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The World Science Project

Will the Internet globalize science?
How have cell phones affected social relationships?

Louisiana (USA) since 1994
Kerala (India) since 1994
The Philippines since 2004
Chile since 2004
Ghana since 1994
South Africa since 2003
Kenya since 1994
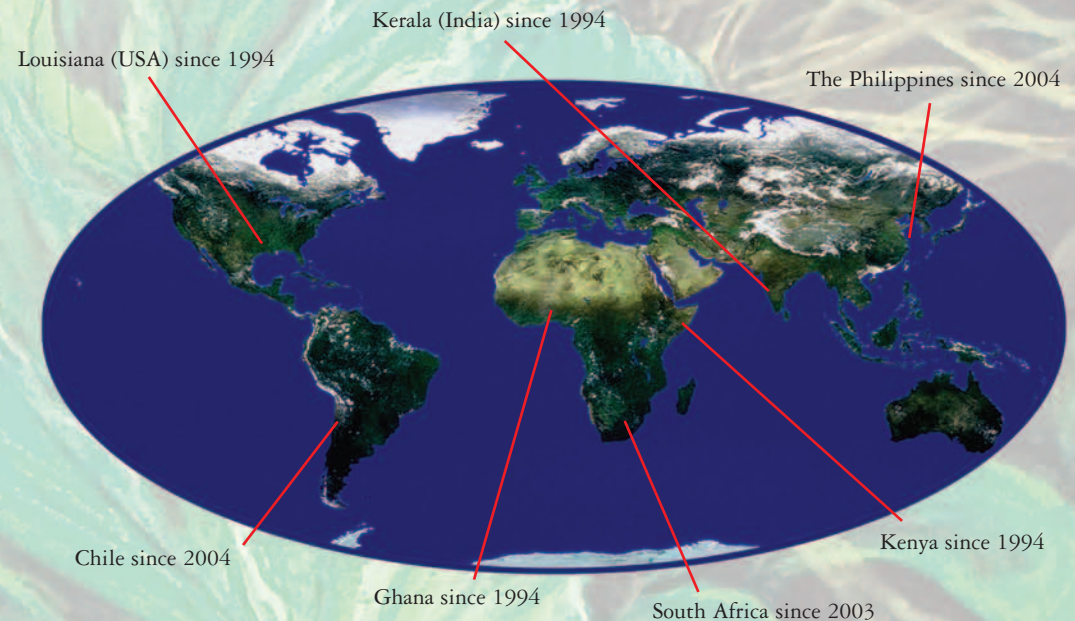
Can the Internet undermine gender stratification in the developing world?

How has the Internet altered development policy and practice?

The World Science Project

A Scholarly Project Examining Research Communication
in Less Developed Areas Since 1994

The World Science Project is a longitudinal study that seeks to understand the ways in which the introduction of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have changed relationships in the process of knowledge production in the developing world. For many, it is obvious that the advent of the Internet has made the production of knowledge a global enterprise, with unlimited possibilities for communication, collaboration, and data transmission across international boundaries. In the developing world, however, this process is not necessarily so direct.

Traditional indicators of the diffusion of Internet technology have proven to be deficient in less developed areas of the world. Our first objective is to understand what's happening "on the ground" for scientists and researchers in their use of modern information and communication technologies. The second objective of our project is to assist research and educational institutions to build local area networks.

We use a variety of methods-- including video ethnography, interviews, and surveys--to follow the diffusion of ICTs in the developing world and assess their impact on the production of scientific knowledge. Since 1994, we have followed this process in Ghana, Kenya, and the state of Kerala in India. In 2003 we expanded to include South Africa. In 2004 we added Chile and the Philippines to our study.

Recent Empirical Work

Collaboration

Researchers who collaborate more are not generally more productive.

Diffusion

The vast majority of scientists describe themselves as current email users, but far fewer have ready access to the technology or use it in diverse ways.

Gender

The presence of connected computers in the home has increased consciousness of the importance of international contacts for women.

Higher education and Internet access for women increased dramatically over time, but international education and relationships may be decreasing.

ICTs

Internet use increases, but mobile phone use decreases the diversity of locations where people maintain social ties.

Recent Theoretical Work

• The globalization of science as a process is best understood by replacing the concept of development with the idea of regency, a process of redirection involving a contingent reaction between identities.

• Those conditions that unsettle the relationship between collaboration and productivity in developing areas may undermine the collaborative benefits of new information and communication technologies.

• Internet connectivity is helping women scientists to circumvent, but not yet undermine, the patrifocal social structure that reduces social capital and impedes career development.

• Mobile telephony and Internet technologies have different consequences for the globalization process.

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