
UNIT 6 BROWSING AND DISCUSSION FORUM

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6.0 INTRODUCTION

In today's world, you repeatedly hear the terms Internet, going online, surfing the net, browsing and searching. If you want any information on any topic, you say you can look up online, or search the net. People all over the world, from all walks of life use the Internet. They look for availability of movie tickets, local

restaurants in an area, jobs availability, research papers on varied topics in areas touching any aspect of life, etc. on the Internet.

Since, Internet has become so important, its use is considered an essential aspect of computer use. In other words, mastering the Internet is one of the first things to do to get the most from the computing experience.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- learn how to use the Web Browser;
- learn how to search the information on the Web;
- learn different ways to communicate, interact and collaborate on the Web; and
- learn how Internet can be used to create different online communities.

6.2 BROWSING THE WEB

Browsing the web is similar to surfing the channels on TV. On TV, you continually change channels until you find a program of your interest; this is known as channel surfing. Similarly, on the Web you select a link by clicking on the word or picture to open a new document or picture. Progressively clicking through the Web by triggering the links that interests you is known as **browsing**, a term synonymous with surfing the Net.

6.2.1 The Browser

A **Web Browser** is a software application you use to surf the Web. It is a program designed to find the hypertext documents on the Web and then open those documents on your computers.

Microsoft **Internet Explorer**, Mozilla **Firefox** and Google **Chrome** are the popular Web browsers of current times.

We will consider Google Chrome for our study.

6.2.2 Launching the Browser


Click on the **Start** menu button.

Choose **All Programs** option.

Click on Google Chrome option.

Note: Before you launch the browser, please ensure that your computer is connected to the Internet.

The browser window opens as shown in the Figure 6.1. The page that opens when you launch the browser depends on your browser settings. The browser can be customized as follows:

1. Click the wrench icon  on the browser toolbar.
2. Select **Options** from the pull down menu.
3. Set the **Startup** and **Homepage** sections.

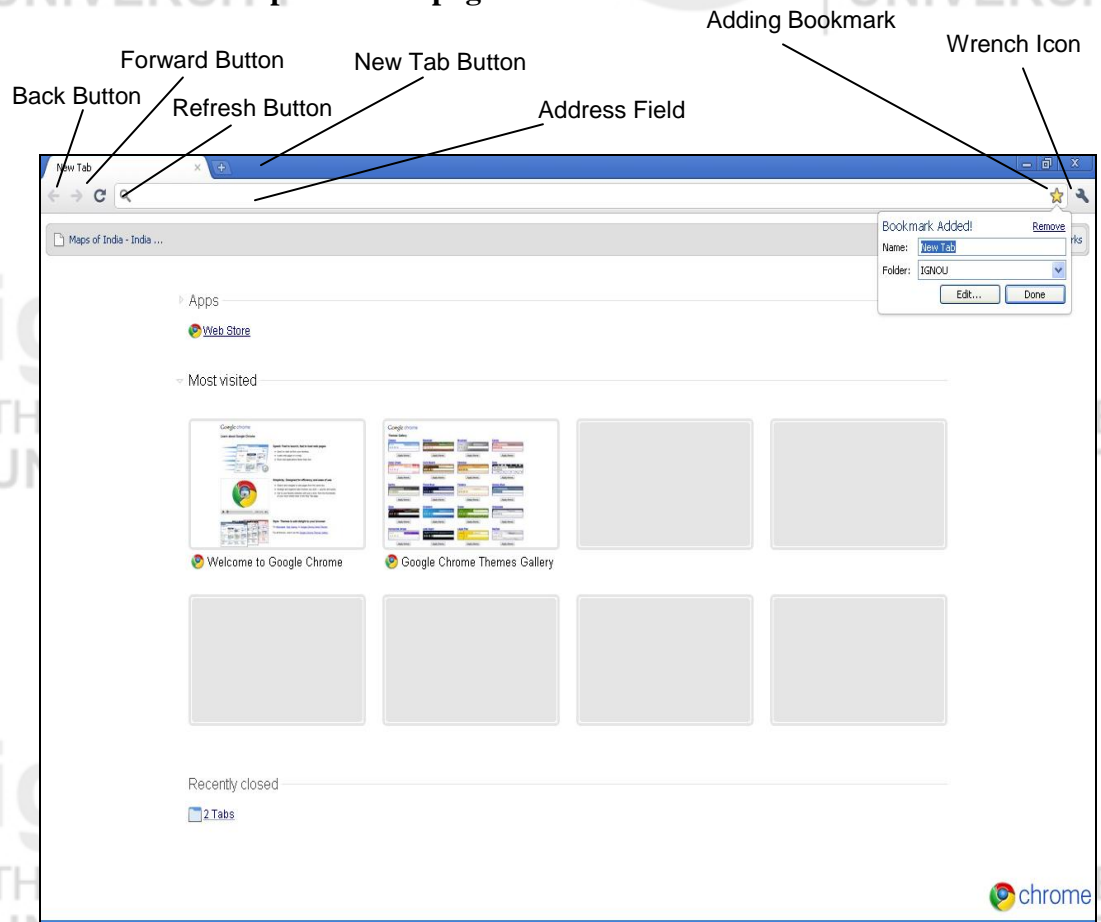


Figure 6.1 : Google Chrome Web Browser

6.2.3 Enter URL's in Address Field

Every place on the Web has a global address known as a **Uniform Resource Locator (URL)**. A URL uniquely identifies the Website or its associated pages.

1. Click once in the address field to position your cursor there. In case there is an address already there, delete it.
2. Type www.mapsofindia.com and press enter
3. The website will open.

