

Audience Models

The Hypodermic Model audiences are passive consumers, the subject of mass manipulation, under the influence of political and/or commercial control. In simple terms this model sees audiences as unthinking and powerless, being injected with conditioned responses. This model lends itself to simple solutions to why people behave the way they do they copy what they see in the media. This argument is often wheeled out where children are concerned watching violence on TV causes them to be violent. How might this transfer to the way people use the Web and the Internet?

The Uses and Gratification Model audiences are active consumers and select what they want from the media. In this model audience needs dictate how the media is used. Rather than being force-fed, people might use the media as a diversion (escape, release from pressure); as companionship (including as subject of discussion with other people); as confirmation of personal identity (special interest programmes or comparing life choices with others); or as a source of information (news, documentary etc.).

Audience Positioning

A theory that tries to explain the relationship between media content and audiences. In some ways this falls between the two positions above. The argument is that media texts are structured in ways that position audiences to adopt a particular perspective or point of view. This can include holding certain value systems and is obviously concerned with Mode of Address (see this below).

BBS (Bulletin Board System)

A messaging system allowing users to share and exchange information. It is either dialled direct using a modem (i.e. you need to know the phone number; can involve long-distance charges), or accessed via the web (run by a systems operator or sysop). A BBS is often devoted to specific interests (i.e. dentistry, film, law, guns, multi-player games, Druidic practices, information for the disabled etc.). Most are free, though some charge a membership or user fee. Many Internet access providers (ISPs) have BBSs giving technical information about services and allowing users to download updated software. BBSs often have their own culture and jargon.

Body

In E-mail terms, the body is the textual content; the main part of your message.

Bookmark

If you bookmark an address for a web site on the World Wide Web you save it in your browser, which adds it to a list of saved links. Always bookmark the home page of a web site so that you can quickly get back to it later. It provides a way of selecting from a book full of (millions of) Web pages, a few useful chapters. Your browser sometimes calls this the "bookmark list", "Favourites" or "hotlist".

Browser

A browser is a program providing a way to look at and interact the World Wide Web. The word "browser" is a generic term for a user interface allowing you browse text files online. Technically, a Web browser is a client program that uses the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) to make requests of Web servers. The two browsers that most people know are Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator, though online services such as America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy, originally had their own browsers; virtually all now offer the Netscape or Microsoft browser.

BTW

This is email shorthand meaning "by the way".

Cyberspace

This term was invented by author William Gibson in his novel 'Neuromancer', to describe an imaginary space in which a majority of the population believe. The word is now commonly used to label the range of information and resources across the World Wide Web. Gibson defined cyberspace as a 'consensual hallucination'.

Dial up Connection

A connection to the Internet using a phone and modem (types include PPP and SLIP).

Dialup

When a modem is used to gain access to the Internet.

Digerati

Knowledgeable or 'hip' people in-the-know regarding the digital revolution.

Direct Connection

Connection direct to Internet - faster than dial-up.

Discussion Group

Members of a BBS or section within a messaging system usually dedicated to a particular subject. Also known as a newsgroup.

Download

When you copy anything from a remote computer to your own computer. The opposite, 'upload' involves copying or sending from your computer to another on the web.

E-Commerce

Electronic commerce (EC, also "e-business") is buying or selling goods and services on the Internet and World Wide Web. Often used interchangeably for online retail selling or "e-tailing". Some divisions of e-commerce:

Virtual "storefronts" or "malls" - Web sites with online catalogues.
Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) exchange of lists for mail marketing.
Business-to-business buying and selling
The security of business transactions

E-Mail

Electronic mail (exchange of computer-stored messages by telecommunication encoded in ASCII text, can also send non-text files, such as graphic images and sound files, as attachments), one of its first uses, and is still the most popular use, of the Internet. It can be distributed to lists of people and managed. You can request a subscription to a list by emailing the mailing list administrator. A mailing list that is administered by a computer rather than a person is called a list server.

Emoticons

An emoticon (or "smiley") conveys a feeling behind a message by emulating a facial expression. Most use keyboard symbols to create a smile, wink, or turned-down mouth which you can see by tilting your head (or turn the monitor on its side!). :-)

Encoding - Decoding

In Media Studies this refers to a theory of the ways in which media texts position audiences through their mode of address. Producers of texts (TV, film, print, Web pages etc.) make use of 'frameworks of knowledge' (systems of values and selected information) which they assume is familiar to the audience. To make sure the receiver or consumer of the text feels comfortable and well disposed to a 'friendly' text, these frameworks are encoded in the message or body of the text and transmitted (via radio, TV, print etc.).

