

WebLinks Whitepaper

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Introduction

This paper describes the software WebLinks Plus and its various versions. It covers differences between the versions and instructions for the installation of the software. For each version it describes the hardware and software requirements.

Who should read this

This paper is aimed at the Network Manager or IT person responsible for managing the network.

Overview

WebLinks Plus is a database search and retrieval system for the WebLinks entries compiled and distributed by Pledger Consulting Pty Ltd. The database is upgraded monthly with new links added and unused links altered or removed.

Purchase of the system entitles the purchaser to use the software and also to 12 months of free database support.

Versions of WebLinks Plus

There are 3 versions of WebLinks Plus.

VB Stand alone Version

This version is installed on a single stand-alone computer. The database resides in the same directory as the application, and is upgraded using a secret key combination. There are no special hardware requirements and any computer capable of running Windows 95 should be able to run WebLinks Plus.

VB Network Version

The interface for this version is the same as for the stand alone computer version. The software must be installed on each workstation however the database is stored on a shared network drive, using either a Universal Naming Convention (UNC) or standard DOS pathname. There are no special hardware requirements and any computer capable of running Windows 95 should be able to run WebLinks Plus Network Edition.

ASP Version

This version is installed onto a web server that supports Active Server Pages (ASP). The software is accessed using a Web Browser (IE3.0, Netscape3.0 or higher). The database is stored on the server and accessed using an Open DataBase Connectivity (ODBC) connection. This software has been tested on Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) version 3 with ASP support installed and Version 4, which supports ASP natively. There are no hardware requirements for the client as the program is accessed with a Web browser.

Which Version to Use

When choosing the most appropriate version schools need to consider the available software and level of expertise in the school.

The VB Stand alone version – is suitable for use on a single machine. It could be installed on multiple machines, but each will have their own copy of the database and must be upgraded individually.

The VB Network Version – is suitable for all networks that have Windows 95/98 workstations and the ability to share directories. This includes Windows NT Server, Peer-to-Peer networks (no server) and Novell Networks.

The ASP version - is the easiest to use and maintain but has very specific hardware and software requirements. The software uses a browser so no installation is necessary on the workstations.

Setting up WebLinks Plus

Setting up is a straightforward process for both of the VB versions, however the ASP version needs to be configured, preferable by a network manager or someone with some web server experience.

The VB Stand alone version

The software is distributed on a single CD. The CD will usually run the Setup program automatically when inserted. As part of the setup process the software may install DCOM95 and/or MDAC. These are both upgrades to the database handling capability and should be backward compatible with all existing software. This process happens automatically, and will require you to restart the computer before launching the software.

The VB Network Version

The installation for this software is the same as the for the Stand alone version. The program must be installed on each of the workstations, but the database file is stored on a shared directory. Before installing the software make sure you have created a directory on the server (or workstation with sharing facilities) and shared it. The first time that the software is run after installation, the menu shown below will appear



The menu contains two options: -

Copy

This option is used to copy the database file to a shared directory and then sets the database path in the program. This option is normally used when the program is set up on the first workstation on the network

Connect

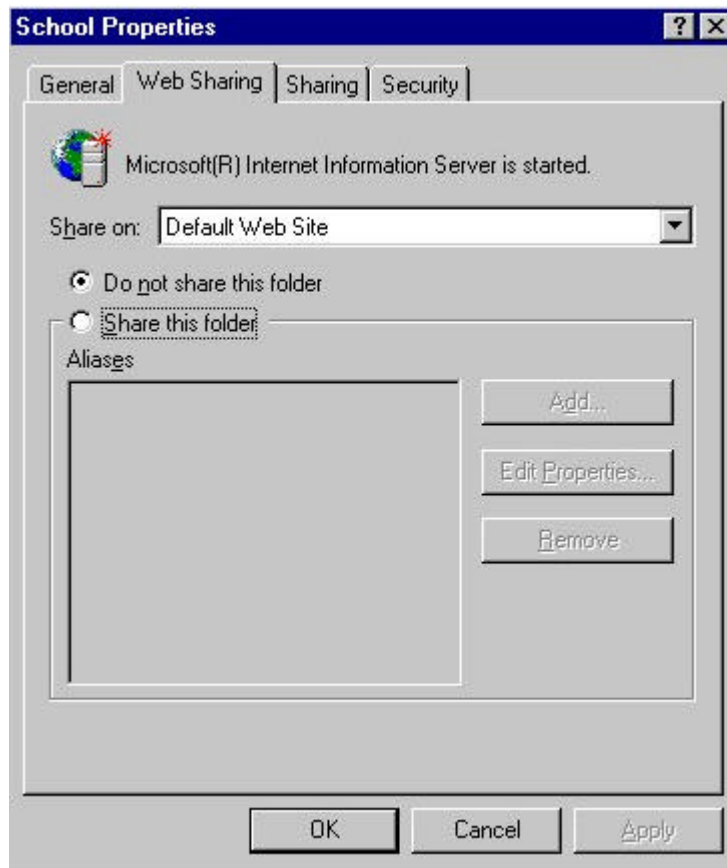
This option is used to set the database path to a file that is already on a shared directory.

