SEARCHING THE INTERNET
@ the Edwardsville Public Library

Internet Browser:

In order to search the Internet, you need to use an Internet Browser. An Internet browser is a software program that is used to access and view web pages. It allows you to "surf the web." The two browsers most commonly used for viewing the Internet are **Internet Explorer** and Mozilla's **Firefox. Google Chrome** is a web browser developed by Google, which states that it is based on "three ideas: speed, simplicity, and security."
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Browser/Window Features:

Title Bar—The name of the web site or title of the page you're viewing will appear on the top left hand corner of your screen. Typically, the bar is blue. This bar doesn't take you anywhere, but it always lets you know where you are.

Menu Bar—Under the title bar is the menu bar. In Internet Explorer, it contains the following selections: File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, and Help. When you click on any of these selections you will see a drop down menu of options. The print option is under *File*. *Favorites* allows you to create and save a list of frequently visited or favorite websites so you don't have to type the address in each time. If you go to *Tools* and then *Internet Options* you can set whatever web site you'd like to use as your home page on your personal computer.
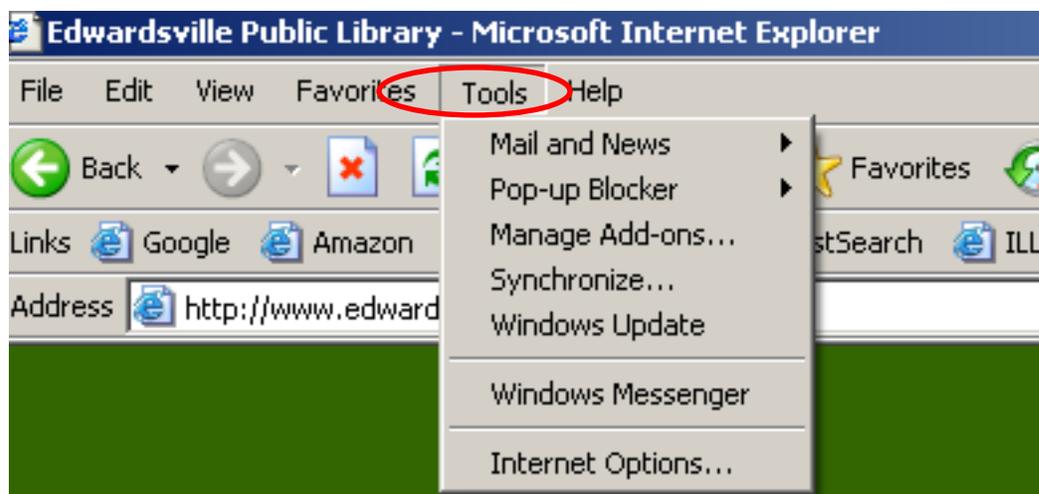
TITLE BAR

MENU BAR

Address Bar—Each web page has a unique address called a **Uniform Resource Locator or URL**. The URL is the specific and exact address of a web page. The components of the URL or web address are typically a protocol name, which is a set of rules and standards that enables computers to exchange information. The most common protocol on the Internet is http (hypertext transfer protocol). The second component is the location of the site—www—on the world wide web. The third component is the name of the organization that maintains the site. Finally, the fourth component is the suffix that identifies the kind of organization that is operating the web site. The most common suffixes are:

> .com - a commercial entity
> .org - a noncommercial entity. These can include associations and
> organizations.
> .edu – schools, colleges, universities
> .gov – government entities
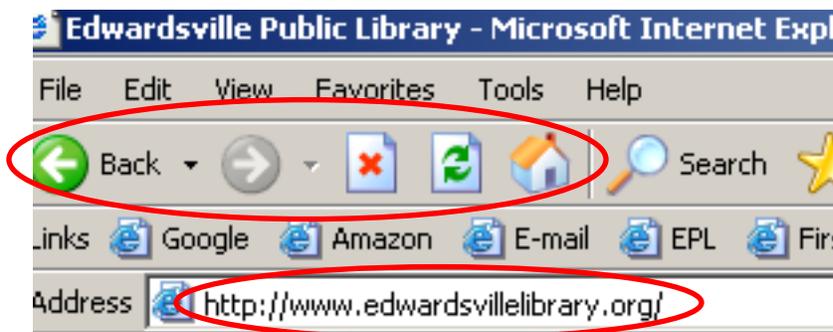
Tool Bar – under the menu bar is the tool bar, which contains several useful icon/commands. If you hold your cursor over the icon, the function of that icon will appear. We're going to look at the first five icons: **Back, Forward, Stop, Refresh, and Home.**

