

Introduction

Here's something cool I bet you didn't know . . .

That, in a nutshell, is what drove the creation of this book—cool stuff you probably didn't know about your favorite Web sites. *Secrets*, for want of a better word. Five hundred and one of them.

About This Book

What kind of secrets are included in *501 Web Site Secrets*? Well, there's parts of a site you didn't know existed. Or ways to use the site that you weren't aware of. Or special commands that help you get even more out of the site than you could before. Cool stuff like that—and more.

That's the nature of a secret—something that most users don't know about, but would get a kick out of if they did. These are the kinds of things that will make you say to yourself, "That's cool—I didn't know you could do that!" And then you'll want to go directly to the site to try the secret out for yourself. (Go ahead; it's allowed.)

Of course, not all 501 secrets in this book will be new to you. If you're Internet-savvy at all, you'll probably know some of what I reveal in these pages. That's okay; it only means that you're on your toes. I'm sure, however, that you'll find more than a few secrets you *didn't* know, and that they'll make this book a worthwhile read for you.

To be fair, many of these secrets are hidden in plain sight. There are few secrets in this book that are deliberately concealed from the general public. Most so-called secrets are things that are there if you look for them—and if you know where to look. You can discover lots of secrets on your own just by clicking all the links on all the pages of your favorite sites and poring over every single page of the site's help system. The sad fact is, most users never get beyond a site's home page—and there aren't too many secrets there!

How to Use This Book

Using this book is as simple as turning to the chapter on a particular site, reading through the secrets, then trying them on your own. You don't need any particular technical expertise to take advantage of these secrets, although some familiarity with the sites in question is helpful. There's no fancy programming, no high-level coding, just a lot of common-sense information that you probably didn't know before.

How This Book Is Organized

When collecting these 501 secrets, I focused on 20 of the top Web sites today. And that's exactly how the book is organized—20 total chapters divided into 4 major parts. (If your favorite site isn't included, I apologize; there were only so many pages available, and I had to make the cut-off somewhere!)

Part I: Secrets of the Internet Portals

This part covers the top Web portals, those sites that offer a little bit of everything and want to be the starting point for all your Web surfing. The biggest portals are covered here: Yahoo!, MSN, AOL.com, Excite, and Lycos.

Part II: Secrets of the Internet Search Engines

The most common online activity is searching, so this part covers the top search sites—including a few search engines you might not know about, but should. Look here for the search secrets of Google, AllTheWeb, Ask Jeeves, AltaVista, and HotBot.

Part III: Secrets of the Online News and Information Sites

More and more people are getting all their news and information from the Internet. This part tells you all about the top sites for news, sports, weather, and other information: CNN.com, ESPN.com, CBS MarketWatch, Weather.com, and Microsoft.com. (Yes, Microsoft.com—a great source for technical information!)

Part IV: Secrets of Online Shopping and Services

The final part covers those sites where you spend a lot of money—the Internet's top shopping and auction sites. Turn here for the inside information on eBay, Amazon.com, Napster, Expedia, and MapQuest.

Conventions Used in This Book

If I did my job right, you don't need an instruction book to read this text and take advantage of the 501 secrets. Just remember that anything you need to enter is in bold, like this: **enter this text**. And when there's site navigating to do, I'll lead you from page to page (and from link to link) by listing each of the pages in order with an arrow between them, like this: pageone ⇄ pagetwo. URLs are presented in monofont to make them stand out. It should be fairly easy to follow.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout the book I've included even more advice and secrets beyond what you see in the main text. This subsidiary information is presented in icons set off from the regular text. I use three different types of icons for three different types of information:



Insider Insight icons present additional secrets and advice above and beyond the main secret. In other words—more cool stuff!

note

Notes present interesting, but not essential, information. Read these to get more background about the topic at hand.

caution

Caution icons alert you to potential problems or issues you need to know before you explore the relevant secret.

Where to Go from Here

501 Web Site Secrets covers 20 top Internet sites. There's one other site I'd like to mention—my own personal Web site, www.molehillgroup.com. I don't pretend that it ranks with the other sites presented in this book (it doesn't), but it's still a site you might want to check out—particularly if you're interested in what books I'm writing next. You can also find any corrections or clarifications to this book listed there.

I also welcome e-mails from readers; you can send your questions or comments to me at secrets@molehillgroup.com. I can't guarantee a personal response to every e-mail, but I definitely would like to hear what you think!

But I digress. It's time to get down to the serious business of uncovering the secrets of your favorite Web sites. So turn the page, fire up your Web browser, and get ready for some really cool stuff!