Technology Revolution Essay, Research Paper

The technology revolution is upon us. In recent years there have been many triumphs in technology. Now more than ever, people are able to communicate over thousands of miles with the greatest of ease. Wireless communication is much to thank for the ease of communication. What used to take weeks threw mail, now takes seconds over the Internet. But just like any revolution there are social consequences, especially when the revolution takes place around the globe. Since the world does not evolve at the same pace, lesser developed countries as well as minorities in developed countries have not even come close to reaping the benefits of a world connected at the touch of a button. The social argument is that as this revolution proceeds, the gap between the haves and have-nots will widen to the point of ill repute. Others argue that because of technological advances the world is a much better place. This seems to be the debate at hand.

The problem domestically is that providing high-speed Internet services to rural communities is difficult. Tom Daschle, a senator from Senator from South Dakota highlighted the “digital divide” between those who have access to high-speed Internet services and those who live in undeserved areas where such capabilities may not be readily available. The reason that this so critical to Senator Daschle is because those without access to high-speed Internet services could be cut off from affordable information on education and healthcare. The major issue domestically is the distance problem. Rural areas are so far from the more technologically advanced urban areas that getting high-speed phone connections to these rural areas is difficult. To help remedy this problem many phone companies are trying to enter the long-distance market. By doing this, it will enable telephone companies to make greater investments in rural areas at a lower more affordable cost. Another option to connect this distant areas is the exploiting of wireless technology. Wireless technology can be a way around the distance problem posed by offering these rural communities Internet access over traditional landlines. John Stanton of western Wireless says, ”Economically, wireless is a better way of providing universal service.”

There is also another problem with Internet access on the domestic front. This problem is that of race. According to a new Federal survey, African-Americans and Hispanics are less than half as likely as whites to explore the Internet from home, work or school. This study also reinforces the fear that minority groups are increasingly at a disadvantage in competing for entry-level jobs because most of these jobs now require a knowledge of computers and comfort in navigating the Internet. Donna L. Hoffman, a professor at Vanderbilt University says, “The big question is why African-Americans are not adopting this technology, its not just price, because they are buying cable and satellite systems in large numbers. So we have to look deeper to cultural and social factors. I think there is still a question of ‘What’s in it for me?’” Most division in computer use correlates to income levels and education. Sixty-one percent of whites and 54 percent of blacks in households earning more than $75,000 used the internet regularly, but the figures drop to 17 percent of whites and 8 percent of blacks when families are earning $15,000 to $35,000. It has become obvious that race and socio-economic standing has something to do with the involvement in this technological revolution.

Internationally is where the largest problems lie. In many corners of the world, there are dozens of developing countries where widespread access to the Internet remains a distant possibility. While some of the world’s most remote places have the internet, there are still no connections in Iraq, North Korea and a handful of African countries. In many of the developing countries with internet access, the access is basically concentrated in the largest cities and is prohibitively expensive when set against an individual’s income. In order to shorten the gap of technology between developed and lesser-developed countries, especially in the realm of the internet, there is an annual conference called INET. The purpose of this conference is to educate those who are not as technologically advanced and sending participants home with additional technical and administrative skills for running networks. Poor and expensive telecommunications play a large part in the reason why these third world countries are lacking Internet access, but another major factor is politics. In countries such as Laos, the communist government considers the internet a destabilizing force because of the free flow of information associated with the Web. Basically old hardware, a weak telecommunications infrastructure and in some cases local political opposition have rendered the promised benefits of technology elusive. In the developed world, the Internet has ushered in the greatest period of wealth creation in history. It has undermined traditional power structures and changed the way industry conducts business. For many developing agencies, the was no reason to think technology could not have a similar affect on third world countries. But reality has not lived up to expectations.

The real question is has the Internet been an effective tool in helping these lesser-developed countries? The United Nations thinks it can use the internet to help these countries. The United Nations has teamed up with Cisco Systems, Inc. in order to help the world’s poor. They are attempting to help by televising a concert called Netaid, which will be seen, around the world. Contrary to popular belief this will not just be another charity telethon. The heart of Netaid is the web site that is being created to allow people around the world to participate in antipoverty efforts long after the music is over. The Web sites intent is to get groups from developed countries to contact and assist groups in these lesser-developed countries. This could possibly be a solution to bringing the Internet into the homes and lives of the entire world.

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