

Will the Computers Affect Customer Relations?

The Konglow system will allow employees to process customer complaints more quickly, reducing a 15-minute wait to seconds. This speeded-up handling of problems will eliminate customer complaints about standing in line.

Types of Informal Reports

Writers use informal reports in many situations. This section introduces you to several variations.

IMRD Reports

An IMRD (*Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion*) report is a standard way to present information that is the result of some kind of research. This approach can present laboratory research, questionnaire results, or the results of any action whose goal is to find out about a topic and discuss the significance of what was discovered. The IMRD report causes you to tell a story about your project in a way that most readers will find satisfying. This kind of report allows you to provide new knowledge for a reader and to fit that knowledge into a bigger context. Your research project started out with some kind of question that you investigated in a certain way. You found information, and you explain that the information is important in various ways.

- For the *introduction*, present the question you investigated (the goal of the project) and the point of the paper. It is helpful to give a general answer to the question. Consider these questions:
 - What is the goal of this project?
 - What is the goal of this report?
- For the *methodology section*, write a process description of your actions and why you performed those actions. This section establishes your credibility. Explain such things as whom you talked to, and describe any actions you took and why. This description should allow a reader to replicate your actions. Consider these questions:
 - What steps or actions did you take to achieve the goal or answer the questions? (Explain all your actions. Arrange them in sequence, if necessary.)
 - Why did you perform those actions?
- For the *results section*, tell what you discovered, usually by presenting a table or graph of the data. If a visual aid is all you need in this section, combine it with the discussion section. If you add text, tell the readers what to focus on in the results. Honesty requires that you point out material that might contradict what you expected to discover. Consider these questions:
 - What are the results of each action or sequence?

- Can I present the results in one visual aid?
- In the *discussion section*, explain the significance of what you found out. Either interpret it by relating it to some other important concept or suggest its causes or effects. Relate the results to the problem or concerns you mentioned in the introduction. If the method affects the results, tell how and suggest changes. Often you can suggest or recommend further actions at the end of this section. Consider these questions:
 - Did you achieve your goal? (If you didn't, say so, and explain why.)
 - What are the implications of your results? for you and your goals? for other people and their goals?
 - What new questions do your results raise?

THE HISTORY OF HTML

IMRD Report

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this IMRD Report is to describe my research for my history of HTML (HyperText Markup Language) research report. The goal of this project is to produce an HTML document that describes the history of HTML. This report will inform the reader of the methods used to obtain the information for the report, the results of the application of the methods, and questions that arise because of the results.

Importance of HTML's History

The history of HTML is important to anyone who wants to know more about how and why the Internet works. HTML is the language per se of the Internet. Documents on the Net are written using HTML or using an editor that places the HTML into the document. Knowing why HTML was created, how it has developed, and why it has changed are all important points in understanding why the Internet has developed as it has. The functionality and limits of HTML dictate how we can illustrate our ideas on the Internet and how we view the ideas of others.

METHODS

Internet Searches

The methods used in my research consisted exclusively of Internet searches, and my goal was to collect enough information to write a document on the history of HTML. I chose to use the Internet because HTML has been related to the World Wide Web since its inception, and, hence, much of its history can be found on-line. The primary search engines I used were Google and Metacrawler. Search terms/phrases used to locate information in conjunction with both of these search engines were

"HTML History," "History of HTML," "W3C," and "CERN." Using these search terms in both search engines produced a multitude of results, of which I had to choose the most pertinent.

Drilling for Information

After using these search engines to locate pertinent sites, I had to drill down through these sites to locate more specific information. This consisted of looking for specific dates, places, and names that had to do with the development of HTML. Each time I found a page that gave me specific information that I thought would be useful, I used Internet Explorer's Favorite menu to bookmark the page for later use in writing my report.

RESULTS

The application of my method yielded a plethora of information on the history of HTML. Specific information on how HTML originated at CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) and how HTML was originally proposed by Tim Berners-Lee was helpful in formulating the early history of HTML. I was also able to find two different time lines of the development of HTML on two independent sites. All of the pages that I found and used for information are listed in Figure 1. The webpage title,

Webpage	Description
The Early History of HTML	This page covers HTML history from 1990 to 1992.
HTML History	This page covers all of HTML's specifications as well as cascading style sheets.
The History of HTML	This page covers basic terminology associated with HTML and the origin of HTML at CERN.
HTML Overview	This page contains an excellent glossary of terms as well as an HTML timeline and narrative on the early development of HTML. It also contains links to the different HTML specifications.
Some Early Ideas for HTML	This page contains information on hypertext systems that came before HTML and gives a description of what hypertext is. It is published by the current HTML regulatory agency, the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium).
The History of HTML	This page contains a description of each version for HTML, what changed from version to version, and why.
What Is HyperText	This page contains a description of hypertext.
Quick HTML History	This page contains a small timeline of HTML's history.

