

## Globalisation and TECNOLOGY



There are many sections and subsections when dealing with the issue of globalization. This article would look at how technology plays an important role – both negative and positive – as we look to the future.

People all over the world have high hopes that they would lead healthier lives, have greater social freedoms, increase their knowledge and be productive in their livelihoods. At the same time, there is a greater fear of the unknown. There is an element of risk attached to change; the more changes that take place the less comfortable we feel. If things change where we don't have any control, then our fear is even greater.

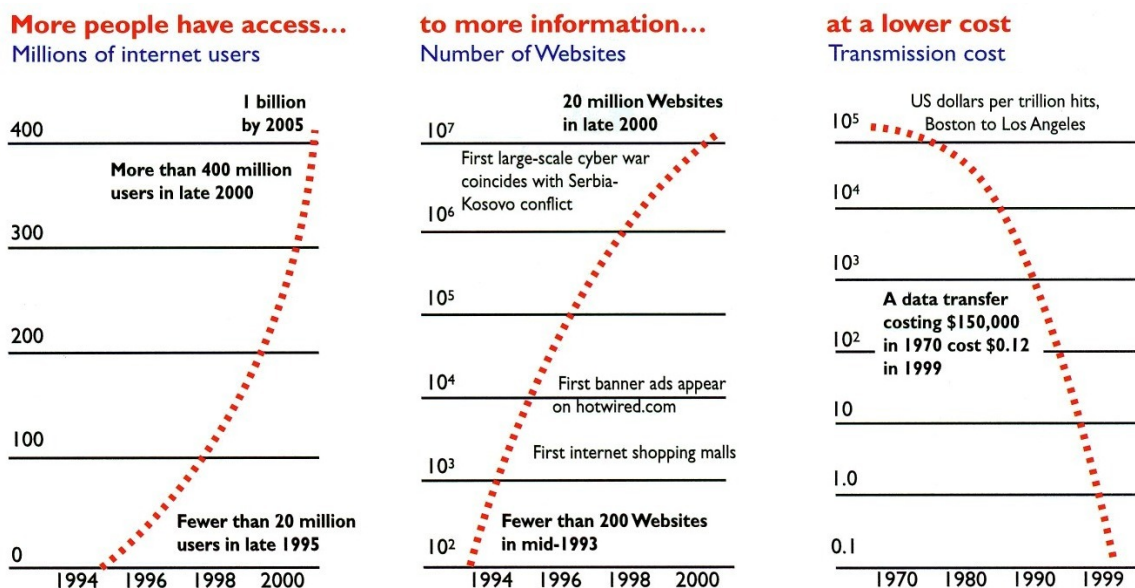
This is where we in St. Vincent & the Grenadines find ourselves; the integration of markers, enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before, coupled with rapid advancement in technologies that we don't understand, creates a new paradigm known as the "network age"

In this age, technology is not inherently good or bad – the outcome depends on how it is used. Some people argue that technology is a reward of development creating a digital divide just like the income divide we have now, but I'm more inclined to suggest that most technologies are tools for human development enabling people to live longer, lead healthier lives and enjoy a better standard of living. I would say technology is like education-it enables people to lift themselves out of poverty. Thus technology is a tool for, not just a reward of, growth and development.

So how does this affect us here in St. Vincent & the Grenadines? The most obvious technological change we've seen is the introduction of internet access. More and more businesses, schools and homes are connected and with the opening up of the telecommunications sector, choice has brought the cost of access down. Two laws associated with this particular technology come to mind, Moore's Law and Gilder's Law. Moore's law predicts the doubling of computing power every 18-24 months due to the rapid evolution of microprocessor technology. Gilder's law predicts the doubling of communications power every six months-a bandwidth explosion-due to advances in fibre-optic network technologies. [1]

Both are accompanied by huge reduction in costs and massive increases in speed and quantity. In 2001 more information could be sent over a single cable in a second than in 1997 was sent over the entire Internet in a month. The cost of transmitting a trillion bits of information from Boston to Los Angeles has fallen from \$150,000 in 1970 to 12 cents today. A three minute phone call from New York to London that in 1930 cost more than \$300 (in today's prices) costs less than 20 cents today. E-mailing a 40-page document from Chile to Kenya costs less than 10 cents, faxing it about \$10, sending it by courier \$50. [2]

The table below shows graphically, the changes that have taken place in the recent past. We have access to this advancement today and what we must do is embrace it with both hands. Treat it as a tool rather than a reward and let us compete with the rest of the world. Even though the Western world has many years advantage over us in terms of technology, access to the Internet allows us to utilize the same information they have and communicate at the same speed they do. With trade barriers coming down, what we sell and buy does not isolate us as if did five years ago. We must be prepared to use the technology available to learn how to use new technology to make us a better people. Globalisation and technology go hand in hand; adoption of the two is essential for our long term survival in the big wide world.



[1] Gilder, George 2000 Telescom: How Infinite Bandwidth will Revolutionize Our World, New York: Free Press

[2] Human Development Report 2001, UNDP, Today's Technological Transformation Chap 2, p27, New York, Oxford University Press 2001