

ECSU and the Internet: Mapping the future...

Learning about the Net: students travel the information super highway

by NaKeisha S. Sylver

How clearly has ECSU drawn the map to the informational superhighway (the Internet) for its students?

The answer varies among students and faculty and among ECSU's academic departments. One thing that most agree upon, however, is that knowledge of the Internet benefits all students.

"The Internet is very beneficial to our students because of the vast amount of information students can gain access to," said Derrick Wilkins, manager of the Academic Computing Center. "With this system, students have access to libraries, research institutions, governmental agencies and the world at their finger tips."

Loletia Underdue, a senior English/news media major, agrees that learning about the Internet is important.

"We need to become familiar with the wave of the future—computer technology," said Underdue. "That way, once we enter the workplace we'll already have knowledge of the information superhighway, which will make us more marketable."

Underdue says that she learned everything she knows about the Internet from television, articles she read, and a little hands-on experience.

"I didn't gain any knowledge from the school," she said. "I wasn't even aware until about a month ago that the computer lab had access to the Internet."

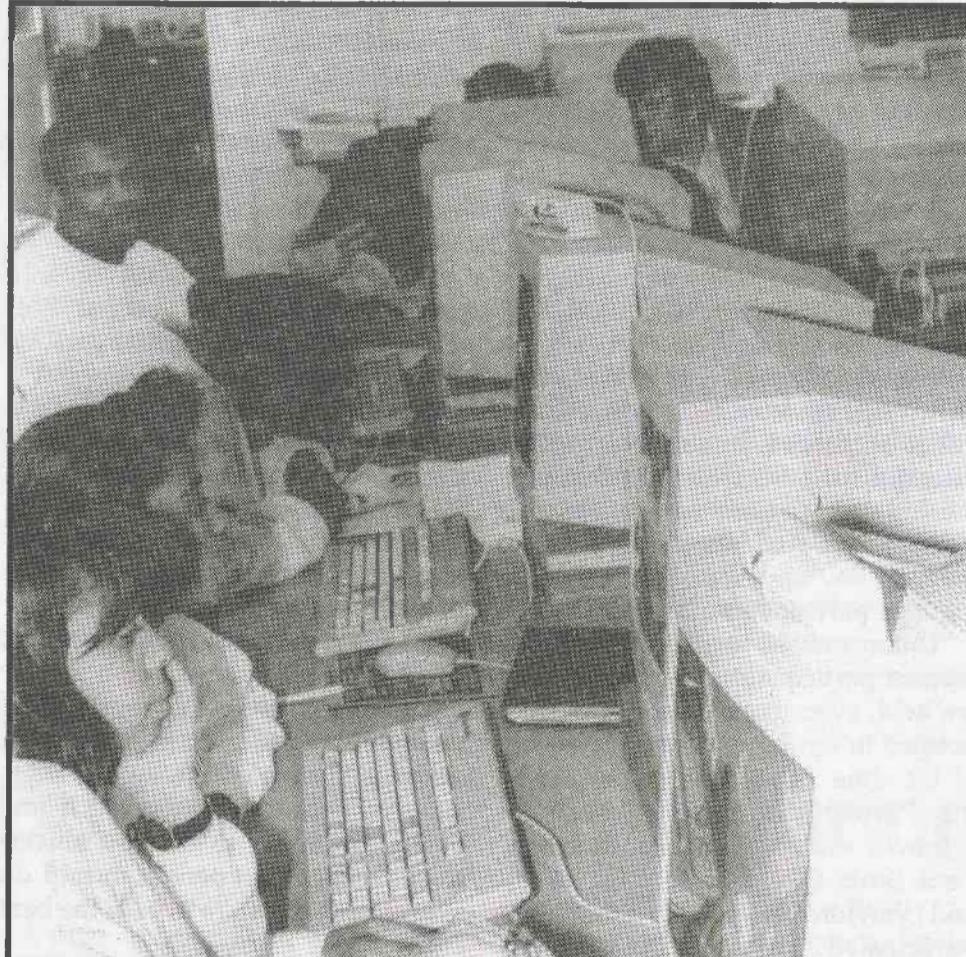
According to Wilkins, approximately 100 ECSU students currently have access to the Internet through University-provided E-mail accounts. A student who wants to open an account is required to fill out an application. After the application is reviewed, the student will receive an account, as long as there is account availability.

