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**How To Bridge The Digital Divide**

**By J. Nayer Hardin**

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How To Bridge The Digital Divide

GIVE THE GIFT OF COMPUTERIZATION  
START A COMPUTER CLUB AT YOUR BANK TODAY

The digital divide is the space in our society between the computerized and the non-computerized. The digital divide is dangerous, yet can be made safe if we all just work together to build a bridge to cyber freedom.

When the problem is a lack of adequate computerization, the solution is simply to adequately computerize. Web conferencing, computer enriched literacy programs and organizational participation can dramatically help transform the digital divide into opportunities wide.

We live in a world of technology haves and have-nots. Like A Tale Of Two Cities, failure to address the issues can result in creating a future resembling The Time Machine. Since we never know who's life experience will hold the key to solving the problems of disease, environmental destruction, economic empowerment, or our next really good laugh, we can't afford to leave anybody behind who wants to participate in the Information Age Evolution.

The evidence is too precise to ignore. Maximizing cyber opportunities is critical to the success of any economy. Make no mistake about it. Second hand information in the information age is truly the new slavery. If you have to go to another for your daily data, by the time you get it, if you get it, it's old news. Many companies only have additional product information on the web. Talk about second-class status.

The solution involves access to both equipment and education. For example, internet access without the confidence and ability to effectively use the technology, is like having a microphone and not know how to turn it on or what to say. Though I've trained thousands how to use a computer at no financial cost, I'm still astounded at the number of people who don't have a clue how to use a computer. What's even more amazing to me are the people who have gone to traditional computer classes and still don't

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have a grasp on how to benefit from computer use. My training notes are posted at <http://www.compurest.com>. Click on Free MS Training.

Multi-level involvement of government, organizations and individuals is imperative. Computers are the keys out of Babylon, the next day in the genesis of our freedom as the human race. I have a theory that during WWII enough people chose good over evil so that we were given the power of computers. The Enigma Machine, an early computer, was developed by the Allies and used to break Hitler's code, thereby turning the tide of the war. The power of our modern Enigma Machines, computers, has changed the tide in many lives in no less a dramatic fashion.

According to Genesis, during the time of Babylon's ego, our language was confounded. With computers and their language translation capabilities, people from all over the world can speak and be

understood. I'll never be able to convey the joy on the face of a young man in Harlem the first time he communicated with a soul from Japan about a mutual artistic passion. Or the peace of senior Miss. Ruth who was able to communicate with younger members of her family in another state through a computer, which translated into them becoming even closer. Or the accomplishment of a young father building stronger communications bridges with his six-year-old daughter during conversations they would have while together at the computer screen. It no longer matters what one learned or did not learn in school. The information, the commodity of kings, is available to all who know how to use a computer, the Internet and an assortment of educational tools. As Anthony Robbins says in his book AWAKEN THE GIANT WITHIN..."I can't overemphasize the power and value of gaining even one, single distinction - a sole piece of information - that can be used to change the course of your life. Information is power when it is acted upon, and one thing is that you never know when you're going to get it."

The difference between a computerized and non-computerized life is like the difference between a Mercedes and a mule. Take insurance. Via the web, one can quickly gain access to tools that compare up to the second insurance rates offered by a multitude of companies. Without the web, one usually relies on whatever print or phone information is available. Anyone can be a salesman with Yahoo Classified, a free product advertising service that gets around 12 million hits a day. Driving instructions, medical treatments, food information <http://www.foodstop.com>, breaking news, spirituality, sports, humor, art, <http://www.audart.com>, it's all there.

I've been a computer diva for a quarter of a century. Back in the late '80's Harlem's great community service diva, Mother Clara Hale, told me that there was something going on with computers and I needed to come uptown to help people become computerized. I won't repeat what she said about Harlem's politicians on the issues.

It is time for effective leadership. I'm not dissin' the folks in charge, just requesting they use computers to solve the problems the community is facing. Truthful information is a key. In the 80's I was told by Harlem's leadership that AIDS was not a Black problem. They said the best way to handle AIDS was to not talk about it. They'd put on another record, rather than have on Niro Markoff Asistent who's book WHY I SURVIVE AIDS tells how she healed herself of HIV with ARC (aids related complex). In the 90's, the politicians did little about the 5 open sewers that surround Harlem, the location of the majority

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of Manhattan's bus depots in Harlem, the threat of the Hanta Virus or plague from the large rodent population, inadequate disaster relief programs or information available on how to deal with the dramas on hand. The Internet has some answers, but you have to know how to do a search or type in an address to find them.

