

# **How the Internet is Changing Self-Directed Learning**

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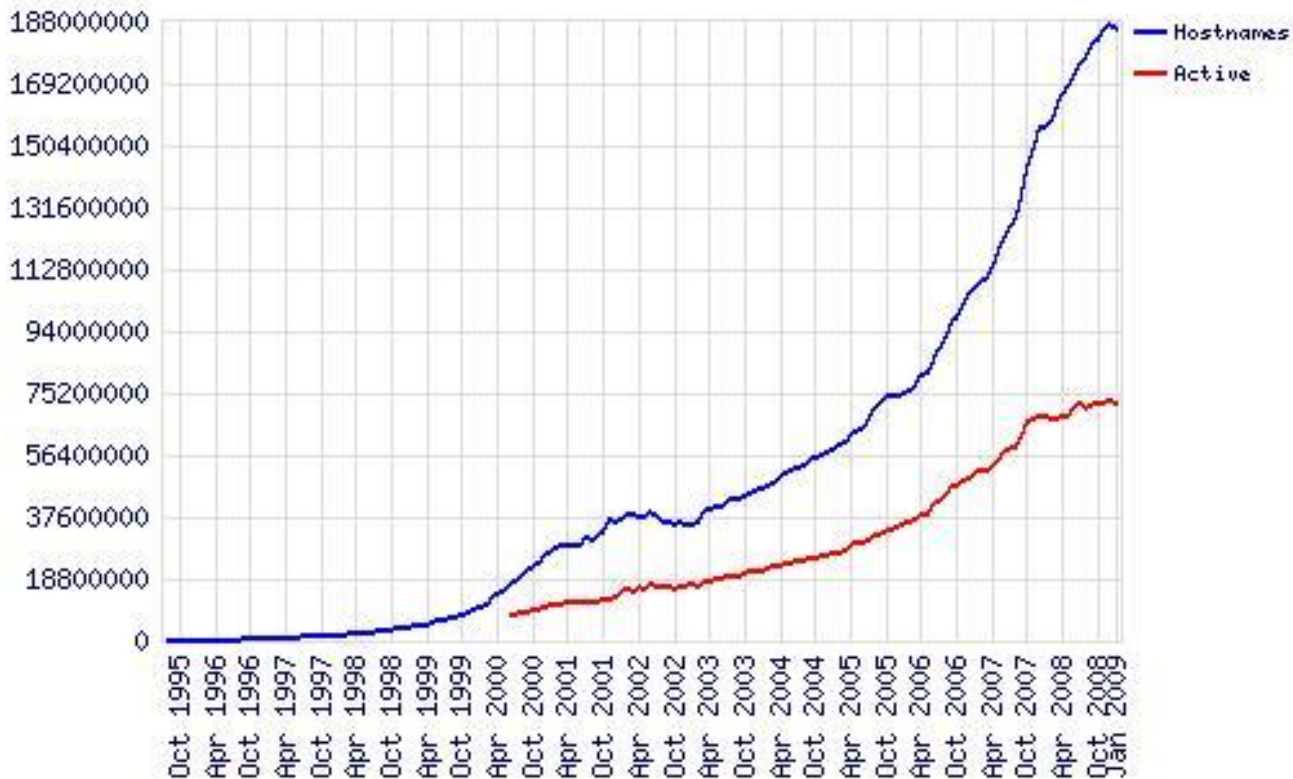
**EMPIRE STATE  
COLLEGE**

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

# WWW Growth; 1996-2009

(No. of Web Sites in the World - Netcraft, 2009)

Total Sites Across All Domains August 1995 - January 2009



**185+ Million Web Sites as of January, 2009**

**Almost 75 Million are Active Today**

# Internet Userid Growth

- **Worldwide a 2008 estimate put the number of Internet users at nearly 7 billion**
- **U. S. – over 220 million Internet users as of June, 2008, but it is only 19<sup>th</sup> in the world**
- **390 million European users**
- **298 million Chinese Internet users (and growing much more rapidly than the U.S.) with more than 650 million throughout Asia**

**Source: Miniwatts International, 2008**



# Growth in Social Networking

(Hale, Fisch, McLeod, and Bronman, 2008)



