AIDS on the Net

Best bets for surfing the ultimate wave

January 1, 1999 By Shana Naomi Krochmal

Face it: The HIV information superhighway is no walk in the park. When all you want is new data or a hot date, just typing in *AIDS* on a standard search engine like Yahoo! yields more than 3,000 website addresses. That's like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack, and many sites in this unmonitored medium are open to misleading information or even hate groups exhorting PWAs to suicide for the greater good.

One low-tech way to navigate the Net is through specialized books such as the recent *HIV/AIDS Internet Information Sources and Resources* (Harrington Park Press). Edited by Jeffrey T. Huber, PhD, this overview of HIV-related websites is designed to help the average surfer pinpoint a relevant site. The book could also serve as inspiration for any lonely but ambitious HIVer who wants to set up his or her own webpage.

There's a drawback: Like all hard-copy Internet guides, this one ages poorly—many of the links we sampled had already expired. Those still up run the gamut from basic black-and-white to all sorts of bells and whistles. A few recommendations:

WEB SERVICES

Some ASOs provide Internet access for their clients, and it's possible to obtain an e-mail address, even if you only have access through a public library or a friend's computer. Several companies like Juno (www.juno.com), Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) and Hotmail (now owned by Microsoft, www.hotmail.com), offer web-based e-mail, which allows you to read, store and send e-mail through a browser like Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer.

Critical Path AIDS Project (www.critpath.com)

This Philadelphia-based site comes to you from longtime activist (and POZ February/March 1996 cover boy) Kiyoshi Kuromiya and provides free Internet access to local individuals and organizations as well as free websites and mailing lists for individuals and organizations nationwide.

MAILING LISTS

If you have an e-mail account, you can participate in electronic bulk mailings. All such lists e-mail you messages about AIDS policy, treatment or news. Most allow you to e-mail information

("posting") back to the list as well, whether it's related to treatment, an upcoming event or a response to a query. A moderated list requires messages to be approved by a facilitator. Be sure to read the the list leader's posting guidelines detailing the expected conduct of members so as to avoid offending others.

AEGIS (www.aegis.com/todaysnews/list.asp)
The AIDS Education Global Information System (AEGIS) hosts a comprehensive website with links to information about AIDS published around the world. It also offers a service that sends between five and 15 news articles on AIDS to your e-mail address each day. This is a read-only list, which means that you can send but not receive messages to the list. This is not a discussion list.

AIDSACT (www.actupny.org/treatment/AIDSACTlist.html)
For activists of all ages. This list, which is not officially sponsored by ACT UP, announces upcoming meetings, demos and related ornery events; a new separate list does the same for treatment issues. Both are unmoderated.

GayPoz (www.gaypoz.com)
For gay men with HIV. This list is closed (you must send a note to the list owner to be approved), unmoderated and confidential. Postings can be anonymous. For more info, e-mail gaypoz-approval@web-depot.com.

HIV Support
For HIVers to share support and/or medical information. The list is unmoderated, confidential and accepts anonymous postings. E-mail lists@web-depot.com with a message containing the following text: info hiv-support.

Preventionews mailing list
A daily read-only list by the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention that includes a summary of journal articles and popular media. This is not a discussion list. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail message to: preventionews-subscribe@cdcnpin.org.

BULLETIN BOARDS AND FORUMS
These are online communities that allow members to post their own messages and answer others. Requires the use of a browser like Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer. Follow each group's posting practices or risk the boot.

CATIE (www.catie.ca/treatment.nsf)
Community AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) is a Canadian organization that hosts a treatment forum for PWAs, caregivers and service providers. Much of site and postings are in both French and English.

The Body (www.thebody.com/connect.html)
The Body hosts 16 bulletin boards in three areas: communities, relationships and information. Subjects range from “HIV/AIDS in the Military” to “I Just Tested Positive.” There are also groups for gay men, women, teens and Spanish-speakers. Hint: Organizing messages by “tree” (subject) rather than “date” makes for easier reading. POZ’s own lovely and luscious website (www.poz.com), which contains the full text of all issues published since June 1995, is maintained by The Body.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/AIDS-on-the-Net-7095-8434