6.2.4 Create New Tab

1. Click on New Tab button on the top of the browser.
2. Type www.ignou.ac.in in the address field. And press enter
3. The IGNOU website opens.

You can navigate between the two tabs that you have opened.

6.2.5 Bookmark Web Page

You can Bookmark your favorite or most frequently visited pages. This allows you to go directly to those pages from the Bookmarks list, rather than type the URL. If you have too many Bookmarks in the list, you may organize them in folders and sub folders for easy access.


A single click on the star adds the page to the Bookmarks list and the star changes to yellow color. If you click the star again, the bookmark is removed.

In the IGNOU tab

1. Click on the star at the end of the address line to bookmark the page.
2. Star color changes to yellow. A small bookmark window opens.
3. Leave the bookmark "Name" as is.
4. Click on the drop down button for folder and "Choose another folder".
5. In the pop up window, click on create new folder and give the new folder any name.
6. Click OK button.

The page bookmark is stored in the new folder that you created.

To see how your bookmarks have been organized,

1. Click the wrench icon  on the browser toolbar.
2. Choose "Bookmark Manager".
3. A bookmark manager tab opens and displays all the bookmark folders/subfolders and pages.

6.2.6 Remove Bookmark

In the IGNOU tab

1. Click on the yellow star at the end of the address line to bookmark the page.
2. A small bookmark window opens.
3. Click on the 'Remove' hyperlink on the right side of the window.
4. The star color changes to white and the bookmark is removed.

Bookmarks can also be deleted through the Bookmark Manager.


6.2.7 Navigation Buttons

At the top left of the browser you should see a row of navigation buttons – back and forward buttons.

The Back button takes you to previously opened web page. Conversely, the Forward button moves you to ahead to the page you visited before you clicked the Back button. When you Right-click on the Back or Forward buttons, a list pops up that shows the whole path you followed.

6.2.8 History List

The browser creates a History list of the web pages visited earlier.

1. Click the wrench icon  on the browser toolbar.
2. Choose “History” from the menu.
3. A History tab opens which lists all the previously visited pages.

6.2.9 Downloading Files

Downloading means to copy files from the Internet to your machine. You can download any type of file – text, pdf, exe, spreadsheet, audio, video or image file from the internet as long as either it is a freeware or you have paid for it. Any file or image on the Internet is copyrighted if it not freeware and it is illegal to use the material for commercial purposes without getting permission from the copyright owner.

Images: You can copy an image by using the right mouse click on the image and selecting the ‘Save image as...’ option. You can also click the ‘Download’ button to download the pictures as on the website www.freeclipartpictures.com.

Audio, Video and other files: Normally, you have to click on the ‘Download’ button to copy the file on your computer. When the browser displays ‘Save’ or ‘Save As’ dialog box, choose where you want to save the file.

6.3 SEARCHING THE WEB

Search Engines are tools that help you find specific information and websites on the internet. There are many search engines available, but we will consider Google’s search engine for our reference.

6.3.1 Basic Search

1. Go to www.google.co.in. The site opens as shown in Figure 6.2. You may change the language and see how all the labels change. We will use English for our purposes.

2. You can also change your search preferences through the link ‘Search Setting’.
3. Type whatever you want to search for in the Search Box and hit Enter or click Google Search button. All the words that you have typed will be used for the search. For example type **printer**.
4. A list of all the web pages that have **printer** in it will be displayed with links to their websites.
5. Also it gives the number of results below the search box.
6. The more words you use for your search, the more restrictive it becomes. For example of you use **color printer**, it gives less number of results. And if you use **color inkjet printer**, it gives still lesser number of results.
7. You may also check that the search is case insensitive.

