

“Tech Talk” TV Show

Getting the Most Out of the Web

Aired 1/9/05

People are being interviewed in a mall as to how they use the internet.

- I make a lot of purchases online.
- Travel; looking up places where we'd like to visit.
- Mostly search engines, but I actually go to school for digital art so I use it for video production and editing and all that.
- Ah...surfing the net and investment information...investing.
- I use it for research too, if a word comes up or a subject comes up I'll run it on Google or Yahoo and try and get an answer that way.
- Usually just to use email and talk to my friends, like, that live in Denmark.

Tech Talk intro plays

Susan: Hello and welcome to Tech Talk from the University of Minnesota, your source of information about the technology that surrounds us every day. I'm your host, Susan McKinnell. The World Wide Web; what a magnificent gift! You can do so much with it. It's like a library of information, no, it's even more than a library. It's a source of not only information, but of conversation, of activities, of entertainment. And those people at the beginning of the show, they seemed to know how to get a whole lot out of the web and that's what we're here to help you do that today as well. One of the specialists we'll talk to today is Justin Steen. Justin is a web programmer at the U. He also teaches computer short courses and he provides technical support for the University community. Justin, it's nice to have you with us today.

Justin: Thanks. It's great to be back on the show.

Susan: Now, in order to get to the web, I know we all need a browser, a piece of software called a browser.

Justin: Mm. Hmm.

Susan: And just about everybody has, what, Internet Explorer? Is there any reason why you might want to use a different browser?

Justin: There are other browsers that you can download for your computer that provide features beyond what Internet Explorer provides. One popular feature is pop-up blocking, although, the latest Internet Explorer does block pop-ups now. Another is tabbed browsing, which other non-Internet Explorer browsers do, it allows you to open multiple websites in one window under a different tab in that window.

Susan: Okay. What are some of the browsers that do this?

Justin: Opera, Mozilla, Firefox, the latest Netscape browser, Conquerer.

Susan: Wow! Some of those I haven't even heard of at all. Now these browsers, like Firefox, these are free browsers? Are these all free?

Justin: Most of them are freely downloadable. Opera is free to try but there is a small fee if you choose to buy it and license it. But Firefox is freely downloadable from Mozilla.org.

Susan: Okay. And we have Firefox right on here right now. Can we take a look at it?

Justin: Sure.

Susan: Now you say this tabbed browsing thing, how would I use that?

Justin: One popular example is if you had a website on your screen and you wanted to just examine one of the links off in its own window, but still keep up that original page.

Susan: Sometimes I do that, I open up a whole new window.

Justin: Right then you don't have to backtrack.

Susan: It does give me a lot of windows to manage.

Justin: Right. So, let's say I'm at the Tech Talk website and I want to bring up just the episodes in a new window.

Susan: Okay.

Justin: On a Windows computer you can just right click that "episodes" link and choose open a new tab.

Susan: Okay, I see, you can choose open a new window but there is also open a new tab.

Justin: On the Mac I just have one mouse button so I need to control click, I don't have the two-button mouse.

Susan: And so what is this?

Justin: Open a new tab and then you can see the Tech Talk home page is still open and then we have this additional tab with the episodes page.

Susan: So, I can just go back and forth and look at whatever I want.

Justin: Right.

Susan: And if I wanted to I could just close this down this individual tab.

Justin: Right.

Susan: And then could I open up as many tabs as I want?

Justin: Sure. And you don't just need to open links in new tabs. You could bring up brand new tabs and then go to another website in that tab. So you can have several websites open in one window; instead of juggling multiple windows.

Susan: That's a lot less messy, isn't it?

Justin: Right.

Susan: That's great. And Firefox is free? And you said Firefox and Mozilla are kind of in the same...same...I know that they're both made by the same folks, aren't they?

Justin: The Mozilla organization.

Susan: What's the difference between the two?

Justin: With Mozilla you get a browser plus an email application and there is a web page editor also.

Susan: That sounds a lot like Netscape.

Justin: Right. And Firefox is just the web browser component of Mozilla.

