Portal Encyclopedia Article

Portal

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Portal

A portal is a web site that serves as an all-purpose entry point to the **Internet**. Designed with rich navigation structures, portals provide easy-to-use interfaces to access resources on the web and the content contained on the site itself. Portal designers seek to make the portal site the central place for users to find what they need on the web. Portals usually display ads to generate income and pay for the services they provide. Popular portals include Yahoo, CNET, and America Online's AOL.com.

Services

Portals offer a broad array of resources and services, such as search engines, **e-mail**, news, discussion groups, classified ads, online shopping, stock quotes, weather, sports scores, white and yellow pages, and links to other useful or popular sites. Portals attempt to offer as many services as possible to retain large audiences, hoping that users will make the site their default home page or at least visit it often. The number and types of services portals provide are the defining difference between portals and other web sites.

Special Types of Portals

Specialty portals have developed for specific audiences and industries. One such type is a corporate portal. Corporate portals are contained in intranets, or internal sites. They are used to help company employees access internal information as well as useful public web sites. Corporate portals also possess search engines and can be customized for various company divisions or groups. Corporate portals are usually restricted to information relevant to the company.

A vortal is a vertical industry portal. A vortal targets a specific industry, such as banking, medicine, computers, or pets. It offers services, information, research, and other resources particular to the industry to which it is catering. Vortals can be considered a hybrid cross between web portals and **intranet** portals. Vortals can also be business-to-business sites that provide a common site for buyers and sellers in a specific industry to interact.

The Future of Portals

Some Internet analysts considered portals the future of the web and particularly intranets. The nature of portals as a central location for accessing information on the Internet reduces, what some may consider, unnecessary web surfing. Portals allow for the aggregation of a variety of content, such as documents and database queries, and can provide a front-end to software **applications** companies use. Portals also allow for

scaling. As the amount of information available continues to grow, the ability to categorize and group information that portals provide may become essential.