

much less formal," he says. "You can figure out what you want to say and keep trying until you get it right. I can be more myself over e-mail. One professor joked with me and called me a goofball. I just don't think that's the kind of conversation we could have had if we were in his office."

The meek, it seems, have inherited the world (Wide Web?). The Internet scene is rapidly growing. Some estimate 20 million users worldwide and a growth of 1 million per month.

A recent American Association of State Colleges and Universities survey of big and small schools found that 93 percent of the institutions (100 percent of the large ones) have Internet access and 99.5 percent have e-mail.

For some, the access makes for practical time-savers like checking whether a library book is in without trekking across campus only to find it gone.

For others, the access provides too much temptation — and the techno-play can become addictive.

"It's just so easy to get into and so easy to abuse," says a U. of California, Berkeley, sophomore who was required to withdraw from school last spring because he failed three fall courses.

"I had just gotten to college and had never used e-mail or any of that stuff before," he says. "It all seemed so fun and harmless and collegiate. Then I met a girl on-line, and we used to talk all night, every night. I hardly slept, and I never did my work because I just couldn't wait to get back to my computer."

While the student was on required leave, his account was shut down, and he says he's kicked his e-mail habit. But despite the extremeness of his case, he says he knows he could get caught in the 'net again.

"You can meet so many people in such a short amount of time — people you know you could

never walk up and say hi to," he says. "People fight for attention, but they fight from a level playing field. Nobody knows anything about you except whatever name you're using, so you fight to be witty and cool — good things to judge people on."

At most colleges, Internet accounts are free. They're cheap and easy ways to keep in touch with old high school friends. Then college friends across campus. Or across the hall. New acquaintances enter the picture through newsgroups or chat lines, where users with similar interests weigh in on topics.

Help! I've fallen, and I can't get off-line

It's easy to get sucked into Internet culture, says De Paola. And once you start, he adds, it's even easier to get stuck.

De Paola, a computer science major, will graduate in December. He's starting to think about jobs. But more importantly, he says, he's found a good, cheap on-line service that will save him from the withdrawal new graduates face when their accounts are cut off.

"It's funny, but that's the most important thing to me right now," he says. "I absolutely feel like I'm dependent on it to be happy with my life."

Wainess, too, says he depends on the 'net, but the manifestation in his life is a little different. "My account allows me to stretch my day by about five hours," he says. "There are so many things I can do that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise."

Wainess has also been able to streamline his thesis research — on health-care initiatives during the Nixon presidency — by searching online.

"I certainly won't be avoiding dusty library stacks altogether, but I can't believe what's possible out there," he says.

Wainess had been wishing he could go to the Nixon Library in California. The next time he was



Guest Expert: Elvira

On Technology

"I was in a head-on collision on the information super-highway and haven't been the same since."

on the 'net, he surfed — practically accidentally — right into its database.

"I'm not by nature computer-literate, but if you can't use this stuff, it's widespread enough now that people who can use it will pass you by," he says. "It shouldn't be more than a supplement to hands-on stuff, and it will never replace human interaction in a healthy world, but now it's certainly something you need to do things well and quickly."

Really, I'm a people person

Yvonne Chiu, a '94 Dartmouth College graduate and former editor of Dartmouth's daily newspaper, says too much Internet actually pushed her back toward human contact.

"I got to the point where I just couldn't stand it," Chiu says. "I'd get 100 random messages a day from people who were too lazy to pick up the phone and call. At Dartmouth, nobody calls anybody anymore unless it's an emergency. I had to send messages to people telling them that if they wanted me, they should call me."

"You can do all kinds of things with the Internet. But you can never replace the effort that goes into a real conversation, and that's what college students are missing out on now."

Tara Arden-Smith, a Harvard U. senior, is executive editor of The Harvard Crimson. She'd leave an e-mail address, but she can't work the new-fangled technology.

Netiquette

Emily may not have ever posted, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't mind your manners when you're online.

- **DON'T SHOUT!!!** Typing in all caps is considered rude. Put asterisks around a word to emphasize a point.

- **Anybody home?** Check e-mail often — it's as important as clearing and returning phone messages.

- **Do you like to read babble?** None of us do. Keep paragraphs and messages short and to the point.

- **What are you talking about?** Use the "re" or "memo" lines — it's nice to know what you're getting when you open a file.

- **Keep your cool** — flaming (sending scathing replies to others on the network) hurts. Be nice.

- **That's not funny.** Sarcasm and humor don't always translate when you're not face to face. Use symbols to convey your point.

"I had to send messages telling them that if they wanted me, they should call me."

YVONNE CHIU,
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

I chose my college for the personal attention.

