

The impact of ICT on the way I do things at home and at school.

In this assignment I will explain what impact ICT has on my life. I will describe the way in which I use ICT and explain why I use it. The uses that I will explain are word processing, MSN Instant Messenger, the internet and email. These 4 applications of ICT are the most important things that I use; they help me in the presentation and quality of my homework and to keep in touch with people who otherwise would not be easily contactable. ICT is used in many other ways in my house and at school, these are just a few of the uses, other uses are digital television, personal stereos and DVD technology and software such as Microsoft Excel. ICT has had a major impact upon my life; it has opened up opportunities such as a better career and a better understanding of how things work.

Home personal

Microsoft Word

Word Processing has aided me in the presentation of my work and has also made homework and coursework more enjoyable, as I enjoy working at the computer. A word processor is a program which lets you write a letter or a piece of writing and use advanced tools such as the spell check, dictionary and thesaurus all at the click of the mouse. Since I got my computer around three or four years ago, I have become more aware of the keyboard and where characters are, this has increased the speed with which I type things when word processing. I find that I can write a piece of work faster on the computer than I can use a pen and paper. Another advantage of word processing is that if you wish to add a piece of writing at the last minute to your document, you can do so without hassle, whereas if you were to hand-write the document you would have to rewrite the whole thing. Also, if you make a spelling mistake in a word processed document you can correct it very quickly without having to use tipex, which would make your work look a lot messier.

The program that I use to do word processing is Microsoft Word.

Most computers that you buy nowadays have Microsoft Word already installed on the hard drive. Although I find this program very handy, it does have limitations e.g. it does not always pick up words that are wrong e.g. .I could relay on this.. This sentence is wrong; however Word's spell checker will not pick it up as a mistake because relay is a word in the English dictionary. This could make me believe that the document is OK when it is not. I usually proofread my work, just to check that mistakes like this don't happen.

Sometimes there are things that you wish to write that Word does not approve of. It thinks you have made a grammatical mistake and tries to correct it for you. This is highly annoying, as you know what you wish to say and you may have said it in a way that you know is right.

Another problem that has happened to me is that when using Microsoft Word you could have all your work finished and just how you want it, however, if you forget to save your work, then you will lose it if your computer crashes for some reason. Also, Microsoft Word has been upgraded several times since I got my computer. This confuses me because when I use the computers in school, they have a newer version of Microsoft Word than I have on my computer. Therefore, when I get home and go to word-process a piece of writing I can't always find functions which I use on the school computers.

The school computers are updated more frequently and therefore are more efficient, whereas my computer at home is now out of date.

Home social

MSN instant messenger MSN is a program that enables the user to type chat to people in real time, rather than a delayed chat, which is how chat rooms work. MSN is used world-wide and enables people to communicate with each other over the internet to many people. I have had MSN for around 3 years and have a fair knowledge of what to do with it and how it works. MSN is like a chat room, however you only chat to the people you have added to your friends list.

MSN is text-based program, however there is a sound a function which lets you speak through the internet to the other end of the connection. This is a useful function if you wish to know what the person sounds like (if you have never met them) and if you want to know that it is really them that you are talking to. However, the sound can be blurred and very hard to understand sometimes and so I do not use this very often as it is usually easier to type- talk to the person I am having a conversation with. You also have the option to send a file to the person you are talking to. I use this function a lot to send different pictures to my friends who are online and also to send files, such as work for them to print out. This is usually a very secure exchange if you know who the person is at the other end of the connection, however if you are not sure whether the person you are talking to can be trusted then you could receive viruses over the chat box. This is definitely something that MSN needs to improve on in the near future; if they could install a virus protector, which scans every file that is sent over MSN, then the number of viruses which are passed through MSN, would decline greatly.

Another function available to you through MSN is to have a net meeting with more than one person, this could be text based, verbal or you can use web cams to see the person you are chatting to. I have never used this function, as I do not have a web cam.

I use MSN whenever I am on the internet and if I am busy, I can still be signed into MSN and have a (busy) sign put next to my name so it discourages people from talking to me. There is an available option where I can appear offline. to other users, this acts as a cloaking device, hiding my presence on MSN, however I am still logged in and can monitor who there is online and whether I wish to appear online to talk to them. This is a very good function as I can use this when I wish to be logged on and still do homework. I think that MSN is a very good program. It has taught me to type a lot faster on the keyboard and has encouraged me to know more about the internet.

MSN has helped me in panic situations, such as when my printer ran out of ink and I was able to send my friend the file and ask him to print it for me.

However there are downsides to this program as there are with all programs. Every now and then the MSN service immobilises. Also there are sometimes problems sending a message that you type. I don't know why this happens, but it doesn't happen very often and so it doesn't bother me too much.

Over the past three years I have had no major problems with this service and it has provided a last minute lifeline for many of my printer disasters. It has helped me and my family to keep in touch with people who we might have lost contact with otherwise.

We use MSN to keep in touch with people in Indonesia and Canada.

There are alternatives to MSN. However these methods of communication are not as reliable as MSN or email. There is the option of Mail which is usually quite reliable and could be used if MSN is not available, however you have no confirmation that the recipient got the letter, whereas with MSN you get a reply instantly or at least confirmation that the message has been sent. Another form of communication is the phone. Phoning people in other countries can be extremely expensive, whereas MSN is free.