SEARCHING:

Subject Directories – These directories are created and maintained by human editors who review and select sites for inclusion in the directory. When you initiate a keyword search of a directory's content, the directory attempts to match your keyword with those words in the titles, descriptions, and subject categories which have been assigned to the web sites included in the directory. No full-text searching of web pages occurs. Subject directories range from small to very large, but they are smaller than most search engine databases. Subject directories sometimes include annotations. Because of the human element involved in selection of the web sites, one should expect a higher quality of content and fewer results to look at when using subject directories. Once a site is included, it is there until the human element removes it, so there tend to be more "dead" links and links to sites that have changed address. Think of the subject directory like the yellow pages; it works well for browsing and more general searches.

Yahoo	**http://www.yahoo.com/**
About.com	**http://www.about.com/**
Ipl2	**http://www.ipl.org/**

Search Engines – Search engines are huge databases of web page files that have been assembled automatically by machine. Search engines compile their databases by using "spiders" to crawl through web space from link to link identifying pages. Sites with no links to other pages may be missed. Once the spiders get to a web site, they typically index most of the words on the available pages at the site. Search engine databases are huge, and the searches usually result in enormous numbers of results. The results are ranked using algorithms so that the most relevant web pages should appear near the top of the results list. Search engines provide access to a large number of publicly available web pages, but remember you are still not searching the entire web as it exists at the moment you are searching. Search engines work especially well when searching for unique keywords, phrases, and more obscure information found within the pages of a web site.

Google	**http://www.google.com/**
Ask.com	**http://www.ask.com/**
Bing	**http://www.bing.com/**

There are some specialized search engines:

Zanran is a new search engine that searches for numerical data presented in graphs, tables, and charts. **http://www.zanran.com/q/**

MetaCrawler and **Dogpile** are meta search engines. They present results from multiple search engines. Both of them retrieve results from Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

MetaCrawler	**http://www.metacrawler.com/**
Dogpile	**http://www.dogpile.com/**

Search Strategies:

Often, just typing in the word or phrase you're looking for will result in a successful search. However, if you want to narrow down your results there are some tips that might help you with most search engines. Type the most important words in your search string first. Put quotation marks ("") around phrases so they are searched in exactly that order. Use plus (+) and minus (-) signs in front of words to ensure they are included or excluded in searches. Know what the default or basic settings are for whatever search engine you're using. For example, if you're using Google, click on "*About Google*," then click on "*Web Search Features,*" and then click on "*Web Search Help Center*." **http://www.google.com/support/websearch/** You'll find lots of helpful information for searching.

Evaluating Web Resources:

Anyone can publish anything on the Internet. It is a good idea to think critically about the information you find. Is the information on the web site factual or someone's opinion? Is the goal of the site to educate or sell something? Are there links to other sites and are they relevant and up-to-date? Is the information accurate; can it be verified? Who is the author or sponsor of the web site – an individual, a government agency, a corporation? What are the credentials of the author? Is contact information for the author provided? When was the web site last updated? Is the web site well organized? Is it user friendly?

Troubleshooting:

If you can't find what you are looking for check your spelling and punctuation. If you are typing in a web address, every slash and dot matters. Upper and lower case letters can make a difference. If your search is not bringing up useful web pages try changing your search terms; perhaps use a more specific term or try a more general search. Most search engines have *stop words* which are ignored when doing a search. If you have entered any of those words into your search they are not being used. If you're using Google, you can get more information on stop words at the "*Web Search Help Center."*
If you get a message "Internet Explorer cannot display the webpage" try accessing a different website. That can help you determine if you are having a connectivity problem or if there's a problem with a particular website. If your connection to the Internet is good, try the website again. Sometimes it helps to try accessing a site using a different browser; so, if you have been using Internet Explorer, try Firefox. A message that says "File not found" means that the particular file you're looking for has been removed, moved or renamed. In this case, try to access the main page of the web site and see if there is a link to the page you want. You can do this by working your way backwards on the web site address.

Tutorials:

Internet 101
http://www.gcflearnfree.org/internet101
This guide for new Internet users provides a general overview of the Internet, information on connecting to the Internet, and help using browsers and search engines.

Basic Search Techniques
http://www.internettutorials.net/basic-search-techniques.asp
Check out this site for tips and strategies for creating effective searches.

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