Figure 1
Useful Webpages

Types of Informal Reports

which is also a link to that page, as well as a short description of each page, can be found there.

DISCUSSION

The results above show I have met my goal for information collection, and I am now prepared to write my HTML history. My information, while answering many of my questions, raised more. These questions need further study: Why did HTML become so popular, while other hypertext systems did not? Why did certain browsers such as Mosaic outclass other browsers to such a great degree?

Brief Analytical Reports

Brief analytical reports are very common in industry. Writers review an issue with the goal of revealing important factors in the issue and of presenting relevant conclusions. The two reports below illustrate varied uses of this form.

CREDIBLE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR USE BY DIETITIANS

INTRODUCTION

The use of computers and the Internet has become a part of the daily life of most Americans. As dietetics professionals, being aware of the resources available on the World Wide Web is necessary. Dietitians can access nutrition education materials, current legislation information, job opportunities, government programs, disease/disorder information, and more with the click of a button.

FINDING CREDIBLE RESOURCES

When doing a simple Internet search using the search engine Google and using the keywords "dietetics" or "dietitian," several Web matches appear. When utilizing Web resources, it is important to use the CAR (Credibility, Accuracy, and Reliability) method to determine whether the information provided is appropriate for use in one's practice. The CAR method was utilized reviewing websites related to dietetics. All websites described in this report passed the CAR examination. A summary of the findings are given in Table 1.

WEB RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Government Sites

The most detailed and reliable information found on the Internet came from government resources. The website www.nutrition.gov is the official nutrition site for the United States government. This site links to all

nutrition-related information, ranging from food safety and security to diabetes and disease management. The best part of this site is that it links to all federal nutrition programs. These sites give important information as well as provide the ability to download and print forms. Nutrition education, tools and resources are also available on this site. The second government site, agriculture.senate.gov, provides archived federal bills as well as current legislation regarding nutrition, forestry, and agriculture.

Professional Sites

Professional websites that provided many links and extremely reliable information include www.webdictitian.com and www.eatright.org. Both websites contain a wide variety of resources beneficial to dietitians, ranging from current nutrition issues to patient education materials.

The website dietetics.co.uk is a message-board forum for dietitians across the world. It is based in the United Kingdom. Dietetics professionals can post and reply to message boards dealing with all aspects of the dietetics profession, including enteral/parenteral feedings, professional issues, nutrition assessment and screening, freelance and private practice dietetics, and more.

Dietetics.com houses links to state and national dietetic associations, antiquackery information, and other basic information to help the dietetic professional.

Dietetic Career Searches

The American Dietetic Association has a career link page that is a national database of current openings in the field of dietetics. A search can be narrowed by choosing an area of discipline or choosing by location. However, the career link is not extensive at this point and does not offer many positions.

The site Jobs In Dietetics, jobsindietetics.com, offers a nationwide career search. There is a membership charge for utilizing this Web resource. Its member only approach makes it impossible to summarize its usability or quality.

RESULTS OF QUERY

Table 1 summarizes the above paragraphs. The websites were placed into three categories: professional, government, and career search. It was noted whether the website provided outside links. The availability of links on pages was taken into consideration in the overall rating of the quality and usefulness of the websites. Based on the CAR analysis, each site was scored with a 1 to 5 rating with 5 being the highest quality and most beneficial to dietetic practitioners.

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- If there is a visual aid, does it help you grasp the results quickly?
- Discussion
 - Does the discussion answer the question or explain success or failure in achieving the project's goal?
 - What are the implications of the results? Implications mean (1) effects on various groups of people or their goals, or (2) perceptions about the system (e.g., Web search engines, Web authoring programs) discussed in the report.
 - What new questions do the results cause?

Examples

Examples 12.1–12.4 show four informal reports. These reports illustrate the wide range of topics that the informal report can present. Note the varied handling of the introduction and of the format of the pages. The goal in all the reports is to make the readers confident that they have the information necessary to make a decision.

