A Five Part Look at “The Digital Divide:” Education, Countries around the World, Athens, OH, Healthcare, and Views from People who Don’t have Access to Technology and Don’t Want Access!

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Abstract

This research paper deals with five aspects of the digital divide. It first covers the digital divide in education. It shows the disparity in technology access between schools in low-income rural areas versus high-income areas. The paper also presents steps that school staff as well as city officials can take in order to fix this problem. The second aspect of the digital divide that this research paper deals with, is the digital divide in countries around the world. The research paper takes a closer look at the different ways the governments of Malaysia, Mozambique, Estonia and Egypt are handling the same problem, the digital divide. Some countries choose strict governmental control over technology while other lean towards a privatization and foreign investment model. Third, primary research in the form of interviews uncovers the problem with the digital divide in Athens, OH and discovers what organizations and institutions are doing to curtail this problem. This paper also deals with the digital divide in Healthcare. The research paper discusses people who need technology to help with mental illness and other disabilities. It also talks about how the digital divide is depriving certain ethnic and socioeconomic groups the opportunity to use the Internet to find health information. Lastly, the paper deals with people who don’t want to use or access technology.
Introduction

A need to investigate the digital divide sprung up from the changing situations of a few notable publications in the United States. These publications have gone from print to online only. In an article on CNN.com/US talks about the Seattle Post intelligencer, “The paper -- which was the oldest continually operating business in Seattle -- published its final print edition Tuesday as the P-I makes a transformation into an online-only news outlet. A skeleton crew of 20 to 25 staffers will remain at the new Seattle PI.com while more than 140 staffers will lose their jobs” (Oppmann).

The CNN article continued, “Last month, the Rocky Mountain News in Denver, Colorado, published its final edition after nearly 150 years. Last October, the Christian Science Monitor also announced that in 2009, it would replace its daily print edition with its Web site. It also offers subscribers weekly print and daily e-mail editions.”(Oppmann) It is apparent that the switch from print to online has cost numerous jobs, which is bad for the former employees, but a good cost saving measure for the newspapers. However, the effect that this will have on the public is not fully disclosed. According to the 2000 US census,“51 percent of Americans have computers at home; however, only 41 percent of Americans have computers at home that can access the internet” (p. 1). Many of these Americans are forced to get their news from TV or print sources. With the current economic climate, print sources are closing down or transforming to online only sources. The newspaper that was once thrown on many people’s door step daily is starting to be a thing of the past. This is leaving some Americans with no way to gain timely information, further intensifying the digital divide. School children with no internet access who are doing research papers and other assignments are forced to overlook possible sources. For instance with no internet fewer people will be able to use the Seattle P-I as a source. This
research will examine the digital divide in education, around the world, Appalachian Ohio, in Healthcare as well as sharing the rational of people who do not want technology in their lives.

Literature Review

*The Digital Divide in Education*

The digital divide is a serious problem in the American education system. Former President Bill Clinton said that “technology provided the tools needed to assure no child, regardless of socioeconomic status, was left behind.” A research study by Dianne Thomas titled “The Digital Divide: What Schools in Low Socioeconomic Areas Must Teach.” Found that children living in lower socioeconomic conditions did not have the same access to computer and internet as the students living in higher socioeconomic conditions. This study ran in the summer of 2008 and it dealt with low income families in Mississippi. The study looked at Third Graders and based on records provided by the State Department of Education determined which students where low income and which were middle to high income. 1,119 surveys were completed and nearly half of them were taken by students in small rural towns.

“As expected, the children living in the lower socioeconomic levels didn’t have the same access level to computer and internet as the students living in high socioeconomic levels. 76 percent of students from lower income families had computer at home; however only 65 percent of these computers had internet access. 94 percent of students from higher income families had computers; however, 86 percent of these computers had internet service” (Thomas p.13).

“95 percent of students from lower income families use computers at schools while 99 percent of students from higher income families used computers at school” (Thomas p.13).

However, this study proposes no real solution it simply states “School personnel in charge of
funding should provide needed equipment and computer labs and classes to meet the growing needs students have to keep up to date in the fast advancing technology world. Local school boards, districts, and the State Board of Education should provide funds to meet these needs” (p. 14). This response to the funding issue sounds very ideal but provides no steps to reach this goal.

