

Bits and Bytes

Warning: Hackers can intercept any information transmitted over an insecure Web page. Don't send your credit card number through cyberspace unless you're sure the page is secure. (You'll be told if it is.)

Kiosks: Soon all the campuses will be doing it. Students can stop by one of the ports to find where they're going, look up campus phone numbers, check out coming events, access their financial aid records, grades and class schedules and even send and receive e-mail and faxes. Some schools already keyed in: San Francisco State U., U. of Southern California, Kent State U., Western Michigan U., U. of Texas, Austin, U. of Pittsburgh.

New-age correspondence courses: New York's New School for Social Research began putting classes completely online in spring 1994. The program, called Distance Instruction for Adult Learners (DIAL), is up to 38 courses, with students from all over the world. DIAL even offers online hangouts for faculty and students to "get together" informally. Schools such as the U. of Pennsylvania and Duke U. have online classes that are only supplemented with live instruction.

Beam me up: Increasing in popularity are teleclasses. Satellites link students from different schools with each other and with lecturers — often experts who wouldn't be available for individual classes — for interactive discussion sessions.

Get off my lap! A plan to require all students to own laptops met protest by students and professors at Wake Forest U., N.C. The plan, which was approved by the board of trustees and will start with the '96 freshman class, includes other programs but would entail a hefty tuition hike. Protesters object to not only the cost but also the threat to the school's liberal arts commitment. Some schools, like Virginia Tech, already require students in certain majors to own computers.

Tomorrow, the world!



one another in ways people my year didn't exactly understand," Lowman says.

Late-night chats between friends sprawled across dorm-room floors aren't extinct, but they're no more common than late-night chats between friends across a country or continent, connected by wires and faceless equipment.

"Suddenly everyone was obsessed with computers, and it wasn't just because they were writing long papers," Lowman says. "Doing anything that

wasn't word processing used to be a novelty. Now it's a necessity — that's how people deal with one another, and if you can't, you're in trouble."

Hello? Is anybody in there?

On a huge university campus — and Michigan is the 16th largest in the country — finding ways to interact with people can be a point of stress in itself. Wainess says he couldn't have successfully conducted a campuswide campaign without techno-tools.

"I could talk to dozens or hundreds of people at once and really get my message across," Wainess says. "It's so different from trying to meet people in person. It will never replace it, but it changes the whole structure and function of face-to-face interaction."

Some campus life observers worry that students will forgo flesh friends for on-line connections. Although at best the Internet should only supplement personal dealings, critics agree that students have the capability to go into Internet seclusion yet still take care of daily routines.

Certainly, 'net riders can make and maintain electronic relationships. But there's a lot more. At some schools they can register for classes, get transcripts, peruse library holdings, cruise document databases for research, turn in written homework, take exams, attend professors' office hours and even "talk" with classmates in techno-discussion sessions.

Internet options also allow people to place orders and pay bills — things that normally require some venturing into the outside world — with a keyboard and terminal instead of car keys or bus fare.

Michael De Paola, a senior at Johns Hopkins U., says he even learned to fix his car's brakes — a decidedly hands-on activity — over the Internet.

"I just wasn't in the mood to ask anyone, so I didn't," De Paola says. "I floated a message on a newsgroup that said, 'How do I fix my brakes?' and about 50 people replied. The directions were perfect, probably a lot better than if I had asked a real person."

For De Paola, the convenience of organizing his life from his desk outweighs most benefits of personal presence. Last year, he lived off-campus in Baltimore but spent many weekends at home in New York.

"It was great. I could hand in homework from hundreds of miles away, and I could talk with my professors from anywhere."

De Paola's use of the Internet points to a question college students and administrators around the country are raising with increasing frequency: How does new technology change the college experience, and how much change is too much?

Please don't call on me

Archie C. Epps III, longtime dean of students at Harvard U.'s Harvard College, says he worries that Internet communication takes away from a key component of the "college experience": learning to work and deal with people.

"You cannot develop into a mature person if you don't learn to look someone in the eye or hear a tone of voice," Epps says. "College teaches valuable life skills that students need to learn because they are pre-professional pre-adults. The Internet, when overused, allows people to hide from those things."

Some students say the lack of life skills necessary to succeed in an Internet social world is part of the charm. De Paola, for example, says he would much rather e-mail a professor than talk face to face.

"I get nervous and intimidated, and e-mailing is

Have a day Sick of :-)? Everybody knows the basic smiley. But have you tried these?

8:) Bow in hair smiley

:-)8 Bow tie smiley

:-! Bronx cheer smiley

0:-) Innocent smiley

(-: Left-handed smiley

:-\$ Orthodontics smiley

@->->- Rose

=:-() Scared smiley

:-@ Screaming smiley

:-8 Smiley who just ate a pickle

C1 Sombrero smiley