# The Constant Search for Information - Changing How We Acquire Knowledge

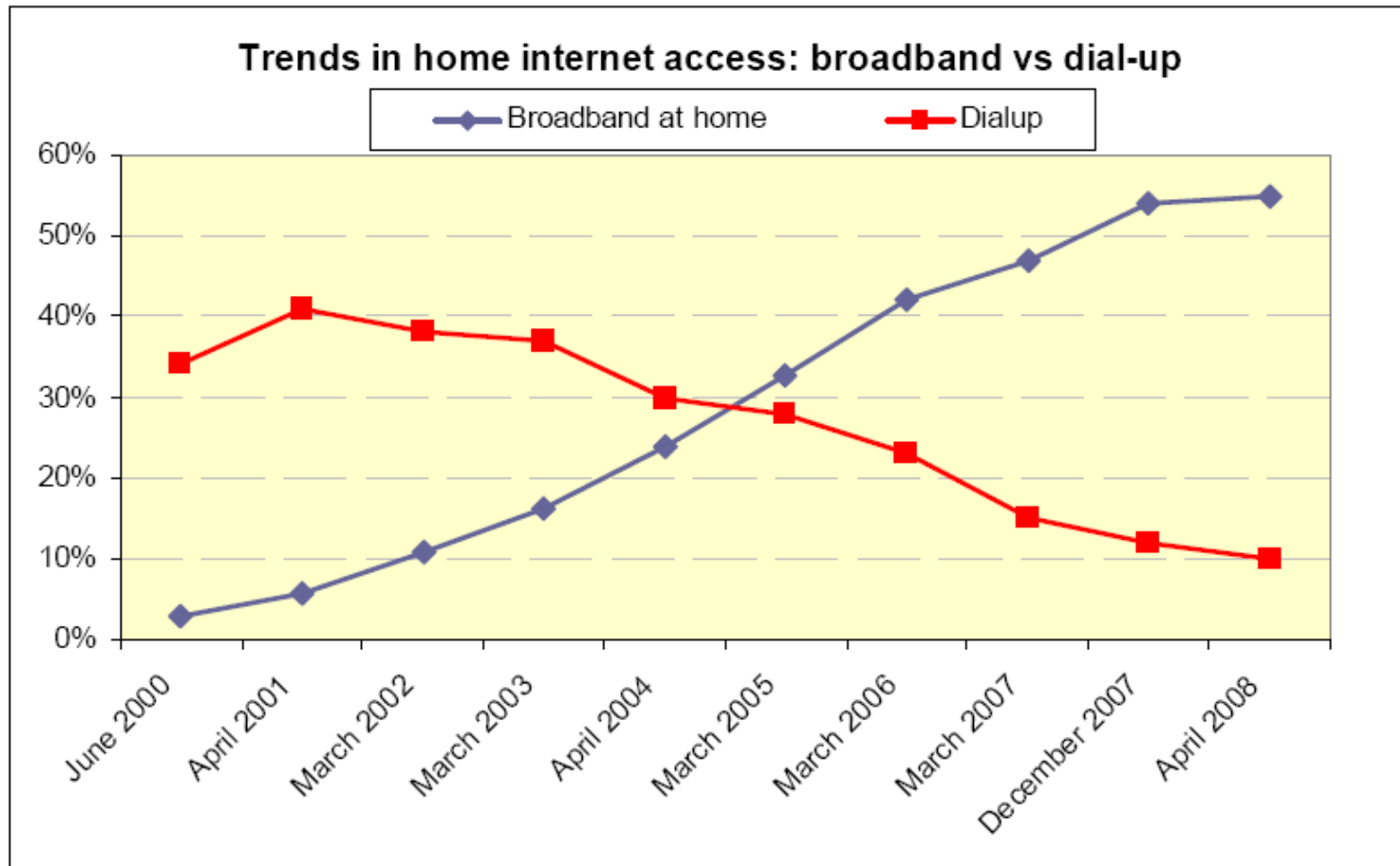


# Person to Person Informational Flow Via the Internet Continues to Grow



# Broadband Web Use – The New “NORMAL”

[Home broadband adoption up to 55% in Apr. 2008]



Slide graphic courtesy of Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project - Horrigan, 2008



