

## The Internet and the "Digital Economy"

Editorial Staff

The amount of traffic on the Internet is doubling every 100 days, according to a report issued recently by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The report, "The Emerging Digital Economy," analyzed the growth of information technology and measured its effect on the nation's overall economy. Among the report's more significant findings:

- The Internet is growing faster than any previous technology.

Radio existed for 38 years before it had 50 million listeners. Television took 13 years to garner 50 million viewers. It took the Internet just four years to reach that plateau.

- In 1994, there were about three million people connected to the Internet. By the end of 1997, there were more than 100 million Internet users worldwide. That number is expected to grow to as many as one billion users by 2005.
- People are becoming more comfortable making online purchases with their credit cards. In the first six months of 1997, 4.7 million people in the U.S. and Canada bought a product online; that number more than doubled to 10 million by the end of the year.

The department's report also gives a number of recommendations for how the federal government should react to the growth of the information technology industry, and offers suggestions on creating legal and ethical frameworks and regulations for Internet businesses. For those interested, a copy of the report is available online at <http://www.ecommerce.gov>.

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