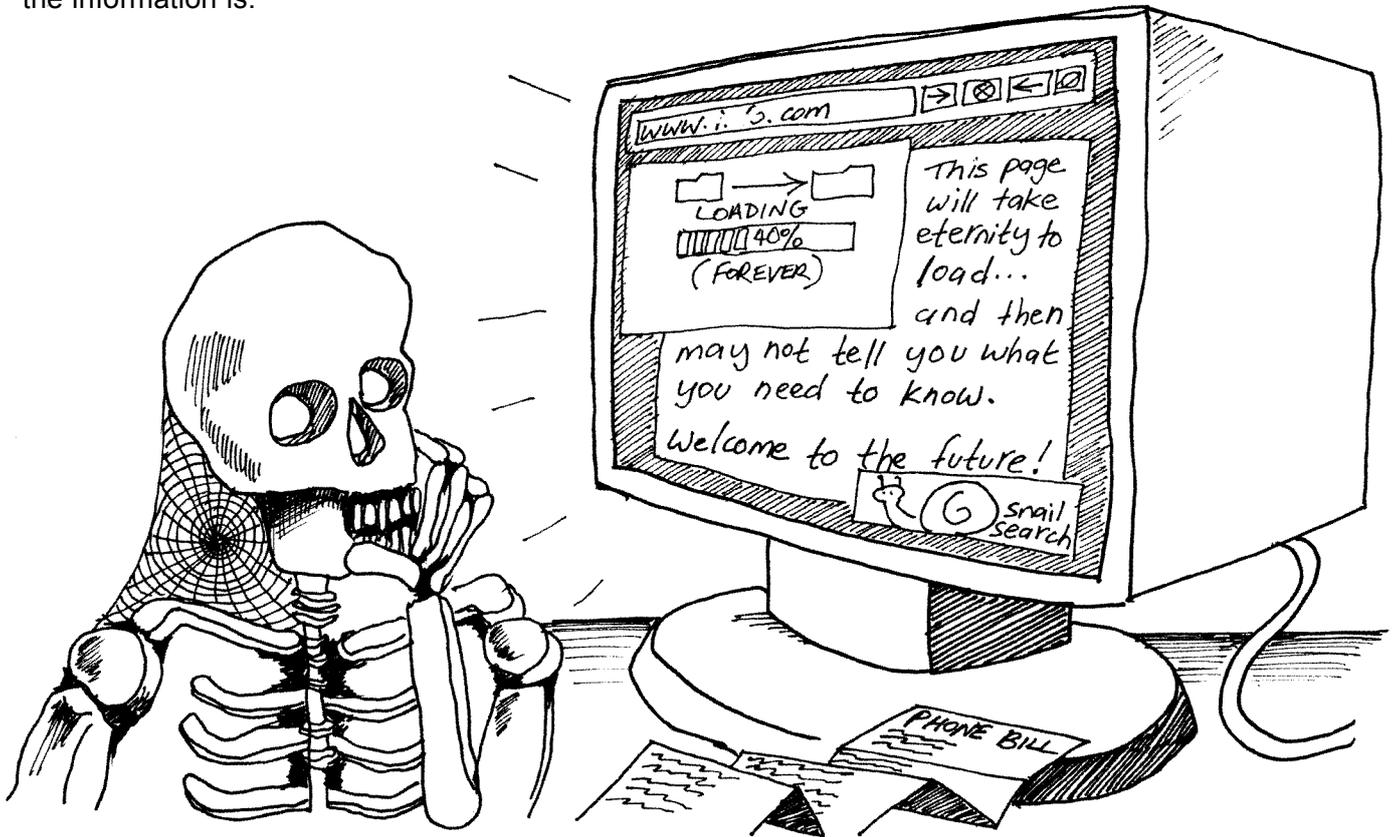


PROBLEMS WITH THE INTERNET

The Internet is very useful in many different ways. However, it does have its problems. There is a vast amount of information on the World Wide Web but it is not always very easy to find. It is not very well indexed. Suppose you want some information on the Sinking of the Titanic. There are search engines which make it possible for you to type in the key word, Titanic. But the search may turn up thousands of sites. Finding the right one is like finding a needle in a haystack. Also, you do not know how accurate the information is.



It is sometimes difficult to gain an overview of what is out there on the internet. You can end up feeling lost in hyperspace. You do not know how much of the information you have already seen or what is new on the system. For some kinds of information, it can be simpler to look it up in an encyclopaedia! Imagine you want to find out about Pop music in the 1960s. You do not know yet which aspect of this music you are interested in, so you want to browse. At this stage it may be easier to flip through the pages of an encyclopaedia in book form than it would be to search the net.

Some web pages contain graphics or songs which can use a lot of memory. These may take a long time to download. The net can be slow, if a lot of people are trying to use it at the same time. The net also contains many computer viruses which can make it impossible to use your own software.

In 1996 one of world's largest internet providers, experienced a 19 hour breakdown. During this period, businesses using the provider could not send or receive e-mail. This caused widespread disruption.

E-mail is a very easy and speedy way of sending messages. However, e-mail can only be sent to people who subscribe to the service. By contrast, you can send a letter to anyone. Moreover, if the user forgets to log on to the system and check his mail box, it will not be a very quick system!

Exercises

1. Imagine you were running a business in 1996. Describe the problems you experienced when you could not use the net for 19 hours.
2. Draw a full page diagram with sketches and notes on it to show some of the problems with the net. Make sure you include: indexing, thousands of sites, accuracy, browsing, slowness, viruses, e-mail.