

A 'World' of information in your pocket

Transferring online information onto your PDA provides the World Wide Web's benefits without the connection.

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With wireless Internet available in hospitals, coffee shops, airports, universities, and libraries, real-time Internet access away from the home or office is just a click away on your personal digital assistant (PDA). But what if you're somewhere without wireless Internet—such as in flight or at the local department of motor vehicles?

Transferring and storing online content onto your PDA lets you access critical online information in places without a connection, making your down time more productive.

PORTABLE ONLINE CONTENT

Much Web-based information can easily be captured or stored onto your PDA.

Electronic books, or e-books, have long been one of the pleasures of using PDAs and handheld devices such as the [Franklin eBookMan](#). Many e-books are available for free or for purchase at numerous Web sites. Medical text vendors such as [Skyscape](#) and [Handheldmed](#) offer a range of titles, including the *DSM-IV-TR* and the *Washington Manual Psychiatry Survival Guide*.

Clinical literature. Many journals and medical periodicals offer Adobe Acrobat portable document format (PDF) versions of print articles, but these are often available only to subscribers.

Most online content is copyrighted. As long as the material is captured for personal use and is not distributed, however, there should be no legal ramifications.

TEXT TRANSFER OPTIONS

The easiest way to import text into your handheld is to select text with your mouse, copy the text, paste it into a Microsoft Word document, and transfer it onto your PDA. One drawback of this method is that online information that spans several Web pages can be painstaking to capture, and the site's navigational organization is lost. What's more, graphics and specialized tables may be scrambled with this method.

Specialized offline viewing systems such as [Plucker](#) and [iSilo](#) fill this gap by preserving navigational links and tables. These programs consist of a viewer program on the PDA and a distiller program that runs on the personal computer's desktop. The distiller program is compatible with Windows, Macintosh, and Linux operating systems.

Once the distiller program is installed, simply enter the URL of the desired article. You can modify image color and size, how many levels of links the program will capture, and location of the captured file. After synchronizing files between the PDA and desktop computer, the captured file is ready for viewing.

One nice feature of offline viewing systems is that you can create and update specialized 'channels' on demand. For example, creating a CURRENT PSYCHIATRY channel by using the home page URL will capture all articles available on the site at that time.

VIEWING SYSTEM DISADVANTAGES

One drawback of offline viewing systems is that Web sites often have many extra links such as related articles, other articles by an author, or advertising. The distiller program can control only the depth of links gathered, not the specific links.

[Adobe Acrobat PDF](#) can capture the information while preserving the online formatting. This program also has a distiller, which works by creating a “printer” for your computer. A Web page can be “printed” to the distiller, which captures the information. Only the desired pages are captured, but navigational links will be lost.

Adobe Acrobat is useful because it lets you edit PDF files, but it is expensive (\$300 for the standard version, \$450 for the professional version). If capturing to PDF is all that you need, [PDFCreator](#) is a free alternative. (See “[Beating the high cost of software](#),” Psyber Psychiatry, March 2004.)

Plucker also is free, but it creates documents primarily for Palm OS handhelds. A [Pocket PC version of Plucker](#) is in development. iSiloX documents can be viewed on Pocket PC or Palm OS devices, but the paid version of the viewer iSilo, available for \$20, is required to use the navigational links. The free version of iSilo can read but cannot navigate with hyperlinks. Adobe Acrobat PDFs can be viewed on Pocket PC and Palm OS devices, but these PDFs must be distilled a second time for the handheld.

One disadvantage of all viewing systems is that Web pages with complicated formatting or specialized layers may not be accurately captured or well viewed on a PDA’s small screen.

Table
Sample systems for viewing Web-based content on PDAs

Software	URL	Compatible PDA operating system(s)
Plucker	http://www.plkr.org ; http://vade-mecum.sourceforge.net/	Palm, Pocket PC
iSiloX	http://www.isilox.com http://www.isilo.com	Palm, Pocket PC
Adobe Acrobat	http://www.adobe.com	Palm, Pocket PC
PDF Creator	http://sector7g.wurzel6.de/pdfcreator/index_en.htm	Palm, Pocket PC

Related Resources

- Microsoft Windows XP. Make web pages available for offline viewing.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/using/howto/gomobile/offlineviewing.asp>

- Kansas City Clinical Oncology Program. Mobile users help page.

http://www.kccop.org/mobile_help.htm

- PDACorps discussion forum (topic: Plucker for Pocket PC).

http://www.pdacorps.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=2321

If you have any questions about these products or comments about CURRENT PSYCHIATRY, [click here](#) to contact Dr. Luo or send an e-mail to Current.Psychiatry@dowdenhealth.com.

Disclosure

Dr. Luo reports no financial relationship with any company whose products are mentioned in this article. The opinions expressed by Dr. Luo in this column are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of CURRENT PSYCHIATRY.

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