



News about information systems throughout

Volume 14 • Number 5

May / June 1999

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Take a Virtual Tour of the MIT Campus

Robyn Fizz

Prospective students and parents, alumni, and Web surfers of all stripes can now take a virtual tour of MIT. Even current members of the community can learn a thing or two about the Institute by taking this stroll through cyberspace. The tour is available from the main MIT home page or by visiting <http://web.mit.edu/vrtour/>

Neighborhoods

The Virtual Tour divides MIT into four neighborhoods: West Campus, the Infinite Corridor, East Campus, and Kendall Square. Once you select a neighborhood, you are presented with a map for that area, with yellow dots indicating places of interest. Passing your cursor over a dot brings up a place name, while clicking on a dot delivers a picture and description to the lower frame.

If you click on the picture or the link below it, you get a QuickTime VR or full-motion video of the site. (For more on QuickTime VR, plug-ins, and other computer-related requirements for viewing the videos, read the "Let's Get Technical" section that follows.)

The Virtual Tour features over 60 sites on campus and is designed to accommodate expansion. For a full list of current tour stops, click on the Tour Locations link.

Hotspots

If you don't have time for the full tour, you may want to visit a few of the quirkier destinations, just for the fun of it.

The Frank Stella Room in the Department of Architecture features Stella's *Loohooloo* (1994), a painting that wraps around the walls of a specially constructed conference room. The painting springs from a scene in Herman Melville's *Omoo*, where men spearfish by torchlight on coral reefs.

In the Barker Library Reading Room, you can take a spin around the Möbius Sculpture. Be careful how fast you move your cursor: the effect can be dizzying.

A high-speed tour down the Infinite Corridor was shot from a rolling cart. You can see passersby scatter or press against the walls as the cart barrels along, its wheels making a dull roar that's also captured in the video.

For an unusual view of student dining, follow a tray as it winds its way through Walker Cafeteria. You'll get to hear a bit of Offenbach's *Can-Can* theme along the way.

Speaking of music, did you know that there's an Elvis Shrine in East Campus, 4th West?

The Tour and Its Team

The Virtual Tour was conceived about two years ago by staff in the MIT Admissions Office. The original idea was to produce a brochure with a map, along with a Web tour. The

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brochure was intended for prospective students and parents who couldn't take a regularly scheduled tour. Ultimately, though, the brochure idea was dropped, and the Web version of the Virtual Tour took off. Project leader Deborah Levinson, of IS Campus Wide Information Systems (CWIS), worked with staff in the Admissions Office and a designer in the Publishing Services Bureau. She also had help from student programmers, MIT Video Productions, members of CWIS, and a few freelancers. You can find a full list of credits on the site.

The team has plans to shoot other locations, including additional living groups and laboratories. In the future, the Virtual Tour may also link to other tours created by members of the MIT community.

Let's Get Technical

The Virtual Tour was designed for PC and Macintosh users, since most prospective students – the primary audience for the tour – surf the Web using one of those platforms.

There are a few different types of videos on the tour, all based on Apple Computer's QuickTime technology. QuickTime movies are full-motion videos, playable by any application that can handle movies. QuickTime VR offers two types of views: Object movies provide a 360-degree view of a single object, letting you rotate the object as if you held it in your hands. Panoramic movies consist of a single 360-degree photograph with both ends "connected," giving you the illusion of traveling through an entire room or location.

For optimal viewing, the Virtual Tour team recommends a frames-capable Web browser and the QuickTime 3 plug-in. The How to Tour page provides a link to this plug-in, as well as a list of technical specifications and helpful hints. Since QuickTime 4 is in beta as this issue goes to press, the team is not yet recommending its use.

Unix users, including those surfing from Athena machines, cannot view any of the Tour's QuickTime VR clips. However, with a QuickTime-capable helper application such as xanim, Unix users can view the full-motion videos. See the How to Tour page for details.

