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There are just not enough hours in a day to read all the maintenance information you can find on the Internet.

At www.mt-online.com alone, you can find at least 5 years of collective wisdom captured in articles, editorials, and directories. You can bookmark them, save them to a file, print them, and even e-mail them. As you read this column, even more information is being added.

In an effort to leverage the multimedia capabilities of the Internet and to provide an alternative to reading, a new site has been launched. ReliabilityRadio.com, is a streaming web-based talk radio show.

You now can hear leading experts such as Joel Levitt, Ricky Smith, and Darren Clark talk about maintenance 24 hours per day, on demand, at your convenience. Download the free Live365 player (155 K) for the easiest set up.

The advantage of streaming audio files rather than providing a direct file download is that the stream starts to play as soon as enough information has been downloaded and the rest of the large file downloads in the background while you listen. The format of the audio file is MP3, a common audio format for the web due to its small file size.

Other sites that offer listening material over the Internet include Audible.com with over 18,000 audio books and audio programs in MP3 format. You can even listen to magazines such as Fast Company, Scientific American, Technology Review, Science News, and the Harvard Business Review.

Audio Books for Free offers classic fiction for the most part but a search of nonfiction revealed the classic book of strategy Art of War by Sun Tzu and other interesting titles. I wonder if Sun Tzu could have imagined his words being downloaded via MP3 2400 years after he spoke them?

Another good site is MP3AudioBooks.com . It offers business MP3 files that play on your computer or portable MP3 player.

If you are a music fan, you probably have heard of MP3 download sites such as Napster (now defunct) and BearShare.com. These free sites are questionable at best from a legal standpoint and almost all of the free music sites download a terrible spy-ware application that tracks your Internet usage on behalf of e-marketing companies.

Luckily there are more music alternatives now and most are free or low cost. My personal favorites are National Public Radio for news and Launchcast.com for music.

Launchcast allows you to build your own custom radio station by rating songs and artists as you listen. You then can send your radio station link to friends who can build their own radio station. You can even let your friends “influence” your radio station if you like their taste in music. You can click on a red X if they play an artist or song you do not like and you will never hear it again. The basic service is free and you can get a commercial-free version for under $40 per year.

Apple Computer offers over 200,000 songs at its new iTunes Music store . You can preview any of the songs for free. When you find a song you want, buy it for just 99 cents.

If you have moved to a new town and want to hear your favorite old radio stations from back home, try Radio-Locator , the most comprehensive radio station search engine on the Internet. It has links to over 10,000 radio station web pages and over 2500 audio streams from radio stations in the U.S. and around the world. The Internet defies distance so your far-away radio stations can be delivered right to your PC desktop.

Don’t have time to read your boss’s latest memo? Now you can download a cool application that will read it to you. You can choose a male or female voice and convert the memo to MP3 for listening during your morning jog or transcontinental air trip. Visit Zero2000 Software for 2nd Speech Center ($39.95).

Try MT3.com for the latest audio software and information about various MP3 players and get plugged in to the audible side of the Internet today to hear what you have been missing.

Internet Tip: Watch Google

As much as I like to use the Google search engine, recent privacy concerns have made me a little more thoughtful when I do use it.

According to Google-watch.org , the popular search site keeps track of every search you perform. It identifies you with a unique ID. We are all under heightened alert since 9/11 but I am not sure I want Google (a private company) tracking all of my activity.

The folks at Google-watch may be slightly paranoid, but they got my attention. Try the anonymous proxy that allows you to use Google without being tracked here: www.google-watch.org/cgi-bin/proxy.htm
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