

## Internet Resources

The Internet is a vast media. No one has or can ever index every resource available on the net. All the same, with experience, users tend to get a pretty good idea of how it's all structured and how to find useful information.

Provided below are some URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) that you may want to surf

### Architectural Institutes

Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia > [www.pam.org.my](http://www.pam.org.my)  
Singapore Institute of Architects > [www.sia.org.sg](http://www.sia.org.sg)  
Royal British Institute of Architects > [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)  
Royal Australian Institute of Architects > [www.raia.com.au](http://www.raia.com.au)  
American Institute of Architects > [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)

### Free Web-Mail Providers

Hotmail > [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com)  
Yahoo! > [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)  
Netscape > [www.netscape.com](http://www.netscape.com)

### Free Websites

Geocities > [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com)  
Yahoo! > [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)  
Tripod > [www.tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com)  
Freeservers > [www.freeservers.com](http://www.freeservers.com)  
FortuneCity > [www.fortunecity.com](http://www.fortunecity.com)

### Local ISPs

Jaring > [www.jaring.my](http://www.jaring.my)  
TMnet > [www.tm.net.my](http://www.tm.net.my)

### Domain Name Registrars

MYNIC(for.com.my) > [www.mynic.net](http://www.mynic.net)  
Register.com > [www.register.com](http://www.register.com)  
DirecNIC > [www.directnic.com](http://www.directnic.com)

### Web Hosting Service Providers

Interplay > [www.interplay.com.my](http://www.interplay.com.my)  
Webserver.com.my > [www.webserver.com.my](http://www.webserver.com.my)

### Instant Messaging/ Chat

ICQ > [www.icq.com](http://www.icq.com)  
Netscape Instant Messenger > [home.netscape.com/aim](http://home.netscape.com/aim)  
MSN Instant Messenger > [messenger.msn.com](http://messenger.msn.com)  
MIRC > [www.mirc.co.uk](http://www.mirc.co.uk)  
Talkcity > [www.talkcity.com](http://www.talkcity.com)

### Search Engines

Google > [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)  
Netscape > [www.netscape.com](http://www.netscape.com)  
Yahoo! > [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)  
Ask Jeeves > [www.ask.com](http://www.ask.com)  
About.co.in > [www.about.com](http://www.about.com)  
Alto Vista > [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)  
Lycos > [www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)

### News Sites

CNN > [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)  
TIME > [www.time.com](http://www.time.com)  
Star > [www.thestar.com.my](http://www.thestar.com.my)

### Misc

Great Buildings Collections > [www.greatbuildings.com](http://www.greatbuildings.com)  
Cool Tool of the Day > [www.cooltool.com](http://www.cooltool.com)  
Library of Congress > [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)  
Barnes & Nobles Books > [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com)  
Amazon.com > [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)  
Project Gutenberg > [www.gutenberg.net](http://www.gutenberg.net)  
Virus Myths > [www.vmyths.com](http://www.vmyths.com)

# Internet for Building Professionals



a half-day CPD programme for PAM northern chapter

## What is the Internet?

This seemingly simple question is actually quite difficult to answer. Where your interest lies will determine your viewpoint. To a businessperson, the Internet probably represents a great business opportunity. To a short-term speculator it may quite be a bubble that has already burst.

What the Internet is is primarily a new media space: a means of presenting information—about people, products, services, news & international affairs, hobbies, science and technology, etc. Really, *anything and everything!*

In addition to the above, the old media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) and the new media space offered by the Internet are mixing, merging and *converging*.

To be distributed and accessed, information has to be published. In the not so distant past, we had newsletters, magazines produced using a typewriter, glue and scissors and a photo-copier. Then along came desktop publishing. Now, everyone with an Internet connection can become a publisher—and reach out to the remotest corner of our wired planet.

That, then is what the Internet is— a wired form of communications transcending the traditional boundaries. It is fast, reliable, inexpensive and pretty informal as well. Or if you must—it is websites, email, VOIP, multimedia, mailing lists & newsgroups, chat, instant messaging and hundreds of other exciting possibilities—all available on a cheap PC.

## Brief History of the Internet

Generally, the Internet is the latest development in a relatively long history of communications technology: telegraph wire system (1884), cable (1866), telephone (1876), radio (1915) and satellite (1957). What is thrilling, however, is how recent the explosion of the Internet into general use is.

In 1964, the RAND Corporation published a document outlining the principles of *packet switching*. The idea was to have numerous decentralised independent equal-status control *nodes*. Messages through the system were broken down into small packets, routed independently around the system and automatically reassembled at the destination.