The Virtual Tour even works well with Lynx, which means it can be used

by people with disabilities or people who are connecting directly to a dialup machine. With Lynx, the videos aren't available, but users can still access all the text on the Virtual Tour.

A Word about Frames

In general, CWIS doesn't recommend the use of frames in Web sites, for many reasons. These are outlined at

<http://web.mit.edu/cwis/frames/>

In the case of the Virtual Tour, though, a frames-based design clearly worked best. To overcome the problems inherent in using frames, the team did their coding carefully. For example,

- They repeated links from the navigation frame in the content frame.
- They included `<noframes>` data with many URLs that lead to general information about MIT, including admissions.
- They provided alternative access, through the Tour Locations page, for those who don't have a frames-based browser.

Comments?

If you have suggestions for new tour locations or comments about the Virtual Tour of MIT, send e-mail to [<virtour@mit.edu>](mailto:virtour@mit.edu). ☺

Cybercafes and Web Mail

In the last few years, cybercafes have opened their doors all over the world. These cafes offer computers with Internet connections: you pay a fee to check e-mail or to surf the Web. IS staff have spotted cybercafes in small towns in Mexico and Italy and even Nepal.

To see if there are cybercafes at your travel destination, check

<http://cybercaptive.com/bbs/>

Before You Go

With a little advance preparation, you can use a cybercafe to read your e-mail. You first set up a free Web-based e-mail account, then have your MIT e-mail forwarded to it.

Some free e-mail choices include those offered by Excite, Netscape, and Yahoo! IS does not endorse any Web e-mail provider, because of the security risks inherent when unencrypted passwords are transmitted in the clear.

For instructions on how to forward your MIT e-mail, see

http://web.mit.edu/answers/mail/accounts_chpobox.html

or contact Athena User Accounts at [<accounts@mit.edu>](mailto:accounts@mit.edu). The change will take effect overnight.

A Good Choice

Web-based e-mail is a good choice when

- You don't want to lug your computer around with you.
- You don't mind using public machines (in cybercafes, libraries, or hotels) to read your e-mail.
- You've accepted the security risk that you may be transmitting your passwords in the clear.
- Calls to MIT's Tether service or other ISPs are prohibitively expensive.

Many free accounts limit how much e-mail you can leave on their servers. You may want to read and delete your mail as you go. ☺



Managing Editor
Robyn Fizz

Writer/Editor
Lee Ridgway

i/s is published six times a year. MIT faculty and staff receive copies through campus mail; *i/s* is also available in lobbies around campus. Individuals at MIT may subscribe by contacting the managing editor.

Send comments or subscription requests to:
MIT Room N42-290b, 77 Massachusetts Avenue,
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307
Phone: (617) 253-0540
Electronic mail: [<fizz@mit.edu>](mailto:fizz@mit.edu)

i/s is also published online at
<http://web.mit.edu/is/isnews/>

A companion Web site, *i/s NewsLink*, offers frequent news updates. It's located at
<http://web.mit.edu/is/newslink/>

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Macromedia Fireworks 2 Can Make Your Web Pages Sizzle

Katie Livingston-Vale

Fireworks 2, from Macromedia, is software for creating Web graphics. It lets you design, animate, optimize, and export images for the Web. The program runs on Power Macintoshes and Pentium-based PCs.

Fireworks can import images from digital cameras and scanners, as well as from graphics programs such as Photoshop and Illustrator. One of Fireworks' strengths is that it can handle vector art (based on paths) and bitmap images (based on pixels) using the same tools. Fireworks lets you apply multiple, editable effects to images and control text at the character level.

You can preview images in two different browsers. When the images are ready for export, Fireworks creates clean, compact code that you can use in conjunction with an HTML editor.

Web Graphics on the Go

While a Web graphic can be static, many are interactive. Web graphics that have a dynamic component include image maps, animated GIFs, and JavaScript rollovers. Read on to find out what these graphics are and how Fireworks simplifies creating them.