Further research on the topic of the Digital Divide and education was presented in an article from the January 2009 issue of School Library Media Activities Monthly, written by Pat Franklin and Claire Gatrell Stephens entitled, “Equitable Access, the Digital Divide, and the Participation Gap!” This article focused on what Librarians can do to ensure students have as much access as can possibly be provided by schools. The article stressed that librarians need to “Look for opportunities to improve the library media center facility” through “lobbying the school administration, district personnel or local community groups, or write grants to gain improvements” (p. 44). The article proposed that the Librarians “create opportunities to educate, increase efforts to collaborate with teachers to teach information skills to all students” (p.44) as well as to “embrace their changing role” (p. 44)! Finally, the article saw that the transformation of the library from a place of solely books into a multimedia center gave Librarians a chance to proactively teach students; “Don’t wait for them to come to you-get out there, go to them” (p.44). Often the library can be viewed as a place of great restriction. To dispel this belief the article urged librarians to let students do things with technology that may currently be prohibited, for example, checking out DVD’s and CD’s to students or letting students check out reference books, “Diversity offerings, include the nontraditional (p.44).

Another solution could be involving the city, and or municipality in the quest for funding. This is alluded to in a May 14, 2008 article from The New York Amsterdam News titled “New York uses Diamond to close the digital divide.” In the article Akosua Alberitton
writes about the negotiations between Diamond Managements & Technology Consultants and the city of New York. The city plans to do a complete technology upgrade on their “municipal wireless and broadband infrastructures,” (p. 39) in an effort to make new technology more accessible to people of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. The upgrades are costly however New York City Committee on Technology in Government has made this project a priority. “New York City is the United States’ most populated city and its largest media market. To stay competitive internationally, New York must get up to speed of cities such as San Francisco, Boston and Philadelphia” (p. 39). Smaller towns and cities can do what New York is planning to do, but on a smaller scale.

The Global Digital Divide and What Can Be Done

A well reported on phenomenon is that the digital divide is a global occurrence. An example of this was presented in a May 22, 2008 article in the Christian Science Monitor, written by Stephanie Hanes, titled “African park bridges the ‘Last Mile’ of the digital divide: Low energy Web centers and classes on using computers open up better jobs for locals.” The article says “For years, this impoverished region of central Mozambique (Goronogosa District) has found itself squarely on the losing side of the global digital divide. Most people here lack access to electricity and phone lines, let alone laptops and YouTube. So there was an intense response when three computer labs were built in Gorongosa. The US-based Carr Foundation, which is working to improve conservation and human development around the district, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) joined forces to build the labs - part of a global effort to boost information and communication technology in developing countries” (p. 14).
Hanes gave background on the progression of technology in the region “For decades, Western aid groups have tried to use technology to help impoverished regions. In the 1970s, groups started radio communication initiatives to spread health and other messages; In the 1990s, programs such as the Leland Initiative introduced Internet connectivity to previously wireless African countries” (p. 14).

However what was striking about this article was they way it detailed how the community partnered with the foreign aid groups to bring about these technological advances. “In 2003, the Last Mile Initiative began giving grants - usually about $500,000 and were often matched by local businesses or nonprofits - to projects in about 30 countries, says Michael Tetelman of the DOT-COM Alliance in Washington, which helped implement many of the projects” (p. 14).

The article also showed that there are a variety of different solutions to the problem of access and not every solution is right for every area. "With 30 countries you're showing 30 different business and technology models,” he says. ‘What's really been positive is how [the Last Mile Initiative] has shown the vast diversity of models that can be used successfully to provide ICT [information and communication technology.]” (p. 15).

Example of two different approaches used to solve global access problem can be found in the 2008 case study “Global digital divide: Influence of socioeconomic, governmental, and accessibility factors on information technology,” written by James B. Pick and Rasool Azari. The countries studied were Egypt and Estonia. “Estonia constitutes a case example of a developing nation from which technological development has benefitted by government leadership, foreign and domestic investment in technology. One of the government’s major steps was to replace
aging Soviet infrastructure with cutting-edge infrastructure at the time. This was done by opening up telecommunications sector to private and foreign investment” (p.109).

To achieve technological advancement Estonia took the route of government involvement with private and foreign investor partnerships, which led to domestic innovation. However, the common thread of all of these things was that the public was included in the plans and that the programs were aimed at benefiting all segments of the population with no sort of socioeconomic discrimination. Egypt took a completely different path in order to achieve technological advancement. According to the case study done by Pick and Azari, the Egyptian method of technological advancement consisted of the government developing all of the software with no foreign help or privatization. The methods also includes a disproportionate amount of government spending on technology for universities, thus giving a bias towards those members of society who are on a higher socioeconomic level and can afford to attain secondary education.

