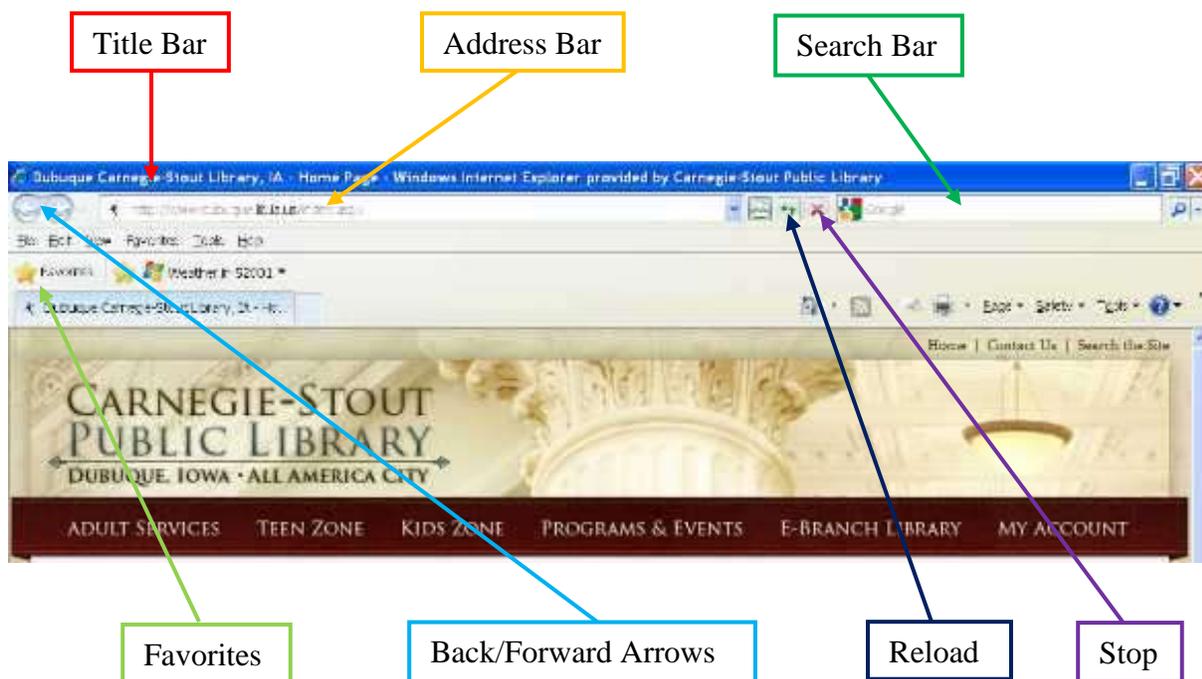# Beginners Guide to the Internet

To access the Internet you'll first need to open your Web browser. Internet Explorer is a popular browser that is available on many computers. Open Internet Explorer by double-clicking its icon on the desktop.

When your browser opens it first goes to your homepage. Your homepage is a webpage you select that will always be the first page you reach and the easiest page to return to.

First, let's take a moment to look at a few important parts of our browser window.

Title Bar: The blue bar along the top of the window gives the title of the webpage currently displayed.

Address Bar: The large white bar underneath the title shows the web address of the page currently displayed.

Search Bar: The small white bar to the right of the address is used to search for webpages. We'll talk about this more later, for now just note that it is different from the address bar.

Favorites: The favorites button opens a window with links to webpages you've told the computer to remember. This window also contains the history tab, which gives you a list of the pages you've been to recently.

Back/Forward Arrows: The arrow pointing left will move you back to the last webpage you were on. Once you've done this the right arrow will light up and allow you to return to the webpage you started on.

Reload: The reload button clears out the page you're on and then loads it again. It can often help when a page loads incorrectly.

Stop: The stop button stops a page from loading. It can be helpful when a page has a lot of unwanted pictures or other features that take a long time to load.

Note that the library's computers have the latest version of Internet Explorer installed. Previous versions of the program should have more or less all the same features but may look a bit different.