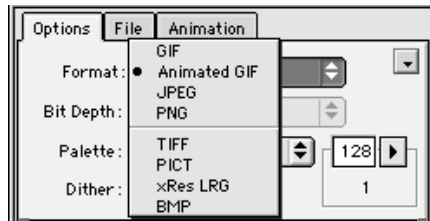
Image Maps

An image map, or "clickable map," is a Web graphic that has multiple hotspots, or links. One example is the map of MIT found at

<http://web.mit.edu/vrtour/>

which divides the campus into four neighborhoods. Clicking on one of these takes you to a Web page focusing on that area. Before the advent of applications like Fireworks, creating image maps was tedious – you had to determine the boundaries of each hotspot by its pixel coordinates.

Fireworks simplifies this procedure. After importing or creating a graphic, you choose a shape (circle, rectangle, or polygon) from the Hotspot tool and draw a hotspot over the desired area. You can also make hotspots from object paths. After entering a target URL for each hotspot in the Object Inspector, you can export code for the image map via the HTML Style pop-up menu in the Export dialog box.



You can access Fireworks' format list from the Export Preview window.

Animated GIFs

An animated GIF is a single file made up of multiple images. These images act as successive frames of an animation when viewed in a Web browser. Banner ads are a common example of animated GIFs.

Before discussing how to create animated GIFs in Fireworks, a word of caution. Many people consider Web animations a nuisance (in the same camp as blinking text and sound files that play when a page is launched). It's best to use them sparingly and to limit the number of times they loop (repeat) to 4 or 5 at a maximum.

To create an animated GIF, you first need to create the individual frames. These frames are akin to animation cels or to individual pages of a flip book. To start, click on the Frames tab in the Layers and Frames panel. Choose Add Frames from the pop-up menu on the right side of the panel, and type in the number of frames you want. These are listed numerically in the Frames panel. To edit a frame, click on its number, then draw or import the contents for that frame in the editing window.

You can preview your animation using the VCR controls at the bottom of the document window. When you are ready to export, choose Animated GIF as the format – this saves the individual frames under a single filename. If desired, click on the Animation tab in the Export Preview dialog box to adjust the speed of the animation, set the looping, and optimize the file size.

JavaScript Rollovers

JavaScript rollovers are images that change appearance in a browser when you move your cursor over them. Unlike animated GIFs, which are saved under a single filename, rollovers consist of up to four image state files:

- *Up* – the default image state that appears when the page loads

- *Over* – the image state when you move the mouse onto the image
- *Down* – the image state as you begin to press the mouse button
- *Click* – the image state when you click the mouse button

In addition, at the time you export the rollover, Fireworks creates a JavaScript file that tells Web browsers which image to display at a given time.

Creating a rollover is similar to making an animated GIF. You create a frame for each desired image state. You can incorporate graphics effects, such as buttons that appear to glow when the cursor moves over them or icons that look inset (sunken) when clicked. You draw hotspots to define the areas used to trigger a rollover, and then choose the rollover state from the Behaviors Inspector palette.

Exporting rollovers generates several graphics files. Be sure to upload all of them to your Web locker.

See for Yourself

To see what Fireworks can do, visit Macromedia's online gallery at

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/fireworks/gallery/>

If you'd like to give Fireworks a try, reserve a machine at one of the New Media Centers by filling out the form at

<http://web.mit.edu/cwis/faq/media-station.html>

You can also download a free 30-day trial version of Fireworks 2 from the Macromedia Web site.

Keep in mind that Fireworks is not an IS-supported product; the Computing Help Desk does not have expertise in using it. However, the program has an excellent tutorial and help system, and Macromedia offers online support at

<http://www.macromedia.com/support/fireworks/>

System Requirements and Purchase

Fireworks runs on Power Macintoshes with System 7.5.5 or higher and PCs with Windows 95 or NT 4 (with Service Pack 3) or higher. It requires a minimum of 32MB of RAM and 60MB of available hard disk space. For complete requirements and product information, visit the Macromedia Web site.