Wilkins says that the Academic Computing Center offers two training courses per month for students with new E-mail accounts.

Dr. Johnny L. Houston, a senior research professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, cites E-mail as one of the greatest benefits of the information superhighway.

"E-mail allows you in a quick and inexpensive way, to interact with any of the other users of the Internet," said Houston. "We're talking about instant access in the least amount of time, and at the least expense."

In addition to its instant benefits, Houston says knowledge of the Inter-



ECSU students Felicia Bowser and Chanda Gayle learn to set up "web sites" on the Internet in Dr. Linda Hayden's Microcomputer Application class. At back (left) is Darnely Archer, who assists in the computer lab.

Photo by Jamie Jordan

net is also important when preparing to enter the work force.

"Most jobs require you to use this skill," said Houston. "In the marketplace, it has become the state-of-the-art. It is now used more than the telephone."

Though Houston said that he would urge students in all majors to become knowledgeable about the Internet, some students feel that certain majors have been in a better position than others to learn about and use this service.

Dovella Moore, a computer science major from Washington, NC, says that, while her major has helped to make her "very familiar" with the Internet, students in other majors may not have the same advantage.

"We do papers and search for information with it (the Internet)," said Moore. "People from other majors have to learn about it on their own time."

Kelvin Black, an Applied Mathematics major believes more could be done to spread the word about the Internet to students who don't have classes in Lester Hall (the mathematics and computer science building).

"They have workshops (on the Internet), but I don't think they advertise them enough. If you don't come over

here (Lester Hall) you probably won't know."

Word of Internet training on campus didn't reach Ted Cherry, an Early Childhood Education major. Cherry said that he is "not too familiar with the Internet," but that what he does know about it, he learned from watching television, or talking to his sister who majored in computer science while in college.

"So many things have changed," said Cherry. "There are so many advances. It would be good for ECSU to set up something that would teach the students all about it."

Cherry feels that lack of knowledge about the Internet is causing his peers to be apathetic about it.

"Students are not taking the Internet as seriously as they should because they haven't been taught about it," Cherry said.

Training about the information superhighway should be done in conjunction with a student's course work, says Michael Lytle, a senior English/news media major.

"I think the Internet should be incorporated into classes," Lytle said. "It should be incorporated into everyday lesson plans. This is supposed to be a place of higher learning. It is supposed

to give us the skills we need for the job market."

Wilkins also sees a need for the Internet in the classroom.

"We have to look at different ways of teaching," said Wilkins. "It's no longer a textbook and chalkboard, but a world of information which is available on the Internet."

Though Wilkins says that the University is "doing its part," by making a "major investment in the infrastructure and hardware" necessary to make the Internet accessible, some students feel that making a small investment in advertising what is currently available is also important.

"I think ECSU should advertise this (Internet availability) more," said Lytle. "When something that could help us in the job market comes along, they seem reluctant to let us know."

Underdue agrees that knowing what's available is the first step toward making good use of the Internet resources on campus.

"Since most students aren't aware that it is here," said Underdue, "they aren't aware of the possibilities that are before them."

After a student becomes aware that the Internet is available to him, however, Wilkins feels that the student has some responsibility for becoming familiar with it.

"Those students who have taken the initiative to explore the Internet will be just as knowledgeable as anyone else," said Wilkins.

Moore too feels that, with experience, ECSU students will be just as knowledgeable about the Internet and its uses as students from other institutions.

"Because of the size of the school," says Moore, "computer science majors from ECSU are probably going to be more prepared than other students, (from different schools) because they get more hands-on training and experience."

Moore says that for students who have no knowledge of how or why the Internet relates to their lives, she would love to "sit down with them, and go through a couple of searches and show them how beneficial it is, no matter what your major is."

Wilkins said that he would encourage any student who has never used the Internet to "get on board, or be left behind."

"The Internet is changing the way we communicate, work, and recreate," Wilkins says. "Don't be intimidated, but learn to use this technology."