Susan: Right. Would that be a lot faster to download then, since it's just the browser?

Justin: It's a little bit smaller.

Susan: Okay. Okay. And it's free to get. Where would I go to get this?

Justin: You go to www.Mozilla.org.

Susan: And they'd have all those options there to download.

Justin: Right.

Susan: Great! I could try it out; have as much fun with it as I want.

Justin: Mm. Hmm.

Susan: So, I've got the browser, I've got the neat browser, are these going to take a while to download?

Justin: Firefox is about 8 megabytes or so.

Susan: Okay, so if I'm on a phone connection, it might take...

Justin: On a phone connection, maybe half an hour.

Susan: Okay. That's not too bad. And then installing it would be about the same as installing any other software.

Justin: Right.

Susan: Okay. Once I'm on the web, I think the hardest thing for a lot of people is finding what you're looking for. Do you have any suggestions on search engines? First of all, like which ones to use.

Justin: Right. Probably one of the most popular search engines right now is Google. It's at Google.com.

Susan: Mm. Hmm.

Justin: And it's a really simple search engine.

Susan: Mm. Hmm. Yeah, I think we've got it up here right now. One of the things that I like about Google is that it's so simple. There's not a lot of junk on the page. It's just a spot to put what you're looking for.

Justin: Mm. Hmm.

Susan: Okay, how does Google work?

Justin: A search engine is basically a huge database of millions, even billions of web pages that are out there on the internet. Just like you would flip to the back of a book to look in the index for a particular word or phrase – it would tell you which page of the book to look on.

Susan: Mm. Hmm.

Justin: If you go to a search engine online and type in the words or phrases that you're looking for and it will give you a list of websites that pertain to that topic or to that word.

Susan: Okay. And how does Google find those websites in the first place?

Justin: It's really interesting. First it starts with a basic set of websites, these can be submitted to Google by users, by anybody.

Susan: Mm. Hmm. So if I put up a website I could submit to Google so that people could find me.

Justin: Right. So they could index it.

Susan: Mm. Hmm.

Justin: And Google will catalog and index each one of those pages, it remembers the words and phrases on the page so that when people search for them in the future they can find that page and what Google additionally does to add to its database is it'll periodically visit each webpage in its catalog and then it scans the links on each of those pages and it visits those pages that it links to and indexes those pages. So it's maintaining a list of links as well so it just keeps spidering out, finding more and more pages all the time.

Susan: Mm. Hmm. Covering as much of the web as possible.

Justin: Right.

Susan: Do you have some tips for actually searching for things? Like I know frequently I put something in and I don't find exactly what I'm looking for. I find a whole bunch of other stuff. For an example, there is a store that's real close to my house, it's called Fun Sisters, if I want to find some info about that I just type in "Fun Sisters." What's that going to get me?

Justin: Well, let's try typing fun sisters into Google.

Susan: And you can hit the Google button or just hit return, right?

Justin: Right.

Susan: And...boy! It looks like we've got some stuff here that looks like it has nothing to do with my store. "Join the fun." "Sisters Oregon Art event"

Justin: Yep.

Susan: Yeah this is a lot of stuff but it's not the store I'm looking for.

Justin: If you add the word “store” to the search, so here at the top of the Google page the original search is still there.

Susan: And we can just add to it.

Justin: Just add the word, “store”

Susan: Okay, “Old Company store.”

Justin: It’s still not what you want.

Susan: Yeah! And a lot of this too...

Justin: So, in this case we know that the name of the store is Fun Sisters so in the page that it brings up for that store it will have the words Fun and Sisters always together.

Susan: Yeah. I see it’s got down here, “Simply Sisters jewelry” and fun is way over here.

Justin: Right. So we’re just going to put those next to each other. You can put quotation marks around them. I’m putting “Fun Sisters” in quotation marks.

Susan: And that’s going to make sure that those two words are right next to each other.

Justin: Right.

Susan: And look.

Justin: We’re getting closer.

Susan: This looks like it. We’re looking at Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis. I think that might be the store I’m looking for.

