

Introduction

Does technology make the world appear bigger or smaller? Advances in communication and transport technology mean we have much more contact with the rest of the world than we did 100, 50 or even 20 years ago.

You can find out what is happening on the other side of the world in an instant. You can contact almost anyone at any time. You can get food from almost any country at your local supermarket. You can watch movies and listen to music almost anywhere—even in a car or on your mobile phone. It is now easier and cheaper for many people around the world to travel to other countries, where they can see other people's cultures and traditions.



Technology is changing the way we live—and it is becoming faster and faster every day. Let us look at how quickly new technologies were taken up by people:

- Thirty-four years after the invention of television, 50 000 people were using it.
- Thirteen years after the **Internet** was invented, 50 000 people were using it.
- Four months after **instant messaging** was invented, 50 000 people were using it.

This means that people are using new technologies at a greater rate than ever before.

So how does all this change affect the world we live in?

This book discusses the enormous changes that have taken place in communication and technology.



Telephones

150 years ago we did not have telephones

"It is my firm belief that one day there will be a telephone in every major town in America."

—Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, 1877

One hundred years ago, only the most important or very wealthy people had a telephone. There were no phone numbers—you picked up the phone and talked to an "operator" who connected you to the person you wanted to talk to.

By 1935, telephones were much more widespread and the first round-the-world telephone call was made. Now, there are not many homes in Australia without a phone. We also have answering machines and voicemail services in case we are not available to answer the phone.

Ten years ago, one in four people had a mobile phone. Now there are more mobile phones than people in Australia! If you have a mobile phone you can be contacted just about anywhere. Your mobile phone will work in most countries. We also have text messages and video phone calls to almost anywhere in the world.



The user of this candlestick telephone, from the early 1900s, would hold the earpiece to their ear and speak into the mouthpiece.

REPLACE IT

There are more than 19 million mobile phones in use in Australia. Most Australians replace their mobiles every 18 to 24 months.



The first mobile phones were bigger than a person's hand (above left). Today's mobiles are much smaller and many can be folded up (above right).

When mobile phones first appeared in the 1980s they were much bigger than they are today and would not fit in a person's pocket. They could only be used to make phone calls—there was no such thing as text messaging. Mobile phones have become smaller and slimmer and their functions are constantly being updated. You can use them to browse the Internet, send emails, listen to music, take photos and even watch television and movies.

I WONDER ...

Maybe in the future we will all wear our mobile phones built into our watches or even into earrings. We might even have phones inside our bodies! Do you think the explosion in mobile phone use has implications for community health?