

NOW HEAR THIS: SOUND ON THE WEB

NOT LONG AGO, all was quiet on the cyberfront. But now, with the advent of Web-based audio technology, the Net's getting pretty noisy. Multimedia computers armed with sound cards and speakers let users hear CDs, live concerts, speeches, and interviews directly from Web sites. Even older computers, such as 486s, can be up-

graded so that they transmit audio. Adding Web-based audio to training programs is a growing trend. And according to The Masie Center's research on learning effectiveness, audio may be the single most effective addition to text for learning comprehension. "In other words,



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learners will benefit dramatically from the ability to listen to content," says Elliott Masie in "Scratch and Sniff These Learning Delivery Systems" (*Technology for Learning Newsletter*).

Be sure to visit
ASTD's Web page at
<http://www.astd.org>

Get an earful

To hear Web-based audio content, you'll need to download an audio player. Currently, the most popular product is Progressive Network's RealAudio player. This software is free to download on the Web at <http://www.realaudio.com>. At press time, Progressive had just introduced

RealPlayer 4.0, which plays both audio and video content. It's available for Windows 95, Windows NT, and Macintosh PowerPC. Windows 3.1 or Macintosh 68040 users still can download RealAudio Player 3.0.

Once you've installed either RealAudio Player or RealPlayer on your computer, a good place to start exploring audio-enabled sites is the RealAudio showcase, <http://www.real.com/products/ra3.0/index.html>. There you will find links to major recording labels, live broadcasts, and sound demos. When you click on the RealAudio icon, the player will open up automatically on your screen. It looks a little like the front of a CD player, complete with volume, play, pause, and stop controls.

Here are some tips to help you get the best sound quality from RealAudio software:

- ▶ Heavy Internet traffic can lead to poor sound quality. Avoid downloading files at peak times (between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.), and contact your ISP (Internet Service Provider) to see if it is upgrading its equipment to handle increased traffic.
- ▶ If the audio sounds too fast, too slow, scratchy, or distorted, change the Advanced settings in the player. Select Preferences from the View menu (Windows) and click on the

NET NEWS

NBC and Microsoft have teamed up to offer live audio and video of major business events on their joint MSNBC Web site, <http://www.msnbc.com/news/default.asp>. The service, which costs \$24.95 per month, delivers unedited footage of speeches, news conferences, and late-breaking business news. Recent footage includes speeches by members of Congress and the Senate, interviews with economists, and news from the United Nations.

The MSNBC Web site was designed to compete with desktop television feeds, which can cost more than \$1,000 a month, and are delivered via satellite.

Michael C. Wheeler, president of MSNBC Business Video says that the service "offers things that aren't being shown elsewhere, or are being [shown] for a lot of money."

DIGITAL DUST BUSTER

If your computer has been running more slowly than usual, perhaps it's time for you to come clean. That means more than just using the uninstall feature that comes with most software programs. You see, each time you install a program on a PC, many files are dumped throughout various directories on your PC. Those files tell the new program how to interact with already existing programs. If you decide to get rid of a certain program using its uninstall feature, you still might not be able to remove all of the files that are hidden on your hard drive.

Quarterdeck's CleanSweep 3.0

uninstall utility, however, was designed to completely remove unnecessary files. It analyzes all of the files on your PC's hard drive and decides which files belong to which programs. Then, it guides you through a thorough uninstall process and lets you make compressed backups of every file you delete in case you deleted a file accidentally.

A demo version of the software is available at <http://www.download.com>. It runs on Windows 95, Windows NT, or Windows 3.1. A similar program, Spring Cleaning, which is designed for Macs, is also available at the [DOWNLOAD.com](http://www.DOWNLOAD.com) Web site.

Advanced Tab. Then, click either Disable 16-bit sound or Disable custom sampling rates to change the way your player and sound card interface. Experiment with the settings to find the one that works best for you.

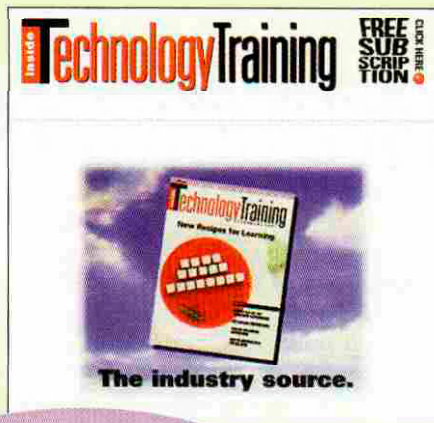
Liquid Audio, <http://www.liquidaudio.com/>, also offers Web-based audio software for Mac OS and Windows 95. As of this writing, Liquid Audio had just released version 2.0 in beta. This product is not as prolific as RealAudio, but it's worth investigating. According to the company's site, Liquid Audio was designed to "provide the music industry with the tools needed to utilize the rapidly growing online environment for the distribution of professional quality music titles, and to provide consumers with the ability to access music over the Internet." Liquid Audio's use for business applications has yet to be determined.

CYBER NEWswire

Yet another contestant in the push technology game is HeadLiner from Toronto, Canada-based Lanacom. This software, which is similar to PointCast Network, is based on software-agent technology, which filters and updates Web content and then delivers it to your desktop. According to Lanacom, what makes its product "unique" is that it can recognize the difference between a headline, a summary, and general body text. This feature lets you save disk space because you download only the full-text articles that are really interesting to you. HeadLiner lets you personalize to your heart's content nearly all of its features, from when you want information downloaded to how you want it displayed on your computer.

