**Sources Template What Will The Internet Bring Us?**

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| **Document A:** What the Internet Will Bring Us, William Deverell  Deverell, W. (1999, June 24). What the Internet Will Bring Us. Retrieved from <http://origins.osu.edu/history-news/what-internet-will-bring-us>  **What the Internet Will Bring Us**  **by William Deverell on Jun 24, 1999**  What is the internet?  Is it a technological godsend? Is the internet the ultimate solution to problems of (pick one, or pick many) communication, commerce, travel, learning, teaching, thinking?  Much of the promise of the internet is no doubt real. But maybe some of the claims about what it can, or will, do are exaggerated? Maybe a little historical perspective is in order?  The internet is the transcontinental railroad of our time. Think about it. Like the internet, which the Department of Defense created in 1969, the transcontinental railroad (completed exactly a hundred years earlier) brought technology to bear on people’s lives in new and remarkable ways. When the Union Pacific met up with the Central Pacific at Promontory Point in 1869, a single track had been thrown across the nation and America’s two coasts forever linked.  Just like the internet, the railroad opened new worlds of work and commerce. Just like the internet, it obliterated older notions of time and space. People could travel places they never would have imagined going, and they could do so with remarkable speed. Americans connected with one another differently than they had before. Many saw the railroad as a message from God to His most favored nation, announcing the arrival of the Railroad Age.  Now we live in the Internet Age. And so much of that hyperbolic language of the railroad past is being assigned to the promise of the internet. The internet will do this, it will do that: it will make the world better (richer, faster, smarter) for everyone, for all time. Yet if we take the historical analogy seriously, maybe we should be a little cautious about suggesting what the technological sinews of our age will do for us.  A hundred and thirty-one years ago, the writer Henry George wondered, in a famous essay, “What the Railroad Will Bring Us.” He questioned whether all the hype about the transcontinental railroad (“this railroad that we have looked for, hoped for, prayed for so long”) could possibly come true. Like the internet, the railroad did change, speed up, and alter the world. But no matter the wishful thinking, it couldn’t possibly be a force for universal good.  The railroad could, and did, create immense, almost unfathomable, fortunes overnight, but of course for only the very few. What the technology titans did with their wealth was not at all clear or foreordained. Like the internet, the railroad could only be as “good” as the larger society determined. If its owners and supporters and regulators and users wished it to be a force of good, then it had a chance to be so. The technology itself didn’t think or feel or act. The railroad itself didn’t believe in democracy or equality or egalitarian distribution of goods and services.  The railroad, like the internet today, was not just one thing. Nor is the internet. Both sprang from complex collections of ideas and hardware, of labor, capital and vision. The excitement and the promise of the technology was, and is, almost palpable. But there is a catch. “We cannot,” Henry George cautioned, “escape the great law of compensation which exacts some loss for every gain.”  Henry George knew the railroad for the good it could provide; but he knew as well that its beneficence would not be equally distributed throughout an unequal society. That, he suggested, would be asking far, far too much of technology.  We should keep this old, but still timely, caution in mind as we move through the Internet Age. Assumptions and presumptions about the ways in which the internet will “do good” must be accompanied by watchdog vigilance. Technology and democracy do not necessarily attract one another. We must insist upon their affinity if the Internet Age is to live up to its promise.  **Word Bank:**   * Obliterated: destroy, wipe out * Hyperbolic: exaggerated * Unfathomable: incapable of being fully explored or understood * Foreordained: (of God or fate) appoint or decree something beforehand * Egalitarian: relating to or believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities * Affinity: relationship by marriage |

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| **Document B:** The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective, Manuel Castells  Castells, M. (2014). The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective. In *Change: 19 Key Essays on How the Internet Is Changing Our Lives*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/>  **The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective**  The Internet is the decisive technology of the Information Age, as the electrical engine was the vector of technological transformation of the Industrial Age. This global network of computer networks, largely based nowadays on platforms of wireless communication, provides ubiquitous capacity of multimodal, interactive communication in chosen time, transcending space. The Internet is not really a new technology: its ancestor, the Arpanet, was first deployed in 1969 (Abbate 1999). But it was in the 1990s when it was privatized and released from the control of the U.S. Department of Commerce that it diffused around the world at extraordinary speed: in 1996 the first survey of Internet users counted about 40 million; in 2013 they are over 2.5 billion, with China accounting for the largest number of Internet users. Furthermore, for some time the spread of the Internet was limited by the difficulty to lay out land-based telecommunications infrastructure in the emerging countries. This has changed with the explosion of wireless communication in the early twenty-first century. Indeed, in 1991, there were about 16 million subscribers of wireless devices in the world, in 2013 they are close to 7 billion (in a planet of 7.7 billion human beings). Counting on the family and village uses of mobile phones, and taking into consideration the limited use of these devices among children under five years of age, we can say that humankind is now almost entirely connected, albeit with great levels of inequality in the bandwidth as well as in the efficiency and price of the service.  