Now that we're a bit more familiar with the browser let's start moving between pages. The simplest way to do this is to click on a link from the page we're on now. Traditionally links have appeared as blue,

underlined text. A lot of links still look like this but not all of them. The best way to tell if something is a link is to move your mouse over it. When your mouse pointer is over a link it will change from an arrow to a pointing hand. Take a moment to move your mouse around the library homepage and find the different kinds of links. Click on anything that looks interesting. Once you've been to more than one page you can use the arrow keys to move between pages you've already seen.
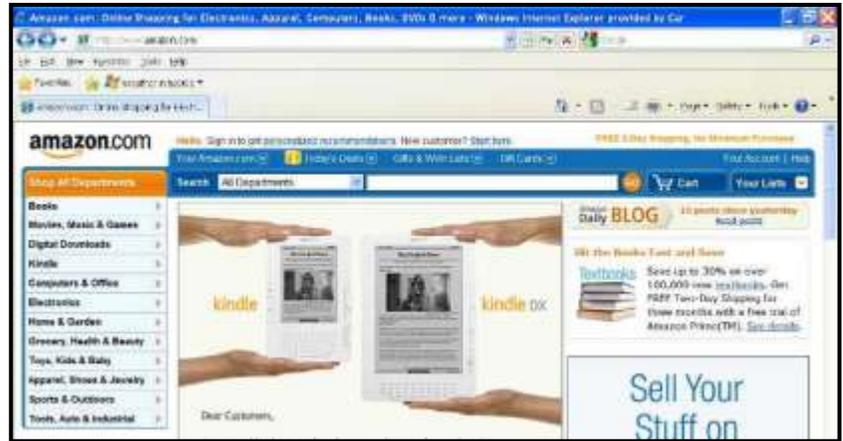
Of course you won't always be able to find a link to the page you want. There are a couple things you can do in this case. If you know the address of the page you want to go to you can just type it into the address bar. Let's talk about web addresses a little bit before we try that.

All web addresses share some common features. They will always be a combination of letters, numbers, and punctuation marks with important sections separated by periods. Web addresses never have spaces and are never case sensitive.

Almost all web addresses start with "http://." This is so common that if you're typing in an address you don't need to type this, the computer will add it automatically. After that most addresses move on to "www," which is short for "World Wide Web." After that things start to get more specific. For example, the web address for Amazon, a popular online store, is "www.amazon.com." The main part of the address is just the name of the company. The last part of the address, the ".com" in Amazon's address, is also important. It can let us know what sort of

group owns the web page. A company, like Amazon, will have an address ending in ".com" while a non-profit organization will end in ".org." Government addresses end in ".gov" and school addresses end in ".edu."

Now let's try typing in a few addresses. If you click on the address in the address bar it should become highlighted. This lets you know that when you start typing your new address will replace the old address. If it doesn't highlight automatically you can click and drag to highlight it just like you would in a word processor.

Since it has a nice, short address lets go to Amazon's page. Type in "www.amazon.com" being careful to spell it correctly and not add anything extra. Web addresses are very specific and small errors can land you in the wrong place entirely. If, for example, you got confused

and typed "www.amazon.org" you'd end up on a totally different site. This is one of the reasons why typing in a web address isn't always the best way to get somewhere.

If you're not sure of the exact address of the page you want (or if you don't know what you want at all) you can search for an address with a search engine. Google (located at www.google.com) is probably the most popular search engine around today and is the one we'll be using in this class, but there are many others. A search engine is sort of like the yellow pages for the Internet. To make a search engine a company visits and records as many websites as possible and then indexes them all. When you use the search engine you type in some words describing what you want to find and the program gives you a list of web pages it thinks may be relevant.

As the more and more webpages are created search engines become more and more important. They are so important that most browsers include a special search box in their interface so users don't have to go to a search engine's webpage to use it. Let's use the search box in Internet Explorer now. We'll pretend that we don't know the library's wed address and search "Dubuque public library."

When we hit enter we're taken to a page with a list of links to pages Google thinks we might be looking for. We'll talk next week about how to determine which of these pages we actually want.