THE WEB
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Who Wouldn't Like It?

By William Powell

Believe it or not, there are people out there—friends, neighbors, and family—who, brace yourself, don't like the Internet. Worse, they've decided to live their lives unplugged. OK, maybe it's not so shocking. Most of us, at one time or another, have thought of walking away from the World Wide Web. Email? Almost daily. But at a time when it seemed that the United States was moving, albeit slowly, toward a totally wired existence, along comes a

new study from the Pew Internet & American Life Project. According to Pew's research, 24 percent of Americans live their lives free of the Web's entanglements and more than half say they "don't want it and don't need it."

What has the Web ever done to them? Well, it seems their reasons for rejecting the Internet are what you might expect. According to Pew, many people lack the resources, financial and otherwise, to go online. Some don't

have the social connections that pull so many first-timers on board. And others have just had it with poor connection speed. In short, they fall outside of the affluent, educated suburbanites and guys without dates, which studies have shown, dominate usage.

What surprises me is the number of people who were once loyal users and have now dropped the Internet for various reasons of dissatisfaction. "Net Dropouts," as the Pew study refers to them, are at 17 percent of the un-Internet population. That's up 4 percent from 2000. It's not a drastic increase by any means, but it does run counter to the evolution of a society in which everyone is wired to the gills (aside from the Amish, Mennonites, and a handful of practicing Luddites). Considering the number of stories I've read recently about people dropping out of wired society (proclaiming their independence with a loud *Yahoo!,* perhaps?), I'm led to wonder if this might be the first grumblings of an Internet backlash?

All right, so that may be a shot in the dark, but I feel confident saying that the Internet is losing the last of its counter-culture appeal. It's no longer the domain of the terminally geeky and all things pornographic; the Internet is becoming mainstream. When the Pew survey asked, "What do you think the Internet is like?" respondents overwhelmingly responded that it's like a library. Only 10 percent said "shopping mall," and a mere 2 percent said "party." I like the library, but have you been to one recently? It's no party.

In Internet time, the Web is getting up there. The Mosaic browser, which revolutionized the way we view Websites, just celebrated its 10th birthday. Users

have had plenty of time to find out what the Web is about, and, like it or not, some people just don't want it in their lives. They bought the pitch, they signed up for the extended in-home trial, and now they're sending it back.

The Internet will never be all things to all people, at least not in our lifetime, nor should it be. It should continue to challenge, provoke, and even annoy us. That's what makes it fun. But as it evolves, I hope it does those things in a more refined and purposeful way. Much like—I guess they were right—a library.

I suspect that for many of those Net Dropouts, turning their backs on the Web is just a healthy case of rebellion. I'm reminded of *The Wild Ones* when Johnny (Marlon Brando) is asked what he's rebelling against. He replies, "Whaddya got?" With the Internet, thankfully, the answer will always be, "Where do I start?"

@Play

For many people, Ken Burns's documentary *Jazz* was their first taste of the art form (Kenny G doesn't count), but the series only touched on its earliest performers. There's a lot of great music from the 1920s and 1930s that gets overlooked by most jazz fans but creates a passionate following for those in the know.

RedHotJazz.com ◄꜉)**www.red hotjazz.com** provides essays, biographies, and an impressive list of streaming tunes from the early years of jazz. I challenge anyone who can't find at least one tune that will set those toes a tappin'.

QuickTip

Many Websites provide printer-friendly versions of their Webpages. Those that don't force users to print articles that include the surrounding graphics and banner ads. That can take up a lot of ink, especially if you're printing in color, and that means quickly replacing expensive cartridges.

To save ink when printing Webpages, Internet Explorer users can configure the browser's setting to omit background colors and images.

Begin by choosing Internet Options from Explorer's Tool menu. Next, click on the Advanced tab and scroll to the Printing heading. Next to "Print background colors and images" is a small check box. If it has been checked, click on the box once to disable the feature. Click OK, and you're finished!

◄꜉)**Source/*PC Magazine***

Eeuuu, It's iLOO

I wonder what Sir John Harington and Alexander Cummings, the founding fathers of the modern toilet ◄⊃ **www.theplumber.com/closet.html,** would say to MSN Britain's latest marketing gimmick. Probably the same thing I said—"you must be joking"—but with an English accent.

The same folks that brought you the Internet-ready park bench have created a portable restroom wired for high-speed Internet access. That's right, a "WWW.C." as its creators call it. While sitting, users can access a built-in keyboard, plasma screen monitor, and six-speaker surround sound. An external keyboard and monitor lets whoever's next log on.

Last-Minute Update: because of negative feedback, Microsoft canned the project. Or, was it all a hoax?

And the Award Goes To

No, it's not the Oscars, but it's the closest thing on the Web—the Webby Awards. Each year, the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences selects the five best Websites in 30 categories ◄⊃ **www.webbyawards.com.**

The nominees below, in the education category, are an entertaining collection of sites, both fun and informative, that will appeal to adults and children. (Be sure to check out Plumb Design's Visual Thesaurus, a visual representation of the subtleties of the English language.)

- BrainPOP ◄⊃ **www.brainpop.com**
- NASA Earth Observatory ◄⊃ **http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov**
- Plumb Design Visual Thesaurus ◄⊃ **www.visualthesaurus.com**
- Sodaplay ◄⊃ **www.sodaplay.com**
- The New York Times Learning Network ◄⊃ **www.nytimes.com/learning**

Quick Clicks

Do you ever wonder if you're making the grade as a leader? Chances are, your employees have a good idea. Give them a copy of The Leadership Report Card at *Darwin Magazine.com* ◄⊃ **www.darwinmag.com/read/050703/card.html** to find out whether you're the A+ leader you want to be.

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The Web *covers Internet technology trends, news, and tips. Send comments, questions, and items of interest to theweb@astd.org.*

FastFacts

One out of every 2.8 email messages tracked by MessageLabs worldwide in March was spam. More than 50 percent of that spam originated in the United States.

Research from a BIGresearch survey in April determined that 23.8 percent of men and 29.1 percent of women regularly go online while watching TV. Whatever happened to reading a book while watching TV?

Once only kids' stuff, instant messaging usage among adults is on the rise. Forrester Research documented a 50 percent increase in IM usage from 2002, finding that nearly one third of adults in the United States now use the technology.