# PEW / INTERNET
## PEW INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT

## DATA MEMO

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RE:        Hobbyists online
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### *83% of online Americans have used the internet to pursue their hobbies*

### *The size of the daily online hobbyist population has increased substantially in the past five years*

Sara Greenleaf had taken up genealogy after she inherited her grandmother's family history files. Thanks to the internet, instead of spending time in dusty archives, she has been able to gather evidence and make connections from her desktop, particularly since she has the good luck of unusual ancestral names. One day, while preparing a scrapbook on her Welsh ancestors, she typed her great-grandfather's name, Gouverneur Cadwalader, into a search engine and found a cameo portrait of her great-great-great-grandmother on a website based in New Zealand.[1] She happened to be named Maria Charlotte Gouverneur Cadwalader.

Greenleaf is one of the respondents to a survey posted on the Pew Internet Project website that collected stories about how the internet has had an impact on people's hobbies and her experience is far from unique. The internet has become a hobbyist's playground. A telephone survey conducted in February-March 2007 found that fully 83% of online Americans say they have used the internet to seek information about their hobbies and 29% do so on a typical day. Looking for information about hobbies is among the most popular online activities, on par with shopping, surfing the web for fun, and getting news.

The internet's effect on hobbies can range from being an integral research tool for a genealogist, like Greenleaf, to being a connection and communication tool for collectors, to being the very source of a hobby's existence, as in the case of online gaming. Regardless of the internet's role in the hobby, its impact is clear.

Since early 2002, there has been a significant jump in the overall hobbyist population online and an even more substantial increase in the daily number of online hobbyists.

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[1] http://american-miniatures.blogspot.com/2006/04/brown-john-henry-portrait-of-mrs-maria.html

The chart below shows the increase of internet usage for hobbies as a percentage of the total U.S. population. Notably, the online hobby population has grown from about 45% of all American adults in 2005 to 59% in February-March 2007 and the online hobby population on a typical day has increased from about 12% to 20% of all adults.

**Using the internet for hobbies**
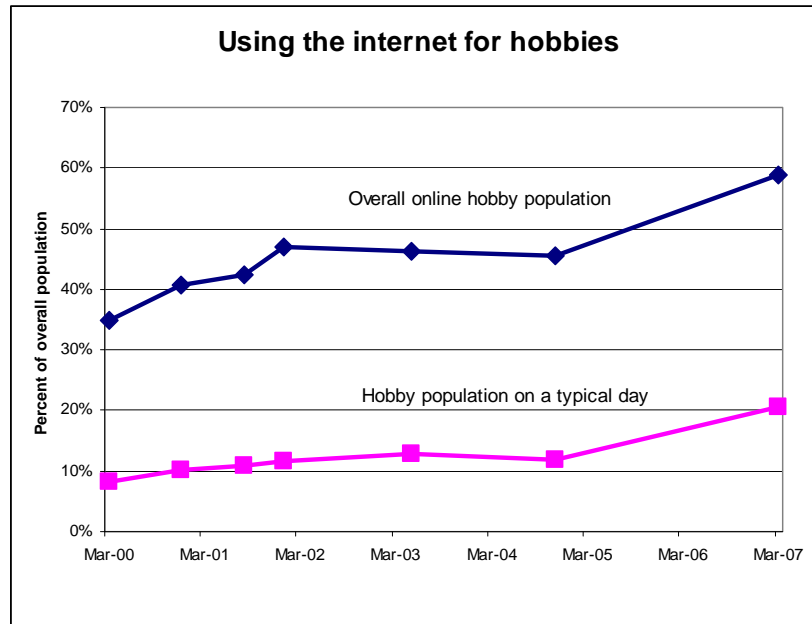


The 2007 survey data also marks a major increase from November 2004, the most recent time before February that we asked about hobbies. In that prior survey, 77% of internet users said they had used the internet to search for information about a hobby and 20% of internet users did so on a typical day.