Codes (systematised signs) and conventions (ways of combining them) are employed in this process in ways that are so familiar that the result is that the text itself seems natural or transparent. It is important to realise that these frameworks of knowledge are ideological in nature.

However, some theorists argue that it is precisely because the message is thus coded, it is open to more than one interpretation - it is 'polysemic' (multi-meaning). Nevertheless (the argument goes) the frameworks of knowledge at work in the text cuts down the number of meanings and suggests a dominant meaning which has obviously been preferred by its producers.

FAQ

Pronounced Fak, means "frequently-asked questions" (and answers). Go to a search engine like Yahoo and enter "faq" or "faqs" in the search entry box to see the range of FAQs available on the web! To find a FAQ on a subject of interest (for example, Television), enter "FAQ and television"(without the quotes). The number of subjects on which you will NOT find is FAQ is also large. The most useful FAQs are often found at a Web site you use.

Firewall

A firewall program protects a private network from other networks (implies a security policy). An company intranet that allows its workers to access the Internet installs a firewall a) to stop outsiders accessing private data and b) to stop employees accessing certain web sites (usually porn!) on company time. A firewall also records activities of workstations.

Flame

Flaming used to mean passion used in the spirit of honourable debate on a BBS or Discussion group, involving use of flowery language. It used to be regarded as an art form but recently has come to mean any kind of derogatory comment.

Flame War

A slang term referring to a series of personal attacks or a heated exchange in an online discussion.

Freeware

Programs which can be downloaded on the web and offered at no cost. It is, however, copyrighted which means that you can not incorporate it into anything, especially commercial products, you may develop. The least restrictive "no-cost" programs are open to copy programs in the public domain. When re-using public domain software it is best to check that it really is in the public domain.

FTP

File Transfer Protocol is a standard Internet protocol and the simplest way to exchange files between computers on the Internet. Similar to Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), which transfers Web pages and their related files, and to the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), which transfers e-mail, FTP is uses the Internet's TCP/IP protocols. FTP is commonly used to launch Web page to the server or computer that makes them available for everyone on the Internet. It is also used to download programs and other files to your computer from other servers.

FYI

Pronounced EFF-WAI-AI, is short for "For your information". Used to forward material and information that is simply being shared and no action is required.

Gateway

A computer screen acting as an entrance to a network of information. In the network of a company, each computer is as a gateway. On the Internet the computers that control traffic within a company's network or at your local Internet service provider (ISP) are gateway "nodes". On the Internet, in terms of routing, the network consists of gateway nodes and host nodes. The computers of network users and the computers that serve content (such as Web pages) are host nodes.

Gender and Media Technology

According to research (Gray, 1992) men's influence on how the VCR was used in the home was far greater than women's. Men mastered the timer programming, owned tapes and planned time-shifting. This contrasted with 'feminine' technology like microwaves, dishwashers and washing machines. Like the VCR, computers and video games have come to be seen as 'masculine' technologies. Why do you think this is? Sherry Turkle (1984) argues that men are attracted by the abstract systems of computer culture, safely distant from personal relationships yet there are numerous chat lines and listservers dedicated to exactly this. Certainly games design emphasises male heroes in action adventure settings. However, according to Nick Patton Walsh in the Guardian (Sunday 20 May, 2001): "The balance online is shifting to empower women. (David) Silver (assistant professor in the School of Communications at the University of Washington) said a huge change had occurred in global internet use in the past few years as women lay claim to a medium previously dominated by 'geeky' men."

GIF

A GIF is one of the two most common file formats for graphic images on the World Wide Web. The other is the JPEG. On the Internet, the GIF has become a standard form. Technically, there are two versions of the format, 87a and 89a. Version 89a (July, 1989) allows for the possibility of an animated GIF, which is a short sequence of images within a single GIF file. A GIF89a can also be specified for interlaced presentation. Though Unisys actually owns the compression program for part of the GIF, most downloaders and Web site builders are ignorant of or indifferent to a requirement to get a license from Unisys for the use of their algorithm. Meanwhile a patent-free replacement for the GIF, the PNG format, has been developed by an Internet committee and major browsers support it or soon will.

Gigabyte

Pronounced GIG-a-bite (with hard Gs), this is a measure of data storage capacity and is "roughly" a billion bytes. A gigabyte is two to the 30th power, or 1,073,741,824 in decimal notation.