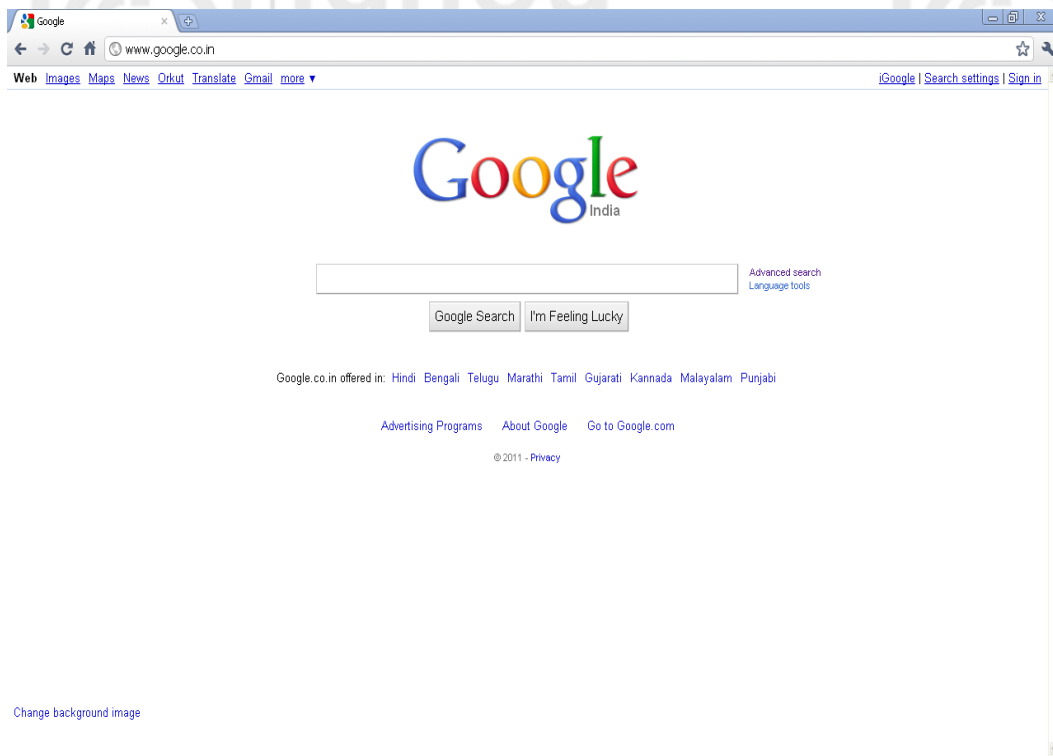


Figure 6.2 : Google India Search Engine

6.3.2 Advanced Basic Search

1. **Phrase Search(“”):** By putting double quotes around a set of words, you are telling google to consider the exact words in that exact order without any change. For example search for *Mohandas K. Gandhi* and for “*Mohandas K. Gandhi*”. See the difference in number if results.
2. **Search within a specific website (site:):** Google allows you to specify that your search results must come from a specific website. Search on *gurgaon site:timesofindia* will return pages on gurgaon but only from *timesofindia.com*.

3. **Term to exclude (-):** Attaching a minus sign immediately before a word indicates that you do not want pages that contain this word to appear in your results. The minus sign should appear immediately before the word and should be preceded with a space. Example, search on *color printer –inkjet* lists all color printers that are not inkjet.
4. **Fill in the blanks (*):** The * is a wild card character. For example if you search on *Google **, it will give you results about many of Google's products.
5. **Search as is (+):** By adding + immediately before the word, you tell the search engine to match that word as is, and not to look for its synonym in the search.
6. **The OR operator:** Used to search for *either* of several words, instead of all the words.

6.3.3 Advanced Search

With Advanced Search, you can search for pages that...

- contain ALL the search terms you type in
- contain the exact phrase you type in
- contain at least one of the words you type in
- do NOT contain any of the words you type in
- is written in a certain language
- is created in a certain file format
- was updated within a certain period of time
- contain numbers within a certain range
- within a certain domain, or website
- don't contain "adult" material

6.4 DISCUSSION FORUMS AND GROUPS

Discussion Forums are online communities of people with similar interests. Members of a forum can communicate, discuss, share and comment on an idea through messages. There are many forums available on the net, each dedicated to a specific subject, like karate, travel, gardening, cooking, vintage cars, Photoshop, aviation, laser eye surgery, etc. Anyone can register on the forum website and become a member of the forum. Registering gives you the opportunity to contribute your ideas and share your views with other members. Some examples of discussion forum websites are *karateforums.com*, *photoshopforums.com* and *discussions.hardwarecentral.com*.

Each discussion forum has a group of community users who are knowledgeable about the subject matter. These users are called **moderators** who are responsible for the quality and effectiveness of the discussions. They keep the discussions

fresh and clean by starting new topics and removing inappropriate content. Any new topic in the forum is called a ‘**Thread**’ and all the messages associated with a thread are called ‘**Posts**’.

Discussion Groups like Google Groups or Yahoo Groups are based on the concept of mailing list. You create and see the threads using e-mail and only people who are subscribed to that group are able to see the threads (e-mails).

Unlike discussion forum, a discussion group does not need any additional hardware or software for its set up. We will study setting up and using a discussion group in detail, taking Yahoo Groups as our example.

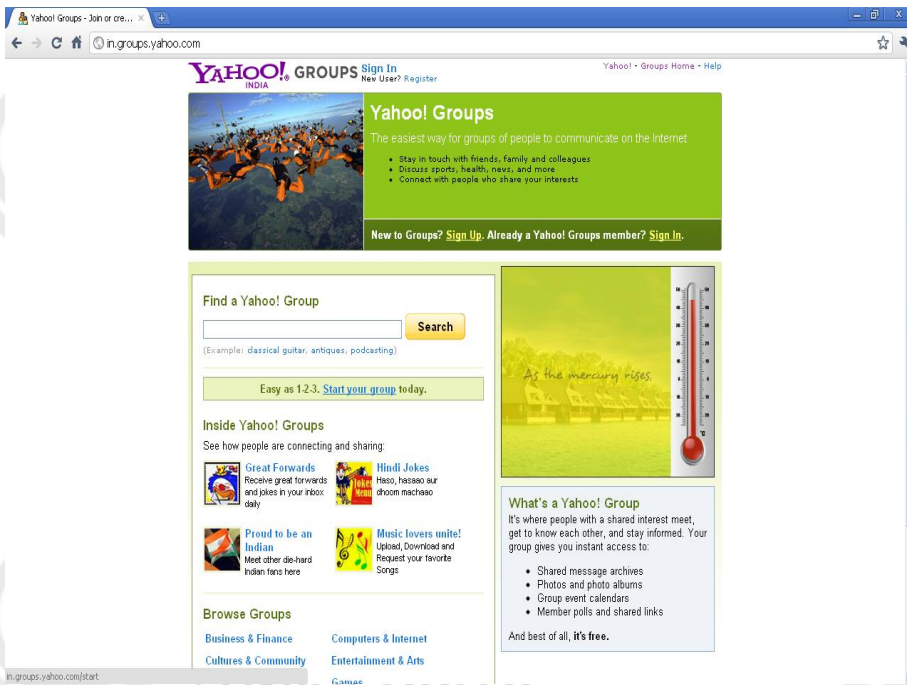


Figure 6.3: Yahoo Groups Main page

6.4.1 Creating a Yahoo Group

1. Go to <http://in.groups.yahoo.com/>. You get the screen as above
2. Click on the link ‘Start your group’. If you already have a Yahoo Id then login using that, else click on the ‘Create New Account’ button. Enter all the details asked for and a new Yahoo Id will be created for you.
3. Select the category for the Group you want to create. For this you need to be sure of the purpose of your group. Since we will be creating a community of BCA students, we select ‘Schools and Education’ and then ‘classmates’ on the next page.
4. Click on ‘Place my group here’ on the next page.
5. We will give the name and email address for our group on the next page. Since this group is for all BCA students at centre A, we will name it as ‘BCACenterA’ for our purpose. We will give ‘BCACenterA’ for the email address too. You may give any name and address as per your requirements. Click ‘Continue’ button to go to the next screen.