Justin: If you wanted to just be sure you could even add the city that you’re looking for.

Susan: That’s a real good idea because a lot of times I’m looking for something local and so putting in...Mm. Hmm. And now we’ve got a lot of the best of the twin cities and so forth. So it looks like a lot of articles that are referring to the store. And my store may not even have web site but there might be information about it on the web.

Justin: Sure.

Susan: **Justin,** there is so much to see on the web!

Justin: And there is plenty to do as well. First and foremost, the web is practical. For example, you can check your bank accounts and pay most of your utility bills online.

Susan: Renew your automobile license tabs as well. I did that just recently.

Justin: There is a place called Mapquest that shows you how to get to your friend's house and you can even type in an address and it will tell you exactly where that is in the city. There is another site that you might want to use should you want to find, say, an ancestor's grave.

Susan: Hmm.

Justin: You can even go to the doctor online.

Susan: We all know that you can shop online, but did you know you could compare product prices online? You can even plan your vacation online.

Justin: You can do your taxes on the internet. You could even register for college. You can buy your college books on the web. You can visit a dictionary or an encyclopedia online.

Susan: You can learn about wine on the web, even plan a luncheon. Now, that's informational, but what about entertainment?

Justin: Right. Everyone thinks about games and, of course, they're on the web, but so are virtual visits to faraway places. You have the chance to buy discount movie tickets.

Susan: You can even see what's playing at the local theater or rent DVDs and have them delivered to your home.

Justin: And instead of going to the store for groceries, you can even order groceries online and have them delivered to your house.

Susan: The web is also a place to get a deal at an auction, make sure that you actually quit smoking or make out your living will.

Justin: Sure! As well as get the latest news.

Susan: Yes and there is even a site that let's you know that you are not the only one having technical problems on the World Wide Web.

Justin: There are several sites you can visit if you're having trouble with something. There are many experts out there you are willing to lend you a hand.

Susan: Great. Thank you so much for guiding us through all those sites. Say! What is your, or one of your favorite sites on the web?

Justin: One site that I visit once in a while is Slashdot.org

Susan: That's a technical information site, isn't it?

Justin: Right.

Susan: Thanks so much for being here with us today, Justin.

Justin: Thanks for having me on the show.

Susan: All that stuff on the internet just invites you to drive right in. But there is a site on the web that warns about just leaping into the breach. It's for kids, created by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Boys and Girls Club of America, but the message is for all of us.

Shot of the computer screen and a female voice says...

It's time again for your favorite game show where we find out, "Who's your friend on the Internet?"

Animated doors numbered 1, 2 and 3 appear and an animated child says, "I love this show!"

A female animated host appears and says, Okay, here's how it works, just listen to the three contestants and then choose the one that you'd want for your friend. Web Friend number 1 say, "Hello!"

A female child's voice says "Hello I like to play sports and especially roller blading. My favorite ice cream is vanilla. Mmm. Mmm. Mmm. And I like to listen to my music. I want to be your friend.

The animated host says, "Thank you. Web Friend number 2 say hello."

A creepy voice says, "Yeah. I like to follow people around and not let them know I'm doing it. I hide in corners and watch whenever they go by. My favorite sport is to pretend I'm someone's friend and trick people."

The animated host says, "Yikes! Thank you. Web Friend number 3, say "Hello!""

A teenaged girl's voice says, "Hi there! I, like, like to go shopping and buy stuff then I sit with my girlfriends and, like, look at the boys—they're so hot! And, like, check out the mall. So like, wanna be my friend? You go girl!"

The animated host says, "Thank you contestant. Now it's your turn. Click on the curtains if you want to hear the voices of the web friends again. Then when you are ready to find out "Who's your friend on the internet?" click this button.

Susan: As a viewer you asked to select one of the doors. So let's select door number 3.

The door marked number 3 rises and the creepy voice is heard and there is a man behind the door.

Susan: Uh-Oh. Let's try the nice one, door 1.

The door marked number 1 rises and the creepy voice is heard and there is a man behind the door.

Susan: Well, it just can't be door number 2.