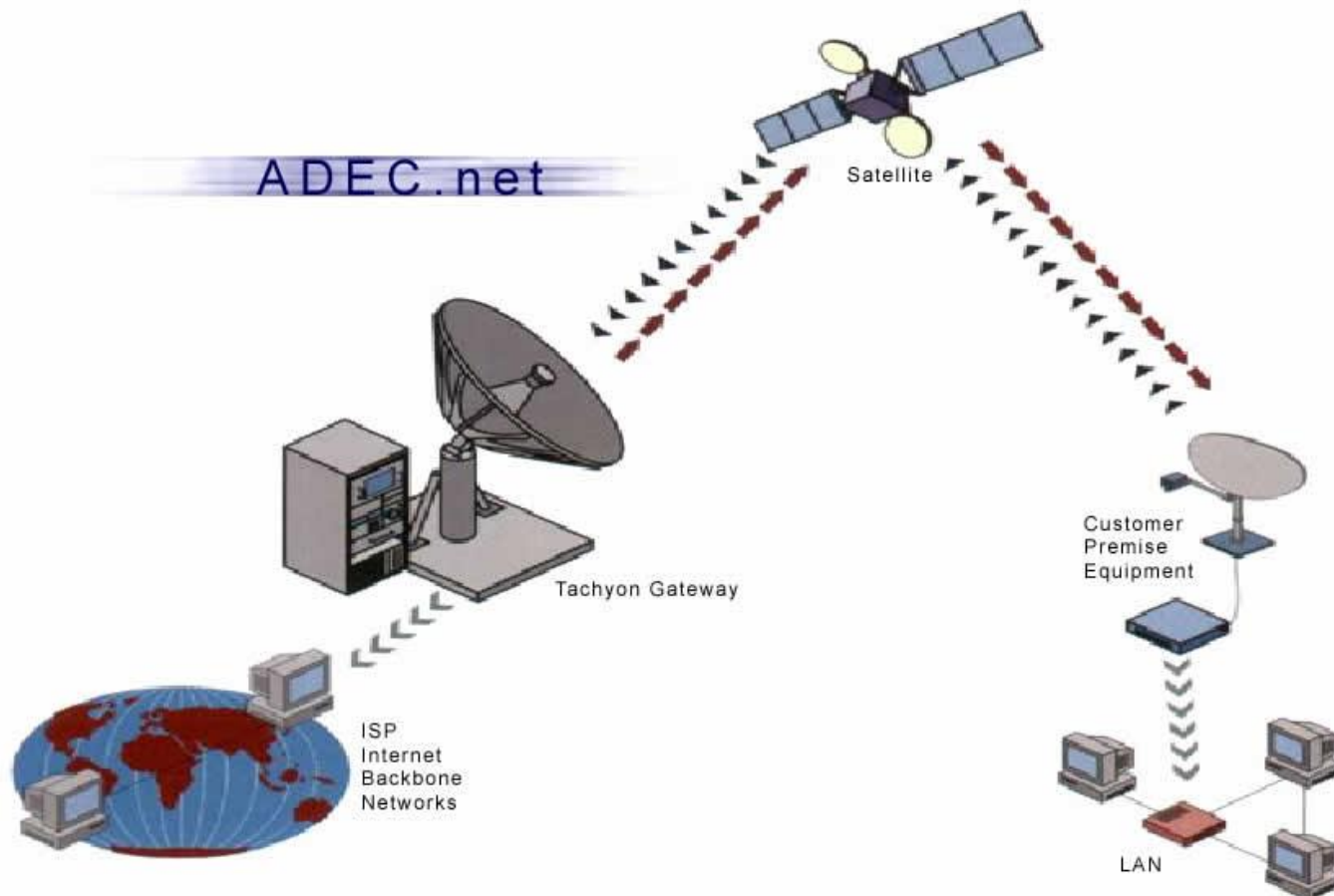
## **MY CONTENTION:**

**This All is Making Profound Changes in  
the Way People Seek and Use Information**

**IT IS CHANGING THE NATURE OF  
SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING – AN  
IMPORTANT FOUNDATION FOR  
SUCCESS IN ON-LINE LEARNING**

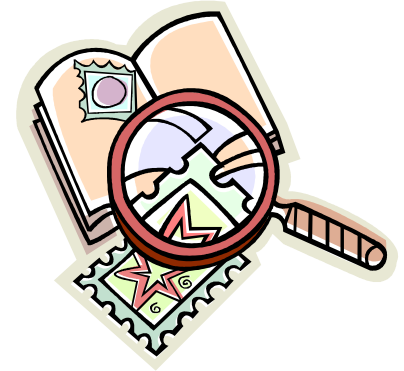


# The NSF Advanced Internet Satellite Extension Project



# Data Collection

- **Three sites – all rural communities:**
  1. **Tustin, Michigan**
  2. **Kinross, Michigan**
  3. **Marsing, Idaho**
- **Qualitative research methods**
  1. **Personal Interviews**
  2. **Participant Observations**

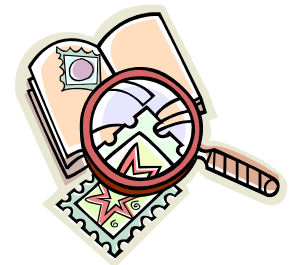




**Marsing, Idaho, Site**

# Data Collection (cont.)

- **51 completed intensive interviews:**
  1. **21 adults (7 male/14 female – 1 was Native American, the rest Caucasian)**
  2. **30 youth (18 male/20 female – 1 Native American, 1 African American, 10 Hispanic, and the rest Caucasian)**
- **43 participant observation memos, numerous site documents, local coordinators' input**
- **Only data from the adults were used for this paper/presentation**