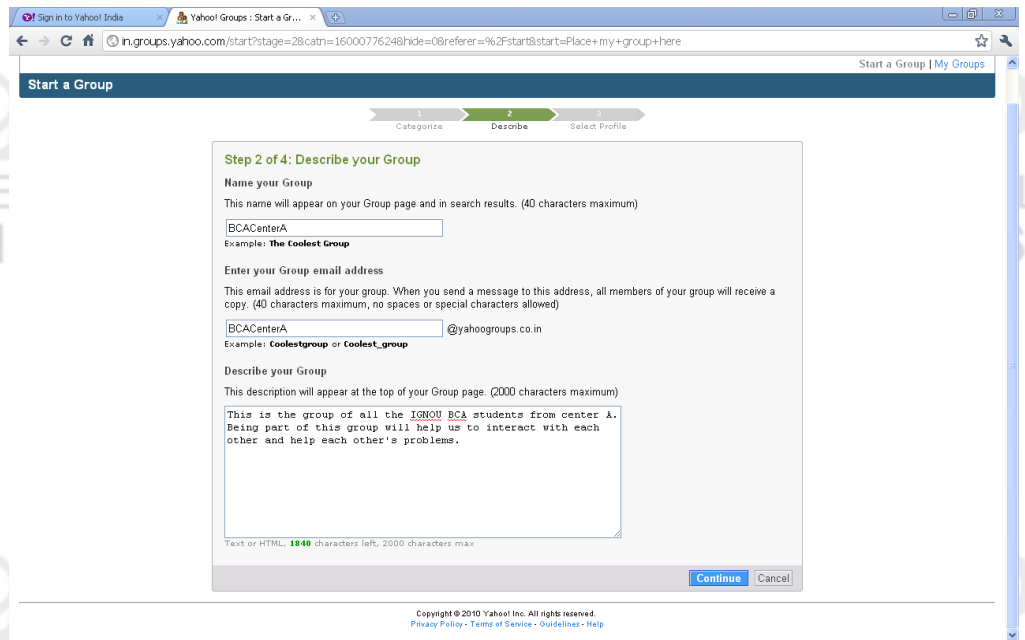


Figure 6.4: Setting up the group

6. Once the group is created you see the following details on the screen:

Group name:	BCACenterA
Group home page:	http://in.groups.yahoo.com/group/BCACenterA
Group email:	BCACenterA@yahoo.com

7. Now you can customize your group and define who all can join the group or post messages, whether or not messages are archived, whether or not to list your group in Yahoo! Groups directory or whether an approval is required to join the group, etc. You can also invite your friends and other people to join the group. The creator of the group becomes the **moderator** by default. The moderator could define on how the group should be used, add or remove people from the group, etc.

6.4.2 Joining a Yahoo Group

There are two ways that you can join a group:

1. Search for the group in Yahoo groups. Login using your Id and then send a request to join the group. Once your request is approved by the moderator, you become the member.
2. The second way is that you receive the invite to join the group and then you join the group.

6.4.3 Posting a message

Once you are a member of a group, you can login to the group and post a message. All the members of the group will receive an email about your post and anybody can reply to that post.

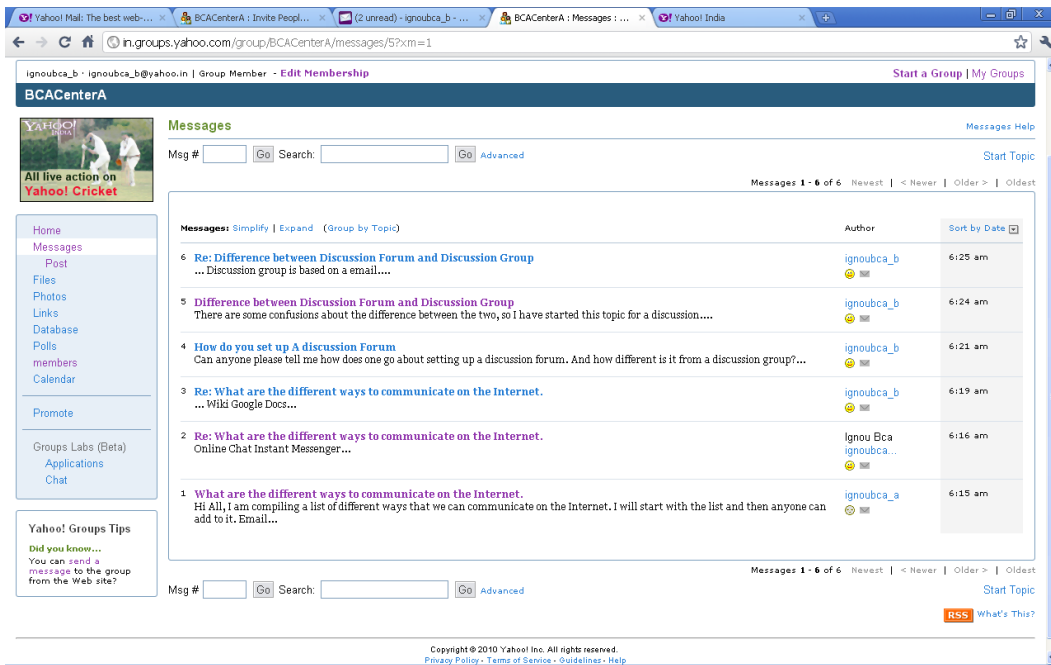


Figure 6.5: View of message posts

You can reply to a post by one of the following two ways:

- Reply to the email received.
- Post a reply to the original message in the group interface.

