

Disability on the Internet

The Internet gives you access to an incredible range of information, advice and contacts. Here are some signposts to get you started.

The World Wide Web (WWW)

WWW is like a huge library. To find what you want, you need the addresses of sites which interest you. Once you have found a site you will usually discover links to other web sites on related topics. As you find sites which you want to return to, you can keep a note of their addresses to speed up your next access.

Tools which search WWW for keywords are known as search engines. Currently one of the quickest and best is AltaVista at:

<http://www.altavista.telia.com/cgi.bin/telia?country=gb&lang=gb>

Many search engines scan web sites on computers round the world for the keywords you feed in. Yahoo works differently. It is more like an index in a book or a directory with topics listed like branches of a tree:

http://www.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/United_Kingdom/

If you already have a web site address you can go straight to it. Some sites concerning disability are:

<http://www.nwttdt.demon.co.uk/>

This is the site of the North West Training and Development Team.

<http://inclusion.com/>

This is the site of Inclusion Press run by Jack Pearpoint and Marsha Forest in Toronto. In addition to giving information about their work they provide a resources page which you can explore for related interests.

<http://ep.open.ac.uk/wgma/CSIE/csiehome.html/>

This is the site of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education based in Bristol, an essential place to start if you are interested in inclusive education in Britain.

http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/edu_incl.htm

Lists

Lists are like discussion groups. Subscription is usually free. To join, you send an instruction to the computer which holds the list. From then on, you receive messages sent to the list by members each

time you look at your email. You can send messages to the list which get passed to all the other members. Your messages might be pleas for information, advice or contacts; responses to messages from other members; news or comments which you think might interest other members.

A British list on inclusive education is operated at the University of Newcastle. To join, send a message as follows:

To: mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk

containing the following one-line message:

join inclusive-education Firstname Lastname

substituting your own first & last names.

Downloading

More and more publications are being made available via the Internet. With the appropriate software you can now download and print out publications which retain all the formatting of the original regardless of incompatibilities of hardware and word processing software. Ofsted reports are now available like this from:

<http://www.open.gov.uk/ofsted/repdb3.htm>

The software you need is Adobe Acrobat, latest version (currently 3.0). The Acrobat Reader is widely available free. You can download it from Adobe's WWW site:

<http://www.adobe.com/proindex/acrobat/readstep.html>

Training and advice

There are many introductory courses to help you get started in exploring the Internet. Some of these are free. Check with your local library or college. Find a friend who is willing to spend time showing you the ropes.

You will need a computer, modem and subscription to an Internet Access Provider (IAP). If you have not got these yet it will pay to get some advice and training so that you make good decisions on purchases.

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