

John MacKenzie

Without doubt the internet itself but particularly the e-mail facility.

I'm a retired, very senior citizen, whose work involved a lot of intercontinental travel as a result of which I made many friends in many countries. On retiring most people seem to find it something of a culture shock, a different environment quite cut off from what they've been used to, but those of us who've made an effort to teach ourselves how to use the internet and the facility of e-mailing don't suffer from that "loneliness".

I'm now in immediate contact with all those friends and ex-colleagues that I want to be and every day someone somewhere e-mails me some personal or business news, yes! and even more than a few jokes. Some of these contacts start a train of thought that raises questions that can usually be answered by searching the internet and I am in no doubt that this stimulation has contributed greatly to fighting off the brain degeneration that comes to all of us sooner or later.

I am convinced that programmes aimed at teaching older people, and there's more of us now than ever, the advantages of using the internet would encourage them to overcome their fear of technology they don't understand. Not only would it give them a new and exciting interest but it could just stave off the dreaded senility.

There's a lot of truth in the saying "Use it or lose it!" so better a "mouse potato" than a "couch potato".