

“The Internet: Today’s Evolution or Tomorrow’s Menace?”

477 words

The Internet Age

In the past two decades, the Internet has changed how people interact with the world. Revolutionary, and at times, dangerous, it has been praised and decried in almost equal measures. This entity has permeated every aspect of our lives in modern society, and has the capacity to alter us forever, for better or for worse. The Internet is a creation of humanity as a collective, and as such, encompasses the best and worst aspects of all of us.

In many ways, the Internet is a miracle, a gift to anyone with a thirst for knowledge and quite a bit of free time. Countless libraries’ worth of information is at the disposal of anyone with a computer—five minutes and one can find everything he or she could ever need to know, whether that be the effects of eutrophication on freshwater protozoa or whether the pretty person from calculus class is In A Relationship or Single. Social networking, online encyclopedias, and the omniscient Google—the resources are nearly limitless. Governments use the Web for greater transparency, and schools to induce more involved participation from tech-savvy students. People have the potential to be more informed than ever. Nowadays, anyone with a keyboard and basic literacy has a world’s discourse at their fingertips—millions of conversations carried out across oceans, across class differences, across language barriers. More so than anywhere else, the Internet is a stage on which all have their chance at the spotlight, as close to a meritocracy than man has ever before achieved. Everyone with the perseverance to gain the attention of the masses is on an equal footing.

It has a darker side, however, as anything so multifaceted must. Side effects of the “Information Age” include the downfall of newspapers, a purported decline in teen literacy, and Web addiction. Additionally, since a presence as ubiquitous as the Internet cannot be fully regulated, malignancy can circulate and grow as easily as positive ideals. Although most simply build and contribute to the socio-intellectual network that is cyberspace, some use it for their own gain, or to expedite the downfall of another. No one has escaped the grim reports of predators infiltrating social networking sites, of suicide chat rooms, of ignorance and prejudice glorified on sites created for that purpose.

These problems, daunting though they are, are not impossible to remedy with persistence and time. As awareness of the issues grow, governments respond faster and with more severity to potentially dangerous websites, and concerned citizens dedicate themselves to keeping innocent Web surfers safe. News sources and other paper-based industries relocate to the Internet, benefiting the environment; and thinkers of all types use online forums to discuss literature or theology or politics, comparing notes on their observations of the world. The revolutionary benefits of the Internet outweigh the flaws. Ultimately, this brainchild of humanity is not a menace, but evolution.