School personal

The internet

The internet has been a major factor in my life since I got it about 3 years ago. It contains lots of information and therefore has helped me with homework queries that I have had. The internet is usually a very reliable feature on my computer, however there are occasional problems; during bad weather my internet connection can be very unreliable. If the storm is very bad, including lightning then my computer will probably not be able to connect to the internet. This is quite annoying as a storm could happen at a time when I really need to use the internet to get some information I need to do my homework. Also, sometimes when there are many applications open on my computer it will not connect to the internet. However this can be corrected by shutting down a few of the applications that are open.

The internet is usually a reasonable speed, however there are days when the browser will not open and on some days it is agonisingly slow. This could be improved by upgrading my connection to broadband. However this would cost a lot of money. The internet is a very good way of getting a source of information and also for communicating through features such as email.

You search the internet via your browser; this is the screen that opens up when you connect to the internet and enables you to type in website addresses and view web pages. To use your browser you usually use Internet Explorer, however there are many different versions and upgrades of this program. Older versions are less efficient and less manageable compared to the latest browsers. I find this very annoying as with Word, there are updated versions that confuse my browser with other browsers and I lose some of the functions sometimes.

The school has broadband, but, as everyone in my class always wants to go onto the internet at the same time, it is slower than when you use the internet on your own.

Other problems include server downtime; this is time where the server, which everyone logs onto at the beginning of lessons, is unavailable for use. Although this has never happened at my school as far as I am aware, it is a very real possibility and could cause a major problem if the people responsible for looking after the server are not prepared for this happening. Although the broadband connection is faster, I have not got this connection on my computer at home; I have a dial-up 56KBps connection at home.

The school sets certain filters which limit what pupils can and cannot view on the internet. This is to stop us looking at porn sites etc. There have been problems in the past with the internet at this school, sometimes the service has been unavailable on the school computers, however it has never been the school's fault, it has been the Internet Service Provider's problem. This problem may have only occurred a few times, however, when it does occur it can cause major problems for the school as people constantly wish to be on the internet to use it for work and research for their homework.

This may be because they do not have access to a computer at home or they may have access to a computer however, may not have the internet.

Alternative forms of getting information are books. This could be frustrating, as you first have to find a book with the information you want in it, and then you have to search through that book for the item of information that you wish to find. This could take a long time, whereas with the internet, you can go onto a search engine and straight away get a list of sites that have your item of information listed on them.

School social

Video conferencing and email

Video conferencing

Video conferencing is a function that is used widely over the internet and will be used more and more in the future. It involves using web cams to see and talk to people over the internet in real time. Many businesses use this to make sure that the people who they are trading with are respectable since internet fraud is a very common crime.

Although I have never had experience of using video conferencing myself, it is a technology that will take off in business. If you are trading internationally, it will save a lot of time and travel.

Although the use of video conferencing will ensure that the travel time of employees will reduce, there are some problems with this e.g. time differences between countries. Another significant problem with this technology is the speed of your internet connection; if your internet connection is only 56KB per second then it is likely that the quality of the video conference that is taking place will be poorer than if the conference takes place via a broadband connection.

Another problem with video conferencing is that if you were connected to the internet and someone who was trying to harass you knew your IP address, then they could request a net meeting over and over again.

Email

Email is probably the most influential function the internet has. Businesses and people use email widely, whether it is to send someone an order form or to tell someone that you will be late for a meeting.

I use email to help me with my homework; I can attach files to the email and therefore can send work which I haven't finished to my personal email address. There are many different email providers, the most popular that I know of being Hotmail. Hotmail is associated with MSN messenger and is usually the address name that you will use if you are signed up for MSN messenger. Email is an alternative to the post or to communicating with someone face-to-face. Email has many advantages; you can communicate through text over the internet to people in far away countries e.g. England to America. You can correct mistakes easily. This is important if the email is a formal letter to a councillor or a person that is important to your future and needs therefore to be perfect and grammatically correct. I use email at school quite often and use it at home all of the time. Like MSN messenger, email lets me communicate with people that I haven't spoken to in a long time. If they are not online at the time when I am online then I cannot talk to them over MSN instant messenger, this is when I use email to communicate with them. There are, however, many disadvantages to email. One key problem is the speed at which the email is sent. Email providers such as Hotmail, Yahoo and BT all have different speeds of transferring the emails to people's email accounts. I have found that if I send an email from one BT email address to another then it takes longer to get there than an email sent from one Hotmail account to another.

This is a screen shot of the login page on the Hotmail website. If you also have MSN messenger, you can access your email account through that program when it starts up. Other than that, you have to go onto the main Hotmail homepage every time you wish to log in to your email, to check it, or to send an email to one of your friends. This is definitely something that could be improved.

You could have the option to check your email every time you log onto the internet, or you could have a little program starter that appears in the toolbar at the bottom of your

screen, like MSN messenger has, where you can click and then check your email straight away, rather than having to go onto the homepage every time. This could be classed as a disadvantage; however I view it as an inconvenience. The only time when I enter my email via the Hotmail website is when the MSN messenger service is unavailable. This does not happen all that often, so usually I log onto my email through the little icon that appears in the bottom right hand corner of the toolbar.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, ICT is something that has affected my life incredibly. Over the past years there have been so many advances in ICT technology that I think that in the future the planet will become completely reliant on computers. More and more people will have computers in their houses over the next few years and in some cases, more than one per household. I believe that it is essential that the youth of today know how to use ICT and to work a computer. This is because in the future, ICT will dominate everyday life.