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## The Sexes Diverge in Online Use

### **Researchers at the USC Annenberg Center for the Digital Future catalogue gender differences in use of online communities, Web surfing, and reading habits**

LOS ANGELES, October 16, 2008 -- Differences in Internet behavior are emerging among men and women, especially the impact of their online community memberships, frequency of web surfing, and their diverging reading habits.

Data analysis by **Michael Gilbert**, a senior fellow at the **USC Annenberg School for Communication's Center for the Digital Future**, found that one in seven Internet users who visit online communities, such as Facebook, said their online activities are reducing their involvement with offline counterparts “at least somewhat,” a response reported by three times as many males (21.5 percent compared to 7.3 percent of females).

And while a majority of users (55 percent) said they “feel as strongly” about their online communities as they do about their offline communities, that response was reported by 60.3 percent of men versus 47.4 percent of women.

Gilbert’s analysis showed that men are also more likely to meet in person with a contact they make in online communities; six in ten have done so compared to half of the women.

“It’s not a surprise that women are more cautious meeting up offline,” said Gilbert, author of *The Disposable Male*, “but the greater inclination of men to connect with their online community members is a trend we’re watching.”

“Visiting online communities and social networking sites is still an evolving experience for most Internet users, but we’re already seeing gender differences of this type in online use,” said **Jeffrey I. Cole**, director of the Center for the Digital Future. “These experiences will be major factors in social communication as relationships over the Internet increase.”

Center researchers also report emerging gender differences in web surfing frequency and online reading habits. Findings from the Center’s 2008 Digital Future Project reveal that men are more likely than women to surf the web “at least daily” (53.5 to 40.5 percent).

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**Page 2 of 2**

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Gender reading habits are also not in sync. Women spend two hours more each week with books offline. Men make some of that up, spending an hour and a half more at their monitors reading online newspapers, magazines and books.

"It seems women still enjoy the experience of curling up with a good book, leafing through the pages," suggests Gilbert. "Men want to get at the information."

Through findings developed in annual surveys conducted among 2,000 American households, the Digital Future Project provides a broad year-to-year exploration of the influence of the Internet and online technology on Americans by examining the behavior and views of a broad national sample of Internet users and non-users.

The USC Annenberg Center for the Digital Future also created and organizes the World Internet Project, which conducts similar surveys and studies in twenty-seven countries around the world.

Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the USC Annenberg School for Communication ([annenberg.usc.edu](http://annenberg.usc.edu)) is among the nation's leading institutions devoted to the study of journalism and communication, and their impact on politics, culture and society. With an enrollment of more than 1,900 graduate and undergraduate students, USC Annenberg offers degree programs in journalism, communication, public diplomacy and public relations.

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