You can buy Fireworks 2 through NECX. The academic price is \$83.30 plus shipping. ☺

Using Attachments in Eudora Pro

Phyllis Galt

Eudora Pro is the supported e-mail program at MIT for Macintosh and Windows. One key benefit of Eudora is that it lets you exchange formatted files – such as text documents, graphics, and spreadsheets – with users on either a Macintosh or PC. You can even share formatted files with colleagues who use some other commercial e-mail software, such as Microsoft Outlook.

Eudora lets you exchange files by “attaching” them to an open e-mail message. This article steps you through how to send, store, and open attachments in Eudora. (See The Computer Corner column on this page to learn about encoding attachments.)

Attaching Files

You can attach one or more files to a message by following a two-step procedure for each attachment.

1. Choose Attach Document (Macintosh) or Attach File (Windows) from the Message menu.

Result: A dialog box prompts you to locate the file you want to attach.

2. Navigate to the file you want to attach, select it, then click on Attach.

Result: The file is attached to the message and will be sent with it. The Attachments: line in the header contains the name of the attached file.

Storing Attached Files

Attached files are stored by default in the Attachments folder, in the Eudora folder in the System folder (Macintosh) or in the Attach folder in the Eudora folder (Windows). You can move attach-

ments out of this folder and store them elsewhere. You can also specify a different folder to store attachments:

1. Choose Settings from the Special menu (Macintosh) or Options from the Tools menu (Windows).
2. Click on the Attachments icon.
3. Click on the button under Attachment Folder (Macintosh) or the button under Attachment Directory (Windows).

Result: A dialog box appears that lets you choose a folder.

4. Navigate to the folder you want to use, then click on Use Folder (Macintosh) or Use Directory (Windows).

Opening Attached Files

There are two ways to open an attached file:

- Double-click on the Attachments: line in the message header; the program in which the file was created will launch and open the file. (If the program isn't installed on your computer, you'll be prompted to locate another program that might open the file.)
- Navigate to the folder where the file is stored, and open it in the usual way.

For tips about handling files that don't open, see the article on page 7.

Reminder about Large Files

Don't use e-mail as a substitute for file transfer; instead use Macintosh or Windows filesharing methods. Post office servers have limited disk space, and aren't intended for the transfer of large files (>1MB), or the transfer of files to a large number of recipients.



This column presents news and tips from the consultants who staff the Computing Help Desk. Check out their Web site at

<http://web.mit.edu/helpdesk/>



I want to attach a document to an e-mail message. Eudora offers several encoding methods for attachments. Which one should I use?



The method you choose should be based on the type of computer and e-mail program your recipient uses. Below is a list of encoding options in Eudora, with details on when to use them. To set a default encoding method on the Macintosh, go to the Special menu, then to Settings, then to Attachments. On PCs, go to the Tools menu, then to Options, then to Attachments.

- **AppleDouble** (In Eudora 3, available on the Macintosh only). This option works for recipients on any platform with e-mail programs that are MIME-compliant. (MIME stands for Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions.) Eudora is MIME-compliant, as are Microsoft's Outlook Express and Outlook 98.
- **AppleSingle** (In Eudora 3, available on the Macintosh only). You can select this method for recipients on Macintoshes with a MIME-compliant e-mail program.
- **BinHex**: Use this setting when sending an attachment to a Macintosh user whose e-mail program is not MIME compliant.
- **MIME** (In Eudora 2.2 and 3, available on Windows only): This option is good for recipients on any kind of computer, including Unix, as long as their e-mail program is MIME-compliant.
- **Uencode or Uencode Data Fork**: Choose this method for recipients on either Unix or Windows computers with e-mail programs that are not MIME compliant.

You can override your default encoding method when you create a new message. To do so, use the pop-down menu labeled “BinHex” in the icon bar.

Note that correct encoding alone doesn't mean that your recipient will be able to open an attachment. For insights about this, see the article on page 7. ☪

New 3DOWN Service Provides Timely Status Information

3DOWN provides timely status information about major communications and computing services available to the MIT community.

