Any portal in a storm

Interpreting the Internet is a monthly service aimed at helping AIIC members get the most out of the Internet. This month, we're offering some thoughts on your choice of a starting point for surfing the Web

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Be honest. When you're on the Internet, are you surfing, or drowning? Are you pointing and clicking, or do you feel you're being dragged and dropped? If so, don't worry; you're not alone. There are millions out there just like you. In fact, everyone on the Internet feels like that sometimes.

Remember the old joke about the man who got lost in the backwoods somewhere, and stopped to ask a local the way back to the big city? "Well", the local replied, "if I were you, I wouldn't start from here."

And that's the point about the Internet: it's not where you're going, it's where you start from that counts. The first thing you should do is take some time to find the gateway-in Internet terminology, the portal site-that suits you best.

Try the one favoured by staff at the NY Times. Called Navigator, the paper describes it as "...the home page used by the newsroom of the New York Times for forays into the Web. Its primary intent was to give reporters and editors new to the Web a solid starting point for a wide range of journalistic functions without forcing all of them to spend time wandering around blindly to find a useful set of links on their own. Its secondary purpose was to show people that there is a lot of fun and useful stuff going on out there."

The site lists over 200 links grouped into a dozen categories. Many will prove of interest to interpreters or translators. The "Reference Desk" section, for example, lists links to on-line dictionaries (including multilingual ones), Roget's Internet Thesaurus, Almanacs and even the CIA Factbook.

The site begins with a listing of Places to Start, with links to conventional search engines and other resource sites. (Incidentally, it's worth spending some time looking at the Help pages on the Search engines, and getting at least a primer in Boolean logic; it can make your searching a lot more productive.)

Other categories include Daily and Breaking News, Magazines and Features, Publications, Politics, Commerce, Culture (see the virtual Louvre), Sports, and Miscellany. American sites predominate, but others do find a way in. All in all, this is a good jumping-off point.

The first time you visit, you will be asked to log-in, but the service is free and log-in will be done automatically.
Any other suggestions for portal sites, or other jumping-off points for the Web? Should we build one ourselves? Email us at webeditors@xjxph1svn.aiic.net and let us know.

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