6.5 WIKI

A Wiki is a website that has a collection of web pages which can be easily created, viewed and modified by anybody using a Web browser, over the internet. It encourages communication, sharing and collaboration on documents across internet. Wikis can be used for a large variety of tasks, from personal note-taking to collaborating online, creating corporate intranets, knowledge management systems, online community, and managing a traditional website.

A Wiki website can be created using wiki engine or wiki software on a web server. The wiki software stores the content including all the current and previous revisions in either data files (database system) or in flat files. There are many wiki software available; some like Confluence and Drupal Wiki are paid while other like TiddlyWiki and TWiki are free of charge.

The main features of Wiki are:

- Simplified creating and editing of web pages.
- Documents can be written and worked upon by all in collaborative manner.
- Pages are stored at a central shared location and document histories are recorded.
- Simplified formatting, use of simple markup and easy creation of links.
- Organized web sites.

6.5.1 Creating the Wiki

To learn create wiki pages, we can use existing hosted wiki software and start adding to it. We will use Wikispaces for our purpose.

1. Go to www.wikispaces.com
2. Click on 'Wikis for individuals and groups'.
3. Create login on the next page by providing username, password and email and click on 'Join now' button.

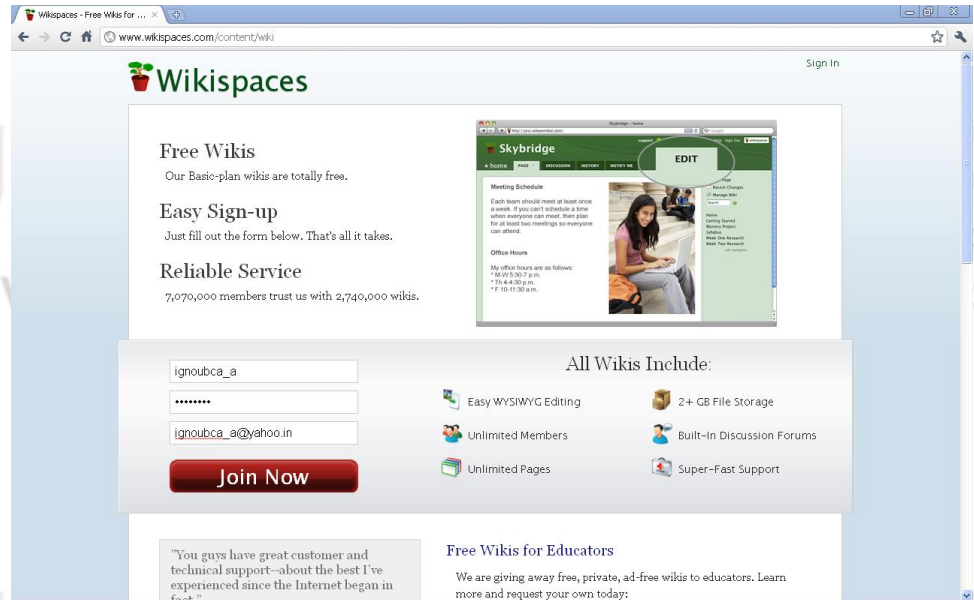


Figure 6.6 : Joining the Wiki Spaces

4. You come to the Dashboard. Click on 'Create a new Wiki'.
5. Give the Wiki Name, set the permissions and type. Click on 'Create' button on the next screen.
6. You can close the 'Getting Started' help screen after reading it. The page that you see is you first Wiki page.
7. Click 'Edit' to make changes to this page.

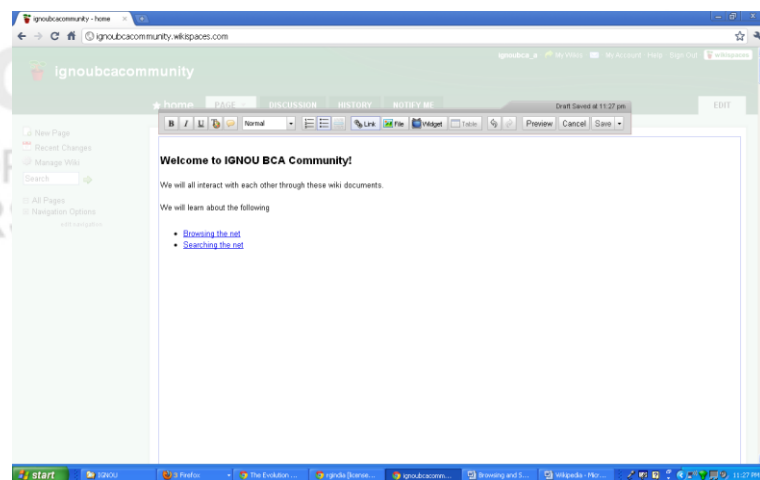


Figure 6.7: Editing the Wiki Page

8. After making changes, click 'Save' button. You may preview the page before saving it.
9. Since you have created this wiki space, you are its owner. You may invite other people to contribute to this wiki.
10. Click on 'Manage Wiki' in the left hand side menu. Choose 'Invite People'. Once the invited people join the wiki, they can add to the content of the wiki. You can also see recent changes to the wiki or the page.