Example 12.1
MRD Report

EVALUATION OF COLLABORATIVE SOFTWARE APPLICABILITY: AT UW-STOUT BY JAMES J. JANISSE

INTRODUCTION

Technical professionals are faced with an increasing number of tools intended to help their job productivity. Technology has also changed the environment and context of their work. Traditional teamwork can now be performed in an electronic or virtual manner and with collaborative software tools purported to significantly enhance job performance. A key part of UW-Stout's continuing mission is to monitor and evaluate these industry tools.

Groove (version 1.3) is considered the leading-edge collaboration software package in the industry and was developed by Groove Networks. This privately held company was created in 1997 and its headquarters are in Beverly, Massachusetts. The founder, Ray Ozzie, is best known as the creator of Lotus Notes, the world's leading groupware product. (There are more than 75 million users worldwide.)

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the applicability and feasibility of using Groove collaboration software in selected technical areas at the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout).

METHODOLOGY

This cursory evaluation targeted two areas of technical study at UW-Stout: the Technical Writing Practicum and development of the new, on-line

Industrial Management Case Studies Course within the College of Technology, Engineering, and Management (CTEM). The selection was based on the strong interest and support from groups and the fact they represented different parts of the technical spectrum. There was a special consideration for the CTEM evaluation of Groove. Any new software tool must provide some instructional delivery capability like the incumbent tool, BlackBoard.Com. Therefore, from a CTEM perspective, Groove was essentially evaluated against the test criteria and an existing software tool.

The evaluation of the Groove software was performed by

1. identifying a subject matter expert in each area. Professor Dan Riordan and Chairperson Dorina Stewart represented Technical Writing and CTEM, respectively.
2. downloading the latest demonstration version of the Groove software from www.groove.net/downloads/ to test laptop and desktop computers.
3. developing a functional profile of the Groove software that would serve as an evaluation checklist. This technique is commonly used in software development in an activity called the Application Walk-Through. Evaluators list all major software categories and functions in a table format to establish the beginning of a simple but powerful scorecard.
4. defining typical test group project activities, scenarios, and testing media to be addressed by each item in the evaluation checklist.
5. conducting a series of tests, with each expert assessing the applicability of Groove functions against the Technical Writing Practicum and Industrial Case Studies Course evaluation checklist.
6. summarizing the evaluation findings by jointly grading the fit or feasibility of each functional area for the two target groups.

RESULTS

Evaluators assessed each criterion by determining the level of

- functional fit to test scenarios
- performance
- ease-of-use
- intangibles such as departmental considerations, software personality, etc.

The range of subjective ratings was noted as

- low (L) — limited function or no match
- medium (M) — moderate function or adequate match
- high (H) — high function or significant match
- not applicable (N/A)

Additionally, each test group designated three criteria as critical or must have, and noted these ratings with asterisks.

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Example 12.1
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The findings of the Groove collaborative evaluation are summarized in Table 1. Nine of the fourteen criteria for Technical Writing were low, including several functions needed for dynamic and joint editing. The Industrial Case Studies ratings included six lows, two not applicable ratings, and a note about prohibitive costs.

Table 1

Ratings of Groove Functional Applicability to Test Groups

Groove Functional Area	Technical Writing Practicum	Industrial Management Case Studies Course
Shared workspaces	H	H
Collaboration—Common File Directory with version control	M	L**
Collaboration—Discussion Space	L-M**	M** No statistics of readers or number of visits to the discussion thread
Collaboration—Notepad	L**—Didn't permit the desired dynamic editing; slow to refresh	L
Collaboration—Outliner	L**—Performance didn't permit reasonable joint editing	N/A
Collaboration—Pictures	L—FYI only	L
Collaboration—Sketchpad	L—No practical use found	L
Collaboration—common Web browser	L	N/A
Productivity—calendar	L	L
Productivity—contacts	L	M
Productivity—course delivery and administration	N/A	L**
Messaging—instant text	M	L
Messaging—asynchronous audio recordings	L	M
Security and privacy	H	H
Costs	M—Might be for a small workgroup	L—Cost prohibitive for desired class size of 20+ students (\$49 each)

DISCUSSION

The results of the collaborative evaluation show that Groove would have limited applicability and value to either the Technical Writing Practicum or Industrial Case Studies Course. Existing or alternative software solutions should be pursued.

From a Technical Writing Practicum perspective, Groove had some interesting functions. Initial impressions anticipated dynamic editing, but testing the software in actual project scenarios proved otherwise. Groove did not provide the right functionality to permit a team to rapidly perform quality creation or editing of text. For example, evaluators had a difficult time converting a table of text into a paragraph using Groove Outliner, Notepad, and Discussion Space functions. While some other tests yielded moderate ratings, Groove did not address the most important criteria for the Technical Writing Practicum.