You can get status information by phone and on the Web. When you call 3DOWN (x3-3696), you get a brief voice mail message about the status of core services. The 3DOWN Web page at <http://web.mit.edu/3down/> details upcoming planned outages, such as preventative maintenance service to SAP R/3, telephone upgrades, and e-mail post office box adjustments. 3DOWN is also the place to look for news about unplanned outages – such as server and network problems that affect entire MIT buildings.

IS anticipates that the 3DOWN service will evolve and invites feedback. Send your comments via e-mail to <3down-admin@mit.edu>.



Options for Departments from Dell Computer

Kathleen Moriarty

Since 1990, MIT has partnered with Dell Computer to provide custom-configured systems to faculty, staff, and students. Dell also offers programs that may be of interest to MIT departments. These include custom integration through the Dell Plus program, leasing, and desktop installation.

Custom Integration

Dell Plus services include hardware integration, software and hard drive image loading, and system customization. Hardware integration services include

- Installing components and drivers – from modems to network interface and video cards
- Tailoring hardware settings – for CMOS/BIOS, ports, and the like
- Configuring arrays and partitioning hard drives.

The charge for this service depends on the complexity of the installation, and a minimum quantity is necessary to qualify, usually 25 to 50 systems within a 90-day period.



Leasing Plans

Dell offers three leasing plans for institutional buyers, with differing options at the end of the lease:

- *Fair Market Value.* Customers can buy the equipment at the end of the lease for its current market value.
- *Pre-Stated Value Lease.* Customers can buy the equipment at the end of the lease at a predetermined percentage of the original cost.
- *Lease to Own.* Customers own the equipment at the end of the lease.

With any lease, Dell offers a Technology Rotation option. This fee-based program offers low lease rates and the

option to rotate all or part of the leased equipment after a predetermined time. This option maximizes a department's ability to keep current with changes in technology.

Desktop Installation

Dell offers three levels of installation services. Pricing, which ranges from \$79 to \$269 per computer, depends on the level of service and the number of units involved.

- *Basic Setup* includes unpacking the system, attaching the monitor, keyboard, and mouse, and connecting to the network and a local printer.
- *Classic Install/De-install* includes all of the above, plus an internal system check, basic Dell diagnostics and testing, and de-installation and moving of the old machine.
- *Comprehensive Install/De-install* includes all *Classic Install/De-install* services, plus the transfer of up to 200MB of data from the old machine.

Additional Information

For information about these and other Dell products and programs, contact an MCC Consultant at x3-7686 or <mcc@mit.edu>. ☺



A Y2K Disclaimer for Web Publishers, and a Few FAQs

Gayle Willman

On October 19, 1998, the Year 2000 Information and Readiness Disclosure Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-271, 112 Stat. 2386) went into effect. It provides a measure of legal protection to organizations which, in good faith, publish information about their Y2K readiness. It is important that any MIT Web pages that refer to Y2K-related work, or Y2K-related information, carry a disclaimer consistent with the provisions of this Act. You will find suitable language at the following Web page maintained by the MIT Year 2000 Team:

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/disclose.html>

Feel free to point to this page from your own Web pages. At a minimum include the following text in each of your Y2K-related Web pages:

This is a "Year 2000 Readiness Disclosure" as defined in the Year 2000 Information and Readiness Disclosure Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-271, 112 Stat. 2386).

The text "Year 2000 Readiness Disclosure" should link to the disclosure page referred to earlier.

Frequently Asked Questions

There are a few questions that the MIT Y2K team has been hearing repeatedly. Here they are, with short answers and links to more in-depth information.

Q How can I tell if my desktop computer is Y2K compliant?

A The Y2K Team has created a Web page that can help you figure this out. Go to

<http://web.mit.edu/mity2k/>

Under Frequently Used Links, click on How to Make Your Personal Computer Year 2000 Compliant.

Q If my computer isn't compliant, is there a way to modify it or will the department have to replace it?

