision making has shown this resource to be most helpful in the following circumstances.

- The Internet is best used as only one of several resources.
- The most valuable current use of the Internet is for information and networking.
- Evaluate the use of a potential Internet site on the basis of the site's potential to meet individual needs, e.g., a popular Internet site may not be appropriate for a particular user.
- When attempting to solve complex problems, use the Internet over several sessions with time in between to consider what has been learned. An effective cycle of Internet use would be as follows: think about needs, use the Internet, reflect on what has been learned, network with others as needed, reflect, use, reflect, network, etc.

**Potential Internet Problems**

The use of the Internet as a decision-making resource may lead to the following problems:

- Relying too much on the Internet and ignoring other potentially valuable information resources;
- Being overwhelmed with the number of Internet sites or the amount of information available;
- Becoming sidetracked when surfing and accessing irrelevant information, e.g., staying busy, but unproductive;
- Accessing fraudulent information or services from unethical Internet sites;
- Accessing information that is out-of-date, invalid or biased; and
- Risking unwanted contact or harm from individuals as a result of disclosing personal information on the Internet.

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