Gopher

An Internet protocol which maintains file structures and provides a way to bring text files from all over the world to view on your computer. Gopher was a step towards Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). With hypertext links, the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), and the arrival of a graphical browser (Mosaic) the Web quickly transcended Gopher. Because many file structures, especially those in universities, still exist, most Web browsers still support Gopher, which was developed at the University of Minnesota, whose sports teams are called "the Golden Gophers."

Hacker

A "good hack" is a clever solution to a programming problem and "hacking" is the act of doing it. The term "Hacker" means either:

- a) a clever programmer, or
- b) a crook who tries to break into computer systems

Eric Raymond, compiler of *The New Hacker's Dictionary*, defines a hacker as a clever programmer and lists five possible qualifying features: One who likes to learn programming language or systems. One who likes actually doing rather than theorising. One who appreciates another's hacking. One who learns programming easily. One who is expert in a particular programming language or system

Raymond prefers the term "cracker" for category b) above (i.e. someone who attempts to crack someone else's system or who uses programming maliciously).

The media tend to use "hacker" to mean someone with criminal intent. This kind of hacker, however, is also a proficient programmer with the technical knowledge to understand where weak points occur in a security system.

Hit

When you visit a web site your arrival or request to visit is counted as a hit by those who run the site. This is important for advertisers. Technically a hit is a single file request in the log of a Web server, so a page with three graphic images will result in four hits in the log: one for the HTML file and one for each of the graphic image files. A hit log can therefore be a misleading indicator of how many pages are being looked at. Advertisers look at the number of pages delivered and ad impressions.

Homepage

Originally, the page your browser opened on start up. Now more commonly the main page for a business or organisation. Thus simply the introductory page of a collection of web pages.

Host

On the Internet, any computer with two-way access to other computers. A host has a specific "local or host number". When you access your provider, you have a unique address while connected and your computer is a host for that period. In this context, a "host" is a node in a network.

HTML

Hypertext Markup Language is a set of codes in a file able to be displayed on a World Wide Web browser. The markup codes tell the browser how to display words and images. The codes are called elements (also referred to as tags). These are standard recommendations by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and observed by all browsers, though each also provides additional non-standard codes. The current version of HTML is HTML 4. Both Internet Explorer and Netscape provide features differently with non-standard extensions. More advanced features of HTML 4 allow pages to be designed for both browsers and send out appropriate versions. Features of HTML 4 are sometimes called dynamic HTML. What is sometimes referred to as HTML 5 is also called XHTML.

HTTP

Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) is the set of rules for exchanging files (text, graphic images, sound, video, and other multimedia files) on the World Wide Web. Essentially the HTTP protocol references other files, which in turn will elicit other transfer requests. Any Web server waits for HTTP requests to handle. A Web browser is an HTTP client, sending requests to server machines.

Hypertext

The organisation of information into connected associations, chosen by a user from highlighted portions of text. Hypertext was the main concept behind the invention of the World Wide Web, which is an enormous amount of information connected by an enormous number of hypertext links.

IMAP

A standard protocol for accessing e-mail from a server on which e-mail is received and held by an Internet server. Typically, you view just the heading and sender to decide whether to download. It also allows you to create and manipulate folders or mailboxes, delete messages, or search for parts of or entire notes. IMAP needs continual online access for the duration of your activity. A less sophisticated protocol is POP3 (Post Office Protocol 3) saves mail to your mailbox on the server. When you read it, all of it is immediately downloaded to your computer and no longer held on the server. IMAP can be thought of as a remote file server. POP can be thought of as a "store-and-forward" service.

IMHO

A shorthand for "in my humble opinion", used in email on an online forum. IMHO indicates the writer s/he is expressing a personal view in a discussion.

Information Superhighway / Infobhan

Describes possible upgrading of the Internet through use of fibre optic and/or coaxial cable for high speed data transmission. This highway does not exist - the Internet of today is not an information superhighway.

Internet

Sometimes just called "the Net," is a world-wide system of computers conceived by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the US govt. in 1969 and first known as the ARPANet. The original aim was to create a network that would allow users to "talk to" research computers at other universities and would continue to function even if parts of it were destroyed.