### *Who uses the internet for hobbies*

Men, internet users under age 50, and those with home broadband connections are among the most likely groups to pursue their hobbies online.

Relatively younger American adults are more likely than their elders to look for information about hobbies or interests online. Some 86% of internet users ages 18 to 29 and 88% of internet users ages 30 to 49 utilize the medium to pursue hobbies. By comparison, 77% of 50-64 year-old internet users and 62% of online Americans age 65 and older report using the internet to pursue hobbies.

Connection speed matters, too. Broadband continues to spread into people's homes,[2] deepening their reliance on the internet in many ways, including the pursuit of hobbies. Fully 89% of respondents with a broadband connection at home report using the internet to find information about hobbies. However, it is important to note that eight in ten home

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[2] "Home Broadband Adoption 2007" (Pew Internet Project: July 3, 2007). Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/217/report_display.asp

dial-up users (78%) go online for information about their hobbies – further evidence of this activity's wide appeal.

| A Profile of Online Hobbyists | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *% of adult internet users who ever use the internet to look for information about a hobby or interest* | *% of adult internet users who used the internet to look for information about a hobby or interest yesterday* |
| All internet users | 83% | 29% |
| Men | 85 | 32 |
| Women | 80 | 25 |
| Whites | 84 | 31 |
| African Americans | 76 | 17 |
| English-speaking Hispanics (n=89) | 83 | 29 |
| Age 18-29 | 86 | 34 |
| Age 30-49 | 88 | 30 |
| Age 50-64 | 77 | 26 |
| Age 65+ | 62 | 17 |
| Less than high school (n=67) | 57 | 26 |
| High school diploma | 81 | 21 |
| Some college | 85 | 27 |
| College grad + | 89 | 38 |
| < $30,000 household income | 75 | 20 |
| $30,000-$50,000 | 83 | 31 |
| $50,000-$75,000 | 89 | 30 |
| >$75,000 | 90 | 36 |
| Dial-up connection at home | 78 | 21 |
| Broadband at home | 89 | 34 |

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey Feb. 15-March 7, 2007. N=1,492 internet users. Margin of error is ±3%.*

Demographic differences are more pronounced among those who said they went online for hobby information "yesterday" – that is, the day before they were contacted for this survey. On a typical day, one-third of online men, one-third of internet users in their 20s, and 38% of college-educated internet users pursue hobbies online.

### *Variety is the spice of online life*

Through a survey posted on our website, the Pew Internet Project collected stories about how the internet had an impact on people's hobbies. Here are some examples:

- "Because of the internet, we've been able to turn a hobby of collecting antiques into a business of buying and selling antiques."

- "I was searching for some information about my grandfather and his company in World War II, and Googled his name. A site came up that had a collection of letters and other papers that belonged to a famous Austrian composer. In that collection was PDF image of a letter that my grandfather had sent from Austria to this composer (who had apparently fled the country) on behalf of some friends that were still in Austria. I sent it to my grandfather, who doesn't even remember writing or sending it, and really had no idea who this composer was. But here was this piece of historical memory- it was really amazing to find such a thing, and it sort of made my grandfather's stories about the war 'true' to see this evidence on the web."
- "I discovered I could view art images of all kinds through museums and libraries around the world. I was just thrilled to be able to access this for my own education and enjoyment."

Online hobby research can inspire a person to travel, through activities like historical tourism, or inspire new experiences at home, like cooking or gardening. The internet can provide detailed information about even the most obscure hobby and can connect hobbyists of every stripe. Taxidermists can find just the right glass eye to complete a stuffed owl. Collectors can scour far-away troves to find that one quilt, stamp, comic book, or baseball card they desire.

The internet has also led to the creation of entirely new hobbies, as in the case of Geocaching – a hide-and-seek type of game using an interactive website and GPS technology.[3] Keeping a multimedia diary in the form of a blog is another uniquely online pursuit.[4]

### *The internet plays a crucial or important role for one-quarter of online hobbyists*

This growing use of the internet for hobby information tracks a trend we have seen in other surveys.

