The Internet: What's all the fuss?

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Introduction:

Unless you never watch TV, listen to a radio, or read, you almost certainly have heard about the Internet or know something about it. Very few people have never heard of the Internet; however most people have either used the Internet occasionally or frequently. It doesn't take much to know that the Internet has attracted an enormous amount of attention the past few years.

What would cause thousands of companies, millions of people and virtually every major country in the world to invest millions of dollars into the Internet? An even better question is what would caused something that operated for nearly 20 years without much public interest to grow to such overwhelming popularity in 6 short years? What truly is all this fuss about?

Some believe it's the speed and wide variety of information found on the net that has made it so popular. Others say it's the ease one can access and publish information on the Internet while others just believe it is a fad. No matter what people say, they can't deny the Internet's tremendous growth rate and current level of popularity in this and other countries.

Who uses it?

In fact, if you have not heard or browsed the Internet, it is not the fault of the Internet. It just isn't that complicated or isolated. Furthermore, anyone with a computer, phone line, modem, and an ISP can connect and even publish on the Internet. However to publish you will have to get to know some Basic Terms such as HTML, HTTP, URL, and others. From young to old, millions of companies, organization, and individuals have published with great success.

Just look around. As my mom says, "Everything has gone www.com crazy." Don't get me wrong the Internet has its complex side. It is a well thought out network with lots of technical languages and protocols that make it work. But that complexity has simply made it easier for the average person to use. From
doctors, lawyers, professors, scientist to hobbyist, housewives and elementary students all have found something of value on the Internet.

Its Benefits:

The Internet's speed, vast resources, and its ability to directly communicate with others are its greatest benefits. Because the Internet uses the quickness of computers to transmit its data, information can travel at tremendous speeds. Speed is not the only benefit. The Internet uses hundreds of thousands of computers all connected to each other to store vast amounts of information. And finally, because the Internet allows for individuals to have specific electronic mail addresses, people can easily communicate with one another.

The Internet is considered by many to be superior to the best and biggest libraries in the county. This superiority exists primarily due to the thousands of organizations, companies and individuals publishing on the Internet. With such ease of publishing and the wide variety of publishers, there is almost no subject left off the Internet. The Internet's ability to deliver this vast amount of information has drawn even more users. Not having to wait for a book, newspaper, or magazine publisher to review and send an author's manuscript to a printing press to be bound or printed eliminates the time it would normally take to publish something. Instead of reading a medical breakthrough in next month's journal, it can be published on the Internet instantly. A breaking news event can be published almost immediately after the event occurs. People don't have to wait until the morning paper to read about an event. This part of the Internet alone has helped make the Internet a technological breakthrough.

Even finding not so current information can be a breeze using the Internet. Driving to a library and searching for possibly hours just to find some specific information is a task many of us have experienced. With the Internet you can sit in the convenience of your home and search (surf) to find information faster than going to a library.

Theoretically, the information on the Internet can travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles/sec.). Realistically, we know that this speed is nearly impossible due mainly to the large number of people using the Internet, and the limitation of the phone system. However the Internet's speed is much faster than traditional means of gathering news and reporting information.
Communication is a huge benefit of the Internet. Many people use the Internet to simple send messages and nothing else. Whether it be by news groups, chat rooms, or the most popular method E-mail, communicating over the Internet has developed vast appeal and usage. Millions of people around the globe use E-mail to communicate everyday. They all place great value on the convenience of sending and receiving E-mail. I am one of its biggest fans. E-mail can be sent and retrieved by its recipient almost instantly. The message never has to be printed or physically mailed to get to it's destination. Furthermore, the cost is considerably less than a thirty-two cent stamp and is delivered a lot faster.

With the invention of the Internet phone, some people can now even talk across the Internet just like on a voice phone but without paying long distance charges. It is just a fact; the time it takes to send a letter or reply to a phone message is no match for E-mail's speed and convenience.

How did the Internet begin?

The Internet's history is not very complicated nor that long. It may surprise you to know that the Internet began 25 years ago as an experiment of the U.S. Defense Department. In fact, it was not originally designed for the public's personal use. The original goal of the Internet was to establish a system to safeguard the exchange of information among different government agencies in the event of war. With no one computer or person controlling the Internet, the enemy could not destroy our means of communication with just one military strike. Today this unique feature of the Internet remains constant and part of its success. No one person or organization controls or heads the Internet. It is basically hosted by thousands of individual computers that have registered with the NSF (National Science Foundation) for an Internet address.

In 1991 there were only 100 host computers or sites. Today this number exceeds half a million and is constantly growing. The Internet has certainly seen tremendous growth in just the past 3 to 6 years.

What really caused the Internet's tremendous growth spurt was the invention of something that made the Internet both easy to use and easy to transmit multimedia (graphics, sound, and video). The invention was a software product now known as a browser. In 1991 in an European physics lab, an invention was made that enabled words in a sentence to be clicked on and an action then performed. This invention today is know as hypertext. Hypertext is when words or pictures are clicked on that takes the place of typing commands into the computer. This single
With this invention came new users from small kids to senior adults who felt comfortable riding the information super highway. This has forever changed the way average people use the Internet. Today we find people reading magazines, buying products, listening to radio stations, talking to friends, writing messages, playing games, even watching video all through the use of the Internet.

**Conclusion**

With almost each passing day, a new product or tool is invented or improved upon to help people use the Internet. However millions of people still are not using the Internet. This is due mainly to the lack of either a computer or an Internet service provider. Nevertheless the Internet continues to surprise even the experts with its tremendous growth and popularity. Its tremendous influence on today's society is certain to be felt for many years to come.

**Internet Article Questions**

**Directions**: Answer each of the following questions in your own words using the article "The Internet: What's the fuss?" on the Internet.

1. What has made the Internet so popular?
2. What does ISP stand for and give one example?
3. What does HTML, URL, and HTTP mean?
4. The speed of the Internet is measured in (bps). What does bps mean?
5. Why has publishing on the Internet attracted so many people?
6. E-mail is a big part of the Internet. What does e-mail look like and name one advantage to using e-mail?
7. How many years ago was it before the Internet got it's start?
8. What was the main reason it started?
9. A browser is what?
10. What are some of the reasons (name 2) for people not connecting to the Internet?

**Part II**

11. Give an example of a real URL.
12. When text are in a different color on a web site, that is referred to as what?

13. What is a browser and what is the most popular browser today?

14. Name a different browser than the one in question 13.

15. How are computer messages sent across the telephone?