At the heart of these communication networks the Internet ensures the production, distribution, and use of digitized information in all formats. According to the study published by Martin Hilbert in Science (Hilbert and López 2011), 95 percent of all information existing in the planet is digitized and most of it is accessible on the Internet and other computer networks.  The speed and scope of the transformation of our communication environment by Internet and wireless communication has triggered all kind of utopian and dystopian perceptions around the world.  The media aggravate the distorted perception by dwelling into scary reports on the basis of anecdotal observation and biased commentary. If there is a topic in which social sciences, in their diversity, should contribute to the full understanding of the world in which we live, it is precisely the area that has come to be named in academia as Internet Studies. Because, in fact, academic research knows a great deal on the interaction between Internet and society, on the basis of methodologically rigorous empirical research conducted in a plurality of cultural and institutional contexts. Any process of major technological change generates its own mythology. In part because it comes into practice before scientists can assess its effects and implications, so there is always a gap between social change and its understanding. For instance, media often report that intense use of the Internet increases the risk of alienation, isolation, depression, and withdrawal from society. In fact, available evidence shows that there is either no relationship or a positive cumulative relationship between the Internet use and the intensity of sociability. We observe that, overall, the more sociable people are, the more they use the Internet. And the more they use the Internet, the more they increase their sociability online and offline, their civic engagement, and the intensity of family and friendship relationships, in all cultures—with the exception of a couple of early studies of the Internet in the 1990s, corrected by their authors later (Castells 2001; Castells et al. 2007; Rainie and Wellman 2012; Center for the Digital Future 2012 et al.).  **Word Bank**   * Decisive: settling an issue; producing a definite result * Ubiquitous: present, appearing, or found everywhere * Bandwidth: a range of frequencies within a given band, that used for transmitting a signal * Utopian: modeled on or aiming for a state in which everything is perfect; idealistic * Dystopian: relating to or denoting an imagined state or society where there is great suffering or injustice * Anecdotal: not necessarily true or reliable, because based on personal accounts rather than facts or research * Empirical: based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic |
| **Document C:** What the Railroad Will Bring Us, Henry George  George, H. (1868). What the Railroad Will Bring Us. *Overland Monthly*, *1*(4), 297–306.  [https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/ahj1472.1-01.004/\*](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/ahj1472.1-01.004/*)  **What the Railroad Will Bring Us**  What is the railroad to do for us? — this railroad that we have looked for, hoped for, prayed for so long?  Much as the matter has been thought about and talked about; many as have been the speeches made and the newspaper articles written on the subject, there are few of us who really comprehend all it will do. We are so used to the California of the stage-coach, widely separated from the rest of the world, that we can hardly realize what the California of the railroad will be — the California netted with iron tracks, and, almost as near in point of time to Chicago and St. Louis, as Virginia City was to San Francisco when the Washoe excitement first commenced, or as Red Bluff is now. All over the State, land is appreciating — fortunes are being made in a day by buying and parceling out Spanish ranches; the Government surveyors and registrars are busy; speculators are grappling the public domain by the hundreds of thousand of acres; while for miles in every direction around San Francisco, ground is being laid off into homestead lots. The new era will be one of great material prosperity, if material prosperity means more people, more houses, more farms and mines, more factories and ships.  The new force to which we principally and primarily look for the development of the future — railroads. This year — during which more has been done in railroad building and railroad projecting than in all previous years combined — the immediate and prospective influence of this new force, the great settler of States and builder up of cities, has first been powerfully felt. This year we have received the first great wave of the coming tide of immigration, the country has filled up more rapidly than for many years before, more new farms have been staked off and more land sold. And this year a spirit of sanguine enterprise has sprung from present prosperity.  