

An Overview of the Internet as an Educational Tool

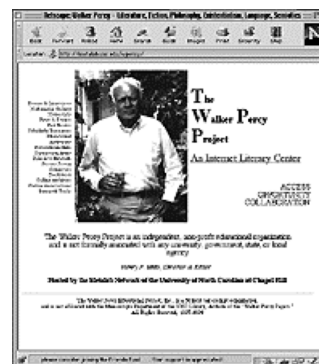
In 1996, President Clinton announced a campaign "to make sure that **by the year 2000 every single classroom and every single library in this country will be hooked up to the Internet.**" Subsequently, the Federal Communications Commission approved a \$2.2 billion dollar plan to equip all American public schools with Internet connections. Today's American educators are turning more and more to Internet-based teaching methods--assuming the role of guide as their pupils explore, learn from, and respond to the resources available to them online.

The Walker Percy Project, following Percy's themes, seeks to sponsor regular public discussion and educational activities that encourage professional, student, and general readers to interact with one another.

The key operative words for describing the Internet are **access** and **interactivity**. Text, audio, and video materials mounted on the Internet are accessible from any Internet-connected computer in the world, twenty-four hours a day. Similarly, the Internet promotes creative interaction with content as well as expands the ways in which people can communicate and exchange ideas. For example, the Internet allows users to view related documents simply by clicking highlighted words on their computer screen. If the user has a question about a document, often he can send an email query directly to the author. In this way, **the Internet brings a world of content and personal connections to an individual's fingertips.**

As an educational tool, the Internet promises to bring live audio and video into the classrooms and homes of the future. **The ability to retrieve information from the Internet will provide a new wealth of materials and resources for educators.** Likewise, virtual classrooms—text-based online spaces where participants can meet together to discuss topics, share materials, and learn—are an educational tool made available by Internet technology. In the future, multimedia-based virtual classrooms will be common.

Given the revolution in education that the Internet is creating, the key issue at present is our need to create well-planned resource infrastructures that can support the development of Internet-based activities. **The Walker Percy Project: An Internet Literary Center stands as a well-planned resource infrastructure addressing the needs of education in the 21st Century.**



Opening Screen of the Walker Percy Project

For more information about our role as a leadership project, visit the Project's Administration Center at <http://metalab.unc.edu/wpercy/admin.html>.