The door marked 2 rises and the creepy voice is heard and there is a man behind the door.

The animated child reappears and says "They're all (inaudible) Yuck!"

The animated host says, "That's right. On the web you never know. There is no way to tell who it is you're really talking to.

Susan: So with the internet come many issues and concerns. To discuss those issues is Professor Janel Anderson, she teaches, consults and researches on communication and technology within organizations focusing primarily on web-based resources and collaboration across space and time. Thank you for being here with us, Janel.

Janel: Thank you for having me, Susan.

Susan: Now, I just looked at a whole bunch of different websites with Justin. There is so much information on the web, how do you know what's real and what's not.

Janel: It's a real challenge these days to tell what's real and what's not on the web. One rule of thumb is to just trust your gut. If it sounds unbelievable, there is a good chance it is unbelievable.

Susan: That's a very good base rule there.

Janel: There are a few practical things that you can do to tell if information is real or get a sense of whether it is or not. One of the first things you can do, is you can look at the address or the url of the website that you're looking at and if it ends in a .gov or a .mil

Susan: Military?

Janel: Military or government. .us for anything by the U.S. government that's not government or military or .CA for Canada and all those other country codes and so on. You know that it's put out by a government and you have at least that measure of...

Susan: Reliability?

Janel: Reliability. Sure. Also, educational institutions use a .edu so you can be assured that things you're finding there are legitimate. When we get into the .coms, the .nets, the .biz even the .orgs anybody can get a url that ends in those extensions.

Susan: Typically non-profits use .orgs but anyone can get those, right?

Janel: Anyone can get those, absolutely. So if you are on a site like that, you have to kind of wonder what is the purpose of this site, are they trying to sell me something and again, as I said before, if it seems unbelievable there is a good chance it is. Now, there are a couple of things that you can do to find out indeed if it is reliable.

Susan: Okay.

Janel: One of those things you can do is you can cross check to see if there are other links and other references to the same material.

Susan: Is this the only that is saying this on the entire web?

Janel: Right. So you could use a search engine, for example, to see if there is collaborating evidence that this indeed is true.

Susan: Mm. Hmm.

Janel: Another thing you can do is check a few different web sites that are out there that look for hoaxes.

Susan: Okay.

Janel: And report hoaxes. One of those would be urbanlegends.about.com.

Susan: Part of the about.com network.

Janel: Right. And another one is consumerwatch.org. And that is the same organization that brings us the print publication Consumer Reports.

Susan: Okay. And so these websites, have information it looks like, on urban legends that are passed around on the web and so might tell you if its false or true and so forth.

Janel: Right. And there are places on some of these websites for you to report things that you think might be hoaxes or write letters in and they'll investigate and write back to you.

Susan: Of course, a lot of hoaxes come around via email and I guess the first things before you start spreading that on to someone else is to double check. Make sure it's real.

Janel: Exactly.

Susan: Great. Again, a lot of people think about the internet that it might be distancing people. You spend a lot of time at home on your computer and not talking to real people and so forth. Are there some ways that the internet is building community?

Janel: Absolutely! There are a number of great ways to connect with other people who have similar interests. And one of those ways is a website called meetup.com.

Susan: Mm.Hmm. Oh yeah, this one right here.

Janel: Mm. Hmm. And on meetup.com you can put in something you're interested in. Say, for example, you are interested in dogs. You can put in dogs as a keyword to search and your zip code or your hometown and it will go out and look to see if there are dog groups, you know, groups of dog owners who are meeting and typically meetup.com groups meet about once a month and so you can find out when is the next meeting, you can register as a user and then you can go meet up with people with the same interests.

Susan: So, you use the internet to actually physically meet people. It's not like you are limited to being in front of your computer.

Janel: Sure.

Susan: I know there is other stuff on there too as far as things that do, perhaps, do keep you behind your computer but still connecting with other people like bulletin boards, chat rooms...

