

World Citizens, Surf the Net!

An Internet Workshop

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You've heard about it on the radio, seen it on TV, and read about it in books, magazines, and now even the *Japan Baha'i News* and the National Spiritual Assembly are talking about it...

"A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvelous swiftness and perfect regularity." — Shoghi Effendi, page 203, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*. March 11, 1936

It seems the Guardian was referring to the Internet!

At the Baha'i Studies 4th Annual Meeting in Yamaguchi, I stressed the importance of the Friends becoming computer-literate. One of the many ways in which computers can help us enroll and deepen thousands, even millions of new believers is to make our materials available to everyone via Internet. Meeting with members of the Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Center in Haifa, and Hand of the Cause, Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum during my Pilgrimage absolutely confirms that we Baha'is must use every available technology on the face of the earth to reach humanity, for "there are divine deadlines to be met". The Internet is definitely a part of this.

In order to handle a large flow of questions and be available whenever a seeker calls, an inexpensive solution is to install a Baha'i voice-mail system. The basic software is available for free, and works on any modem-connected computer. If a user were to need information in English or Japanese, it could easily be prepared by our many talented Baha'is. Quite a few have actual got professional broadcast experience and would love to be of service! We have quite a few Baha'is with computer expertise, as well. Let's reach out!

Naturally, my desire as a pioneer is to get the Message across to as many people as possible. Computers offer a way to get things started, and can clearly play a major role in "systematic deepening". It is already possible to create audio programs that can be heard on demand, over the Internet. As the Internet-using public is demonstrating its hunger for information, why don't we Baha'is give them some that will transform their lives?

There are now literally hundreds of Baha'i resources available for free on the Internet in about 20 different languages. People all over the world are now able to see full-color graphics, read and HEAR prayers, and search all the Writings from their computers.

How to Get Started

Now, in order to get up and running, you'll need a few things: a computer, such as a Mac or IBM-type with Windows. Personally, I'd recommend a Mac. Auxiliary Board Member, T. Higashi is about to buy another one, his 3rd Mac, since his daughters, age 2 and 3 both like to use them at the same time! A machine can't be much less intimidating than that. Either way, the machine should have enough memory, at least 16MB to be safe. A large-capacity hard disk is not expensive anymore, so get a big one, 500MB or more.

The most crucial equipment, after your machine, is the modem. For IBM's, I suppose US Robotics is the brand of choice, according to the pros. Expect to spend around US \$200 for a 28.8kbps external modem. Do not scrimp and buy a slower one, you will end up paying for it in wasted time on the telephone line. I think for English speaking Mac Users, you can't beat Global Village's modems. It has the best fax software around, and so easy to use, you won't even have to read the manual.

If you're looking for a machine to use with a Japanese system, don't worry, both brands have Japanese version available here. For English versions, you can mail order the products from the USA. If they won't ship to Japan, have a friend forward the items to you. Computers are tricky enough without having to fumble around in a language you are not native to, even if you're fluent. Internet software is all available for free, so don't buy it unless you like reading manuals.

Next, and also crucial, is finding an Internet provider. Shop around. The main requirements are to get what's called a PPP account, good customer service, and charges of no more than ¥10 per minute, if you must go with that type of billing. Check your local bookstore, there's sure to be a magazine devoted to the Internet out there!