Life in 2050

Life in the future is set to be very exciting. Your next mobile phone is keeping an eye on the house when you are on holiday, you are surfing the net and downloading videos while your kids are lying on the beach or sitting on the train reading their

E-book. Later, you are in a restaurant, and after checking your pockets you find out that you have forgotten your wallet. No worries, just pick up that WAP phone and go to your bank's website, insert a few details and transfer some money on to your smartcard. This very same card contains your passport, driving license, benefit book, credit cards, supermarket loyalty card, travel pass, soccer club season ticket, digital TV license, house and car keys, medical records, iris and fingerprint information.

The benefit of these cards is that they will work using eye-identification, which is already a reality, meaning that if thieves steal your card, they will have to come back for your eyeball also.

That was a sample of the exciting future that awaits us, and it is all possible thanks to the Internet, which became a reality in the early 90's. It all started in the States during the 70's when University professors experimented with a communications system that would be indestructible, because it wasn't physical material, so if one part was destroyed, the network would keep on working.

The Internet grew very slowly with only a few extra hosts every year until the early 90's, when there was huge interest and consequently a growth explosion. Computers had to change to support the new system, and home modems were introduced, which made modems more compact, unlike the earlier modems which resembled shoe boxes in size, not mention the first ones which were the same size as filing cabinets. The problem now seems to be that computers are advancing much too quickly. It has never been so true that technology doesn't wait for you, but you must keep up with it; nowadays you can be sure that the £1,500 top of the range computer that you bought 6 months ago is out of date and needs upgrading. The PC and the Internet have evolved as a team to the extent that 70% of the population of the U.S.A. has access to the Internet, and it is estimated that 35% of the world's population have access to the Internet.

Every Internet users become more dependent on the Internet for their everyday needs, banking, buying and selling items, and as an information resource. Using the internet has never been so enjoyable, the possibility of faster connection speeds and free access with companies that provide you with e-mail addresses and space for your very own web-page.

The Internet has revolutionised the way we communicate, work and play, and it isn't very hard to see that the way things are going, computers and specially the Internet will be an integral part of our lives in the future.

The Internet has a great potential in every field, whether it's research or business, but it will become very important in education. So where is all this leading us in the future? Hopefully, someday soon schools will be equipped with at least one computer in each classroom that will be connected to the Internet. In this way teachers can

use the Web as an electronic reference tool or connect it to a large monitor for class presentations. As the technology becomes more affordable and reliable, schools will find that the Web will facilitate communication between teachers, students, and parents: schools will post notices, policies, and information on the Web. Teachers will have their own E-mail boxes where students and parents can leave messages.

This will allow the teacher to respond to parental queries or requests in their own time.
Other future advances are more predictable. New technologies such as CU-SeeMe and video conferencing are already in existence but the trick in the future is to improve the quality and reduce the cost.

Video conferencing allows you to talk to and see someone far away via computer. CU-SeeMe is a free video conferencing program, which allows any number of people at locations anywhere around the world to video conference with one another.

CU-SeeMe aims to provide video conferencing at low cost. All you require is the CU-SeeMe software and a computer that comes equipped with a microphone and sound software, In order for other people to see you on their screens, you need to buy a small digital camera which attaches onto your PC. The possibilities of such technology in education are mind boggling. Imagine a group of children conversing in Spanish with a class in Spain or students communicating with kids on the other side of the world about their school and their country. Such developments will allow the Global Classroom to become a reality and make learning a truly interactive process.

In the future, schools will download educational software and resources as they require them from the Internet. We will probably pay a fee in order to do this but instead of clogging up our hard drives with educational programs we will be able to download them as required. Again this will eliminate the problems of outdated software programs and incompatibility between different versions of the same program.
Electronic personal organisers will allow students of the future to keep track of their lives electronically. Such small hand-held devices will contain electronic address books and simple applications to allow students to work at home. In school they will be able to attach their organiser to the school computer and submit their assignments electronically.

Imagine students leaving school with an electronic portfolio containing samples of work from Infants up to Leaving Certificate. Such a concept is currently being examined in the United States. Teachers and students would select samples of a student's best work and save them electronically to a CD. Such portfolios could form part of a student's overall assessment at key stages in their education.

Internet business has now come down to the ultimate World Series - America Vs the Rest of the World. The prerequisite for success is speed. Operating in Internet time at Internet scale is an essential in order to build a brand, own a customer base and develop the potential for a profit-base. Business Internet Time is a function of the speed of capital, the speed of service build, the experience of the principals, and outstanding marketing.
The sheer dynamism of the American Internet marketplace is breathtaking. The contrast between Internet World in New York and the recent Dublin equivalent couldn't have been starker. That's not just because of the expected difference in

scale, but rather in the number and variety of business models being tested and developed there -- a swirling mass of innovation on a self-fuelled cycle of acceleration. Good people with good ideas are getting capital quicker and being forced to market with almost zero lead-time. Funding this fast growth is seen as absolute priority in the U.S.

We have a good position on the European stage. Ireland may be small, but we're packed with talent and know-how. And being small also means we can move fast. We have a good perspective on what it takes to internationalise. We just have to orient ourselves to global thinking, and the internet will certainly help!