Janel: Absolutely. There are some great bulletin boards out there that give people, maybe you can think of them as support networks. Quite often there are bulletin boards or support networks that are related to certain diseases or certain topics. So if you have, if you happen to be the parent of a child with cystic fibrosis, for example, you could network with other parents with children with cystic fibrosis all of the country and share your stories and experiences on these bulletin boards.

Susan: Absolutely. And so you can get the support of people who are in that specific situation and, of course, I am sure trade some information as well that might be particular...one of the things that I think is so neat about the internet is that there is going to be someone out there and probably a whole group of people out there that have your specific arcane interests. You're not going to be the only one.

Janel: Absolutely.

Susan: I wanted to ask you, at the very beginning of this program we asked a lot of different people what their favorite thing on the web is, what is your favorite thing these days on the web?

Janel: Good question! Well, right now I have been right in the middle of a kitchen remodeling project and one of the websites that I found allows me to go in and plot out the dimensions of my kitchen and where my fixtures are and then go in and change the color of the cabinets, change the pattern on the floor or the counter tops.

Susan: That sounds like a lot of fun.

Janel: It is a lot of fun. Would you like to see it?

Susan: I would love to. Here let me see, I'm going to get rid of this screen, I think. Oh. And this is what? Millspride.com

Janel: Yep. This is millspride.com and we're in their kitchen section. And you can start off by choosing a style of kitchen from traditional to contemporary to country or whatever. And here on the screen we have a traditional kitchen. And as you can see here, we can change the floor so if we wanted to have a parquet floor, I could click on that and the floor will change to be a parquet floor.

Susan: Sometimes it takes a little, a little time to load. I can see that is loading across the screen. I have always wanted one of those black and white checked floors although my sister-in-law tells me they scuff like crazy but and so then, the floor the ceiling, the walls. You don't have to go in and paint your room to see what it's going to look like once it's in that dark purple color.

Janel: Exactly, so if you wanted to do something really bold like change to a really dark color or...

Susan: Well, it looks great on the little teeny example but how's it going to look in the actual room?

Janel: Right.

Susan: And then do you have your whole kitchen designed on here, then?

Janel: I do.

Susan: Can we take a look at that. I'll just down here. There we go. So it looks like you also get to do things like lay-out.

Janel: Yes, you can choose the dimensions of your room, the general shape of your room and then put in the exact dimensions of where the walls and the windows and so on are.

Susan: I have to ask you, is this what your kitchen looks like now?

Janel: This is quite a bit what my kitchen looks like right now, except my kitchen is a little bit wider than this shows and I think that that is a user error on my part. I didn't put in the inches in.

Susan: Didn't quite measure right.

Janel: Didn't quite measure right.

Susan: But it really does give you a good example and it's lovely, looks very nice.

Janel: Thank you.

Susan: Mm. Hmm. I know that you do a lot of research on various online things and recently you've been doing some research on applying for jobs.

Janel: Yes. Applying for jobs through online websites.

Susan: These days, pretty much you have to use the internet when applying for a job, don't you?

Janel: Something like 82% of organizations are hiring on the web.

Susan: That's a whole lot!

Janel: Mm.Hmm.

Susan: So, in order to get your job on the web, you're going to have to be a little bit savvy with how to get...I mean...what are some of the things you found out in your research.

Janel: Well, the process has changed. The way that people put resumes together has changed, from having a skill set way down on the bottom of the resume to now having a bunch of keywords right up at the very top.

Susan: Keywords. It's kind of the word that people are going to be looking for those specific words.

Janel: Exactly. And the process of filling out a job application, you may think back to the paper forms we filled out a number of years ago. Well, now the forms are all online and it's a through a series of checking boxes for skills that have or don't have and then filling in form fields with our relevant experience and pasting our resume into a field and that sort of thing.

Susan: Okay. I know that can be very frustrating filling out those online forms. So we're even past that point where you may send your resume as a word.doc attachment?

Janel: Exactly.

Susan: Sometimes does that still happen as well too?

Janel: Sometimes that still happens but the norm is moving to copying your resume and pasting it right into a field in a website.

Susan: And you were mentioning that you've got to put those keywords right at the top so that the person who is reading this is going to be able to find the information?