A In most cases, there are several things you can do to make even older computers Y2K-ready. Again, refer to the section on How to Make Your Personal Computer Year 2000 Compliant on the Y2K Team Web site.

Computer vendors have been very responsive to the Y2K issue and have posted fixes on their Web sites. You will find links to many vendors at

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/y2kcomp.html>

Q Where can I get more help with Y2K issues?

A Attend a hands-on class. *Getting Desktop Computers Ready for Year 2000* is offered on June 23 from 1 to 4pm in W91. The class is free, but you need to register in advance. To do so, go to the IS Computer Training page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/training/>

and click on the Registration Form link. You can also contact the Y2K team by sending mail to <y2k-help@mit.edu>. ☺

Staying Connected When You're Far from Home

Susan Jones

Taking a laptop on your travels can be a convenience, but figuring out how to connect it to the Internet may not be as easy. If you plan to be on the road with your laptop and want to keep in touch electronically, you have two options: to connect via MIT's Tether service or to use an outside Internet Service Provider (ISP). This article gives an overview of these two options; a short companion article on page 2 takes a look at cybercafes, for times when you're away from home without a laptop and want to read e-mail or surf the Web.

In addition, several useful Web sites related to traveling with your laptop are listed on page 8.

Before You Go

Download the necessary software – e-mail program, Web browser, telnet software, and Kerberos authentication – directly from MITnet. With enough lead time, the IS Computing Help Desk can help you install the software on your laptop and get it set up.

Here's the specific software you need on your laptop, sorted by platform.

Macintosh and Windows

Eudora Pro (e-mail)

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/eudora/>

Netscape Navigator (Web browser)

<http://www.netscape.com/>

Windows only

MinK (Minimum Kerberos)

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/mink/>

HostExplorer (Kerberized Telnet)

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/ktelnet/>

Macintosh only

KClient (Kerberos installation)

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/kclient/>

NCSA Telnet (Kerberized Telnet)

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/ktelnet/>

Once you have downloaded the software onto your laptop, you should sign up for the necessary accounts (e.g., MIT's Tether service, a new ISP, MIT e-mail), if you don't already have

them. Also, be sure to write down your settings for MITnet TCP/IP, dialup, and e-mail, so that you can restore them after returning from your travels.



Tether

Tether is MIT's remote-access dialup service, providing PPP connectivity to MITnet. Tether is a good choice when you need access to software from MIT-specific servers such as net-dist.mit.edu or access to certain Web pages, such as licensed library material or class materials that are restricted to Tether and on-campus MITnet users.

Tether is also a good choice when

- You don't need speeds faster than 56 Kbps
- You want to use a standard MIT Eudora account to get e-mail
- You want Kerberos authentication and encryption to ensure that your passwords cannot be captured in the clear
- You can use a calling card to make long-distance calls.

The MIT Calling Card is a good way for faculty and staff to connect to Tether when the call is long-distance. Available from Telephone Support, the MIT Calling Card lets you bill long-distance calls to an MIT account. For details, send e-mail to <callingcard@mit.edu> or call x3-3690.

Macintosh and Windows users can configure their dialup software to use the calling card numbers when connecting to Tether from a remote location.

For the basic facts about MIT's Tether service, see

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/tether/>

Distance Dialup

If you plan to connect to MITnet from outside MIT and find that using Tether via long-distance will be prohibitively expensive, think about using a national or international ISP that provides local phone numbers in various

cities and countries. Be aware that in some countries, local calls are not free. You may be charged by the minute.

With most outside ISPs, you can still use Eudora to send and receive e-mail. You can also get MIT certificates and use certificate-based services through an outside ISP. With some ISPs you may be able to receive your MIT e-mail, but need to send and reply via the ISP's e-mail server.

Remember, though, that with this option, you won't be able to download software from servers such as net-dist.mit.edu or access Web pages that are restricted to on-campus MITnet users or those connected via Tether.