Today it is self-sustaining, accessible to people world-wide, using only a portion of the public telecommunication networks, distinguished by its use of protocols called TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol). Electronic mail (e-mail) is the Net's most widely used application and, for many, has replaced the Postal Service for short written transactions. The Net will also allow live "conversations" with other computer users, using IRC (Internet Relay Chat). Recently, it has become possible to have real-time voice conversations on the Net.

The most widely used part of the Net is the World Wide Web ("WWW" or "the Web"). Its outstanding feature is hypertext on most Web sites, where words or phrases are of a different colour (also underlined) can be selected to transfer you to another site or page. Buttons, images, or portions of

images can do the same.

The Web gives access to millions of pages of information using a Web browser, (Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer are the most popular). Web sites may change in appearance, depending on the browser (later versions may have more animation, sound and music files etc.).

Intranet

A private network, contained within a company, may comprise interlinked local area networks (LANs) and leased lines. An intranet might include connections through certain computers (called gateways not to be confused with the brand name) to the Internet. An intranet shares company information and resources among employees only. It can also facilitate discussion groups and teleconferencing.

Larger companies allow their intranet users to access the Internet through a Firewall program which screens messages in both directions as a security measure. Part of an intranet can be made available to outsiders ie customers, partners and suppliers. This is called an extranet. Note also that an Intranet may simply be called a network.

ISDN

Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) is a standard for digital transmission over ordinary telephone as well as other media. Homes and businesses install ISDN adapters (replacing modems) to access Web pages with high-graphic content very quickly (up to 128 Kbps). It requires that your access provider also has an ISDN adapter. Available from phone companies in most urban areas of US and Europe.

ISDN is the convergence of analog (or voice data) with digital media over the same network.

ISP

An Internet Service Provider is an enterprise that sells access to the Internet, usually along with Web site building services and hosting. They have points-of-presence on the Internet for that geographic area. Large ISPs have high-speed leased lines so are less dependent on telephone companies, and give better service to customers. Among the largest are AT&T WorldNet, IBM Global Network, MCI, Netcom, UUNet, and PSINet.

Access to the Internet is also possible through online service providers (OSPs) such as America Online and CompuServe. Large ISPs collaborate to exchange traffic, known as peering agreements. ISPs are sometimes called IAPs (Internet access provider) to distinguish them from Independent Service Providers which offer fewer services but operate separately from a telephone company.

IT

Information Technology means all technologies that make, store, exchange, and use information in various forms (business data, voice conversations, still images, motion pictures, multimedia, and other forms not yet invented). It covers telephony and computer technology in the same term. It refers to all technology that drives "the information revolution."

JPEG

A graphic image (pronounced JAY-peg) created by selecting from compression qualities (algorithms). In creating a JPEG or converting from another format to a JPEG, you specify a quality. High qualities result in large files; you trade quality for file size. The JPEG is supported by Web protocol (using the suffix ".jpg") as is the Graphic Interchange Format (GIF) file.

Kilobyte

A measure of computer memory or storage, a kilobyte (KB or Kbyte) is about a thousand bytes (2 to the 10th power, or decimal 1,024 bytes).

LAN

A local area network (LAN) is a group of computers sharing a communications line and resources of a processor or server, typically in one building. Applications and data are shared by as few as two or three users, or thousands.

Linux

Often pronounced LIH-nuhks (with a short "i") this an operating system (as is Windows), designed to be free or available at very low-cost. Reputedly efficient and fast, Linux was developed by Linus Torvalds at the University of Helsinki in Finland, making use components developed by members of the Free Software Foundation. Though copyrights are held, Linux is distributed using Free Software Foundation's copyleft stipulations, which means any copy is in turn freely available to others. Sometimes suggested as an alternative to power-players like Microsoft Windows, Linux is far behind Windows in numbers of users.

LISTSERV

Listserv is one of a type of program called a list server that redistributes e-mail automatically to names on a mailing list. Users can subscribe by e-mailing a list they learn about and a listserv program adds the name and distributes future e-mail postings to every subscriber (this is sent to a special address so that all subscribers do not see requests).

Login

In general, a login or logon (meaning to log in or log on) is a procedure used to access a remote computer. Usually a logon requires a user ID and password. In a logon procedure the user ID is usually visible and the password is not displayed as it is secret.

LOL

In e-mail this is an abbreviation for "laugh out loud".

Lurking

If you are a member of a mailing list but never contribute to discussion, merely read through messages of others you are known as a lurker. This is not always bad, as it is good netiquette to get the measure of a topic before adding your two pen'orth.