In 1969, the Pentagon funded a four-node network called *Advanced Research Projects Agency network*. By 1972, a public demonstration took place linking forty machines. In 1973, the first international connections were established with University College London and the Royal Radar Establishment in Norway.

The first email message was sent in 1971. In 1974 *Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol* was developed. In 1976 AT&T Bell Labs developed *UUCP (Unix-to-Unix Protocol)*. In 1979 the Usenet newsgroup network was created. Around this time too, the PC as we know it today was born.

*Internet Relay Chat (IRC)* software was written in Finland in 1988 and came to prominence in 1991 during the Gulf War when it was used to transmit eye-witness accounts to the outside world. In fact, the fascinating IRC logs of these events have been preserved as historical documents! The advent of Graphical User Interfaces (GUI) around 1988 allowed computing tools such as word processors, DTP, etc to be accessible by the layman in the street.

In Europe, at the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN), Tim Berners-Lee developed the concept of the *Worldwide Web (WWW)* in 1989. This was to transform the use of the Internet together with the development of the *web browser* in 1990.

By 1993, *Mosaic* was introduced; its developers went on to create *Netscape Navigator* later. Off-course, Microsoft caught up with its *Internet Explorer*. The rest, as they say, is history.

## Getting Connected to the Internet

**Hardware/Software:** You can connect to the Internet using almost any computer available today. However to avoid difficulties accessing the rich variety of audio and video content on the net, the minimum specifications recommended today would be a *FCVf* at least Pentium III processor with min. 64 MB RAM, 1 GB free hard disk space, Windows 98 operating system, a CD-ROM drive, a soundcard and speakers. Ofcourse, you could use other flavours of operating systems such as Linux, Unix or Mac OS. In addition to the hardware and software above, you would require a [telephone line](#) with a 56kbps *moifem* (oi better still an ISDN or DSL line). And to complete the package, you would require an [account with a local Internet Service Provider \(1SP\)](#).

**ISP:** The 1SP provides your hook into the Internet. Your computer connects, usually via a dial-up modem and telephone line, into the ISP's server, which is continuously connected through high-speed connection to the Internet's world-wide backbone. As part of the ISP's package, you would get a unique email address and sometimes a small space for building a personal [website](#). In Malaysia, the two primary ISPs are Joring ([www.joring.my](http://www.joring.my)) and TMnet ([www.tm.net.my](http://www.tm.net.my)). Costs ore relatively similar and various packages are offered.

**Costs:** Generally, for connecting to the Internet using dial-up connections, you incur two types of costs (apart from the hardware, software and electricity overheads): a connection fee and a phone line usage fee. Both charges are currently based on a per minute usage and total to approximately 3-4 sen per minute. •

**Knowledge:** Simple, operating knowledge of PCs is required, although with today's GUI operating systems and application software, any T-O-H can operate one. Should you still find it a daunting experience, go take a friend to a cyber-cafe (be prepared though for the noise and smoke pollution!) and spend a couple of hours familiarising yourself for a few ringgits' outlay.

## Composition of the Internet

As described earlier, the Internet today is a vast sea of information, with not much control over its content, layout or design. Be forewarned though: most of the stuff on the Internet is copyrighted material and its only proper that you exercise due diligence when tempted by that beautiful piece of graphics! Having said that, however, the Internet still has loads of stuff that is specifically public domain and available for used by anyone.

**World Wide Web:** The WWW is composed of millions of websites each with many individual webpages. These pages con contain text, graphics, animations and sounds and videos too. Webpoges can be informational or commercial in nature. Most are freely accessible by anyone connected to the net. Some, however, charge visitors a fee to view content on their pages. My advice: you should just look elsewhere!

**Email:** Generally, when someone asks "are you on the net?" what they mean is "do you have an email address?" Email traffic is of huge proportions today with about 6 billion messages being transmitted each day! You will get one email account/address when you sign-up with the ISP. If you like having additional addresses, you can obtain them from the numerous free web-mail service providers such as [Hotmail](#). [Yahoo!](#) [Mail](#). [Netscape](#). [etc](#).

Email is fast (almost instantaneous in most coses), flexible (sending to multiple recipients in one go) and can almost replace snail-mail for most purposes. In addition, its semi-formal nature allows you to respond immediately and succinctly. But do take note, archives of anything you write exists on various transieat servers.

