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Breakdown of the 100 recreational minutes the average college student spends online:

- Browsing: 39 minutes
- E-mail: 35 minutes
- Games: 8 minutes
- Chatting: 7 minutes
- Usenet activities: 5 minutes
- FTP: 4 minutes
- MUD activities: 1 minute
- Cybersex: less than 1 minute

SOURCE: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Scott Ains Emerald

Internet

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service and, ultimately, God.

"It's all part of the climate of having to escape something," he said.

A recent study of 1,300 college students from eight different college campuses backs up Lewis' claims that high Internet use can provide harmful side effects. Researchers at the Troy, N.Y.-based Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute found that nearly 10 percent of respondents said the Net is affecting their grades, sleep time and social interactions.

Keith Anderson, a staff psychologist at Rensselaer's Counseling Center, said Internet dependence is the same as a dependence to any other substance. As the student uses the Internet more and more, he or she withdraws further from school and social activities.

"Eventually you see students interact with others less and become less social," Anderson said.

The reasons for online addiction are easy to trace, he added. Colleges

nationwide are racing to build wired campuses with faster connection speeds and more academic services online, which has become a selling point to prospective students. Students are spending more time on fast and easy services, including class registration, distance education classes and class assignment Web pages, such as the University's Blackboard pages.

Anderson warned that there is not always a correlation between high Internet use and online dependency because "some of the students manage quite well when their lives become unbalanced, (and) some students cannot."

He added that Internet addiction is so new, many victims may not recognize inordinate online hours as the cause of their anxiety or depression.

"They don't identify the Internet as being part of the problem," he said. "Nobody is coming out saying, 'This is ruining my life.'"

Ron Miyaguchi, outreach coordinator for the University's Counseling and Testing Center, agreed. He has not seen any cases of Internet dependency so far. But Miyaguchi said his case load might increase in the next few years as Internet use grows.

"This is a very new medium. It has the potential to be a big phenomenon," he said.

The Counseling and Testing Center offers a set of group discussions and outreach services on a passel of different topics. So far, he said, there have not been any requests for Internet dependency groups.

Brooks Harrop, a University sophomore studying biology and neuroscience, spends an average of two hours a day on the Internet doing non-academic work.

"It doesn't detract from my courses or studies," he said. "It's a utility. People use the microwave a lot, but they probably don't know how much they use."

However, Harrop thinks Lewis may have a point with MediaDetox. Harrop knows a few people who he thinks have a problem managing their time on the Internet; however, Harrop agreed with Anderson that these people probably wouldn't admit they have a problem.

"People being addicted to the Net is a pretty new issue, and the problem is that they won't believe it," he said. "It took years for people to start talking about the harms of cigarettes."

Meanwhile, Lewis said he will keep plugging away at raising awareness of Internet dependency. His discussions on the media will run every Wednesday until the end of the term. He is also considering alternative ways to reach students.

He said his patience will persevere.

"I think I may be ahead of the curve," he said. "I have a sense of what it will be like in 10 years."

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