

Computers and the World Wide Web

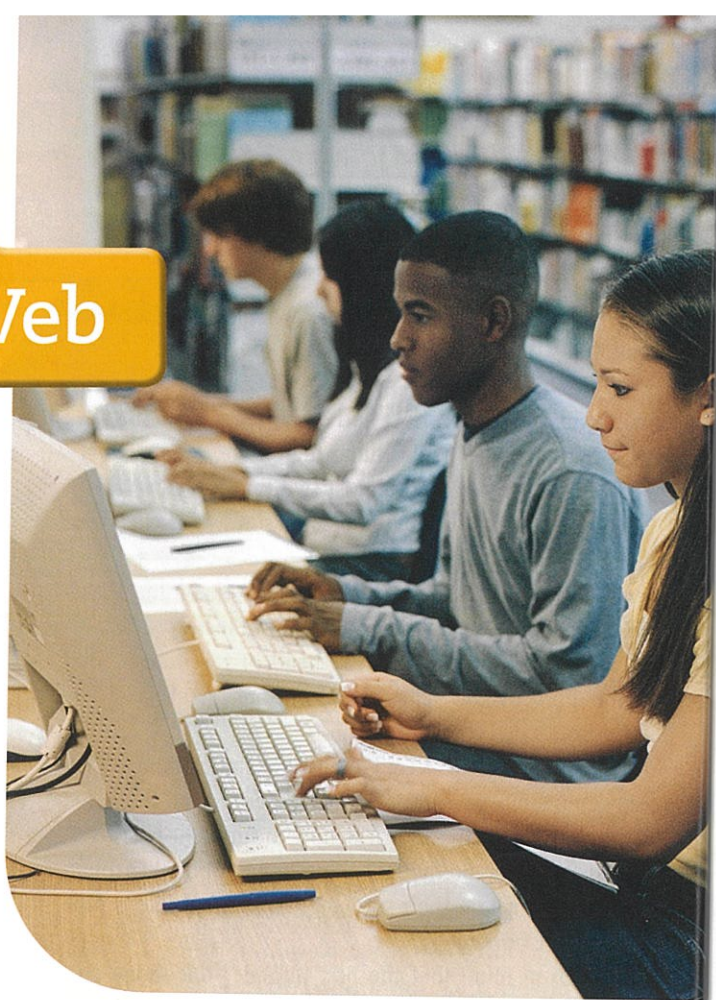
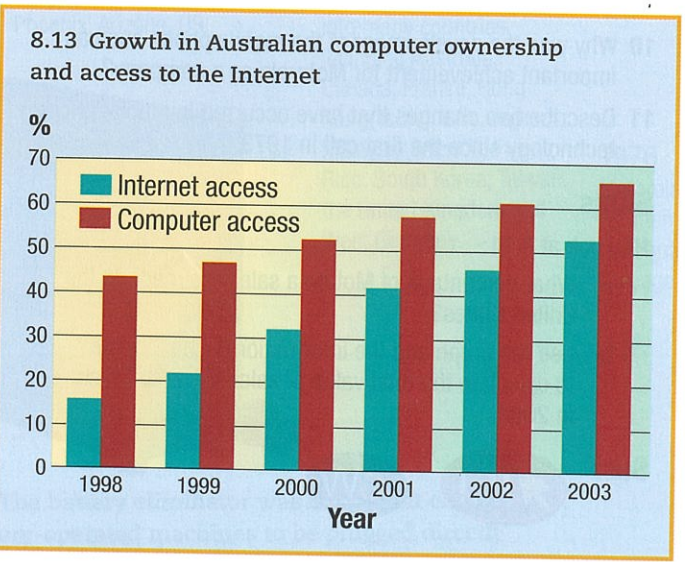
After the radio was invented in 1895 it took 40 years for the audience in the United States to reach 50 million. After personal computers were first generally available in 1981 it took only 15 years to develop an audience of 50 million. After the Internet was introduced to the general public in 1995, it took just four years before 50 million Americans were regularly online. We accept technology quickly into today's society.

TECHNOLOGY AND COMPUTERS

Computers continue to rapidly increase in speed and power while becoming more compact and user-friendly. They have become important business machines as well as entertainment and educational tools.

The development of the Internet has meant that computers have become an essential item in many homes around the world. In 1990, just 22 countries were connected to the Internet. Today all the countries of the world are connected.

These technologies have changed the way the world operates. A range of different-sized companies—not just large ones—are now able to advertise at a global level, money can be transferred around the globe quickly and easily, and information can be accessed from a wide variety of sources.