# Data Analysis Procedures

- **NVivo qualitative analysis software**
- **SPSS quantitative analysis software**
- **Numerous coding categories:**
  - **Impact on community**
  - **Barriers/hurdles/problems**
  - **Success promoters**
  - **Experience level with the Internet**
  - **Internet uses**
  - **Type of Internet usage or activity**
  - **Impact on learning**

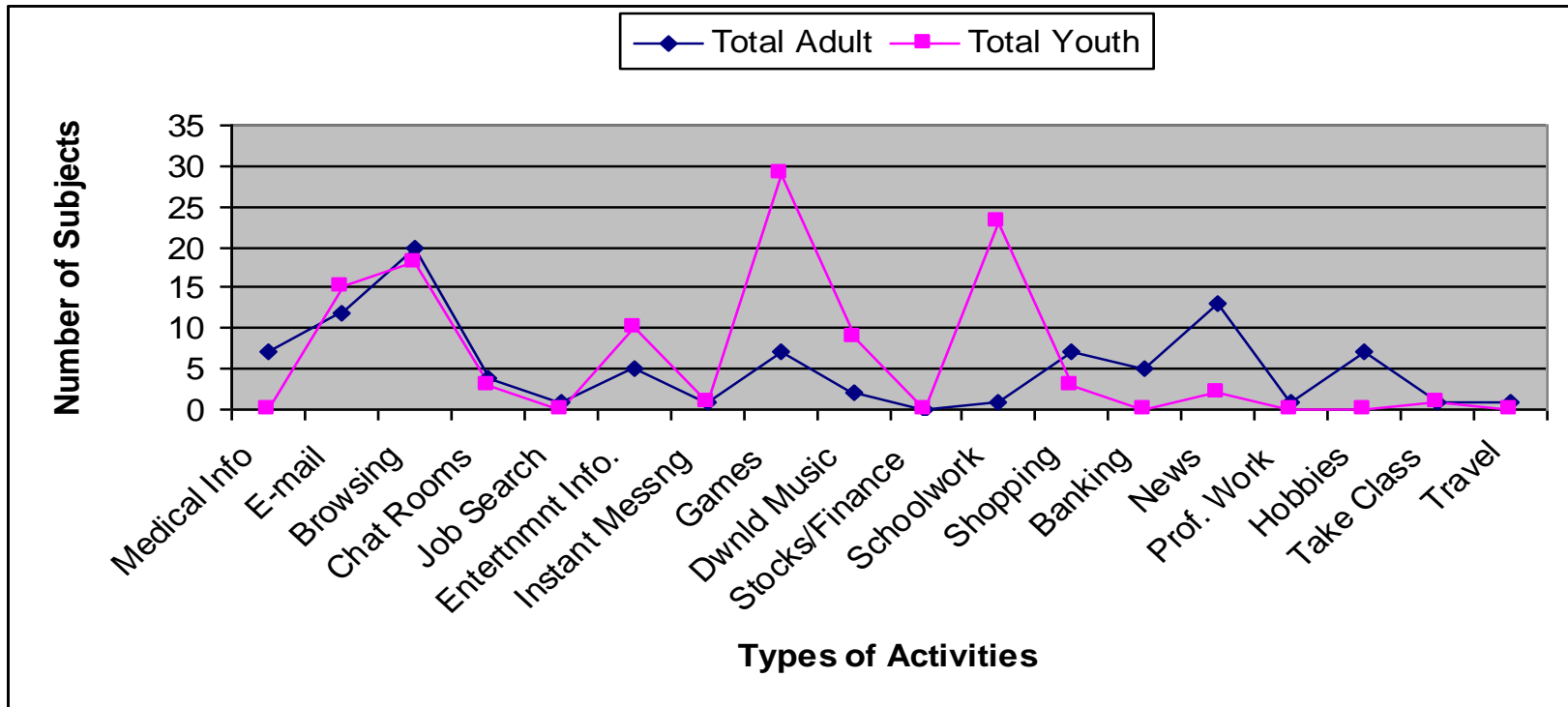


# Data Analysis Procedures (cont.)

- **Coding categories (cont.):**
  - **Education or learning activities**
  - **Online uses in terms of learning**
  - **Self-directed learning experiences**
  - **Enjoyment level**
  - **E-mail experiences**
  - **Communicating with others**
  - **Skill transference to life**
  - **[Age, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.]**