The ASP version

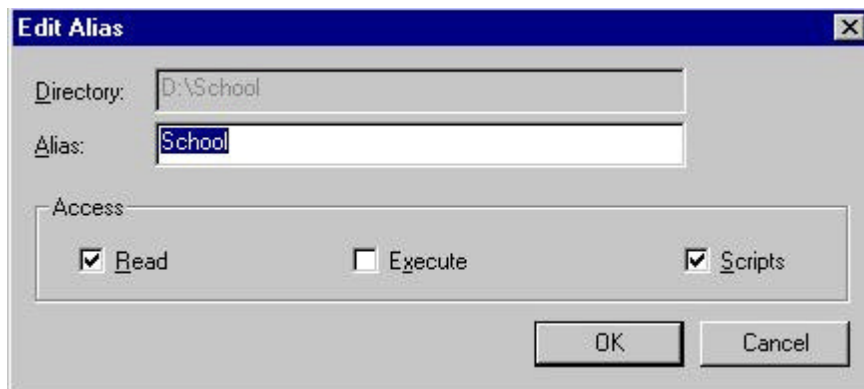
Installation of this version involves three basic steps.

Setting up a Web Folder

Using Internet Information Server this involves creating a folder on the server, and then setting the properties for that folder to a virtual share



When you click on 'Share this folder' a dialog box like the one below will appear.



Make sure that the Read and Scripts boxes are ticked.

The contents of the ASP folder on the CD can now be copied into this folder, including the images subfolder.

Making an ODBC Connection

The Links database needs to be copied to the Server. It doesn't matter what the folder is called and the folder does not need to be shared. It is better not to store the database in the same folder as the ASP code to avoid any possibility of it being tampered with. You must make sure that the NT permissions for the folder you create to store the database in, have been set to Everyone – Full Control.

To make an ODBC connection, follow the directions below

1. Open the Control Panel
2. Double click on the ODBC-32bit Icon
3. Select the System DSN tab
4. Click on Add and then select the Microsoft Access Driver
5. At the next screen the Data source name MUST be **Links**
6. You don't have to fill in anything for the Description, but you could call it WebLinks Database
7. Click on Select and locate the Links.mdb file
8. Click OK to make the connection

Accessing the Weblinks page

From the browser on a workstation type in the following: -

<http://servername/Shareddirname/default.htm> and press Enter

Example <http://server1/weblinks/default.htm>

It is not necessary to type in the default.htm, as the server should pick that up automatically.

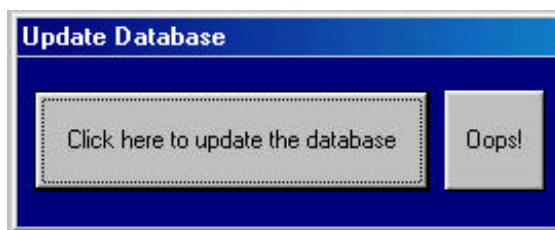
If you have a problem, take a note of the error message on the screen and check the FAQ at the end of this paper. If your error message is not supported contact Technical support with as many details as you can.

Updating the Database

Every month you will receive a database that contains new links and replaces the database you are currently using. Each of the 3 versions uses the same database, however the method for updating each of the versions is different.

Stand Alone Version

Updating should only be done when the program is started and before any searching has been done. Click on the Printer Icon and then press Ctrl-Alt-F10. The following dialog will appear.



Click on the appropriate button and a Browse box will allow you to navigate to where the updated copy of the database is. This database will be copied into the correct location and the program will restart.

Network Version

Make sure that no students are using the program on any workstation. As with the Stand Alone version updating should only be done when the program is started and before any searching has been done. Click on the Printer Icon and then press Ctrl-Alt-F10. The dialog box shown on page 3 will appear. From here the new database can be copied over and the program will restart. Nothing else needs to be done on any other workstation.

ASP Version

Make sure that no students are accessing the database on any workstation using a web browser. The new database file needs to be manually copied over the top of the original database.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of the questions most often asked by users. If you have any other questions let us know so that we can update this section.