**Mailing Lists/Newsgroups:** There exists thousands of special interest mailing lists and newsgroups out on the net from work-related ones (eg. AutoCAD) to leisure and hobbies (eg. DeLorean lovers] to the ever popular jokes lists. Basically you 'join' 'or subscribe to the list/group and thereafter you get all the postings sent to you automatically via your email. Most lists are free to join although there exist special interest paid ones.

**IRC/Chat/Instant Messaging:** Chat is hugely popular especially with kids. Basically, you 'chat' with friends or complete strangers who are online anywhere in the world by typing on a keyboard. Instant messaging (IM) is another form of chat with the added advantage of leaving messages for someone who is not online when you are but will

get your message as soon as he logs on. Most chats/IMs allow the transfer of files: creative use of this facility allows Architects to transfer drawing files while discussing a project with other members of a project team)

**Search Engines:** The best way to surf the net is to use search engines to locate websites related to one's work or interests. Search engines act as dynamic indexes to the WWW, each request returning sites peculiar to the input search phrase. Many search engines exist each with its own strong

points, but many web connoisseurs swear by [Google](#).

## Internet for Architects

The world is getting to be a 'small' place day by day. With the impending globalisation of the economy and the lifting of tariffs world-wide, we would be challenged on our home turf by Architects from around the world, including the big players from developed notions. The Internet offers great potential: infact the Internet is known as the 'great leveler'.

Architects and Engineers can utilise the power of the internet is various ways: its speed, power, reach, flexibility, sex appeal even!

**Email:** By for the most common use. Communicate with fellow consultants, clients, site personnel, etc. The public con contact you (eg. potential job-seekers, suppliers bombarding you with sales/marketing info, etc).

While generally fast and reliable, you ought to realise that occossionally some mail may go astray. Not 100% fool-proof, nor temper-proof. Along the transmission path, anyone interested enough, can intercept your message. So do not send sensitive information via email, especially in unencrypted form from publicly accessible PCs.

Architects and consultants can use emails with attached drawing files for fast transmission of CAD files across town. However, the small mailbox sizes offered by both our local ISPs hinder this except on very small projects. Alternatively, Architects may need to use alternative web-mail services or shored folders (see below).

A major problem with the use of emails is the lack of discipline by users. It's no use to send drawings as email attachments if the receiving party doesn't have a system of regularly checking and retrieving their mails. Not only does this result in delays, it may also cause other incoming mails to 'bounce' back if the recipient's in box is full. ^

**WWW:** LAN has for a number of years now relaxed its strict restrictions on advertising: Architects are now allowed to have websites. Use this to maximum advantage within the context of LAM's guidelines. Simple websites with brief factual profile of the firm, its principals/key staff members and projects are easy and inexpensive to setup. Prospective clients can be directed to these sites thus saving money on expensive printing of company profiles.

A lot of new business can be obtained via a web presence. A simple site with sufficient info has been known to have clients as well as other consultants keen to establish networking come a-knocking via email! In this context, its is important for Malaysian Architects to make their web presence felt.

**Chats/Instant Messaging:** Don't sneer: Creative use of this facility allows Architects to transfer drawing files while discussing a project with other members of a project team, half-way across the globe.

**Search Engines:** Use the search functions of the net to locate information on products, services, people, expertise, etc. Most building products manufacturers and suppliers maintain quality websites these days. Why call the salesman in during precious daylight hours when (if) you can see his company's latest and complete offerings online, 7x24x365. Search for expertise around the world, say for a specialist consultant with specific project experience elsewhere in the world.

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There exists an abundance of information on the net related to the building industry and business generally. From resources on products, materials, construction systems and techniques, new technologies, design trends and concepts, continuing practice development to info on tax strategies, HR trends, ISO certification, etc.

**Web-publishing:** Most office automation packages including leading CAD systems are now capable of web-publishing, ie. having your drawing files immediately available to your other consultants, wherever they may be physically located. Save on plotting and courier delivery charges.

**Shared folders:** A number of service providers used to provide free space for net users to 'upload' files and set sharing privileges for others to access these files. However, almost all have withdrawn their free services, some replacing these with subscription-based models, which still represent good value.

## Risks/Problems

There are, ofcourse, a few risks when you get on the net. Viruses and all the variants (trojan horses, worms, etc) are the biggest threat. Ensure that you have a good anti-virus software installed on your PC and keep the virus definition files up-to-date.

Credit-card fraud is another problem, however statistics show that cord fraud is far greater in the bricks-and-mortar industry than in cyberspace.

Spam is quite a nuisance, but you learn how to minimise it pretty soon. On the other hand, looking at some porn will not make you go blind, although you would be wasting time.