

Community in Cyberspace

Baase (A Gift of Fire) - Chapter 9

1. Some Observations

Internet Use:

Q: *In your opinion, does Internet usage have more of a negative or positive impact on community?*

- [May create isolation](#) from family, in-person friends, and neighbors. p 366
- Creates long-distance associations focused on special interests.
- Reduces or eliminates direct contact with customers and clients.
- Contributes to the formation of [electronic relationships](#).
- Allows for [teleworking](#) from almost any location.
- May lead to [Internet "addiction"](#) (see COLA)

Community in Cyberspace

2. The Issue of Access – Information Haves and Have-nots

Commonly known as the ["Digital Divide"](#).

Factors contributing to access (or lack thereof) to computers and information systems:

Q: *Where in your community can someone who doesn't own a computer access the Internet?*

- Developed country.
- Individual wealth.
- [Age](#).
- Race (see *handout: Technology versus African-Americans*)
- [Gender](#). p 372
- Ethnic background.
- Politics.
- [Geography](#)

Community in Cyberspace

3. Universal Service Guarantee

Universal Access to the Telephone

Q: *Should universal access to the Net be a liberty or claim-right?*

- The Communications Act of 1934 requires telephone companies to provide telephone service to the poor.
- In the 1930s, access to the telephone was deemed necessary in order to function in society.

Universal Access to the Net

- Advocates stress that access to the Net is necessary in order to function in today's society.
- Critics argue that the cost to supply universal access to the Net for the poor is an unfair and unnecessary burden.

Community in Cyberspace

4. Trends In Computer Access

- [Declining costs for hardware, software, and connectivity](#) contribute to greater access.
- Easier to use and understand.
- Gender gap has vanished.
- Age gap is narrowing.
- Some businesses offer home access as a benefit.
- [Public-access becoming more common](#).
- Families perceive Web access to be important.
- Non-white households trail in access.
- Rural, isolated, or remote regions often have limited access.

Community in Cyberspace

5. Abdicating Responsibility

People may rely too much on computers for decisions that were once made by a community:

Q: Recall a time when you did what the computer said, rather than exercise your judgment.

- Approval of loans or insurance coverage.
- Assessment of student, teacher, and school administrator progress.
- [Air traffic control](#)
- [The arrest of certain individuals.](#)
- How to make a particular business decision.
- [Using computer modeling in science and tech.](#)

Effect: Overbureaucratization

- **Creation of a Technocracy (Postman)**

Community in Cyberspace

6. The Neo-Luddite View

Criticisms of Computer Technology:

Q: How would technology enthusiasts counter each criticism?

- Causes massive unemployment and deskilling of jobs.
- We use them because they are there.
- Causes social inequality (see Digital Divide).
- Source of social disintegration; they are dehumanizing.
- [Separates humans from nature and destroys the environment.](#)
- Benefits big business and big government.
- Thwarts development of social skills in children.
- Solves no real human problems.

Community in Cyberspace

7. Ultimately it is a choice of Values

Technology Advocates

- People can choose to use a technology for good or ill.
- Influenced by society, technology does more than it was designed to do.
- People adopt technologies that give us more choices for action and relationships.

Q: *Is it possible for society to prohibit certain technologies?*

Technology Critics

- Technology is not “neutral.”
- Big business and governments make decisions about technology.
- Once created, technology drives its self.