Computers and Society
Computers and Communities

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One concern of the Internet and associated technologies (email, chat, IM, etc) is that people will replace in-person social interaction with online interaction.

People will become more isolated and antisocial.

Questions:
- How is online social interaction better/worse/different from in-person social interaction?
- What are the implications of people becoming more isolated?
1: Measuring a “strong” community

- Some people argue that membership in clubs and organizations is a measure of social strength.
- In general, organization membership is declining.
- Could the Internet be a reason for this?
- What are other possible reasons?
Do you feel that you spend an inordinate amount of time using the Internet?

Estimate how many hours a week you spend:

- Watching TV
- Reading
- Surfing the Web, email, IM, chat, etc.
- Gaming
- Going out with friends/socializing/talking on the phone

What activities lose time as a result of increased Internet usage?
Some researchers and psychologists talk about people becoming “addicted” to their computers. (Web surfing, IM, chat, gaming, etc)

△ Online gambling, shopping, eBay, and pornography or online sex are frequently cited as compulsive behaviors.

Do you think that this is a serious issue? Have you ever known anyone who you felt had a problem in this area?

How might you try to address this problem in a friend/partner/significant other?
4: Online communities

- What are some examples of online communities?
- How many friends do you have who are primarily online friends?
- Are these relationships more or less deep/rewarding than "traditional" relationships?
A criticism of online shopping is that it takes business away from local retailers.

What are some arguments for doing business with a local merchant, rather than Wal-mart or an online retailer?

Are there services that online stores can provide that local stores cannot?
Computers encourage certain behaviors by making them easier

- Spell checking
- Calculators
- Garbage collection
- cut-and-paste
Research and scholarship on the Web

- Having so much information available on the Web is a double-edged sword.
- What are some advantages to having the Web as a research tool?
- What are some disadvantages?
- What can be done to help address these disadvantages?
Changes in thinking due to computers

What skills are less useful due to the advent of computers?

What ways of thinking are made easier?

What sorts of dialogue/discussion are more common?

What sorts are less common?
Exercise

The ubiquity of calculators has changed the way that math is taught in school. Some would argue that it’s made it more difficult for people to perform and understand arithmetic.

△ Give some advantages to incorporating calculators into an elementary school curriculum.

△ Give some disadvantages to incorporating calculators into an elementary school curriculum.

△ Should calculators be banned from elementary schools? Why?

△ Should calculators be a mandatory part of the curriculum? Why?

△ What about laptops?