The Digital Divide and Knowledge Poverty

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US Embassy
Abu Dhabi
Tunghai University Library 2010.12.24

Digital Divide is a term that characterizes between those *…* who use or have access to telecommunications technologies (e.g., telephones, computers, the Internet) and those who do not.
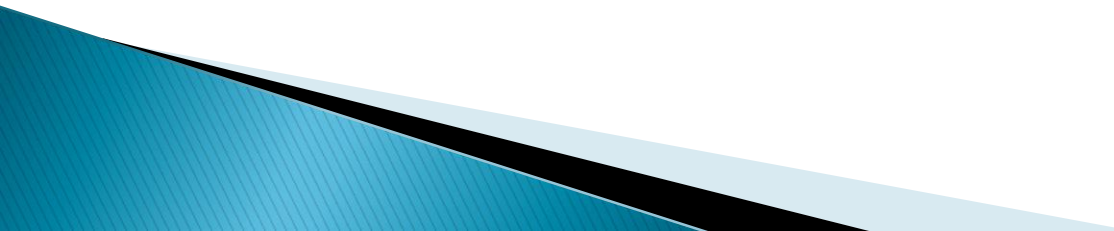
Access to information and communication resources (the internet, but also telephone or TV) is increasingly considered as a basic social need in modern, highly developed societies.

Bridging the Digital Divide
http://www.euractiv.com/en/infosociety/bridging-digital-divide-eu-policies/article-132315

Traditionally in the US the divide or gap was believed to be between rural and urban, males and females, and young and old.

Broadband adoption trends within demographic groups, 2009-2010

% of all adults with broadband at home, 2009-2010

	2009	2010	Percentage point change, 2009-2010	Percent change, 2009-2010
All adults	63%	66%	3	5%
Gender				
Male	64	66	2	3%
Female	63	65	2	3%
Age				
18-29	77	80	3	4%
30-49	72	75	3	4%
50-64	61	63	2	3%
65+	30	31	1	3%
Race/Ethnicity				
White (non-Hispanic)	65	67	2	3%
Black (non-Hispanic)	46	56	10	22%
Hispanic (English-speaking)	68	66	-2	-3%

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=2,252 adults 18 and older.
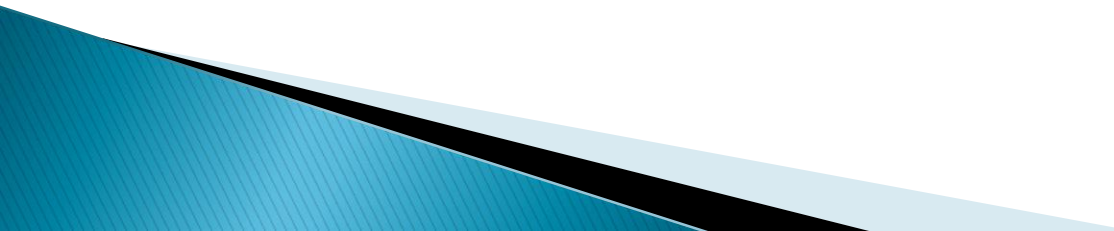
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All adults	63%	66%	3	5%
Education				
Less than high school	30	33	3	10%
High school grad	52	54	2	4%
Some college	71	76	5	7%
College graduate	83	86	3	4%
Household income				
Less than $30,000	42	45	3	7%
$30,000-$49,999	62	67	5	8%
$50,000-$74,999	80	79	-1	-1%
$75,000+	85	87	2	2%
Geography				
Rural	46	50	4	9%
Non-rural	67	70	3	4%

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=2,252 adults 18 and older.

According to the Pew Report:

- 2/3 or 66% of Americans use a broadband connection
- That figure has not changed dramatically in the last year
- In 2009 46% of African Americans did have internet access at home
- In 2010 the figure for African Americans increased to 56%

But the digital divide is changing: now it can mean those who have "apps" and those who don't.