8.12 The Internet has become an essential global communication.

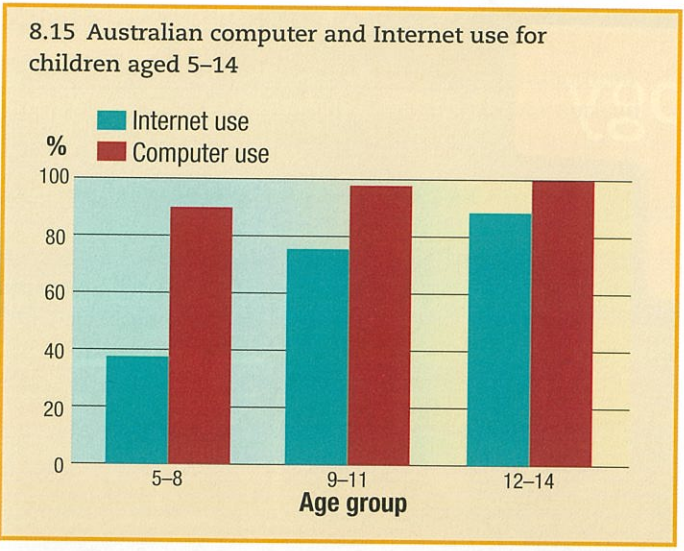
WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

During the 1950s the average computer would have been as big as a lounge room. Due to the size and cost of early computers only governments owned them. At the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US Department of State, there was concern that their computers could be destroyed by a nuclear bomb. To protect their computers and the information contained within them, the authorities set about designing a computer system where information could be accessible from any computer, even if one part of the system was destroyed. An early type of military Internet began in 1969.

Work continued until a computer network used by universities, colleges and US military researchers was launched in 1987. Over the years a lot of small networks were developed. In 1995 the term 'Internet' was being used to describe the World Wide Web, as more and more networks joined together and access to the Internet was offered to private companies. This marked the start of the Internet as we now know it.

8.14 The worldwide Internet population projections from a 2004 base of 934 million

Projection for 2005	Projection for 2006	Projection for 2007
1.07 billion	1.21 billion	1.35 billion



SKILLS MASTER

Unlocking the WWW

With the growing size of the World Wide Web it is useful to know a little about the information sources that are available, and to know that anyone can publish anything on the Web at any time. It is essential that you assess any sources you use from the Web in terms of their validity and reliability.

The biggest clue about the information source is in the URL or website location. Table 8.16 gives an overview of the types of organisations that publish resources on the Web.

8.16 Web addresses: unlocking the URL

URL suffix	URL example	Host	Characteristics of host
.edu	http://www.une.edu.au	Indicates a school, college or university	An educational institution, generally a reliable source
.gov	http://cia.gov	Indicates a government institution or organisation	A government or government department, generally a reliable source
.org	http://redcross.org.uk	Indicates a non-profit organisation	A non-government organisation, generally reliable
.com	http://nike.com	Indicates a commercial institution, company or privately purchased Web space	Ideas on private pages vary greatly and need checking for reliability

Activities

Knowledge

1 Complete the table below using statistics from the text.

Device	Time taken to reach 50 million users in the United States
Radio	
Personal computer	
Internet	

- 2 Name three areas where computers are important.
- 3 What advantage has the development of the Internet had for both large and small companies?
- 4 What was the name of the government organisation that was responsible for developing the Internet?
- 5 What was the main reason behind the development of the computer system that marked the start of the Internet?
- 6 Name the organisations that were first to use computer networks.
- 7 When was the term 'Internet' first used? What does the Internet actually describe?

Skills

- 8 Refer to 8.13:
 - a What percentage of Australian households had access to computers in:
 - i 1998
 - ii 2002
 - iii 2003?
 - b Calculate the percentage change in access to the Internet between 1998 and 2003.
 - c What percentage of people who had computer access in 2003 did not have access to the Internet?
- 9 Refer to 8.15. What percentage of Australian children aged 5-8 use the Internet? Give one possible reason why this percentage is less than the 12-14 group.
- 10 Using the Internet as a research tool, list three websites that you think would be useful to study each of the following aspects of globalisation:
 - what globalisation is
 - large transitional companies
 - protests about globalisation.

List the websites you find under the following headings: web address; name of institution, organisation or company; type of information available.

Application

- 11 **Class discussion:** Why is society quick to adopt new technology?
- 12 Organise a class debate on the following topic: 'The Internet is the greatest source of information in the world.'