Similarly, Groove did not score high for the key criteria established by the Industrial Case Studies team. Neither the file directory nor collaborative functions provided the interactive discussion and analysis needed for students to perform case study work. Although there might be some potential for interaction with Groove, there were deficiencies in delivering basic course activities and addressing course administration as a standalone product.

It is worth noting that Groove should still be monitored as a tool for educational delivery. The April issue of *InfoWorld* previewed an impending release of Groove 2.0 with extensive enhancements and a total integration partnership with Microsoft.

Example 12.2

IMRD Report

IMRD: ADDING BACKGROUND SOUND TO WEBPAGES

INTRODUCTION

I set out to add background sound to a webpage. My resources included an IBM-compatible PC with Windows 98 and software that included Notepad and Internet Explorer 4.0. Computers with these resources can be found in the Main Lab of the Micheels Hall Computer Lab. Before I began, I downloaded a sound file from the Internet and had an existing HTML document to which I wanted to add the sound file. These two files were in the same directory on my disk. Some of the different sound file types that you can use include .midi, .rmf, .rmi, .wav, and .mod.

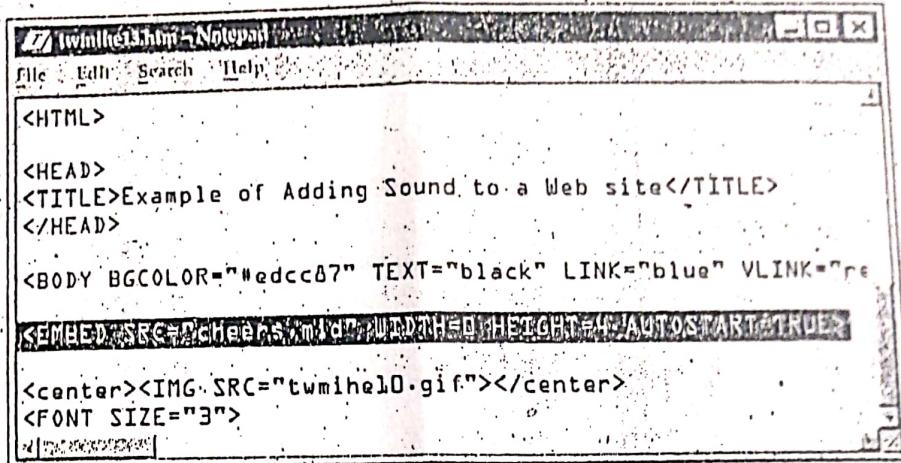
METHOD

I opened Notepad by selecting Start/Programs/Accessories/Notepad. I then opened up an existing HTML file that I wanted to add sound to by selecting File/Open and then finding the HTML file I wanted to open.

(continued)

Example 12.2
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Once the file was open, I added the following code to the body section of my HTML file to add the music file, *cheers.mid*, to the background:



A screenshot of a Windows Notepad window titled "twmihel0 - Notepad". The window contains the following HTML code:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Example of Adding Sound to a Web site</TITLE>
</HEAD>
<BODY BGCOLOR="#edcc87" TEXT="black" LINK="blue" VLINK="purple">
<EMBED SRC="cheers.mid" WIDTH="10" HEIGHT="10" AUTOSTART="TRUE">
<center><IMG SRC="twmihel0.gif"></center>
<FONT SIZE="3">

```

I then selected File/Save to save the modified HTML document.

Once the file was saved, I wanted to view the modified page in Internet Explorer. I did this by first double-clicking on the My Computer icon. Then I double-clicked on the 3½ Floppy (A) icon. I finally opened the file by double-clicking on the filename.

RESULT

In the HTML code that I inserted in my file, the WIDTH and HEIGHT parameters are set to small numbers so there will be no visual changes to the webpage. AUTOSTART = TRUE is used so that the sound file will start playing as soon as the page is opened.

Once I modified and saved my HTML document in Notepad, I had a current copy of the document on my disk in the same directory as the sound file.

When I double-clicked on the My Computer icon, a list of the available drives appeared in the window.

When I double-clicked on the 3½ Floppy (A) icon, a list of the files on my disk appeared in the window.

When I double-clicked on the HTML filename that I modified, Internet Explorer opened with my HTML file and the *cheers.mid* sound file playing in the background. There were no visual changes to the webpage.

DISCUSSION

My webpage was made more interesting by following this easy process of adding music to the background.

If you are working at a computer that has a sound card, but no speakers, you can still hear the audio by plugging headphones into the computer.