Mailing List

A list of people who subscribe to mail distribution on a particular topic.

Mailserver

The computer (and software it runs) that sorts and retrieves e-mails.

Megabyte

Abbreviated to MB, this is 2 to the 20th power bytes, or 1,048,576 bytes in decimal notation. Usually thought of as 1,000,000 bytes.

MHz

A megahertz is a measure of the speed of your computer's main processor. One MHz is a million cycles of electromagnetic currency alternation per second.

Mode of Address

This refers to how a text 'speaks' to its audience. Analysis of this therefore helps us to an understanding of the relation between producer and audience. Laura Mulvey for example has suggested that classic Hollywood films present the hero's point of view (i.e. the male gaze or male subject position). But where film draws us into a 'witnessing' position (where we as an audience are not openly addressed), television directly addresses us as viewers. In television, news presenters look 'at' us, chat show presenters speak to us or to guests 'for' us, and we can play along in quiz show where quiz-masters ask questions of us as well as contestants. Assumptions too are made about audience values in newspapers and magazines, where the type of language used might betray an assumption about class and political values. Perhaps this is true also for the web, and this question should occupy your discussion evaluating web pages.

Netiquette

Etiquette on the Internet, meaning certain expected levels of polite behaviour. Mostly needed when sending or distributing e-mail, posting to list servers and chatting. Largely it requires some understanding of the particular culture of that group so some lurking can help. Bad netiquette because you're a newby is excusable, but practices like spamming and flaming are not.

Netizen

A citizen who sees the Internet as a form of participation in politics (for example, exchanging views, providing information, and voting). An Internet user who is committed to its growth as a communications medium and a new culture with its own issues (i.e. of access). A netizen is a responsible Internet user who wants it to foster free speech and open access.

OCR

Optical Character Recognition is computerised recognition of print or written text using photo-scanning. The scanned-in image or bitmap is analysed and converted into an ASCII code. Libraries are interested in OCR to digitise and preserve material and it can also be used to process cheques or credit card slips, and to sort snail mail.

Offline

When your computer is not connected to the Internet it is working offline.

Online

The opposite of offline.

Packet

When a file (such as an e-mail message) is sent on the Internet, the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) divides it into chunks or "packets" for efficiency. Individual packets may travel different routes on the Internet, to be reassembled when they all arrive.

Password

A sequence of characters using no space. The password ensures security for computer users, especially of a multi-user or protected system. While a user ID may be generally known, the password (typically between 5 and 8 characters) should be known only to that person. The computer does not display the characters of the password on screen, in case others might see it. Many systems make you change your password periodically.

Good criteria when choosing a password: Do not choose a password that someone can easily guess (Social Security number, birthday, or maiden name). Do not choose a word from the dictionary (there are programs that rapidly try every word in the dictionary!). Do not choose a word that is currently newsworthy. Do not choose a password similar to your previous password. Do choose a mixture of letters and at least one number. Do choose a word that you can easily remember.

Plug-in

Plug-ins are programs easily installed on your computer as part of your Web browser. Netscape originally allowed you to download and install programs that played sound or video. However, these helper applications ran in a separate window. A plug-in application automatically function as integral to the HTML file being presented.

Popular plug-ins are Adobe's Acrobat (a document presentation that displays documents as print media), RealNetworks' (streaming media player), and Macromedia's Shockwave for Director (interactive animation and sound). There are now hundreds on the web and users should wait until they need a plug-in before downloading.

POP

Point of Presence, or Post Office Protocol:

A Point of Presence is a location where a connection to the Internet can be made, usually through phone lines. So if an Internet company says they will soon have a POP in Budapest, it means that they will soon have a local phone number in Budapest.

Post Office Protocol is the way e-mail software gets mail from a mail server. You get a POP account when you obtain a SLIP, PPP, or shell account with an ISP. The POP tells your software how to get your mail.

POP3

Post Office Protocol 3 is the most recent version of the Post Office Protocol. It allows e-mail to be held by your Internet server so you can download at your convenience.

An alternative to POP3 is IMAP (Interactive Mail Access Protocol), which allows you to you view and keep email to be searched whenever.

POP can be thought of as a "store-and-forward" service. IMAP can be thought of as a remote file server.

POP and IMAP deal with receiving e-mail: not to be confused with Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), which transfers e-mail across the Internet. You send e-mail with SMTP and mail is read using POP or IMAP.