When I lived in mid-town Manhattan in the 80's and early-mid 90's, I had many computer stores in walking distance of my apartments. When I went to Harlem in '94, there was not one computer store...a place where you could "kick the tires", try new technologies, and take a test drive of new software.

When I left Harlem in '98, despite pleas to elected and appointed officials, Harlem still did not have a computer super store. Not even all the time spent on the Empowerment Zone helped. Instead, I was told that most people had no interest in computers or that computers were of the devil.

When I'd conduct 'computer buying groups', we had one Radio Shack in Harlem, close to Columbia University, which had an extremely limited computer selection and programs were minimal. We ended up having to go down town. When I came to Los Angeles in '98 the same was true for Watts and

Compton. My sister, Robin Hardin, reports the same is true in her city, Detroit. Are there many computers in Afghanistan? I doubt it with their reported 80% illiteracy rate.

Access to technology is meaningless until we learn how to use it to empower our lives.

The <http://www.compurest.com> training notes I mentioned earlier, plus one more class that I haven't posted yet, were given to all who came to me to learn how to compute. I stopped counting at 3,000 people over a four-year period, 1994-1998. I read that millions of dollars were raised for education during that time. I had to accomplish what I did on a \$10,000 grant, plus whatever I earned and resources I had. More and better allocated financial and educational resources need to be committed to this issue. "Based on results" needs to be factored into funding and training qualification.

I provide that background to say that intervention is necessary to eliminate the digital divide. The divide, the space between people with computers and people without, is real and we must take steps to close it, and close it now, both nationally and internationally.

Here are a few recommendations on how to achieve that goal.

1. Encourage banks to set up "Cyber Clubs", much like the "Christmas Clubs" where people can make deposits into an account for future technology purchases. As an alternative to giving a child a doll or game for a gift, take that money and deposit it into the account. These clubs can make group purchases during July 4th and Dr. King's Birthday weekends offering additional buying incentives based on volume discount buying. They can also keep people informed of the newest, latest and most effective equipment and programs to purchase. Financial management, i.e. "computer banking" computer user groups can be formed to use the technology to enrich the community.
2. Provide incentives for community organizations to offer free computer training to their membership.

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Teach the basics necessary to write letters, get on and use the web, balance a budget or record one's family tree.

Encourage business growth. With a computer, whatever one does best, they can do as a business. For example, if someone braids hair, show them how their computer can keep their books, appointments, send out customer mailings, encourage word of mouth, file taxes, etc. Sales development clubs, on the web and off, can also encourage economic growth. These clubs can reach beyond national borders.

3. Hold more and targeted local, state and national and international "town meetings" on the web with elected and appointed officials answering questions and listening to solutions from constituents. Network ideas with resources and people to accomplish the mission.

4. Provide additional tax and financing incentives to open computer stores, training centers, wherever. It's not just low-income people who need access and training. We all do. I still can't believe the many times I heard "I never thought I would ever be able to use a computer," or "I've never even touched a mouse"

5. Encourage intelligent, cross cultural-religious-economic-racial-gender, etc. computer use. With computers we see the quality of one's ideas before we see the body they are in or the lifestyle they live. The opportunity to build bridges is too great to ignore.

6. Encourage non-violent conflict resolution through a computer. It's tough to use a computer and a gun at the same time. Also arguments over modems cause less violence.

7. Promote the joy of computing.

8. Unconditionally computerize all. The only way that national testing of school children can work is if all children have access to the same information at the same time. All 14 years of school should be available on the web. Any child who goes through a web-based education should be able to pass the national standards test. This is not difficult if we allow the needs of the students to hold greater weight than the needs of the unions and school officials.

The systems for success are already in place. Community organizations, one-on-one at home sharing information, economic encouragement and technology already exist to expedite the process. With sponsorship opportunities for computer hardware, software and humanware, the process can pay for itself via an empowered tax base.