General

How often is the database updated?

Every Month

Do I need to have MS Access in order to use the database?

No, the database is in MS Access format but is read by the Weblinks program.

I don't have Visual Basic, can I use the VB version

Visual Basic is the programming language used to write the program. Weblinks VB (Network or Stand Alone) do not require any extra software in order to run.

Do the updates contain only new entries?

No, the updates replace your original database file. The updates contain all the original entries except for broken links that have been removed or altered as well as new entries.

What is the purpose of the ID numbers for each article?

These are a quick means of directing students to a site. Article numbers will NOT change from update to update. Broken links that have been removed will have a missing ID number. This is to ensure that worksheets that refer to an ID number will remain useful for many years. (Unless the site is removed)

Can I run Weblinks Plus from a CD Tower

The Weblinks Plus CD only needs to be used for installation. While it would be possible to run the Setup program from a CD Tower, there is little value in keeping the database on the CD Tower as it is less than 1.5Mb in size. Access the database is also faster if it is stored on a Network or local hard disk.

ASP version

Can WebLinks Plus ASP version be run on Web Servers other than Microsoft?

Any Web server capable of running ASP should be able to run WebLinks Plus ASP although it has only been tested on Internet Information Server (Versions 3 and 4)

Can I run the ASP version from Microsoft's Personal Web Server (PWS).

Yes, the software was written and tested initially using Personal Web Server and works well. PWS only allows 10 simultaneous connections so that access on a network would be limited. PWS is available on the Windows 98 CD, or as a download from Microsoft at the following address <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/pws/>

I have IIS version 3 but it doesn't seem to work. What could be the problem?

Active Server Pages must be installed separately with version 3 but comes as a part of Windows NT Service Pack 3 or higher. For more information on installing ASP on IIS 3 go to <http://www.microsoft.com/Office/intranet/Modules/asp411s3.asp> . We recommend you consider upgrading to Version 4 which is a free download. It can be found at

<http://www.microsoft.com/ntserver/nts/downloads/recommended/NT4OptPk/default.asp>

This is a large download (27Mb) and 52 individual files, so be patient

I have installed the ASP version, but when I run it I get a message that indicates an ODBC problem 80004005.

This is caused because of the NT permissions on the folder the database is stored in being incorrect. Change the permissions for that folder to Everyone – Full Control.

Network version

Will the Network Version run on a Novell Network?

Yes, any Network that can share a directory can support WebLinks Plus NE

Do I need a Server to run the Network Version?

No, a peer to peer network is capable of supporting the Network Version. As long as a computer can share a directory that other computers can connect to, there should be no problems.

Do I have to map a drive letter to the Shared Directory?

No, WebLinks Plus is able to work with UNC path names.

I'm worried about having a shared directory that the students might get to

The directory can be shared as read only and on an NT network it can also be hidden by adding a \$ sign to the end of the share name. The only problem is that you can't then browse to the shared directory easily when Copying or Connecting. The way around this is to type the full UNC path in the file name box and press ok.

Eg \\Server\Links\$. This will bring up the directory and you can click on the links.mdb file easily.

I have not been able to get WebLinks Plus to up-date to the new monthly file. What could be the problem?

Updates should be done once the program has been run and before any searching has been done. This is because some operations in searching and report display hold the database file open and do not allow the updated version to be copied over the top. The sequence for initiating the update is to click on the printer icon, and then press Ctrl-Alt-F10 (To stop students from messing around). This will display the update options. If the database will not copy, restart the program and do the update as the first thing.

An annoying message pops up when I select any category from the drop down list. What is it and how can I get rid of it?

It's a problem with the program. A part of the testing that was not removed before distributing the software in the first release, which has since been fixed. You will need to get a replacement file from Pledger Consulting. Contact them by e-mail or phone to get one sent with instructions for installing the patch.

When I click on a Weblink, the Web Browser does not launch and if I press Ctrl-Alt-Del I see 'WinOldAp' appearing in the task list. What's the problem?

There is another program running that is stopping Weblinks from launching the browser. Try doing the following: -

- Temporarily drag all of your icons in your startup folder to the desktop.
- Reboot your computer

- Run Weblinks and see if it works.
- If it does, replace your startup icons back into the folder one by one, to find out which one is affecting it.

If this doesn't work then there must be a program running that is automatically loaded elsewhere. Contact your System Administrator about checking your Autoexec, Win.ini, System.ini and registry for program that run at startup. Alternatively, bring up the task list (Ctrl-Alt-Del) and end tasks in the list one at a time, then try launching a Weblink again.