

Dive into the Matrix

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The hypnotizing green light from the monitor reflects off of my face in the darkness of the room. Unaware of the surroundings, I hear no sounds; my eyes are locked to the screen in a tantalizing game of change. Suddenly, I become aware of the voice coming from the door – my mother repeatedly asking me if I have any intention of sleeping ... ever. I look at the watch; it is four o'clock in the morning, but it seems as if I had just sat down and pressed the button "Connect." However, that is my point exactly—there is nothing in this world that can hold my attention as the Internet does. A quote from the movie "The Matrix" can be applied as a perfect description of the role of the Internet in today's world: "The Matrix is everywhere, it is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window, or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes..." The whole point of globalization and computerization is said in this sentence. Wherever you turn, you are online—whether you are checking your bank account, playing a game of chess, or taking a class. The world has always been small, but we have never felt closer to each other since the creation of the ultimate human connection wizard – the Net.

Still, even today, many people don't know the importance of this figurative 8th World Wonder. When I try to bring it closer to some people, I feel sympathy for medieval scientists. If I have so much explaining to do and I am talking to educated people who positively know that witches do not exist, then imagine what they had to go through—sometimes it is easier to teach a dog how to spell than to explain something to a hardheaded person. Why? Why so much

unwillingness to accept something new? Well, the human race is skeptical by nature; accepting something new, especially this kind of fast progress, is bound to be a struggle. The Internet is nothing but a new stage in our development, just like the Bronze Age, exactly like the Industrial Revolution. It will take us forward, not backward. All we need to do to realize that is to read history books.

Unfortunately, the majority of people do not know anything about this milestone in human history except for what they have heard on the television (Thank God for the History channel). What they need to realize is that the Internet is truly a sea of opportunities that many have yet to learn how to swim in. And that is not hard—just understand it's there for you to use it and find the right current. You'll be impressed.

On the other hand, most young people realize the unlimited possibilities of the Internet and are using it accordingly. One example would be numerous Southeastern Louisiana University apprentices studying to get their masters degree in Business Administration. Over half of these students are writing their thesis on E-commerce – obviously something they believe is the future of business on this planet. Speaking of business, the Internet is the reason why the economy is growing rapidly and even getting a fresh start in third-world countries. This huge, worldwide network connects the planet, giving us all a closer insight into stock markets, businesses and investment opportunities.

But the moon always has to have its dark side. First of all, The Net kills the sense of good old book reading in a person. Simply speaking, why should someone bother going all the way to the library and spending a couple of hours on research, when all he or she has to do is type in the keywords in the search engine? Furthermore, numerous pornographic sites and the availability of the information that should not be accessible to anyone but experts—such as how to make a

bomb—have been a subject of discussion for years. However, software companies are working hard to make web browsers capable of sorting out web sites, not allowing access to those that contain X-rated material. Also, governments of Western societies are working on laws that will eventually prevent the posting of harmful information or information that could be misused on the Net. The other factor applicable in this case is parental control. In other words, if a parent can prohibit his ten-year-old child from seeing a PG-13 movie, he can also put some limitations on the use of the Internet.

Nearly all people who are not Net-aware live under the impression that the Internet will just go away. I, on the contrary, have a feeling that this is actually just the beginning. Not only is it going to stay, but it will also become an indivisible part of our lives, a shaper of the world we live in. Moreover, as always with new ideas, we still have to find out how much we can exploit it, what good can we get from it. All right, maybe we'll pick up a couple of unpleasant effects on our way, too. But we will learn how to turn them into something positive, as always. After all, we are becoming more and more advanced every day and learning *is* the biggest part of that process.

We have to take one step at the time; the first thing human kind has to learn is that the Net is not here to take our lives from us. It is here to change them for the better, to merge human beings from all parts of the Earth, make us feel like we belong to the same civilization, as well as the same race. The Internet is an exceptionally positive force, a 24-hour wired cyber culture. And it is just waiting for all of us. So, don't be afraid—plug in and dive. We can all learn to swim along the way. I did.

Armin Osmanovic is a Finance major.

Ms. Cutrer's Comments: *Armin is a student from Bosnia, and yet he has a wonderful grasp of the use of the English language. The assignment was a persuasive paper—present both sides and be convincing. he did a fine job.*