Dr. Martin Luther King was right. In my experience, which began on computers in 1977 at ABC Radio's WPLJ-FM, the table of brotherhood that Dr. King spoke of in his I HAVE A DREAM speech is a table with a computer on it, and good people around it, using it to solve problems and have a good time. Just like he was a champion of civil rights, we must all become champions of cyber rights. Government, business, non-profits and individual intervention will not only close the digital divide, but where there was a hole in the ground, new opportunities will be found.

The real lesson from the original American Underground Railroad is that those who have freedom, have a responsibility to share that freedom with those who do not. Until that's accomplished, we're just

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a slave system in another form. When that is accomplished, everyone is free with the help of 'a friend of a friend.' Free to understand, grow, pray and prosper.

How does one champion cyber rights? If you know how to use a computer, find someone in your life that does not know and teach him or her. If you don't know how to use a computer, find someone who does and ask them to teach you. Help your organizations and institutions become computerized too. Everyone has something to contribute. I personally recommend beginning with each individual saying their own prayers for divinely guided computerization.

Regarding the question can anybody learn computers, bring to mind the image of an illiterate person who has already learned how to read the screens and push the buttons on their ATM. We are limited only by our imaginations.

Finally, a message from Miss. Roxanna Dawson. I had issued a challenge to Harlem that I was actively looking for the first person I could not train how to use a PC. Since the cost of the training is that it be passed onto at least two other people, I could not back up the challenge with money, but thousands of the people came anyway over a four-year period. Roxanna, at 92 years old, came and said she was that person I could not train. I asked her why and she said because she was blind. I asked her if she was totally blind or legally blind. I had read Huxley's THE ART OF SEEING so I know the difference. I put Roxanna's fingers on the home row keys and had her type her name. I made the type big and she jumped back from the screen and yelled, "I can see." The people in the training room at Minisink Townhouse went electric. She turned around and said with a smile of deep pride, "If I can do it, the rest of your have no excuse." For her second lesson, I sat her at a computer with a 26-year-old woman and they learned how to use a mouse together. In between practice and laughter, they talked about community issues at a level that's helped me grow ever since. Healing can be found in networking.

In summary, since the cause of the problem is a lack of adequate computerization, the solution is

simple - computerize. It's easier than it seems, and when done right, its rewards are tremendous.

Happy Computing

J. Nayer Hardin is the founder of Computer Underground Railroad Ent. Nayer created a style of free computer training, How To Compute [www.geocities.com/computerjoint](http://www.geocities.com/computerjoint), that's helped over 3,000 people between the ages of 4 and 92 learn how to use a personal computer. The training was covered on New York's WOR-TV in 1997 and her classes were featured on local cable shows including Harlem's Winston Gilchrist Show.

**Digital Film Processing is Really the Only Option for Truly Quality Prints**

**By Dave Gonzalez**

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Digital photography has taken off like wildfire these days, primarily due to its ease and quality in its digital film processing. With a good digital camera, it's as though you're using the very best Kodak film for every single one of your digital photos. Moreover, digital film processing can be done from the comfort of your own home with the right digital film processing software or with digital photo developing online.

The most standard form of digital film processing is digital photos of 4x5 film processing. By using this size, you can make sure to get the very best in cost and quality, as many digital cameras are designed to function their very best at that level. Moreover, if cost is your primary concern, then you'll enjoy the advantage that comes with bulk digital photo developing for all of your parties and other important occasions where many people will be wanting copies.

Just like a standard camera with film, digital cameras use a lens and a shutter, except instead recording your image on film, it is captured electronically by way of a sensor, which converts it into a digital file. This file is saved on a memory device, which is frequently removable. This way, you can choose where you'd like to keep your pictures, and specifically what sort of digital film processing is best for you.

For example, some of your digital photos may be fine if they're kept in digital form on your computer, but others, such as wedding photos, may require better quality digital film processing. This allows you to print your digital pictures on regular paper, photo quality paper, use a home digital film processing printer, or even take it for the professionals to manage, as you would regular film.

When it is your regular digital photography that you'll be digital film processing, however, you'll love the great benefits of having your digital photo quickly, easily, and accurately.

Dave Gonzalez <http://www.digital-film-developing.com/>



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