➢ In computer science jargon, an application (or "app") is simply a program designed to help people perform an activity.
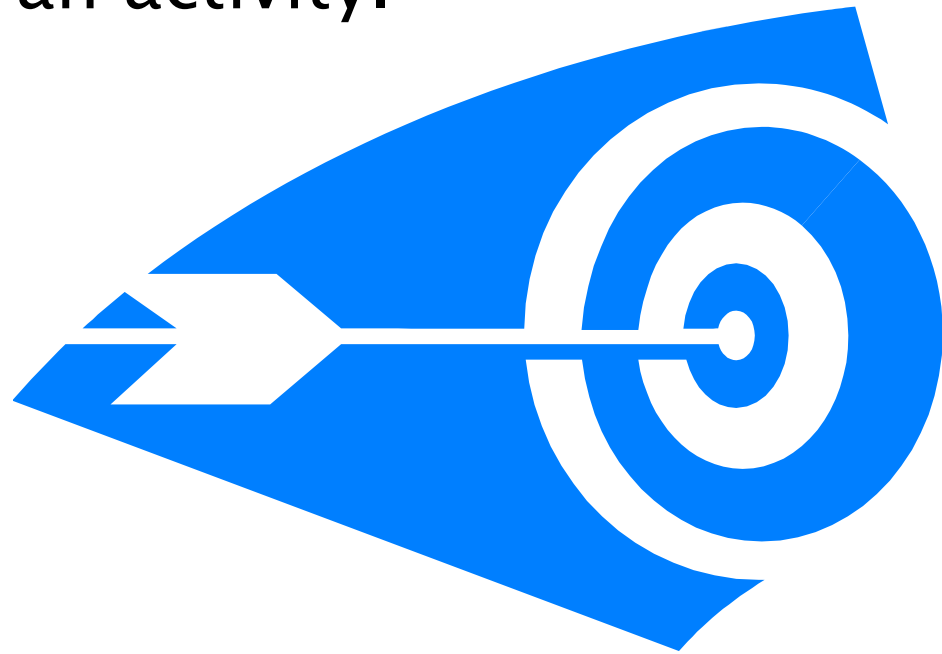
Home Broadband, 2010
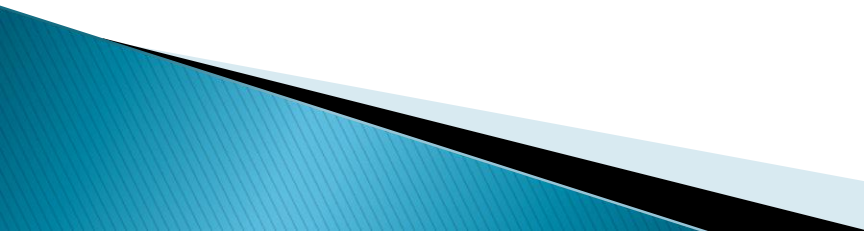
Aaron Smith
Pew Internet and American Life Project
August 11, 2010

http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Home-Broadband-2010.aspx

For many adults it's a choice

- *They do not find online content relevant to their lives. Half (48%) of non-users cite issues relating to the relevance of online content as the main reason they do not go online.*
- *They are largely not interested in going online. Just one in ten non-users say would like to start using the internet in the future.*
- *They are not comfortable using computers or the internet on their own. Six in ten non-users would need assistance getting online. Just one in five know enough about computers and technology to start using the internet on their own.*

Most non-internet users have limited exposure to online life, and half do not go online because they do not see the digital world as relevant to them
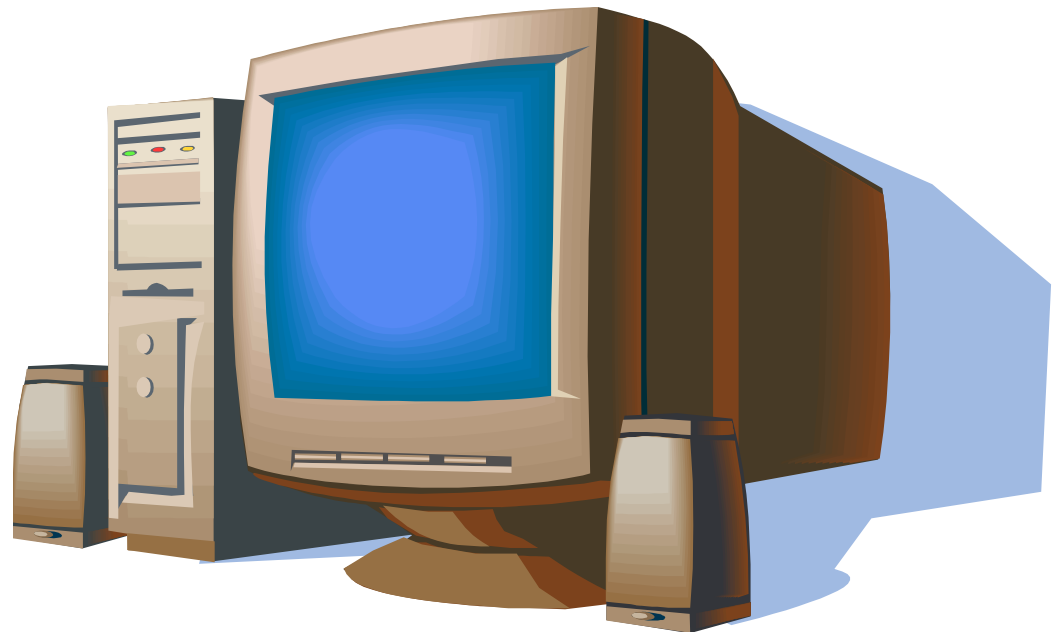
Why should we care?