Restrictions on Netscape When Traveling Internationally

Many people at MIT use the 128-bit encryption version of Netscape Navigator, which is considered strong encryption and may not be legal for export. The 40-bit version is legal for use outside of the United States. You can get this version from Netscape at

<http://www.netscape.com/>

What level of encryption does your Netscape use? In Navigator or Communicator, choose the Help menu and select About Navigator (or Communicator). Look for the section that says "Contains Encryption..." If you are using strong encryption, you will see: "This version supports U.S. security with RSA Public Key Cryptography..."

The rules on export of encryption are complex and in flux. Recently, for example, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that U.S. export limits on encryption are unconstitutional.

Pulling It All Together

For more in-depth coverage about setting up your laptop, attend the free IS Quick Start class *Retrieve Your MIT E-Mail from Afar*. The next session is on June 28 at noon in the N42 Demo Center. The class is for Macintosh and PC users, and no registration is required.

A Last Word

Whichever connection method you choose, make sure you have all the necessary accounts and have tested the connections before you leave MIT. Try the dialup connections. Is your modem working? Can you get your e-mail?

It's also a good idea to make one last backup of the hard disk data on your laptop and to update your virus protection software. And don't forget to bring an emergency boot disk.

Have a good trip! ☺

Tips for Handling Attachments That Don't Open Automatically

Phyllis Galt

It's common today for people to send files as e-mail attachments. But just because you receive a file as an attachment doesn't mean that you can open it. If you receive a file that's been compressed and don't have decompression software on your computer, you won't be able to open the file. Even if the attachment isn't compressed, you may not be able to open it if you don't have the same software on your machine that was used to create the file. Or you may have the same software, but a different version than the one used to create the attachment – another factor that can cause complications. This article looks at these issues and offers some possible solutions.

Compressed Files

Providers may compress files to bundle a group of files into one file (called an archive) and/or to decrease file size for faster transmission. To do this, they use compression software such as Aladdin's StuffIt Deluxe (Macintosh) or WinZip (Windows). The compression software translates files into a new format and normally adds a suffix to filenames to indicate the type of compression used. Common suffixes include

- .exe – a self-extracting archive (Windows)
- .sit – a StuffIt archive (Macintosh)
- .sea – a self-extracting archive (Macintosh)
- .tar – a tape archive (Unix)
- .Z – a compressed file (Unix)
- .zip – a Zip archive (Windows)

A self-extracting archive, as the name implies, decompresses on its own when opened. To decompress other types of compressed files, you need the right software installed on your machine.

Common decompression software includes StuffIt Expander 5 (Macintosh) and WinZip 7 and Aladdin Expander 5 (Windows). StuffIt Expander and Aladdin Expander are freeware from Aladdin Systems; you can download them from the vendor's Web site at

<http://www.aladdinsys.com/expander/>

WinZip 7 is shareware. You can download an evaluation copy at

<http://www.winzip.com/>

Once you have decompression software installed on your computer, you can launch the application to decompress files as needed.

Compatibility Issues

If you can't open an attachment, but don't see a compression suffix in the filename, the problem may be one of software compatibility. Try to figure out which program the attachment was created in, either by viewing the filename in a list, or by using the Get Info command (Macintosh) or Properties command (Windows). In general, if a file's type is listed as "file" or "document," you may not have the necessary software on your computer to open it.

At this point, you may want to send e-mail to the provider to find out what type of file it is and the software version number.



Note to Providers: It's always helpful to give details about a file in the text of the e-mail message to which the file is attached.

Here are three scenarios involving compatibility issues and options for handling them. The "you" in these scenarios is the recipient of the file.

1. *You have the same software on your computer that the file was created in, but your version of the software is older than the one the provider used to create the file (e.g., you have Word 5, the provider has Word 98).*

First, check the vendor's Web site to see if the vendor has posted any converters that allow older versions of the software to read files created in newer versions. Microsoft has posted a page of converters and viewers at

<http://www.microsoft.com/Office/000/viewers.htm>

(If your software version is more recent than that of the provider, you should be able to open the file.)

