

Employing the eGranary Digital Library to Improve Health Education in Developing Countries

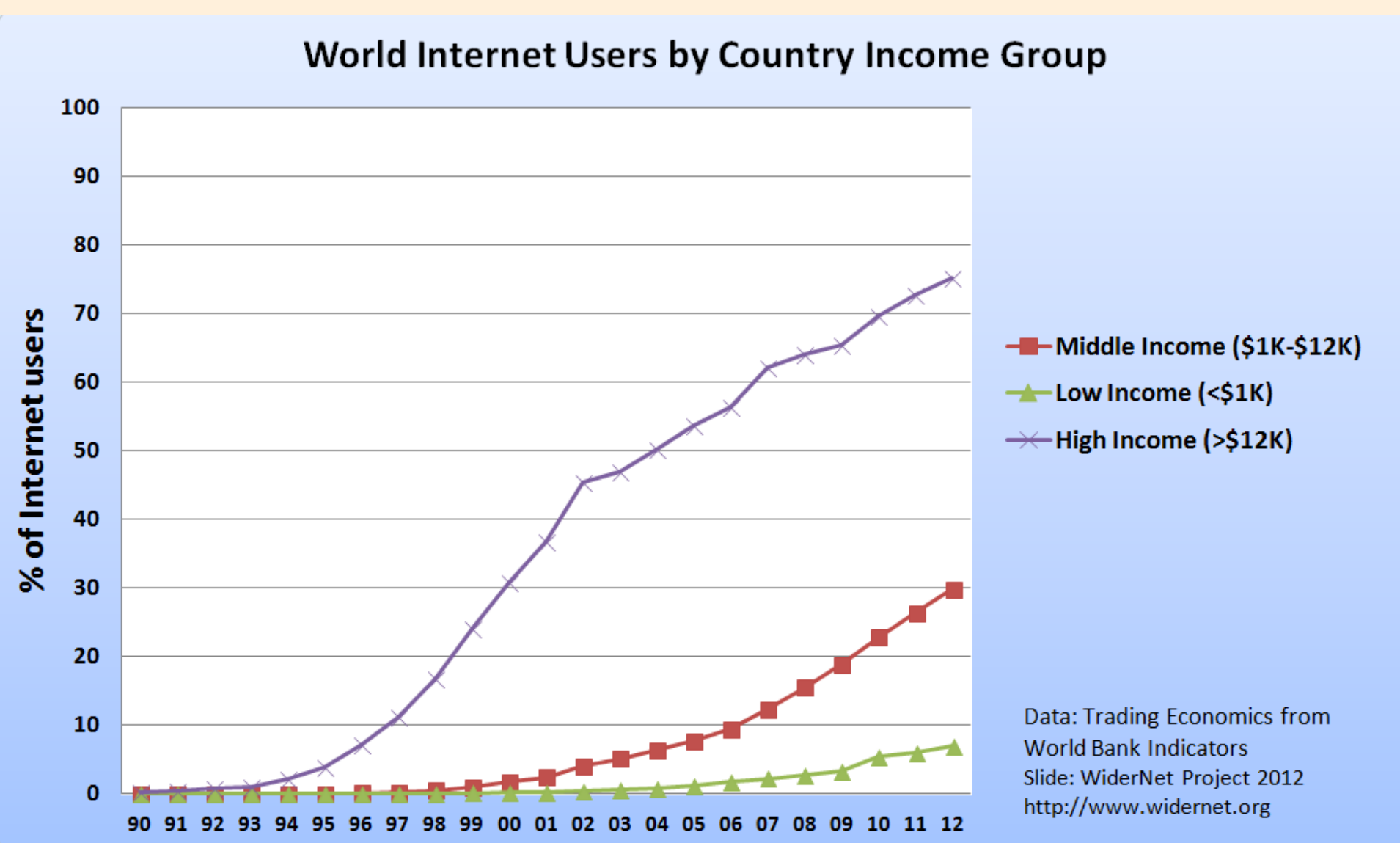


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Challenges to Accessing Information

For most health care professionals in the developing world, the Internet represents an expensive, unreliable, and oftentimes impossible method to access digital health resources. Using inexpensive off-line technologies to deliver Web information has proved remarkably effective.



Internet uptake in sub-Saharan Africa is about 6%, and the existing bandwidth is often so slow that many users avoid large files like PDFs, video, and audio.

Where is the eGranary?

The eGranary is already installed in more than 750 schools, hospitals, clinics, and universities in Africa, Asia, Central America, South America, North America & Europe.



Health Care Training Portals

Having access to information is one thing. Being able to use it well to meet a specific mission is another.

By organizing sets of information into user-friendly interfaces, using schema that are already well-understood – like course curricula – we are attempting to reduce the time and effort required to integrate digital resources into the educational milieu.

Thousands of resources have been added to the eGranary and hundreds of these have been mapped to the curricula of our partner institutions.

Battery-powered eGranary

WiderNet has developed a 12-volt eGranary server for use in places with unreliable electricity.

The battery-powered eGranary can run from a standard UPS for up to four hours, while larger deep-cycle batteries will provide access for days. The batteries can be charged by solar, wind, or grid power. As a result, life-changing information is no longer dependent on access to or the stability of local electricity generation.

Lessons Learned

After conducting several capacity building programs in the field in 2009 and 2010, we have identified ongoing challenges. Most critical, to promote wide scale technology adoption and information literacy, local champions need to be identified and empowered to demonstrate best practices and train others.

The biggest barriers: Lack of technical support and general lack of end user exposure to computers.

How Does the eGranary Work?

The eGranary Digital Library can provide thousands of network users high-speed access to millions of educational resources...

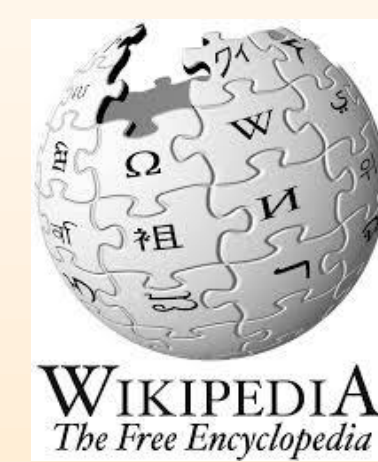


...no Internet connection required!

The eGranary Digital Library – "The Internet in a Box" – provides access to over 32 million Internet resources. Through a process of mirroring Web sites (with permission) and delivering them to partner institutions in developing countries, the eGranary delivers instant access to a wide variety of educational resources including video, audio, books, journals, and software. With its catalog and built-in search engine, the eGranary appears to the end-user to be just like the Internet -- only many, many times faster.

What Health Information is in the eGranary?

Among the 2,700 websites included in the eGranary are those of Wikipedia, World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control, the Hesperian Foundation, the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, and hundreds of open source health-related journals.



Health Care Training in Zambia

In conjunction with the Sparkman Center for Global Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and colleagues at universities in Zambia, we have participated in identifying, collecting, cataloging, and developing collections for teaching medicine, nursing and midwifery, and public health.

