

The internet (World Wide Web) has changed the world profoundly. We are a world-wide community that accesses most information with a 'point and click.' The internet is the repository for a staggering amount of information, both fact and fiction, worthwhile and worthless. It provides an unprecedented equal opportunity to these resources, because it is available to anyone with a device that can digitally access an internet service provider. The internet also has become a long-distance communication device that allows an unprecedented ability for people to communicate in 'real-time' as well as 'asynchronously.' My generation in particular has embraced this innovation and made it our own. I expect continued innovation in the internet at least equal to the advances of the last 20 years. This will lead us to unimagined frontiers in communication, information storage and dissemination, and application.

For me, I expect that the internet will play an increasingly pivotal role in my education and career as a biomedical engineer and physician/surgeon. The internet already allows me to communicate with fellow students and professors about projects, classes, activities, and even to view lectures, demonstrations and discussions remotely (both live and stored). Important programs and applications for engineers and physicians exist on servers, rather than on local computers. 'Cloud' computing and storage (shared across servers) will place even larger data bases and powerful applications at our fingertips, and without wires. These all utilize the World Wide Web, rather than dedicated lines of communication. Tele-robotic surgeries are happening today. As a future physician and surgeon I anticipate a time when remote patient examinations, and remote surgeries and procedures, are routine via the Web. As I train to enter my career, I must be innovative and inventive so that we can get the most out of this remarkable tool, the internet.

-Erik John Cole