Another option is to ask the provider to resave the file in an earlier version, using the Save As command. For example, Word 98 for the Macintosh lets you save files as Word 4.0, 5.0, or 5.1 for the Macintosh, and Word 6.0/95 for the PC, among other formats.

If these options don't work, try the solutions discussed in the third scenario.

2. *You don't have the same software installed on your machine that the file was created in, but you have a similar type of software installed (e.g., you have Adobe Photoshop, not Canvas).*

Sometimes you can open a file with programs other than the one used to create it. If you recognize a file's format, try to open it with software that handles that file format. For example, you can open a TIFF file created in Canvas using Photoshop. QuickTime, for Macintoshes and PCs, is a good option for opening multimedia graphics. To read about or download QuickTime, go to

<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>

3. *You don't have the same or similar software installed on your machine.*

If you know the software used to create the file, check the vendor's Web site for viewers. A viewer lets you look at a file when you don't have the original software. You won't be able to edit the file, however.

Another option is to ask the provider to save the file in a "vanilla" format. For example, a word processing document saved in Rich Text Format (RTF) can be read on any computer with a word processor installed. An RTF file preserves type specifications and paragraph styles. If the file can't be saved in RTF, ask the provider to save it in text-only format.

If the file has graphics in it, or was created in a graphics or spreadsheet program, find out if the provider can "distill" the file into Portable Document Format (PDF). To do this, the provider needs a commercial program, Adobe Acrobat. PDF files can be viewed on any computer that has the free Acrobat Reader installed. To find out more about Acrobat, or to get a copy of the free Reader, start at

<http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/>

Files from the Internet

Much of the advice given here also works for files downloaded from the Internet that don't open automatically. Generally, though, if your Web browser is properly configured, you won't have compression issues. Another difference: with Web downloads, it may be harder to figure out who the provider is.

Still Stumped?

If you need assistance opening a file, contact the Computing Help Desk at x3-1101 (Macintosh) or x3-1102 (Windows).



If you don't know where to get help for your computer, network, or telephone problems, dial one of the help lines listed to the right.

If you prefer to use e-mail, you can send your questions to the corresponding addresses on the far right. (When logged into Athena, you can also use the `o1c` command to send questions to Athena's online consultants.)

For a complete list of services offered by Information Systems, see the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/services/>

For help with...

Dial...

Or send a message to...

Athena Computing Environment	3-4435	olc@mit.edu
Athena hardware repairs	3-1410	hotline@athena.mit.edu
Computer and printer repairs	3-0815	pcservice@mit.edu
Computer pre-sales consulting	3-7686	mcc@mit.edu
Disabilities and computing	3-7808	atic@mit.edu
Macintosh computers	3-1101	mac-help@mit.edu
PC computers	3-1102	pc-help@mit.edu
Telephone repairs	3-4357	5help@mit.edu
UNIX/VMS (by subscription)	3-1103	unix-vms-help@mit.edu
Voice mail	3-3677	vmail@mit.edu
Year 2000 issues	3-2000	y2k-help@mit.edu



Surf Sites: Traveling with Your Laptop

If you are traveling here or abroad with a laptop, you can do a lot in advance to make sure your connections are successful ones. First, there are equipment considerations. Don't forget extra batteries. If you are traveling overseas, bring power plug adapters and make sure that you have the papers that identify your machine as yours (e.g., serial numbers, bill of sale).

You can also find out about ISP options in advance. (For insights about cybercafes, see the article on page 2). The Web sites listed on the right can help you get ready before you go.

How to Get Your Laptop through Customs When Traveling

<http://www.roadnews.com/a20.htm>

Internet Access Providers around the World

<http://www.netalert.com/>

The List - The Definitive ISP Buyer's Guide

<http://thelist.internet.com/>

Resources for the Computer-Equipped Traveler

<http://www.roadnews.com>

Telephone Plug Types by Country

<http://kropla.com/phones2.htm>

World Electric Guide

<http://kropla.com/electric.htm>



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