- Use of information technology does not need to exclude efforts to alleviate poverty
- In India, operators of village Internet kiosks use computer to provide land titles to millions of poor, illiterate villages
- In Nepal and Sri Lanka a radio station broadcasts crucial health information from relevant web sites

"Very fast internet is essential for the economy to grow strongly, to create jobs and prosperity, and to ensure citizens can access the content and services they want."

Broadband Finder
October 13, 2010
http://www.broadband-finder.co.uk/news/broadband/digital-divide-in-eu-down-to-cost_800115001.html

○ The digital divide can lead to "knowledge poverty."

The Digital Divide in the Middle East
▸ Middle East Online
▸ http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/
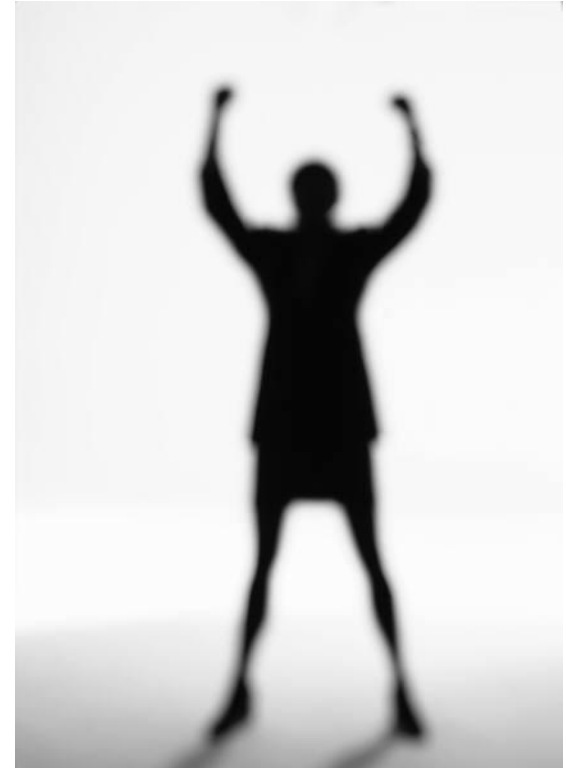
The Arab world will suffer serious problems if it fails to take advantage of the emerging information technologies and bridge the digital gap.

The Digital Divide in the Middle East
Middle East Online

Main reasons for not using the internet

21% of adult Americans do not use the internet; these are the factors they cite as their main reason for not doing so

Just not interested	31%
Don't have a computer	12
Too expensive	10
Too difficult/frustrating	9
Think it's a waste of time	7
Don't have access	6
Too busy/don't have the time	6
Don't need/want it	4
Too old to learn	4
Just don't know how	2
Physically unable	2
Worried about viruses/spam/spyware	1
Other	6
Summary of reasons	
Relevance (not interested + waste of time + too busy + don't need/want)	48%
Price (too expensive + don't have computer)	21
Usability (difficult/frustrating + too old + don't know how + physically unable + worried about virus/spam/spyware)	18
Availability / Access	6

"Inequality that does exist is social not digital"

Dissecting the "Digital Divide": A Case Study in Egypt
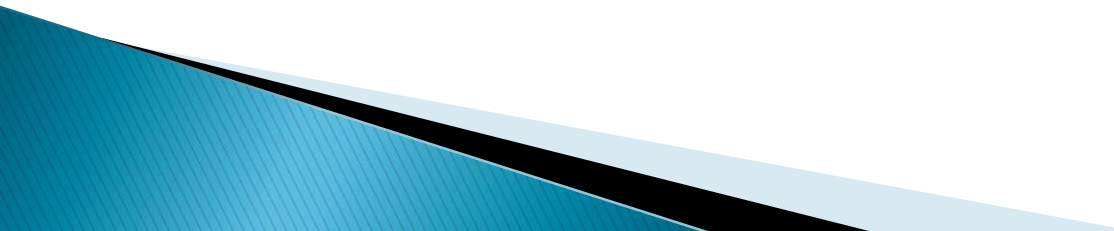
Mark Warschauer

The Information Society 19:297-304, 2003

Possible causes of the Digital Divide

- Culture
- Language
- Poverty
- Infrastructure
- Bureaucracy
- Corruption
- Protectionism

Education Media International
"Addressing the Global Digital Divide"
International Council for Education Media, 2002

The EU also includes these factors:

- Education and skills gap
- Poor or no access to the Internet in remote areas
- Personal factors such as age, gender and disability

Yemen Internet Users

- 86% male
- 47% young (18–24 years old)
- 66% single
- 68% finished high school
- 60% live in Sana'a
- 43% middle class
- 61% of Yemenis access the Internet in cyber cafes

The Digital Divide in Asia, Zia Tanveer et al, Journal of Information Ethics, Fall 2009

Solutions?

- Privatization of telecommunications companies
- Deregulation of telecommunications companies
- Educational endeavors
- Encourage women to work in ICT industries