“Egypt’s Ministry of Education invested in multimedia centers for selected government schools, computer labs for most schools, educational software developed by the Ministry, satellite educational TV programming, and a national multi-site videoconference system. Although the hardware and software were successfully installed, the programs were greatly hampered by rigid curricula dictated by the Ministry bureaucracy, and a desire to “showcase” for outsiders rather than perform the essential teaching steps” (p.110).

The case study continues with the social issues that also create a barrier for all members of society to have access to technology. “Another issue has been the high extent of stratification of education in Egypt. In particular, the government has invested much more heavily in secondary and university education and much less at the primary levels. However, secondary
levels and above are largely restricted to the richer segments of society. This has led to reduced access and openness of education and consequently to lessening of technology training and education” (p. 111).

Another example of access problems in a third-world countries comes from the 2008 case study written by Ibrahim, Z. B., Sulaiman, A. & Faziharudean and titled “The Role of Community Based Telecenters in Bridging the Digital Divide in Rural Malaysia.” In Malaysia, the number of people with a dial-up internet access made up 14.3 percent of the population in 2007, an increase from 2000 when only 7 percent of the population had access to dial-up internet. In the same time frame the number of people with broadband access jumped from .08 percent to 5 percent. The increase in broadband access is more significant in terms of allowing the population to access many ITC applications” (p. 352).

“The uneven distribution of the basic ‘info structure’ such as a fixed telephone lines or internet connections between the urban and rural area is a current problem; the cost to be connected to the internet, is still considered to be high by its rural population, as had been reflected by their low ‘Willingness-to-Pay’” (p. 352).

This case study did not only state a problem it talks about a solution. It talks about how Telecenters were brought to rural Malaysia to teach the residents all about new technology. Malaysia has a vision 2020 program, which strives to use ICT applications in every citizen’s daily life. The government hopes that once this occurs Malaysia will be ranked as a developed country.

_The Digital Divide in Athens, OH and What Can Be Done_
Four interviews were conducted with experts in the area of bridging the digital divide. Susan Urano, the director of the Athens Foundation, James Hill, the Assistant Director of the Nelsonville Library, Bill Reader, a Professor at the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism and Ira Dye, a recent Ohio University graduate who helped bring broadband to rural Meigs county.

Earlier this year Ms. Urano spoke to a classes at the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism about a possible partnership with The Athens Foundation and ATHENSi.com through a Knight Foundation grant.

Susan Urano said that The Athens Foundation is applying for a grant to get money to use cell phones to bring the internet to rural areas in Athens County where broadband and dial-up internet can not possibly reach. The rationale for this method was “since most people have cell phones and see the value in them. Cell phones will be the most effect way to bring internet to people.” She also said that the Athens Foundation is hiring two multimedia interns for the summer of 2009. These interns will shoot video on flip cameras and post it on the Foundations’ Web site as well as go out into the community and show people how to operate the technology. Both of these endeavors are extremely innovative so she couldn’t be specific about how they would work exactly. (S. Urano, personal communication, May 19, 2009)

James Hill from the Nelsonville Public Library was a key person to speak with about libraries in Athens County because Nelsonville has the head library for the county. Nelsonville Library gets information directly from Franklin county libraries in Columbus. Hill talked about the programs and classes that his library offers to the community. He mentioned a technology van that the library rented from Columbus that was stationed at the Library for a week. This van had the latest computer technology and experts who travel around Ohio teaching people how to
use the technology and software. He also mentioned classes that ranged from basic computer awareness to in-depth computer usage, geared towards library patrons of all ages. Hill said some patron do not want technology in their lives so the library does not push technology on to people; however, they do make it available and assistance available to those who request it.