Port

1) On a computer, a port is a physical socket connection for another device. Typically called serial or parallel ports. The serial port devices such as scanners and the parallel port supports hardware such as printers.

2) In programming, a port is a "connection place", using Internets protocol (TCP/IP), to specify a server. Well known ports on the Internet have 'address' numbers pre-assigned by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA).

2) In programming, "to port" is to move a program from one system to another so it can be run there.

Portal

A portal (synonymous with 'gateway'), is a Web site that can be used as a major starting or 'anchor' site for users when they connect to the Web. There are general portals, (such as Yahoo, Excite, Netscape, Lycos, CNET, Microsoft Network, and America Online's AOL.com.) and niche or specialised portals (i.e. Garden.com, Fool.com (for investors), and SearchNT.com (for systems administrators)).

Access providers tend to offer portals for users, with content categories and text-intensive, fast loading pages for ease of use. Company portals have attracted investors because they are seen to provide exposure to advertising.

Services offered by portals include a Web site directory, searches of other sites, news, weather, e-mail, stock quotes, phone and map information, and even a forum. Excite was among the first to offer personalised site creation for individual interests.

In fantasy games, a portal is a gateway to an imaginary world. In 3-D graphics, portal rendering increases realism effects and speeds presentation.

Posting

A single email message (i.e. to a newsgroup or message board).

PPP

Point-to-Point Protocol is used typically to connect a personal computer to a server by phone line using a serial interface. Your ISP provides you with a PPP so that the their server can deal with your requests, using the Internet protocol (IP).

Because PPP can handle synchronous and asynchronous communication, it is an improvement on the earlier Serial Line Internet Protocol (SLIP). Unlike SLIP, PPP can share lines with other users.

Preferred Meaning

Part of the encoding decoding theory of Media Studies. A preferred meaning is the dominant meaning that has been encoded by the producer(s) of a text. An advert, for example, has usually been structured to close down the scope for different audience interpretations, while a TV soap opera will be open to make the 'preferred meaning' more difficult to interpret.

Preferred meanings are more appropriate to factual texts. They may be needed more in Web based or Internet communications, where the dominant form is text.

The theory is unclear about whether preferred meanings are there in the text (whether we see them or not), whether an expert is needed to identify them, or whether they are there by consensus. Who decides?

Public Access Provider

A company that provides access to the Internet, usually for a fee.

Public Domain

Programmes free to copy because they were created to be shared. UNIX has developed such programmes, which can be used without restriction. However, when reusing programmes, it is advisable to research their history to be sure they are public domain.

Reception Context

The context in which an audience consumes a medium goes some way towards defining its content. But the idea that audiences pay full attention to conventional media has been discarded. Studies (Tunstall, 1983) show evidence of primary (close attention), secondary (the medium as background) and tertiary (no conscious attention) levels of media consumption. In contrast with TV or radio, cinema requires audience commitment a deliberate decision to visit a purpose-built environment. With the Web how are we to understand context? TV, radio and film employ two senses sight and sound. But using a computer requires use of sight (screen skills), touch and motor senses (using keyboard and mouse), and sometimes sound. Does this mean that secondary and tertiary modes (as outlined above) are not options? Is surfing the net more demanding, more physically consuming than other media?

Reception Theory

Reception theory sees the meaning of a text in the act of its interpretation rather than the act of its creation: whatever an author intended, it is the reader who defines its meaning. We may think of active audiences as informed readers. For example, in terms of preferred meanings audiences may adopt different positions. The audience which accepts the intended meaning may be said to be complicit with the dominant hegemony. An audience which opposes some and adapts other codes may be said to have negotiated its meaning. An audience which understands but rejects the preferred meaning is taking an oppositional position. On the web it is largely a question of forming interpretative communities. A culture of good taste is being encouraged, for example, on the 'Web Pages that Suck' site.

Search Engines

Put simply, these are either searchable databases of the Web or the entire Internet, or programs that do this. There are three main functions:

A spider ("crawler" or a "bot"), goes to every Web site that wants to be searchable (or has paid a fee to the Search Engine owner like Yahoo to be included in their search), and reads it, using hypertext links to find and read a other pages.

A program creates a database (or "catalogue") from pages already read

A program receives search requests, checks the database, and returns results

An alternative to a search engine is a directory. Yahoo, which also uses a search engine, is the most popular directory. Portals also offer search engine and directory services.

