



Community Connection

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A day in the broadband life



By Doug Adams, the Knight Center of Digital Excellence

With the U.S. investing more than \$7 billion in federal stimulus for broadband, imagine what life may be like in just five or 10 short years from now?

What might my life be like, say in 2019? Here is a scenario:

6 a.m.

The alarm goes off, saying I have 27 unread e-mails and 14 articles cued up in my browser ready to read on my Kindle 10.0.

7 a.m.

While driving to work, I listen to Dan Patrick via my in-dash computer's WiFi connection. WiFi is everywhere now.

8:30 a.m.

My wife calls. She's worried about her mother, Betty, who lives three states away. Betty's health monitoring provider tracks her movement patterns. Today, the Web-enabled video monitor showed Betty hadn't made it to the kitchen by the time she usually does. Given she's in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, a nurse from the monitoring provider looks in and finds her on camera in the study.

9:30 a.m.

I check back with my wife – she has just renewed her driver's license and made her home business into an LLC. With government services online, she does this via our TV and ultra high-speed fiber optic Internet connection. I'm so glad we have a fiber connection to our home – it's similar to the change we experienced when we went from dial-up to my old cable modem. Only with this upgrade have I been able to utilize the Internet for rich, two-way video communications with my doctor, work colleagues and friends.

10:45 a.m.

I check in on my daughter at school via webcam. She's in biology class, and students are watching a live heart surgery in progress at the world-class Cleveland Clinic Foundation. They can see, hear and interact with doctors.

Noon

Lunch with my college roommate, Bob. He's an engineer for a California company, but works from home in Indianapolis. His fiber optic Internet connection allows him to send 3-D virtual mockups to his boss. At lunch, we check the stock market and box scores from the touch screen computer imbedded in our table.

3 p.m.

A problem crops up at work. Defective materials were delivered to a construction site in Texas. Our team utilizes visual feeds to inspect the materials and send images of the problem pieces to the manufacturer.

4:30 p.m.

I haven't been feeling well, so I check in with my doctor from my desk. I open my mouth, say "ah," and the diagnosis is strep. An e-prescription goes out to my pharmacy.

6 p.m.

Working too late to make my son's soccer game, so I watch from my desk. Not only is high-speed, high-capacity WiFi everywhere, but so are webcams. They are completely secure and password-protected.

9 p.m.

The last thing I remember is driving, tired, on the back roads close to home. I'm thankful public safety monitors alerted safety forces when my car veered off the road. The paramedics told me they video-conferenced with emergency room doctors less than 10 minutes after the accident. The operating room and specialist I needed were onsite when I arrived.

The world I'm describing is not science fiction. All these "future" applications are available today, mostly overseas. They save lives, improve quality of life, create job opportunities and prepare citizens to be productive members of the knowledge economy.

The vision we really need as Americans? To see the future is here, we're a good 10 years behind and we have no time to waste investing in the broadband infrastructure necessary to catch up.

Doug Adams oversees public information efforts for the Cleveland-based technology nonprofit OneCommunity, which operates the Knight Center of Digital Excellence in partnership with The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. To learn more about the Knight Center, go to www.knightcenter.org or e-mail info@knightcenter.org.