

ONLINE INFORMATION SERVICES

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ONLINE INFORMATION SERVICES

In this report, we will tell you about some of the popular online services available. The services act as a "Super BBS" that allows you to exchange messages and information, chat among users, participate in several conferences, shop online for just about anything (the computer version of "Home Shopping Club"), as well as make airline reservations and do several other things.

Online Information Service Advantages

There are several things that online information services all have in common with each other.

- * Large Database of files for downloading
- * Extensive mail files for downloading
- * Numerous conferences, forums, and discussions available
- * One information database, AT LEAST!
- * Several games available for one player or multiple players.
- * A wide variety of user-friendly services

Many of these features can be found online at no charge. Since they charge access fees, you might be wondering why anyone would pay for access to an online information service when they can call local BBSes for free. Well, the reason should be obvious. To put it simply, it is because they are BIG! There are literally tens of thousands of people around the world who tap into an online service.

You can find information on just about anything that you are interested in. What? You like studying the life cycle of fish that live on the bottom of the ocean? Well, you probably can find information about that topic some where on an online information service. Interested in the latest political nonsense? Yes, you can find information about politics. Just a general question about what is available online? You can find it all on online information services.

Many of the online information services will offer a continuous chat conference known as "CB" or "Citizen's Band" conference. It works much like CB Radio operates. You talk to people by typing on the computer.

There are hundreds of online games that you can play either by yourself or you can play against another user. The advantage of online games is that you can play against someone else who is online at the same time. You don't have to make a play, and then wait a week for the next person to log on and then play. You can play an entire game in just a few minutes or an hour, however long it takes to play a complete game.

You might play a game where you get into a WWII airplane and do battle

against the NAZIs, (all the other players are the NAZIs, or vice versa). You might play a game where you and all of your teammates are in a dungeon, and you will use your own knowledge and expertise to navigate the team through the dungeon without being killed. This will be an exciting game to play because each player has different ideas, so the game will be different each time you play.

Even though these are all common on most online information services, most of them offer databases for specific information to users.

You may also use online information services to do your shopping. Many companies offer items for sale in a service area usually called something like: "The Electronic Mall," "The Mall," or "Electronic Shoppers Club" (ESC). You shop by selecting an item that you want and selecting the quantity, and then they bill you and send you the product.

Several of the online services offer what is called "Check-Free Transaction Processing" from the CheckFree Processing Center. This allows you to pay your bills electronically by debiting your checking account and crediting the payee's account. This makes it so you don't have to write and mail a check, and it takes care of a lot of paperwork you would otherwise have to do. This service also provides you with updated registers showing your account status.

Many software companies are offering online help for users, as well as customer support. You can find conferences available that will talk about almost any Microsoft product. These conferences are almost always moderated by a person representing the software company being discussed.

In general, these online information services are a good place to go for help on a specific matter or topic; or to get involved in a quick game of chess or checkers, etc.; or to pick up on a good buy in the "mall".