The Athens County Libraries got 15 new computers 10 years ago from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; however the libraries use their own money to repair and replace these computers as needed. They libraries are due to get new computers soon from the same charitable foundation. (J. Hill, personal communication, May 21, 2009)

Professor Reader stated that the digital divide is a problem of geography. He said that the digital divide in rural areas and in cities is the same problem but it steams from different sources and will more than likely have different solutions. Reader said that with the numerous hills in the topography of the Appalachian region it is difficult for companies to bring broadband Internet access or event Internet access at all from the main roads to places where people live. However, he said that it can be done. He also cited that some people don’t want access to the Internet access. (B. Reader, personal communication, May 27, 2009)

Ira Dye, a recent graduate of Ohio University helped bring wireless broadband internet to rural Meigs County. He first gathered a group of resident together that wanted broadband and he had them sign a petition, which he took to a local wireless provider of this type of internet. Dye spent seven months researching the technology behind broadband and the business model and profitability for a company who would bring wireless internet to Meigs County. The company determined that it would nearly $300,000 cheaper to put up a wireless tower; Infrastructure that could later be used as the building block for future technology, than to run cable through wired
fiber optic or telephone lines. Also physical limitations on fiber optic lines prevented the company from laying these type lines. Fiber optic Lines can only stretch 18,000 feet from a central office, which are generally located in urban centers. The work of Dye got Meigs county broadband, which raised property values of the 500 plus homes in the area. (I. Dye, personal communication, May 27, 2009) This is an example of a technology success story for Southeastern Ohio.

The Digital Divide and Healthcare

An article written by Michelle Blanchard, Atari Metcalf, Jo Degney, Helen Herrman and Jane Burns titled “Rethinking the digital divide,” talked about the health implications of the Digital divide. This article came out in November of 2008. “The study looked at Australian Teenagers and measures the correlation between their uses of technology with their mental health. In Australia internet usage is most popular between those 15 to 24 years of age. The internet appeals to this group because of its accessibility and interactivity. 94 percent of those 16 to 29 years of age have a cell phone and 66 percent of those 18 to 29 years old use social media sites everyday” (p.35).

The article says that “Knowledge regarding the social and economic determinants of mental health is growing, including a focus on the role of meaningful relationships in promoting connectedness and belonging…The Internet can be viewed as a virtual community that fosters networks and strengthens existing social ties and lends itself to being a health promotion setting” (p. 36).

The study continues to say that “The internet offers numerous advantages as a health promotion setting, including its cost-effectiveness, reach and capacity to engage geographically
and socially isolated or ‘hard to access’ groups.” Technology access also gets young people participating.

It is disheartening to think that the digital divide is depriving a group of people of the access to community and to the outside world that they desperately need to stay sane. While most people would find it a nuisance to go a few days without checking email, updating twitter or logging in to Facebook this article shows that there are people that depend on the internet as life sustaining resource.

The study not only stressed that the internet helps those with mental disabilities but it also helps those with physical disabilities as well. For example “people with speech and hearing problems prefer email communication over other more traditional types of communication” (p. 38). The study also found that “young people who wanted to ‘come out’ about heir sexuality, practiced or “rehearsed” online. This made it easier when faced with their real life family and friends”(p. 38).

A 2008 case study titled “Understanding Health Literacy for Strategic Health Marketing: eHealth Literacy, Health Disparities, and the Digital Divide,” by Graham D. Bodie and Mohan Jyoti Dutta stated that The digital divide has effected the general publics overall health literacy, which is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health”. Or by the US Department of Health and Human Services in it’s Healthy people 2010 report as "the capacity to obtain, interpret, and understand basic health information and services and the competence to use such information and services to improve health."
Living in the modern era many people have turned to the internet to find health information, but as logic has it people who can’t access the internet can’t access these health Web sites. While health literacy measures a variety of ways people get health information such as through TV and Radio Public Service Announcements and commercials as well as calling hospitals and doctor offices to speak to health care professionals, it also measures the ways and completeness that people comprehend the information they find. The case study found a correlation between race, socioeconomic level, computer literacy and health literacy.

“According to the United Nations Statistical Division 65.98 per 100 people in the United States owned a personal computer in 2002, and 55.58 per 100 people in the United States were Internet users in 2003. While we should be hesitant to assume that computer ownership or Internet usage equals computer literacy, it is promising to see that approximately 55 percent of Americans are using the Internet. Unfortunately, like health literacy, low computer access and usage is more common in certain populations. For instance, patterns of computer and Internet penetration levels show substantive differences between different racial and ethnic groups in the United States, and similar differences are also observed in the realm of online health information seeking. White people and Asians are more likely to have internet access and to use this access to search for health information. African-Americans, Hispanics, and Pacific Islanders are less likely to have internet access and to search for health information. Similarly, individuals over the age of 65, with lower levels of income, with lower educational attainment, and those who live in rural areas have lower levels of access and usage as compared with their higher socioeconomic status and urban counterparts” (p. 184).

