

Net News Update

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Net Access Improves the Way Kids Feel about School

If the results from a recent National School Boards Foundation survey mean anything, the Net appears to be having a positive effect on the way kids feel about school and homework.¹ The survey asked 1,735 parents and 601 kids with Internet access about what they used the Internet for most often. According to the survey, 53 percent of parents and 48 percent of kids use the Net primarily for homework. Among children between ages 9-17, 43 percent said the Internet had improved their outlook about school.

Parents also say that increased Internet use doesn't appear to significantly affect their kids' other activities (at least, not the positive ones). Ninety-five percent of the parents surveyed said they still spend the same amount of time with family and friends; 85 percent said their child's reading habits have either stayed the same or increased; and only 12 percent say their children's outdoor playing time has gone down.

1. Thomas K. Internet gets an "A" for schoolwork. *USA Today* March 27, 2000.

Supreme Court Goes Online

For years, the U.S. Supreme Court has provided its decisions and calendar electronically, but only to legal publishers and news organizations, and then only by subscription. Those days are soon to become a thing of the past. By the time you read this article, the highest court in the land will have its own website (www.supremecourtus.gov), giving scholars and legal buffs access to valuable court information on a daily basis.

According to a spokesperson for the site, texts of decisions handed down by the court will be made available on line the same day they are announced from the bench. The site will include the court's argument calendar, schedules, rules, a visitor's guide and downloadable legal bar admission forms.

At least one Supreme Court justice won't be visiting the site anytime soon. "You are talking with a Luddite when you're talking with me," said Justice David Souter. "I am a computer illiterate." Justice Clarence Thomas, meanwhile, appears to be more at ease with PCs. "Our job is rather portable with computers," he said. "We're able to work any place in the world."²

2. Asseo L. Supreme Court to open web site next week. Associated Press, April 10, 2000.

Accessing the Net in Style

Couch potatoes of the world, unite! Software giant Microsoft and renowned furniture maker La-Z-Boy have teamed up to provide users with the ultimate in comfort and Internet access, all without the burden of having to actually get up and turn on their PC's.

The two companies have introduced the "e-cliner," a plush reclining chair that contains Microsoft's WebTV system imbedded into its armrest. The chair is available in either an upholstered or leather version. Both versions come complete with the WebTV keyboard console, set-top box and two months of free Internet service.

Although the e-cliner comes with a rather hefty price tag (\$999-1,299, depending on the type of chair), the company apparently believes there's a market for the contraption. Said one customer examining the chair in a La-Z-Boy showroom in North Carolina, "I usually fall asleep watching TV in one of these recliners. Now, I guess I can surf the Web in my sleep, too."³

3. WebTV now available in naugahyde or real leather. Reuters, April 7, 2000.

Online Bill Payment on the Rise

Last year, a record number of people did the bulk of their Christmas shopping online. According to a new report from International Data Corporation, many people may soon begin paying their bills online as well.

The report predicts that by the year 2005, one-fifth of all bill payments will be done electronically, with the majority of those payments being conducted over electronic bill presentment and payment (EBPP) Internet services. In 1999, seven percent of all bill payments were done electronically.

Many computer users are resistant to paying bills on line because of possible security hazards, but those feelings will change as more secure systems are designed and implemented, said Albert Pang, a research manager with IDC. "This is a market that is still in its infancy, but it has the potential to blossom into a staggering opportunity."^{4,5}

4. Rosencrance L. Online bill payment becoming popular with consumers. CNN.com, March 29, 2000.

5. Rohdle L. Study: online bill payments to surge. IDG News Service, December 21, 1999.

More Businesses Monitoring Employee Net Access

If you work for a large corporation, chances are you're not alone when you're surfing the Web or sending e-mail. A survey⁶ released by the American Management Association last month reports that nearly 75 percent of major U.S. firms record and view their employees' communications and Internet activities on the job, up from 45 percent only a year ago.

The survey also confirmed what many employers have already suspected: As the amount of Internet

access increases, workers become less productive. Nearly 20 percent of the companies surveyed reported having to terminate an employee because of excessive use or abuse of the Internet.

6. American Management Association. Workplace Monitoring and Surveillance. Available on line at www.amanet.org.

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