Janel: Well, there is not always going to be a person reading it. One of the advantages for organizations is that in doing job applications this way, it saves them a lot of time and money from keying in the information that they would have gotten from job applications... applicants rather, than into a database so they can search to see well, who has applied and what skills do they have.

Susan: You're making the appliers enter it in aren't you?

Janel: Exactly! Exactly. So that frees up the human resources professionals to be able to crunch that data a little bit more.

Susan: Okay. Okay.

Janel: So if there is a particular skill they're looking for and you have checked that box, they can do some simple sorts in that database to find out who has checked that skill and what other experience do they have.

Susan: So you say they're sorting in the database. You mean that they're sorting for a specific check box. They're not having a human eye looking at each of these individual applications.

Janel: Quite often the screening process is skipping reading the cover letter and reading the resume and going straight to looking for the specific skill sets, then if they find the right combination of skills, then a human eye might go and actually read the cover letter and the resume.

Susan: So if you don't check the right check boxes your resume might not even get read at all?

Janel: Exactly.

Susan: So, one of the great things about the internet, of course, is that it opens the scope of things so you might be able to apply for many more jobs or find many more jobs to apply for than you would have without it.

Janel: Absolutely. Our conception of space and time and how we apply for jobs has changed drastically to the benefit of the job applicant because now we don't have to go to out of town newspaper stands to find a job in Cleveland. We can just use the internet to do that.

Susan: Exactly. Exactly. But it sounds like there's kind of a double-edged sword to the internet because we do lose some of that personal contact; nobody is reading that cover letter.

Janel: For all the benefits there are for the organization, there are also some benefits for the employee, but for both parties, as well, there are some real constraints and some real drawbacks to doing it this way.

Susan: Absolutely. Thank you so much for being here with us today, Janel.

Janel: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

Susan: Well, that's our show on getting the most out of the web. Of all the information presented, we've pulled some of the most important pieces for your files.

For Your Files
“Getting the Most out of the Web”
Program #301

Technical Support specialist Justin Steen identified “Google” as one of the most popular search engines ... and then he defined search engine,

A search engine is basically a huge database of millions, even billions of web pages that are out there on the Internet. Just like you would flip to the back of a book to find the index for a particular word or phrase – it would tell you which page of the book to look on – you go to a search engine online, type in the words or phrases that you're looking for and it will give you a list of web sites that pertain to that topic or to that word.

Steen showed us how to use “Tabbed Browsing” to increase our efficiency on the Internet:

Justin: Tabbed browsing, which other non-Internet Explorer browsers do ... it allows you to open multiple websites in one window under a different tab.

The Internet is huge with millions of voices providing bites of information. So how do you know what's real? This is the general guideline technology and communication Professor Janel Anderson gave:

Janel: One rule of thumb is to just trust your gut. If it sounds unbelievable it's a good chance it is unbelievable.

More specifically Professor Anderson said check the address or the URL of the website.

Janel: and if it ends in a **.gov**, **.mil**, military or government, **.us** for anything by the United States government that's not government or military. **.ca** for Canada or all the other country codes and so on. Then you know it's put out by a government and you have at least that measure of reliability.

Also educational institutions use a **.edu** so you can be quite assured that the things you're finding there are legitimate. When we get into the **.com** the **.nets**, the **.biz** and even the **.org** – anybody can get a URL that ends in those extensions.

Or she said, there are sites on the web that look for and report hoaxes:

Janel: One of those would be **urbanlegends.about.com** – part of the about.com network. And another one is **consumerwebwatch.org** and that is the same organization that brings us the print publication Consumer Reports.

Susan: If you missed any portion of our program on getting the most out of the internet, or want to see it all again, stop by our website. All of the programs we've done so far, including this one, are right there for your viewing. Our address is techtalk.umn.edu and if you have a question about this program just post it on our website and we'll have one of our specialists answer it. Next week, the topic is techno identification. Don't let the title scare you off. It's all about you and how digital devices know that you really are you. Thanks for watching. Until next week, I'm Susan McKinnell.

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