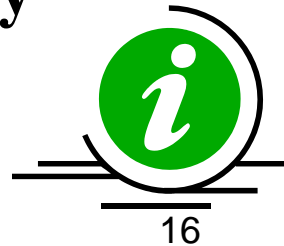
# Use of the Internet by Rural Subjects (21 adults and 30 youth): Online Activities



Note: The interviews took place four years ago before the social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace developed; follow-up interviews today would not doubt provide different results

# Preliminary Findings

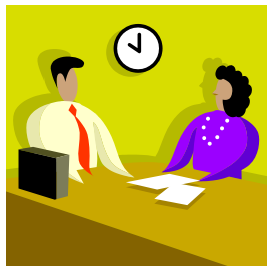
- **Rural people make a wide and varied use of the Internet when they have broad band connections**
- **High speed Internet can make a positive difference in a rural, remote community**
- **Exposure to high speed Internet makes a positive impact on an individual in terms of learning approaches and knowledge acquisition in a relatively short time period**
- **People adapt to high speed Internet quite rapidly**





# In Their Words.....

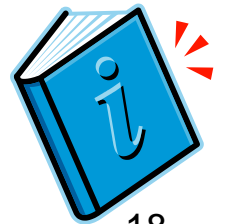
- A 29 yr. old Michigan male: *“I used it a lot for the animation and surfing the web”*
- A 47 yr. old Michigan male: *“I’ve used it for references on different things, for medical problems”*
- A 42 yr. old Idaho female: *“I like to train, I like to run, so I look for Olympic records and things like that?”*
- A 70 yr. old Idaho female: *“I learned on my own to get and send e-mail.”*
- A 35ish Idaho female: *“I use it for everything. You’ve got to learn how to do it.”*



# Preliminary Findings (cont.)

## “Impact on Learning”

- **Efficiency and easy access to information was expressed frequently --**
- A 61 yr. old Idaho female: *“It gives me a lot more information than what I ... would...get any other way”***
- **A general increase in overall knowledge and skill was expressed in various ways --**
- A 50ish Idaho female said simply: *“Oh my gosh, I learned a lot off the Internet”***
- **Notions about curiosity, enjoyment, and general interest came up several times –**
- A 70 yr. old Idaho female said: *“I am really excited about what I can do ... and what I’m going to learn”***



# FINALLY



**What Can You Take Home From  
My Presentation?**

**Here are some of my ideas on how  
the Internet is changing SDL ...**

# Research Outcomes



- **Rural people quickly emulate suburban and urban users in Internet knowledge, confidence, and excitement**
- **Rural people, too, think of the Internet as their self-directed “go to” info source**
- **It’s used for self-discovery and self-improvement**
- **Internet involvement stimulates community development in rural settings**

# Research Outcomes (cont.)



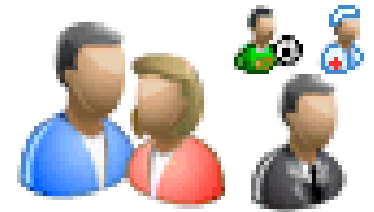
- **Information overload is a real phenomenon and something those of us here today need to be concerned about**
- **The Internet can serve as an important tool for people in rural areas to find important information, such as meeting medical and legal needs**
- **Rural people are discovering new things they probably could not have done without the Internet**

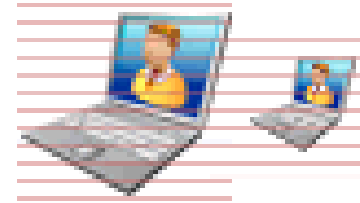
# My Conclusion



**I believe a new species of learner is evolving where the power of the Web changes the way people think about learning and information acquisition – a new type of self-directed learner is being created where the power of the Web affects how we learn and acquire information.**

**Young adults, especially the  
Generation Y people, are driving  
profound changes in this  
information acquisition and the  
infusion of the Internet into our  
daily lives**





**For us as instructors and administrators, we need to do all we can to understand how younger people use the Internet by such activities as joining Facebook or Twitter, by texting, by blogging, etc.**





# My Challenge to Us:

- **Promote our courses to those living at the “edges” of the network**
- **Increase efforts to recruit students via online means**
- **Answer the question of distance education as technology or as adult education**





- **Be more deliberate in the way we maintain our competitiveness**
- **To reach younger adults we need to build more individualized and self-directed learning into our instruction**
- **Discover ways of helping learners assume more responsibility for their own learning**

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