*People who do not want to use technology*
While this Literature review has focused on the digital divide, and primarily on the people who want to be connected to the internet and new technology but for whatever reason are not; it must be fair and present both sides of the issue. There must be some mention of people who could have access to the internet and technology and for whatever reason do not take advantage of it.

Many subscribe to the more accepted school of thought, which assumes “the adage about old dogs and new tricks to be at least partially true. Older folks tend to get complacent, finding what works and sticking to it, which can sometimes land them in a rut. Young people, with minds more malleable, have an easier time learning new ways. Trying out the new, however, takes not only intellectual curiosity but also time, which younger people typically have more of than those with jobs, families to support and other responsibilities,” according to an article on the page 15 of the September 22, 2008 issue of Community College Week titled “Rise of Social Networking Underscores Generational Digital Divide.” The article’s author, Reid Goldsborough perpetuates the stereotype that people who don’t want to embrace technology are older, thus mislabeling the digital divide as a generational problem; however, this is not the whole story. In the September 19, 2008 article titled “Generational Myth” by Siva Vaidhyanathan this concept is explored. The author pulls from her own personal experience as a professor to come to the conclusion that American’s young people are not as computer savvy as everyone and the media would make them out to be. “Every class has a handful of people with amazing (computer) skills and a large number who can't deal with computers at all. A few lack mobile phones. Many can't afford any gizmos and resent assignments that demand digital work. Many use Facebook and MySpace because they are easy and fun, not because they are powerful (which, of course, they are not). And almost none know how to program or even code text with Hypertext Markup
Language (HTML). Only a handful come to college with a sense of how the Internet fundamentally differs from the other major media platforms in daily life. (p.8)"

She continues with, “College students in America are not as ‘digital’ as we might wish to pretend. And even at elite universities, many are not rich enough. All this mystical talk about a generational shift and all the claims that kids won’t read books are just not true. Our students read books when books work for them (and when I tell them to). And they all (I mean all) tell me that they prefer the technology of the bound book to the PDF or Web page. What kids, like the rest of us, don't like is the price of books. Of course they use Google, but not very well -- just like my 75-year-old father. And they fill the campus libraries at all hours, just as Americans of all ages are using libraries in record numbers. (According to the American Library Association, visits to public libraries in the United States increased 61 percent from 1994 to 2004)” (p.8).

However age does come into play when trying to figure out how to use technological items. An article in November 2008 issue of Communication News titled “Cell Phone users frustrated” talks about how consumers under 30 have an easier time using cell phones than those in the over 30 age range. “More than a third of mainstream consumers over the age of 30 experience significant frustration associated with their cell phone's interface, according to a study by Bowen Research. The study indicates a digital divide between people under 30 or over 30 who use standard cell phones, with the under-30 set experiencing problems much less frequently and resolving issues quickly by simply asking a friend how to do it”(p. 8).

The article points out that the main ways that cell phone companies try to distinguish themselves from the competition may be working against older consumers. "Cell phone manufacturers aim to distinguish themselves from their competition with increasingly complex
features and unique interfaces, yet consumers over 30 have this frustrating sense of ‘enough already,’ says Hugh Bowen of Bowen Research. ‘That demographic wants features that are easily accessible, not lost in multiple levels of menus within menus; they want large fonts they can read; and they want a simpler button setup so they're not so confused about what they're doing…While participants in the under-30 category indicated they used 52 percent of their phone's features, that figure dropped a full 12 percent for over-30 participants’” (p.8).

However, even with the over-30 crowd’s problem with technology, companies continue to innovate, making gizmos and gadgets that are more complicated than ever before. These innovations are especially apparent in the sphere of mobile phones, in an era when computers themselves are becoming obsolete. An article in the February 23 2009 Issue of BusinessWeek written by Olga Kharif, Peter Burrows and Cliff Edwards titled “Windows and Intel's Digital Divide,” says “The personal computer remains the mainstay of the tech industry, with about 300 million sold last year. But growth in that market is expected to slow to an annual average of 9 percent over the next three years, according to researcher IDC. Meanwhile, sales of smartphones that can connect to the Net and handle e-mail are expected to surge 18 percent, and sales of small, cheap notebooks that do basic computing tasks will soar 50 percent” (p.59).