HeadLiner makes getting started easy with a setup wizard that asks you questions about your interests and then suggests some Web sites that fit your profile. You can personalize the Web list by selecting up to 40 sites from a simple checklist. In addition to rummaging around Web pages, Head-

COOL SITES FOR TRAINERS



- ▶ **Inside Training Technology's Web site, <http://www.ittrain.com>.** Launched by Ziff-Davis, this site features a forum discussing training issues, as well as links to training sites, advertiser sites, and an online subscription form.
- ▶ **HR OnLINE, <http://www.HR2000.com>.** This site includes an interactive bulletin board, HR software information, and links to other training and development sites. When I visited the site, it was undergoing "construction," so some of its features were either out-of-date or incomplete.

TIME SAVERS

These keystrokes, detailed in *ComputerLife* (January, 1997), simplify some common commands in both Internet Explorer 3.0 and Netscape Navigator 3.0.

- ▶ Alt-Left Arrow: goes back to the previous page
- ▶ Alt-Right Arrow: goes forward to the next page
- ▶ Ctrl-B: opens the Organize Favorites or Bookmarks window
- ▶ Ctrl-L: lets you open a new Web page
- ▶ Ctrl-N: opens a new browser window
- ▶ Ctrl-R: reloads the current page.

Liner also checks e-mail and newsgroups.

Just like PCN, HeadLiner gives you several delivery options, such as a screensaver or a news ticker that scrolls across the top of your computer screen. There is also a feature, NewsTitle, which puts headlines in the title bar of an active application. When you want to view the full story, just click on the headline and your Web browser displays it.

A note of caution before you download this software: If you already feel uncomfortable with all the available information on the Web, this product will probably add to your confusion. It's an intriguing gadget to play with for a week or so, but after that, you may find that the constant IV-drip of information is an

AUDIO SITES

Here are some audio-enabled sites worth exploring. Most of them contain news and business information, although AudioNet is mostly for your listening pleasure.

- ▶ **AudioNet, <http://www.audionet.com/events/ra30/>**
- ▶ **C-SPAN, <http://www.timecast.com/cspan.html>**
- ▶ **@Computerworld, <http://www.computerworld.com/realaudio/>.** Online news and information in text and audio for the information technology community.
- ▶ **BBC TV UK, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>.** A special site for Anglophiles: The BBC (British Broadcasting Company), England's famous source for news, opinion, and high-quality entertainment.
- ▶ **C/NET Radio, <http://www.news.com/radio/>.** The audio news magazine of c/net and news.com, which includes interviews, late-breaking stories, and updates on recent news events.
- ▶ **NewsRadio, <http://www.pcworld.com/news/newsradio/index.html>.** Technology news and information delivered via RealAudio.

unwelcome distraction.

Within the software, you can change settings, schedule download times, and view archived news. HeadLiner is available for free from Lanacom's Web site <http://www.lanacom.com>. It requires at least 8MB RAM, 3MB hard-disk space, Microsoft Windows 95, or Windows NT with Dial-Up Networking.

E-MAIL IS NO JOKE

Forwarding e-mail jokes and gossip to co-workers may seem as harmless as chatting in the employee lounge, but it could get you into trouble. The *Washington Post* reports that although employees generally assume that their messages are private, some companies monitor e-mail messages and save them in archived files. "Employees have this expectation that e-mail is private, but it's not and they don't understand that they can leave a footprint," says Frank Connolly, a professor of computer science and information systems at American University.

In some recent cases, saved messages are being used as evidence in discrimination cases. For instance, R.R. Donnelly & Sons, Morgan Stanley, and Citicorp's Citibank N.A. have been sued by African American employees alleging discrimination as a result of messages sent via e-mail. In the Citibank and Morgan Stanley cases, the lawsuit alleges that white man-

agers circulated a list of words that were used in sentences designed to make fun of the use of Ebionics (sometimes referred to as "black English").

Lawyers say that workers who electronically send what might be viewed as racist jokes could be creating what legally is considered to be a hostile work environment, reports the *Post*. Experts suggest that organizations should implement some form of e-mail monitoring and let employees know about this policy. In addition, management should develop a written e-mail policy and provide training on its proper use. Most importantly, say legal experts, such policies should prohibit the use of offensive language or jokes about race, sex, or sexual orientation.

(Source: the *Washington Post*)

@Work is a monthly column devoted to the use of the Internet. E-mail your online experiences, favorite sites, and suggestions to atwork@astd.org.

SURFIN' WOMEN

Move over cyberdudes—women are flocking to the Net. According to a 1997 survey by CommerceNet-Nielson Media Research, more than 21 million women now surf the Net. Five years ago, women accounted for 10 percent of the online world. Now, 42 percent of online users are women, up from 34 percent 18 months ago.

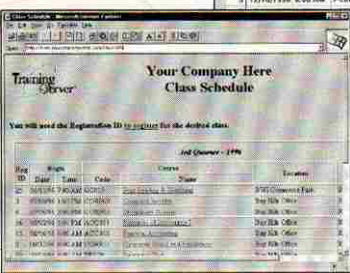
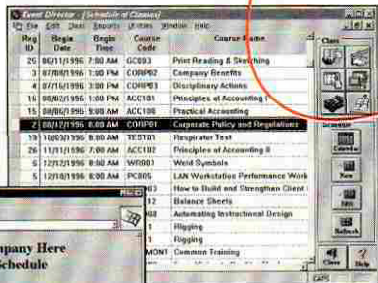
The survey also found that 50.6 million people currently use the Internet, which is more than twice the number revealed by a survey taken in 1995. The 1997 study was based on 6,600 telephone interviews with people age 16 or older from randomly selected households in the United States and Canada.

(Source: the *New York Times* Web site)

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