

# Accessing on-line service information

As more and more service information is made available on-line, Damien Curran from the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) navigates his way through some of the data and lets you know where you can find it.

Technical documentation has always been a fundamental part of a technicians tool kit. In the past, main dealers would have a technical documentation bay or area filled with shelves full of repair manuals and current flow diagrams or, as most people would still call them, wiring diagrams.

These hard copy manuals required a lot of effort from staff to ensure that when one is finished with the manual, it goes back in the appropriate folder, ready for its next use. When a new engine or transmission is fitted to a model range, the technical documentation must be updated in order to ensure that when a technician takes the manual for that vehicle, it is up to date.

To counter this vast expanding hardcopy library, manufacturers have put their new manuals, as well as their back catalogue of past models, onto an electronic format which can be accessed via a computer, therefore reducing the physical space required to store current and future manuals. This does not necessarily make a technician's life easier at first, as navigating your way around the interface requires some practice in order to get the hang of where each section and subsection are located. As a result, most manufacturers will offer documentation training to their dealer network. But like most things in life, familiarity will only come with use. The more the technician uses the system, the quicker they will be able to find the information required.

This is all very well for main dealers, but how can an independent garage and their mechanics keep up to date with changing systems, models and technology and also get access to the relevant manuals in order to carry out repairs? When it comes to carrying out fault finding on various systems on a vehicle, a technician may need access to a diagnostic repair manual in order to get information related to a given fault code. If their diagnostic tool

does not read an existing or stored fault code, then the technician may require information about live data to see if any parameters are out of specification. Based on this information, the next step may require the use of a current flow diagram in order to carry out relevant wiring checks. Then the mechanic might require a repair manual detailing correct removal and refitting procedures.

So how do I get myself access to these manufacturers' manuals? The answer is by using the manufacturer's online documentation website. These websites give repairers access to repair and diagnostic manuals, service procedures and current flow diagrams. Current flow diagrams must be accessed, from time to time, in order to carry out an efficient diagnosis, while abiding to all the relevant procedures in order not to damage or cause problems with other systems on the vehicle.

Here are the currently available manufacturer's technical websites, with the possibility of even more in the future:

#### **Electronic Repair & Workshop Information (ERWIN)**

VW	erwin.volkswagen.de
Audi	erwin.audi.com
Seat	erwin.seat.com
Skoda	erwin.skoda-auto.cz

#### **Toyota Service**

Toyota	www.toyota-tech.eu
Lexus	www.lexus-tech.eu

#### **Info Tech**

Renault	infotech.renault.com
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Unfortunately, each manufacturers website differs, so it can take some time to learn how to navigate your way around each site. As always, there is no such thing as a free lunch, and access is tariff based. However, you can opt for 1 hour sessions from between €4 to €8 (depending on the site)



or one day, one week and so on. You can decide how to best meet your need for access to the proper information while keeping control of your expenses.

There is, however, an alternative to the manufacturers websites. Companies like Autodata offer online access to current flow diagrams, repair methods, diagnostic testing, fault codes and also technical bulletins for a huge range of vehicles. The advantage here is one interface for all manufacturers, so you don't need to get used to a different interface for each manufacturer. Although these companies do offer an alternative, there can be lag time between the first use of new technology on a model and the appearance of the relevant data in non-manufacturers manuals. Given the troubles encountered in keeping up with a manufacturers expanding model ranges, a technician may need to access the manufacturers' site from time to time.