Any number of people can share notes and ideas through wiki. They all can contribute towards building the wiki content.

6.5.2 Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a free encyclopedia in many languages that anyone can edit. It is a great example of a large wiki and is run on MediaWiki wiki engine.

Wikipedia is written collaboratively by largely anonymous Internet volunteers who write without pay. Anyone with Internet access can write and make changes to Wikipedia articles (except in certain cases where editing is restricted to prevent disruption or vandalism). Users can contribute anonymously, under a pseudonym, or with their real identity, if they choose.

Over the last few years, Wikipedia has become one of the largest reference websites worldwide attracting several million users each month.

To understand how Wikipedia is written and how one can make changes to it, do the following:

1. Go to www.wikipedia.org
2. Click in 'Log in/ Create Account' on top right corner. Create you account. You reach the Wikipedia Introduction page.

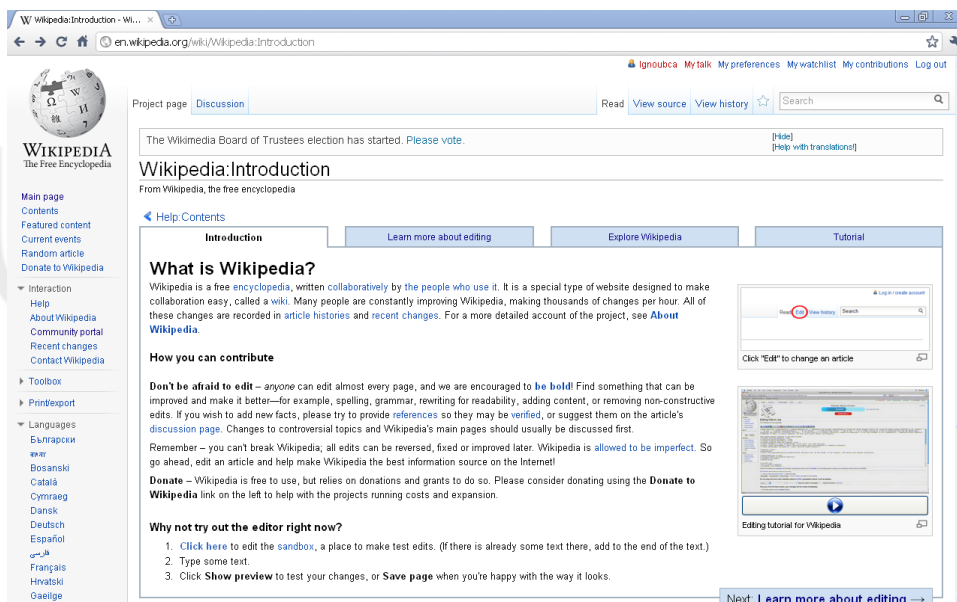


Figure 6.8: Wikipedia Introduction

3. Explore the different tabs. When you go to the ‘Tutorial’ page, you will get a new set of tabs. Click on ‘Editing’ tab. And then ‘try editing in the sandbox’. You get the screen as in Figure 6.9.

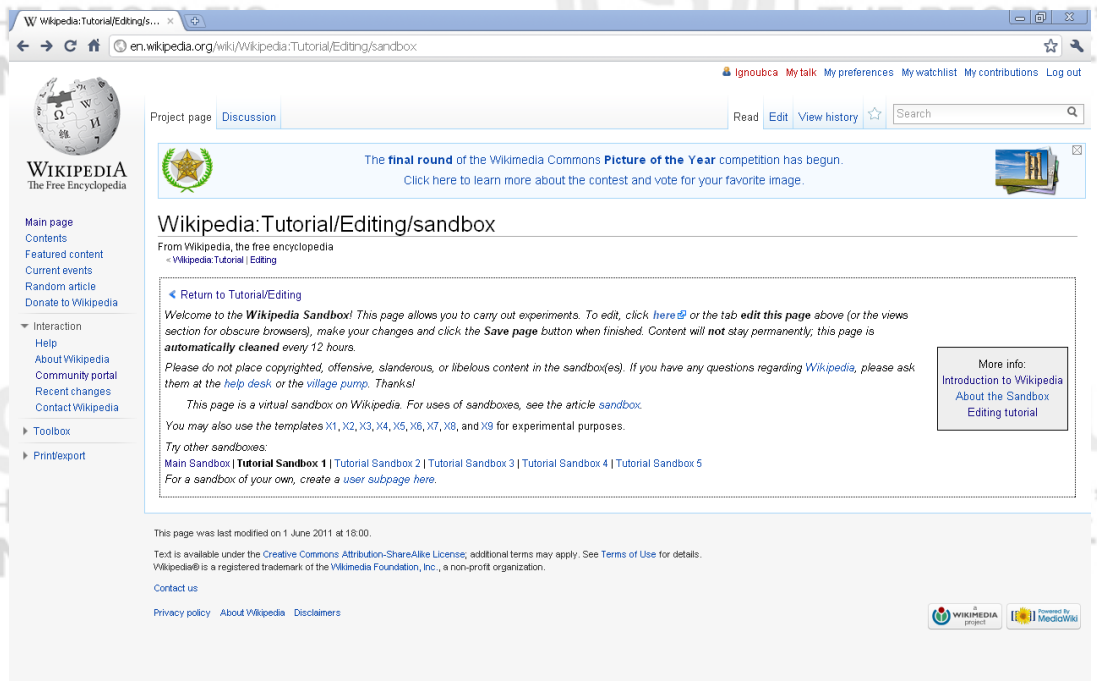


Figure 6.9: Editing in Wikipedia Sandbox

4. Click on Edit and start making changes to the page. Save your changes.

This will give you a fair idea about how you can edit wiki content.

