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The Digital Divide spans a broader area than just the ability to access the Internet. The ability to gain access to the Internet depends on the ability to gain access to Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). In other words, to access the Internet, telephone lines, material resources for transmission, computers, and language for comprehension is greatly needed. Developing countries require computers and they need ways of linking them together effectively. Internet access alone includes many other factors, such as the quality of connection and related services at an affordable cost. It also includes "lower-performance computers, lower-quality or high price connections (i.e. narrowband or dialup connection), difficulty of obtaining technical assistance, and lower access to subscription-based contents." (Digital Divide)

Wikipedia defines Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as "a term that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), computers, middleware as well as necessary software, storage- and audio-visual systems, which enable users to create, access, store, transmit, and manipulate information. In other words, ICT consists of IT as well as telecommunication, broadcast media, all types of audio and video processing and transmission and network based control and monitoring functions." (Information and Communications Technology)

According to the Digital Divide Institute, "Digital Divide refers to the gap between those who can benefit from digital technology and those who cannot. It took digital-divide researchers a whole decade to figure out that the real issue is not so much about access to digital technology but about the benefits derived from access". (Digital Divide Institute)

So what are the benefits of access to digital technology? According to Microsoft, "Today, countries face unprecedented challenges in meeting the demands of their citizens. From empowering the unemployed to raising student achievement and growing cities' local tax bases, government leaders are looking for smart, sustainable, and inclusive solutions that can impact the greatest number of people. For all citizens, access to this 'digital society' delivers tangible economic, employment, and social opportunities. For governments, increasing digital inclusion accelerates the growth of a high-employment economy by accelerating global competitiveness. Technology is the tool that can scale these solutions to reach all citizens." (Shape the Future))

"Sources of widespread public information such as broadcast television, telephone services, educational institutions and public libraries are considered a norm in developed countries. In developing countries, however, these modes of communication and information sources are not easily accessible. This limits citizens' ability to gather information and coordinate with each other to solve their problems. The Internet's ability to promote the efficient dissemination of information promises huge improvements to internal communications in and among developing countries." (Global Digital Divide)

While researching information for other projects completed in this class, I came across other factors I feel that contribute to the digital divide. For example, lack of education due to poverty is a huge factor. However, those who do have access to the Internet, but cannot afford to go to college, can refer to the Open Courseware Consortium to gain access to many free online classes that are available in a large number of subjects and offered by many colleges internationally. While those who take these classes may not receive credit for them, they are still gaining priceless knowledge in subjects that will most definitely benefit them.

Another thought to ponder is that right here in the United States many poor people cannot afford even basic cable television, let alone a subscription to their local newspapers. How are these people supposed to know what is going on around them in the outside world? The ability to gain access to just local television channels requires a reception antenna, and most times those don't even work. Antennas of such are dinosaurs in today's world of technology. Basic cable television should be freely available to all.

Links of Interest

Images taken from the links listed below.

Why the Digital Divide Matters - <http://www.digitaldivide.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Why-Does-It-Matter.pdf>

Ohio Youth and Technology Fact Sheet - <http://www.childrenspartnership.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Technology&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=11812>

Internet Users in the World - <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

Internet Users in North America - <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats14.htm>

United States of America Internet Usage and Broadband Usage Report - <http://www.internetworldstats.com/am/us.htm>

Ohio Usage and Population Statistics - <http://www.internetworldstats.com/unitedstates.htm#OH>

Conclusion

Technological innovation has opened the doors for an increasingly collaborative global effort in the areas of communication, research, world-wide development, and production. The need for web interconnectivity is essential in the global setting. In this light, areas of the world that are not interconnected are left behind from global competitiveness. The lack of technology is literally going to isolate those who least can afford to be alienated by progress. If the goals of globalization are truly to be met, then there has to be a concerted effort to make sure that every

place in the world has access to its resources.

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