In the article “A third of adults without internet don’t want it: Cost of broadband also is a barrier,” Jack Gillum says that “One in four American adults don’t use the Internet. And may of them couldn’t care less about getting online. A report last month by the Pew Internet and American Life Project finds that although price is a barrier for dial-up users in switching to broadband, one-third of those without a Net connection simply aren’t interested in e-mailing or exploring the Web.”(p. 7)
This article does raise another good, but somewhat related, point. People with dial-up internet sometimes don’t switch because the price is often too high. This barrier is further examined in the article in the January 2009 issue of Communications Of The ACM titled “Understanding the Adopters and Non-adopters of Broadband” by Yogesh Dwivedi and Zahir Irani. This article talks about technology in the UK, and how numerous Internet Service Providers increased broadband subscribers by fostering competition amongst themselves. However, competitive pricing and well thought out marketing and advertising campaigns only got the ISP’s so far, until subscriptions hit a plateau” (p. 123). The article said that consumers looked at “the relative advantage from switching to broadband” (p.123), This article shows that many other factors contribute to people choosing to use or not to use technology; it is not simply an issue of age. This data was gathered from 385 randomly selected households in the UK.

Future Directions

While the problem of the digital divide has been thoroughly defined from numerous angels using a variety of methods from surveying to interviewing, the solutions to this problem is still somewhat illusive. From the research presented in the Literature review portion of this research paper it is clear that there are many people and agencies approaching the solution to the digital divide from numerous different angels. Thus, follow-up research should be done on the success of these methods. For Example, someone will have to do a study on the partnership between the city of New York and Diamond Managements & Technology Consultants who had a collaborative plan to blanket the city with wireless internet. Someone should check back in a few years to see if this program was ever implemented and if so, how successful is it? And if not, what were the barriers to getting the program up and running? The same follow-up is needed with the Athens Foundation and their plan to bring the internet to rural Ohio through cell phones
and to use multimedia interns to educate the community first-hand on technology. Someone will have to go back and see if the grant ever came through to fund this project and if so, how the community is responding to the cell phones and the interns. This is the case with all of the solutions presented in the literature review. Even if the solutions are proven to be successful someone will need to examine them to see how they can be improved further.

Conclusion

The need for this research paper came about after a 2009 CNN.com/US article titled “Seattle Post-Intelligencer prints final edition in online transition,” written by Patrick Oppman stated, “Last month, the Rocky Mountain News in Denver, Colorado, published its final edition after nearly 150 years. Last October, the Christian Science Monitor also announced that in 2009, it would replace its daily print edition with its Web site. It also offers subscribers weekly print and daily e-mail editions.” This article was on the forefront of a trend that will most likely change the field of journalism and how the general public gets its news. This phenomenon led to research which uncovered that the digital divide may prevent members of society with limited or no access to computers from getting news. The digital divide is preventing students in rural and urban centers from getting the access to technology that they need to succeed. Research also uncovered a few potential solutions that can be implemented.

The digital divide has proven to be a global problem. Through research it was determined that farmers in rural Malaysia and Mozambique have limited access to technology, but a government initiative has begun to correct this. Research also showed how the countries of Egypt and Estonia had a problem with the digital divide; however, they worked to solve it in two very different ways. Egypt had their government control technological development while
Estonia opened technological development to private citizens as well as foreign investors. The digital divide also proved to be an issue in southeastern, OH. Four interviews uncovered that getting technology to people in a rural areas can be problematic because companies do not feel that it is a good investment to run wiring and install towers and other types of infrastructures because the populations in rural areas tend to be more spread out and of lower income. However of these people, some are content with no access to technology. This was confirmed through interviews with an Ohio University professor and a Nellsonville library administrator and through multiple articles in academia and the mainstream. This research also uncovered that the digital divide can be detrimental to people’s health. Some people with disabilities both social and physical prefer communication through email and some people with mental illness need to go online for human interaction through chat rooms and other vehicles. Also lack of access to technology prevents people from accessing updated health information online. Research showed that this is especially true for older Americans and people of color. These groups are unable to access Web site such as WebMD.com or Kidshealth.org, thus making them less likely to keep up-to-date- with their healthcare; thus, lowering their health literacy. Health Literacy is the ability to comprehend/understand the health information presented. While a doctor visit generally lasts 15 minutes, which is usually not enough time for people to ask all of the questions they have, Web sites are great companion resources to offer more explanation at the patient’s own pace. While one may only get 15 minutes with the doctor the same person can site at the computer and research their condition and possible solutions/cures to it, for hours.

Research provided many solutions however every facet of the digital divide affects the entire community in a different way. This leads to the solution of the digital divide being as complex and versatile as the problem.
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