It is not only the metropolis that is hopeful. Sacramento, Stockton and Marysville feel the general impulse. Oakland is laying out, or at least surveying, docks which will cast those of Jersey City, if not of Liverpool, into the shade; Vallejo talks of her coming foreign commerce, and is preparing to load the grain of the Sacramento and Napa valleys into ships for all parts of the world; and San Diego is beginning to look forward to the time when she will have steam communication with St. Louis and New Orleans on the one hand, and China and Japan on the other, — and be the second city on the coast. Renewed interest is being taken in mining-new branches of manufacture are being started. All over it is felt that the old era of stage coaches and ox and mule transportation is rapidly passing away, and that the locomotive, soon to penetrate the State in all directions, will in future carry the wheat to the wharf, the ore to the mill, the timber to the mine; supply the deficiency of navigable streams, open up millions of acres of the best fruit and grain lands in the world, and make accessible and workable thousands of rich mines.  In San Francisco the change is especially observable, and no one who walks our streets can fail to be struck with the stirring atmosphere of rapid growth. In the crowded avenues and squares, the bustling business air of the centre, the rapidly rising buildings of the suburbs; in new manufactories, docks and wharves, he will everywhere find evidence that San Francisco is fast rising to the rank of a great metropolis.  **Word Bank:**   * Sanguine: optimistic or positive, especially in an apparently bad or difficult situation |

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| **Document D:** How Railroads Forever Changed the Frontier, James P. Ronda  Ronda, J. P. (2008). How Railroads Forever Changed the Frontier. *American Heritage*, *58*(4).  <https://www.americanheritage.com/how-railroads-forever-changed-frontier#1>  **How Railroads Forever Changed the Frontier**  Half a century after engines touched pilot to pilot at Promontory, Utah, to complete the first transcontinental railroad, the imprint of the Iron Road was nearly everywhere in the American West. Some enthusiastic real estate promoters and railway officials even claimed that the railroads invented the West—or at least the national image of the West.  With the exception of the federal government, no one institution more fully shaped the appearance and character of the West than the railroad. Evidence was everywhere. The presence and power of the railroad could be seen on every farm and ranch, in every booming western city and sleepy tank town, and in the lives of the natives and countless newcomers. A quarter century before that moment at Promontory, Ralph Waldo Emerson envisioned what the railroad might mean for American life. Addressing a Boston audience, he described railroads as “a magician’s rod, in its power to evoke the sleeping energies of land and water.”  Nowhere did Emerson’s prediction seem more true than in the American West. Writing about Seward County, Nebraska, at the end of the 1880s, local historian W. W. Cox portrayed a West transformed by the railroad when he informed his readers that “a new railway has been commenced and completed, . . . opening up a great new artery of traffic, and bringing in its train joy and gladness for thousands of our people.” Joy and gladness were invisible emotions, but Cox assured his Seward County friends that a new railroad was “building up three new villages along the way, and infusing new life and activity into a fourth, and adding new life to the city.” Cox was sure that the earth itself would be touched by Emerson’s magic rod.  But the railroad did more than simply give the West a new look. Trains and tracks out beyond Chicago and St. Louis symbolized progress, prosperity, and the promise of the future. For many Americans, railroads and the West seemed the embodiment of the American dream. Even if some westerners questioned the dream and feared its consequences, no one doubted that railroads in the West represented a power for change that was undeniable and perhaps even irresistible.  Some 20 years after he watched the golden spike ceremony at Promontory, Union Pacific contractor Sidney Dillon confessed that “none of us dreamed that the future of the Pacific roads depended on the business that would grow out of the peopling the deserts it traversed.” Visions of Pacific trade did not vanish, but they were increasingly supplemented by strategies to extract what the interior West grew, grazed, or mined, and turn them to profit. The West could provide the things that other things were made of.  That business—the wheat, cattle, and minerals that flowed out of the West—also passed through the station gateway. If the actual objects were loaded somewhere down the rail line, it was at the depot that the market information began the process of turning nature into commodities. Markets need information and the depot was “information central.” Just as the natural world of northern forests became lumber for sale, western nature was transformed to become bread and meat for eastern markets. The railroad was at the heart of all those transformations.  Emerson was right. The railroad was the magician’s rod in the West. But prophets and reformers in the century after Emerson shifted the image from magic want to something more sinister, perhaps something like Frank Norris’s The Octopus.  Whatever the image, railroads had shaped the West.  **Word Bank:**   * Supplemented: add an extra element or amount to * Depot: a place for the storage of large quantities of equipment, food, or some other commodity * Prophets: a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God |