Searches with search engines (Yahoo, AltaVista, Lycos, Google) can provide pages and pages of results that are themselves time-consuming to search. Specialise search engines select parts of the Web to index. For example, Ask Jeeves (<http://www.askjeeves.com>) provides a general search, but allows search request to be phrased in natural language, "What's the weather in New York today?" Dogpile.com or WebFerret (<http://www.softferret.com>) are specialised tools that catalogue the findings of different search engines at the same time.

Other sites that do this are:

Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>)

search.com (<http://search.com>)

EasySearcher (<http://www.easysearcher.com>)

Server

There are three main meanings:

A computer program providing services to other programs in the same or other computers.

The computer that a server program runs.

A program that deals with requests from client programs in the same or other computers.

A Web server is the program (in a computer) that deals with requests for HTML pages or files. A Web client is the program (i.e. the browser program in your computer) making the request.

Shareware

Software distributed free on a trial basis for which the user may later have to pay. Shareware versions of programs are offered on magazine covers with built-in expiration dates (usually 30 days). Other shareware (sometimes 'liteware') is offered with disabled functions to entice buyers.

Freeware has no costs attached, but is copyrighted so it cannot be incorporated into a commercial development. Least restrictive freeware programs are in the public domain. When reusing public domain software it is advisable to research its history to be sure it is public domain.

SLIP

A protocol allowing two computers to communicate with each other. For example, your ISP provides you with a SLIP connection so their server can deal with your requests. Dial-up connection is typically slower than the ISP network connections.

Point-to-Point Protocol (PPP) is better than SLIP.

SME

Small-to-Medium Enterprise an abbreviation for the growing number of "small office/home office" (SOHO) size companies. The EU defines an SME as legally independent with less than 500 employees.

Smileys

A commonly used emoticon. Example :-) or >:(

SMS

A Short Message Service is for mobile phones (less than 160 characters) using the Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication. GSM and SMS is available in Europe. SMS is similar to paging but does not need an active phone since messages are held for a few days. SMS can send to digital phones from a Web site with PC Link or from one digital phone to another.

Snail Mail

Refers to the regular postal service (i.e. Royal Mail), in a derogatory way that implies a much slower service than e-mail.

Spam

A term for junk e-mail, a form of bulk mail to a list obtained by subscribing to a Usenet discussion group. It is not good netiquette to spam. Some spam is mistakenly agreed to when registering with a site. The term derives from a Monty Python sketch.

Thumbnail

A graphic or image made smaller so that multiple images can be displayed on one Web. This is useful because users can choose which image to see in larger format by clicking on it. Also used to display "samples" which, when clicked, prompt users for a password then give instructions on how to pay for the larger format version.

Unzip

Unzipping is un-compressing files from a zip or similar compression program. Downloaded programs from shareware or freeware will usually be zipped (the file name has a ".zip" suffix).

Upload

The transmission of a file to another, usually larger computer or server. Those who share images with others can upload a file to a BBS.

Downloading is the opposite; receiving a file from a BBS or Web site.

Both are performed through FTP. (You usually need permission to upload to a site)

This is different from sending or receiving an attached file with e-mail, though many people use the terms loosely; "upload" to mean "send" and "download" to mean receive.

URL

A Uniform Resource Locator is the address of a resource or web site, using the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). The URL names the protocol required, gives a domain name and describes a file location.

Virus

A piece of code inserted into a program, usually to cause some malfunction, can be downloaded with a program or be present on a floppy disk. The source is often unaware of its presence and the virus can lie dormant until something triggers its code.

The best protection is anti-virus software that checks files periodically. The majority of email warnings about viruses are hoaxes.

WAP

The Wireless Application Protocol specifies communication protocols for wireless devices, like cell telephones. It can be used for Internet access and e-mail, the Web, newsgroups, and Internet Relay Chat (IRC). In the past, different manufacturers used different technologies. WAP means that future devices will be able to operate across different technologies.

Webcam

A video camera attached to a computer, allowing images to be requested over the Internet from a Web site. A live cam provides new images, transmitted in succession or in streaming video. Early cams were mounted on fish tanks and coffee machines. Today, many are used for travel promotion and information, and remote monitoring of ongoing events such as building erection or festivals. Webcams may become more common as access to more bandwidth becomes available.

WWW

World Wide Web – Commonly incorrectly used to refer to "The Internet", WWW is the wealth of resources that can be accessed using the Internet. It is also the labyrinth of connected hypertext servers (HTTP servers), which allow text, graphics, sound files, etc. to be combined.