

Broadband Hub

Connecting Innovative Voices

Digital Divide

April 14, 2008

Here's a reality check to put into perspective all of my recent entries about the volumes of people who would rather work from home than the office, and watch *The Office* from a laptop.

Millions of people right here in the U.S. still cannot take part in this fast growing use of broadband technology, because they do not have a broadband connection. And I'm not talking about elitist "get away from it all" types who opt to make their homes quiet zones because they are overly connected at work. I'm talking about America's poor: today only 21% of people earning less than \$30,000 a year have broadband Internet connections in their homes. Three times as many affluent individuals have high-speed access.

Those numbers were disclosed last week by the nonprofit [One Economy Corp.](#), which has launched a national campaign, called [Bring IT Home](#), to help more low income Americans get high-speed Internet access. One Economy's position is that high-speed Internet access has become so ubiquitous, that those who don't have it are starting to look a little like those who didn't have telephones in the days before the Internet replaced so much telephone communication. Sure, you could opt not to have a telephone, but if you were looking for a job, trying to be an active member of your community, or just raising a family and coordinating all the birthday parties and soccer games that come with that role, you were severely disadvantaged without one.

Some may argue that at a time when many families go without adequate shelter, lobbying for better technology is inappropriate. As someone whose work revolves around the country's growing dependence on the Internet, I disagree: a reliable broadband connection is far more critical to helping families work and educate their children effectively than the telephone ever was.