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World History preIB

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Introduction

In the 1960s, in the height of the communist scare, the pentagon wanted to create a system of interconnected communication system such that if one post is destroyed, the remaining would continue to work as a whole so that no data would be destroyed. Paul Baran was one of the scientists hired to discuss such a device. He advocated intertwined links like a fishnet among electronic devices; ironically this first borne idea of the Internet was turned down temporarily for some other project. But Paul Baran isn't going to let his idea drop; he soon joined a group of computer specialists in a secret research program called ARPA, where dozens of specialists joined together to weave the net into reality. However, there was a few problems: When many computers are connected to each other, how can we send information to the computer we want to send it to without also sending it to all the other ones? Many computers are based on different languages, how can these computers share information? These problems troubled ARPA for years until one night, as legend tells, when Vinton Cerf stared at the back of an envelope and came up with Gateway. Gateway is a device that processes Data grams -- packets of information—and sends it to the correct address in the correct language. With this comes the first form of the Internet, the Arpanet, which connected 4 universities. The universities shared information on the net for free and banned charging for the net. That

rule was soon broken when Rick Adams founded AlterNet, a company that provided Internet links for other companies. And soon in the wake of the computer revolution came the Internet revolution that would change the world forever. (Understanding the Internet, VC4070)

Benefits

The Internet marks a milestone in history comparable to the printing press in the 1800s. Like the printing press, it enabled people to communicate better with each other, and it made information and knowledge more readily provided than ever. A tourist can check out the official websites for theme parks and historical museums; a stockbroker can check the price of stocks hourly instead of waiting for the newspaper; a college professor can look up the latest technological findings instantaneously just by the click of the mouse. The Internet can also help corporations quickly communicate between its branches, promoting more efficient managing. To profit in the new century, most companies are looking toward the Internet with hopes of expansion. As Barrenechea observed, the commercial value of the World Wide Web have far more potential than anybody have ever predicted. In the old days the corporations communicated through mail and phone. This is very expensive considering the thousands of correspondences between the executives, also its very unreliable since with mail it may or may not reach its destination in time and with the phone it's hard not to disturb people. This is especially true with multinational corporations where the time zones are different, a executive from United states may not be able to call upon his co-executive in Japan for a

discussion because it's night there and he's probably still sleeping. With the Internet he can just e-mail him and he'll be reading it first thing in the morning. The Internet is a great money saver for commercial corporations: Baranecchia claims that the global e-mail system now saves Oracle (his company) more than \$30 million a year. So even without any data, we can sufficiently conclude that the Internet have benefited the development of business corporations and thus greatly promote trade, increased consumer spending and greatly promoted the flow of the economy. Now as computers are becoming even more efficient and personalized, the Internet business grows faster than ever.

The fortunate countries

In the past, those countries that are quick to accept change becomes stronger, and those that are more rigid with its traditions usually weaken and die off. A good example would be Japan after World War II, with ingenious planning and the combined efforts of its people, Japan emerged from its war-torn ground into the leading industrial power in the world. (Holt 756) South Korea, however, did not go with the electronic industry but focused more on basic industries such as Steel and textiles. (Holt 766) As a result, though both Japan and South Korea started off with the same war-torn grounds and financial support from the West, Japan was far more successful due to flexible policies. Same principle with the Internet, those countries that first adopted this new technology usually run ahead. Unfortunately, in the beginning only the wealthy developed countries can afford the Internet, and those that were left behind economically continued to be deprived. (Baranecchia 47)

One of those fortunate countries that benefited from the boom in the Internet industry was Canada. In an editorial about the Canadian economy, Douglas indicated that the fast-growing telecommunications sector (with the computer/internet industry as its mainstream) generated 100.2 billion in revenues. Its contribution to the national domestic product increased 14 percent over last year. In his opinion, “Canada should keep on driving the high-tech sector, and become a very strong player in the world economy and in the world IT (Internet technology) sector.” (Grolier)

China is yet another country that benefited from the network. As China enters WTO, the computer corporations looked into China’s immense population for market expansion. According to statistics from China online, China’s Internet users had increased by as much as 119,000 during the first two months of 2002. Hence, the country’s telecommunication business earned over \$7 billion in revenue. (Webb, 16)

In a way Russia also benefited from the Internet. But for the Russians, Internet is not mostly making money but also a tool for free speech among the state controlled media. The Kremlin information war waged by Putin has already taken a significant number of newsgroups, but the Internet he could not take over. Thus in a way the Internet has preserved democracy in Russia.

The Internet is a powerful tool, just like Gutenberg’s printing press, it has enhanced the power of the individual, because on the Internet everyone is equal. In Canada Ian Wojtowicz goes to school just like any other boy, but at home in front of his computer he’s the official editor of the Internet Magazine—International Teletimes. In an interview he tells the interviewer that on the Internet he feels influential: off the net he’s only a kid, but on the net he is level with the professional editors from rival magazines.

His favorite comic strip was the one with the dog going on the internet and another dog saying to him “On the Internet nobody knows you are a dog.”(Cochran and the Discovery Channel VC4070) The Internet is a great equalizer between people of different status and age group. Today on the Internet we can chat with all kinds of people including those older than our grandparents and younger than our little brothers. And we can talk to people without any pressure, because we have complete control over the screen.

Bad effects

With all its benefits and wonders, the Internet was not perfect. It has its flaws. Apart from helpful communications it also brought up the vices of society. One of the worst crimes on the net is child pornography. Just recently the National Crime Squad initiated 130 arrest and search warrants in 19 countries around the world, including Australia, Canada, France, America, South Korea and Japan. With information from the intelligence agencies, the Demon Internet, an Internet service provider, was caught allowing over 30 sites carrying paedophilic pages to be brought on line with their server. Detective Peter Spindler stated that “it’s particularly disturbing that all these news groups carrying paedophilic images are available for everyone to access—even young children themselves.”(Akdeniz 2a) Also people steal money on the Internet by pretending to provide services that they aren’t going to, or obtain credit card numbers and try to steal people’s money from their account.

Perhaps the most economical costly problem was the computer virus, each year tens of thousands of dollars are lost due to computer viruses. Viruses initially started as petty Jokes. As the Internet Worm in 1988, a graduate student at Cornell injected a self-replicating program called Worm into the Internet, hours later he found that the program

have replicated much faster than he thought and had already infected many computers and caused them to crash. The estimated cost of installation of dealing with the worm ranged from \$200 to \$53,000, far more costly than the damage of all biological worms combined. (Ornstein 20)

Conclusion

Although the Internet presented many new problems that we never encountered before, we continued to develop the Internet faster than ever. Because despite its downside, the Internet is an essential tool for the new millennium, or as Bill Gates predicted: every aspect of our life in the future will all tie together in the net. With the Internet the economy is in better hands. I tried to research for countries that had failed with Internet, but I found none. There're only those who now prospers under this new tool and those who cannot yet afford one. If Bill Gates is right about his predictions—that the Internet business would continue to grow and doubling every year—then I may just have a whole new episode to tell next year about new triumphs in the economy with the Internet.