In a survey completed in March 2005, we asked all Americans if they had started a new hobby or became more involved with a hobby within the previous two years. Some 27% of internet users said they had and, of those, 28% said the internet played a crucial or important role as they delved into the hobby. Online men and those under age 30 were the most likely to report a major internet impact on their hobby. We got a similar result in a survey in February 2002.

### *About the Pew Internet & American Life Project*
The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit initiative of the Pew Research Center and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts to examine the social impact of the internet. The project is non-partisan and does not advocate policy outcomes: http://www.pewinternet.org/

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[3] Prios, D. "Hide-and-seek by satellite; High-tech treasure hunting: Minnesotans discover geocaching, which uses GPS technology to help find objects hidden in outdoor settings." *Star Tribune*, January 10, 2006, p. 1B.
[4] "Bloggers: A portrait of the internet's new storytellers" (Pew Internet Project: July 19, 2006). Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/186/report_display.asp

# February 2007 Tracking Survey

Final Topline          3/12/07

Data for February 15 – March 7, 2007

Princeton Survey Research Associates International
for the Pew Internet & American Life Project

Sample: *n* = 2,200 adults 18 and older
Interviewing dates: 02.15.07 – 03.07.07
Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on total sample [n=2,200]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [n=1,492]

**Q6a**    Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?
**Q6b**    Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?[5]

|  | USES INTERNET | DOES NOT USE INTERNET |
|---|---|---|
| Current | 71 | 29 |
| December 2006 | 70 | 30 |
| November 2006 | 68 | 32 |
| August 2006 | 70 | 30 |
| Feb-April 2006 | 73 | 27 |
| Jan/Feb 2006 | 73 | 27 |
| Nov/Dec 2005 | 66 | 34 |
| September 2005 | 72 | 28 |
| May/June 2005 | 68 | 32 |
| February 2005 | 67 | 33 |
| January 2005 | 66 | 34 |
| November 2004 | 61 | 39 |
| May/June 2004 | 63 | 37 |
| February 2004 | 63 | 37 |
| November 2003 | 64 | 36 |
| July 2003 | 63 | 37 |
| June 2003 | 62 | 38 |
| April/May 2003 | 63 | 37 |
| March 3-11, 2003 | 62 | 38 |
| February 2003 | 64 | 36 |
| December 2002 | 57 | 43 |
| November 2002 | 61 | 39 |
| October 2002 | 59 | 41 |
| September 2002 | 61 | 39 |
| July 2002 | 59 | 41 |
| March/May 2002 | 58 | 42 |
| January 2002 | 61 | 39 |
| December 2001 | 58 | 42 |
| November 2001 | 58 | 42 |

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[5] Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| October 2001 | 56 | 44 |
| September 2001 | 55 | 45 |
| August 2001 | 59 | 41 |
| February 2001 | 53 | 47 |
| December 2000 | 59 | 41 |
| November 2000 | 53 | 47 |
| October 2000 | 52 | 48 |
| September 2000 | 50 | 50 |
| July/August 2000 | 49 | 51 |
| May/June 2000[i] | 47 | 53 |
| March/April 2000 | 48 | 52 |

