

Web cameras bring dorms into focus

WebDorm places 24-hour cameras in dormitories of selected college students

By Amy Boytz
Oregon Daily Emerald

Imagine yourself sitting in your residence hall room, studying or talking on the phone or maybe hanging out with that special someone. And now imagine yourself on camera, broadcast throughout the World Wide Web.

This is what happens on WebDorm, a new program that shows what college life is all about. The creators of the program install web cameras in residence hall rooms of various colleges and universities and follow the lives of individual students throughout the course of one semester.

"Our mission is to break down any stereotypes of what it's like to live in a dorm and be in col-

lege," said Allison Mahoney, marketing manager for CollegeWeb.com, which is the parent company for WebDorm. "[We want] to show a realistic view of college dorms."

Upon its launch on Feb. 1, WebDorm focused on eight students in the New England area. Throughout the next few weeks, the program will begin to feature students in the Great Lakes area, the Midwest and West. As of yet, there are no Oregon students involved. But the number of national applicants is constantly increasing, Mahoney said.

Students are selected by their interests and personalities, and the program strives to select well-rounded participants, she added. She said they also must be mature enough to handle a 24-hour camera in their rooms.

The way the program works is simple: web cameras are placed in a participants' dorm room,

and snapshots are taken every 30 seconds. These photos are instantly placed on the web, and visitors to the WebDorm site can watch their activity. WebDorm participants are also required to keep an online journal of their experiences and participate in two hours of online chat each week.

Though the idea of broadcasting your life online may sound crazy, Mahoney said the WebDorm participants enjoy sharing their experiences.

"Anyone who applies is obviously comfortable with themselves," she said. "Usually they have really enjoyed their college experience and going to their particular college, and they want to share [the experience] with other people. They want to give other people an idea of what it's like to go to their school." The

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Futurama

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said.

One thing Earley could say about "Futurama" is Fry, the main character will not have all of the flexibility of some of the other characters.

"Fry is a human," Earley said, "and he is limited to the reality of what humans do."

According to Groening in a recent interview with Wired magazine, this makes life hard for Fry.

"The themes: If you are a loser, is it possible to reinvent yourself? How do you deal with the desire for youth, for the return of dead loved ones, and what does it mean to be finite in the universe?" Groening said.

Groening told Wired that in the future, there will be no Pepsi, no Microsoft, no Intel. He said there will be an Internet, but it won't be any faster than it

is today. There will be modern celebrities, but their disembodied heads will be in jars (including Leonard Nimoy in the first episode).

He admits the show may cause a bit of a craze among already-notorious "The Simpsons" and science-fiction fans.

"The weird intensity of fans is fascinating," Groening said. "We succeed when we give them something worthy of their devotion."

That's exactly what Fox is looking for, Earley said.

"They would hope every show would become as popular as 'The Simpsons,'" he said.

If Groening's résumé is any indication — 15 years of "Life in Hell" and a hit with his first try at TV animation with "The Simpsons" — "Futurama" should be a future Fox staple.

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