6.6 GOOGLE DOCS

Google docs is a free web-based Word processor, Spreadsheet, Presentation, Form etc along with online data storage solution from Google. To use this, one does not need to buy any specific Office suite of products (ex MS Office etc). This is Google’s Software-As-A-Service (SaaS) version of the Office suite. Since Google docs is web based, you can access it from anywhere through the Internet, you need not worry about copying it to transfer it somewhere else, or about its latest version and you can easily share it with anybody for real time collaboration.

6.6.1 Using Google Docs

1. Go to the URL (website) – <http://docs.google.com>. You will get a screen like the one below.

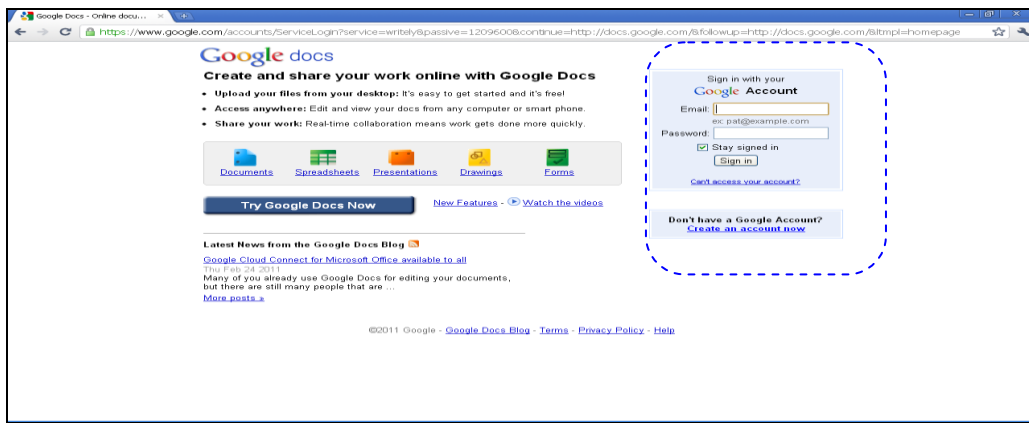


Figure 6.10: Google Docs Login Page

2. You can use an existing account (ex Gmail, yahoo) to login on the right hand side of the above screen. If you don't have an existing account, you can easily create one using your last name, first name, preferred user name (if available) etc. Once you login, you get the screen as in Figure 6.11.
3. On the left hand side of the window, if you click on Button 'Create New', you would see the drop down options (Document, Presentation, Spreadsheet etc) as shown Figure 6.11.
4. Select 'Document' option from the drop down. Type some text here. You may format it as any word document.



Figure 6.11: Google Docs Home Page

5. Click 'Save' button on top right corner. When you save the file, it will ask you to enter the document name. Notice that there is a 'Share' button also. This can be used to share the document. We will discuss about sharing a little later.
6. Give the file name as 'Test document for IGNOU BCA Student' and by default this document is saved on the Google server.
7. You can also download this document locally on the computer in various formats such as DOC, PDF, RTF etc. By default, the document is saved in the folder -C:\Documents and Settings\dell\My Documents\Downloads on your computer.

8. You may also upload an existing document from your machine using the upload button.

Similarly, you can work on other types of docs such as spreadsheet, presentation etc.

6.6.2 Sharing the Document

In Google Docs, to share a document means to give someone else access to that document. This can be done in two ways:

- Email the document as an attachment
- Invite others to read or edit the document online.

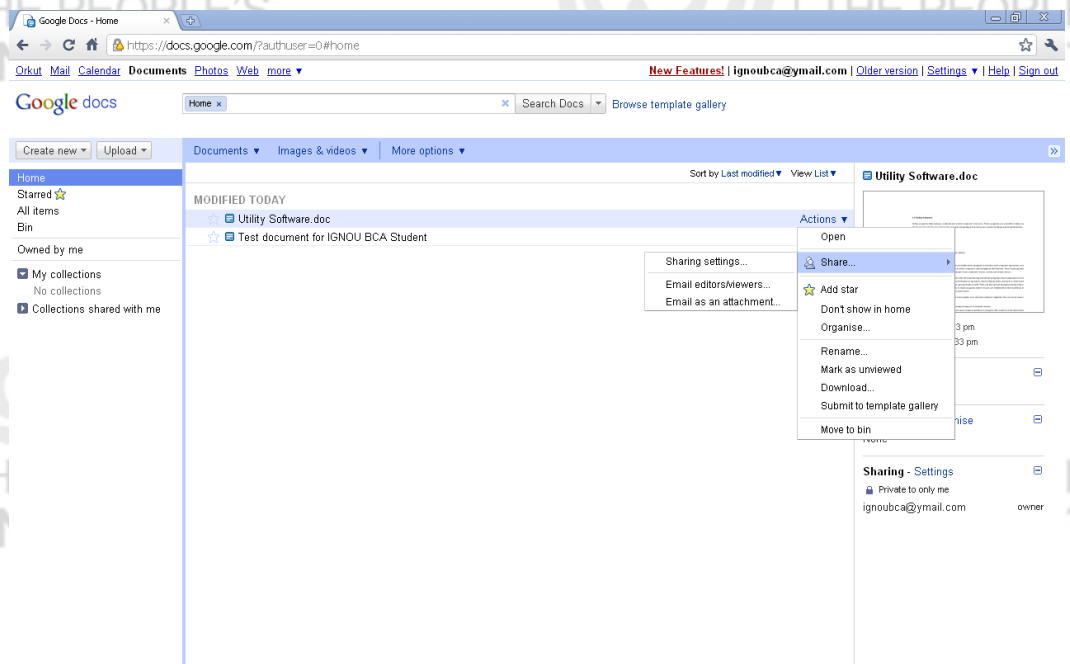



Figure 6.12: List of Documents in Google Docs

1. Bring your cursor on a document name in the list, the word ‘Action’ appears on the right side. When you click on that drop down arrow, a menu appears with ‘Share’ as an option.
2. Choose Share. Another sub menu opens up. ‘Email as an attachment’ emails the document.
3. Click on ‘Email editors/viewers’. This option is used to invite people to either view the document or to collaborate (view and edit) on the document. The people you have invited must have Google Docs account to view the document.
4. A shared document is marked as ‘Shared’ in the list on the main page.