**Q7** Did you happen to use the internet YESTERDAY?[6]

**Based on internet users [N=1,492]**

| | YES, USED INTERNET YESTERDAY | NO, DID NOT USE INTERNET YESTERDAY | DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED |
|---|---|---|---|
| Current | 69 | 31 | * |
| December 2006 | 65 | 34 | * |
| November 2006 | 64 | 36 | * |
| August 2006 | 66 | 34 | * |
| Feb-April 2006 | 66 | 33 | * |
| Nov/Dec 2005 | 63 | 36 | * |
| September 2005 | 65 | 34 | * |
| February 2005 | 60 | 40 | * |
| January 2005 | 58 | 42 | * |
| November 2004 | 61 | 39 | * |
| May/June 2004 | 53 | 46 | 1 |
| February 2004 | 55 | 44 | * |
| November 2003 | 54 | 45 | * |
| July 2003 | 52 | 47 | 1 |
| June 2003 | 55 | 44 | * |
| April/May 2003 | 58 | 42 | * |
| March 3-11, 2003 | 60 | 40 | 0 |
| February 2003 | 60 | 40 | * |
| December 2002 | 56 | 44 | * |
| November 2002 | 57 | 43 | * |
| October 2002 | 57 | 43 | 0 |
| September 2002 | 58 | 42 | * |
| June 26-July 26, 2002 | 53 | 47 | * |
| March/May 2002 | 57 | 43 | * |
| January 2002[7] | 59 | 41 | * |
| Dec. 17-23, 2001 | 58 | 42 | * |
| Nov. 19-Dec. 16 2001 | 60 | 40 | * |
| Oct. 19-Nov. 18 2001 | 61 | 39 | * |
| Oct. 8-18 2001 | 51 | 49 | 1 |

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[6] Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Did you happen to go online or check your email **yesterday**?"
[7] Internet user defined as Q5=1 and Q6=1 from Aug. 2001 until Jan 2002.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| October 2-7 2001 | 56 | 43 | 1 |
| Sept 20-Oct 1 2001 | 57 | 42 | 1 |
| Sept 12-19 2001 | 51 | 49 | * |
| August 2001 | 56 | 44 | * |
| February 2001[8] | 59 | 41 | * |
| Fall 2000[ii] | 56 | 44 | * |
| July/August 2000 | 50 | 50 | * |
| May/June 2000 | 52 | 48 | * |
| April 2000[iii] | 55 | 45 | 0 |
| March 2000[iv] | 60 | 40 | * |

**WEB1**  Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things.  Do you ever use the internet to.../Did you happen to do this **yesterday**, or not?[9]

**Based on internet users [N=1,492]**

| | Total have ever DONE THIS | DID YESTERDAY | Have not done this | Don't know/ Refused |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Look for information about a hobby or interest | | | | |
| Current | 83 | 29 | 17 | * |
| November 23-30, 2004 | 77 | 20 | 23 | 0 |
| April/May 2003 | 76 | 21 | 24 | 0 |
| March 20-25, 2003 | 79 | 18 | 21 | * |
| March 12-19, 2003 | 76 | 19 | 24 | 0 |
| Jan 2002 | 77 | 19 | 23 | * |
| Dec 17-23, 2001 | 80 | 21 | 20 | * |
| Nov 19-Dec 16, 2001 | 80 | 20 | 20 | * |
| Oct 19-Nov 18, 2001 | 78 | 21 | 22 | * |
| Oct 8-18 , 2001 | 80 | 19 | 20 | * |
| Oct 2-7, 2001 | 77 | 18 | 23 | 0 |
| Sept 20-Oct 1, 2001 | 78 | 22 | 22 | * |
| Sept 12-19, 2001 | 77 | 10 | 22 | 1 |
| Aug 2001 | 80 | 20 | 20 | * |
| Feb 2001 | 80 | 21 | 19 | 1 |

**Continued…**

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[8] Internet user for Feb. 2001 defined as Q5=1 and (Q6=1 or Q6A=1-7).
[9] Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online.  Do you ever…?/Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?"

**WEB1 continued…**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2000 | 77 | 19 | 23 | * |
| July-August 2000 | 78 | 17 | 22 | * |
| May 2000 | 71 | 18 | 29 | * |
| April 2000 | 75 | 17 | 25 | * |
| March 2000 | 76 | 18 | 24 | * |

[i] In March through June 2000, Q6 asked only of computer users (Q5=1).

[ii] Fall 2000 figures based on a daily tracking survey conducted September 15 – December 22, 2000 [N=13,342].

[iii] April 2000 figures based on a daily tracking survey conducted April 1 – May 1, 2000 [N=2,503].

[iv] March 2000 figures based on a daily tracking survey conducted March 1 – March 31, 2000 [N=3,533].