Samirius's Corner
Article 003 – First Week January Updated every month

Introduction

This month's article is based on something that we use very often. It has become such a common thing in our daily lives that sometimes without it we seem lost. After all, the world has become a web that is so interconnected that everything is conducted within the web.

Internet is an integral part of our lives. Surfing the website, looking for business, getting tenders, looking at the new sport festival pictures and checking mail, this is all possible via this thing we call the internet. What we look at as end users in this big picture is what we are getting on our screens when we click on www.google.com. What actually transpires is jargon that we really don't care about. But in layman terms this is what is really happening.

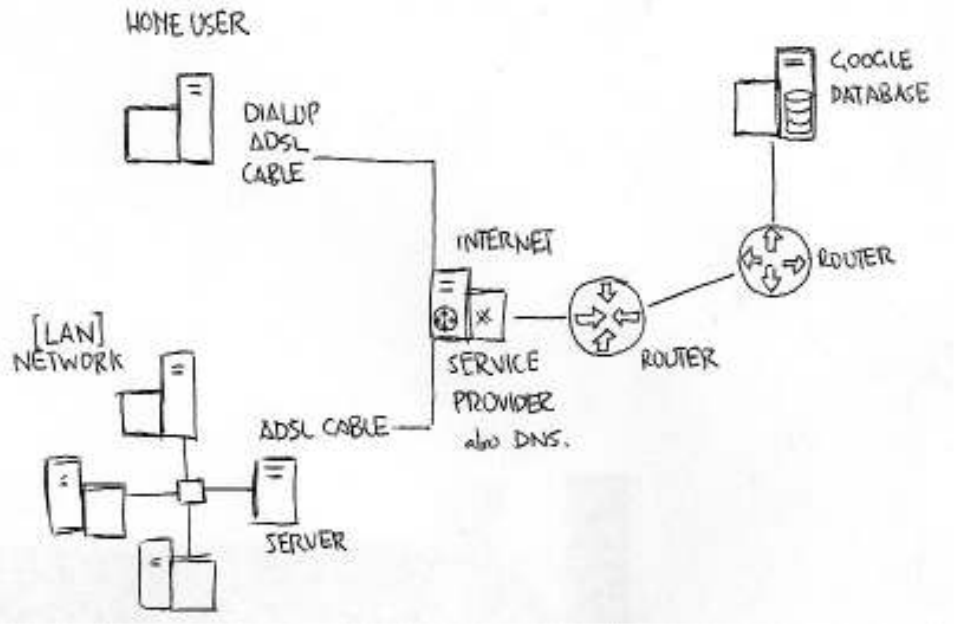
Internet and Web

The Internet is a collection of interconnected *computer networks*, linked by copper wires, fiber-optic cables, wireless connections, etc.; the Web is a collection of interconnected documents and other *resources*, linked by hyperlinks and URLs. The World Wide Web is accessible via the Internet, as are many other services including e-mail, file sharing, and others.

This really means accessing the web we need the internet. The internet is actually a physical layer where everything is cables and a set of bits passing thru them. The bits being carried actually make up the web. At the computers level which is at the same level as the internet (physical) where the translations can be done. All those bits are encoded and decoded to make up pictures, text, music and maybe movies.

All this information is transferred at tremendous rates that we don't realize that maybe this information has traveled great distances in very short times. But how does this information know where to go? Where was it requested from? Who is actually clicking "enter" on www.google.com?

All of us have heard of IP addresses. This is what is actually happening. Our machine with an IP address 172.16.126.255 tells our ISP that we want to access the www.google.com page. The ISP has a database of names that have corresponding numbers that is the actual address of the www.google.com page. The ISP then sends messages via routers that find the shortest and fastest send and receive path to that address. Then simply www.google.com returns answers to all queries back to 172.16.126.255. This is basically how the information is being transferred every time you are surfing. *Read more **here** or **here***
Diagrammatically



Browsers
All this information that is in bits in the physical level has to be changed so that we users can understand it. This is possible at the application level where we use a browser that does all the smaller details for us.

This article is more about the different types of browsers that are available out there. But explaining the intricacies of the internet was important to and extent so that we can appreciate the workings of browsers.

What is a browser?
A web browser is a software application that enables a user to display and interact with text, images, and other information typically located on a web page at a website on the World Wide Web or a local area network. Text and images on a web page can contain hyperlinks to other web pages at the same or different websites. Web browsers allow a user to quickly and easily access information provided on many web pages at many websites by traversing these links.

Though all of them literally do the same thing; surfing, faster browsing with saved information, security and browser helpers other different browsers give more add-on options that I will discuss later in this document.

The most common amongst browsers is what comes bundled with the OS majority of us use; IE. Until the last quarter of 2006 IE ver6.0 was the most common, now updated to IE ver7.0. The Microsoft product that we have been using has been a nice browser for most of us and because we have not faced any problems other than the common ones, we haven't looked for anything different. Most of the common sites are accessible with plug-ins like Active X, Flash and Shockwave, but then some of us follow the white rabbit.

Mozilla Firefox is the next popular browser (my favorite). The add-ons are excellent. There are options beyond imagination that go with this browser. Being my favorite I will elaborate, it has similar but better base features. The add-ons make it like a rally car. I have on my system an email "notifier" that without me going to either of my free email accounts can tell me how many new emails I have. It can check multiple gmail, yahoo, hotmail and even a pop3 accounts. Another thing I use frequently is the inbuilt FTP system, google preview and ctrl tab browsing. There was also Netscape, the old users will remember vividly, especially those who never wanted to use IE. This phased out in recent years and was replaced by Firefox.

Tab Browsing is using the same window to open multiple web pages. This reduces the cluster of open windows on the taskbar. Even if you are grouping like windows this option allows you to see what you are surfing**. Ctrl-Tab** is an add-on that will show all the open tabbed windows captures and can simple go the one you want to.

Opera is an innovative, speedy browser popular in handheld devices, particularly mobile phones, as well as on PCs in some countries remaining a niche player in the PC web browser market.

The Lynx browser remains popular for Unix users and with vision impaired users due to its entirely text-based nature. There are also several text-mode browsers with advanced features, such as w3m, Links, and the Links forks such as ELinks.

The Macintosh scene too has traditionally been dominated by Internet Explorer and Netscape, the future appears to belong to Apple's Safari which is based on Apple's WebKit layout engine. Safari is the default browser on Mac OS X.

These are the known and most frequently used browsers. Since most of us are Windows OS users, we have 2 options that sound really good. Option 1 is continue to use IE ver6.0 and hope that our Windows is not a pirated version and that we can download the IE ver7.0. It is different to the older version and if you skipped the readme file, then you would be using the browser in its old way. Option 2 is of course the one I went with, downloaded Mozilla Firefox and ever since have been a total fan. Don't just download Mozilla Firefox, after installing it www.google.com/firefox is the place to start. Get all the add-ons you think will benefit you. Maybe you are an online news reader, begin with reading about RSS and downloading the RSS feed, don't miss out on the Email Notifier and other add-ons you would have never used because you didn't know about them.

"What you don't know doesn't necessarily mean that it doesn't exist" if no one said this, it's mine.

You can read more about browsers here.

And like always, there is no feedback from readers about these articles. Depending on the feedback I shall receive from this article, only then will I decide whether to continue contributing or not. So if you do like these articles please do send a mail, I would tell you to nod aimlessly like some of my students do but that isn't really possible in the virtual reality scene.

Visual Recognition

Note: If as a reader there is an issue that is important to you, that needs clarification write to samirius@gmail.com. If you want any of the above topics to be prioritized please feel free to mail.