Lab Exercise 1 (Browsing the Web)

1. In Google Chrome do the following:
 - Set it as the default browser.
 - Set www.ignou.ac.in as your home page.
 - Show 'Home' button in the tool bar.
 - Create a folder 'Search Engines' in the Bookmark Manager.
 - Go to the site www.yahoo.com and bookmark it. Save the bookmark in the folder 'Search Engines' created above. Similarly, bookmark the sites www.google.com and www.bing.com and save the bookmarks in the same folder.
 - Check your history.
 - Go to the home page directly using the home button.
 - Create another folder called 'email'.
 - Go to www.hotmail.com and bookmark it in 'email' folder.
 - Delete the 'email' folder.

(Note: For all above options use icon  on the browser toolbar)

2. Open Internet Explorer and do the following :
 - Set IE as your default browser.
 - Set blank page as the home page.
 - Change the appearance of the browser.
 - Go to many different sites.
 - Delete your history.
 - Explore different tabs and options under Internet Options.
 - Add and Delete pages to Favorites.

(Note: For all above options use Tools → Internet Options from the main menu)

3. Open Mozilla Firefox
 - Explore its menu options
 - Do all the exercises that you have done for Chrome and IE in question 1 and question 2.
4. Go to site www.hyundai.co.in and copy the image of all Hyundai cars on our computer.

Lab Exercise 2 (Searching the Web)

1. Use different Search Engines available – for example www.live.com, www.ask.com, www.about.com, www.shopzilla.com, www.yahoo.com, www.find.com, www.monster.com. Determine what each search engine can be used for. Name two more search engine that are not in the given list.

Lab Course

2. Go to Google India site. Set the number of results on a page from 10 to 15. Save your settings.
3. You want to buy a LCD TV. You want to compare only Sony and Samsung TV. Create a search string that gives only Sony and Samsung TV's in the result list and not Toshiba or LG TV's
4. Search on the author Erich Segal
 - Search on all the books written by Erich Segal.
 - Search on Erich Segal who is not an author or writer and has not written any story.
5. You want know the travel to Agra from Delhi by road. You have no idea about the distance and the direction. Using the internet search, find out all the details you need.
6. Search for all the museums you can visit in Mumbai.

Lab Exercise 3 (discussion Forums and Groups)

1. You and your friends are planning to go on a camping trip. Create a Yahoo group so that all the friends interact and plan for the trip. One of you can be a moderator who creates the group and invite all your friends to join the group. Each one can contribute to the discussion and planning of the trip, for example to decide on the location, things to take, bookings, etc.
2. Create a group in Google Groups.
3. Register for the forum on <http://www.proud2bindian.in> and participate in the discussion on the active topics. Check the latest posts, latest threads and popular forums.
4. You want to set up your own Discussion Forum Community. Think of a subject for you forum. Search the Internet and study the hardware and software requirements to set up a forum. List all the steps need to be taken. Also note down free and paid forum software available.

Lab Exercise 4 (Wiki)

1. You and your friends are planning to go on a camping trip. Set up a wiki and invite all your friends to join it. Create a link to the place where you would be going and a list of items that need to be taken. Ask your friends to update the list if they can bring any item from the list. This way everybody will know who is bringing what through the page.
2. Discuss how the communication in the above case (question 1) is different from communicating through email or through discussion group.
3. Search the Internet for different wiki engines available. Consider any five and compare them.

4. Go to www.pbworks.com and setup a wiki there. Develop wiki content in collaboration with few friends. Check the page history. Compare the revisions of the page.

Lab Exercise 5 (Google Docs)

1. Create a new document in Google Docs. Share it with two other people. One should have only view access.
2. Create a presentation on Google docs. Ask your friend to review it and comment on it. Use 'Discussion' option for your discussions on the presentation.
3. Create a spreadsheet on your computer. Upload it to Google Docs.
4. You are a group of four people who are working together on a project report. Create a report on Google Docs and work on it simultaneously, each from your own machines. Check different versions of the document.

6.8 SUMMARY

World Wide Web is one of the most used services of the Internet. You can search the internet for any kind of information. You can create communities of people with similar interests to interact with each other. There are tools like Wiki and Google Docs available to create, share, contribute and collaborate on content online. Internet has made it easier for physically distant people to connect with each other and work together. It has brought people closer.

6.9 FURTHER READINGS

- Internet Technologies at Work By Fred T. Hofstetter Tata McGraw-Hill Edition.
- Information Technology - The Breaking Wave By Dennis P. Curtin, Kim Foley, Kunal Sen, Cathleen Morin Tata- McGraw-Hill Edition.
- Introduction to Computers By Peter Norton Sixth Edition Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Wiki for Dummies By Dan Woods, Peter Thoeny.
- The Internet for Dummies By John R. Levine.
- Google Docs 4 Everyone By Steve Holzner, Nancy Holzner.