

# Smart Tiny Tech

Solving Problems with Simple Technology

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<[librarian.net/talks/cil2009](http://librarian.net/talks/cil2009)>

# my library



I work at the Tunbridge Public Library in Tunbridge Vermont. We serve about 900 people. The library is open 21 hours a week. I work somewhere between three and five.

# I also...

- run MetaFilter
- lifeguard
- teach basic computer classes
- “help me buy a laptop” stuff
- do this sort of thing



As a result, I have a few other jobs....

# me @ work



One of the main things I do, as someone who is pretty computer savvy is helping people learn to use their own computers. This is Judy and Don. They brought their computers to the library for some help. I don't know who that kid is.

# rural is different



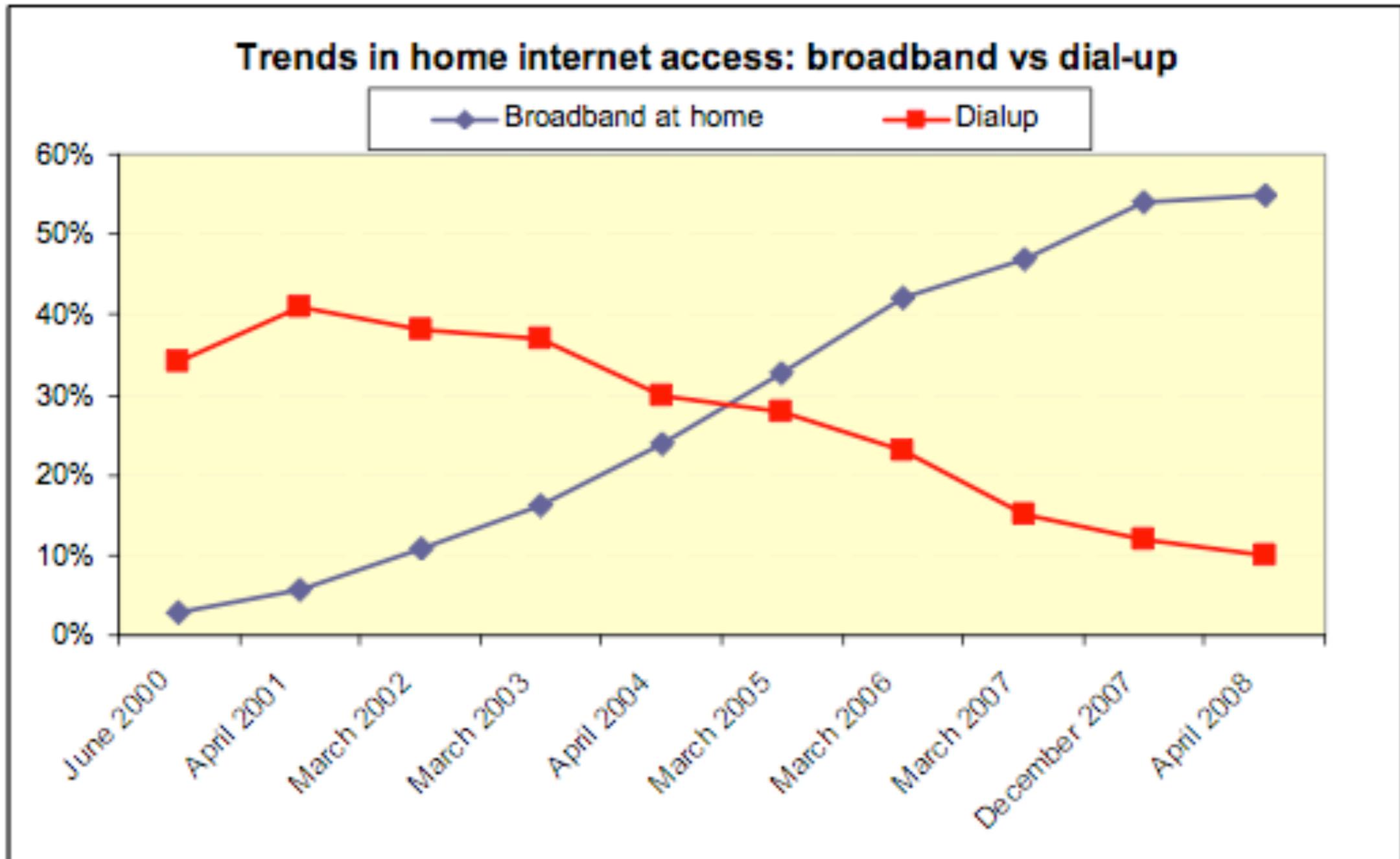
A lot of what we hear about library services is about what's happening 'where the people are' this is normal, but rural locations are in many ways different. For example, the wifi we offer at the library is often the only public wifi -- at any price -- in town.

# apologies for the numbers



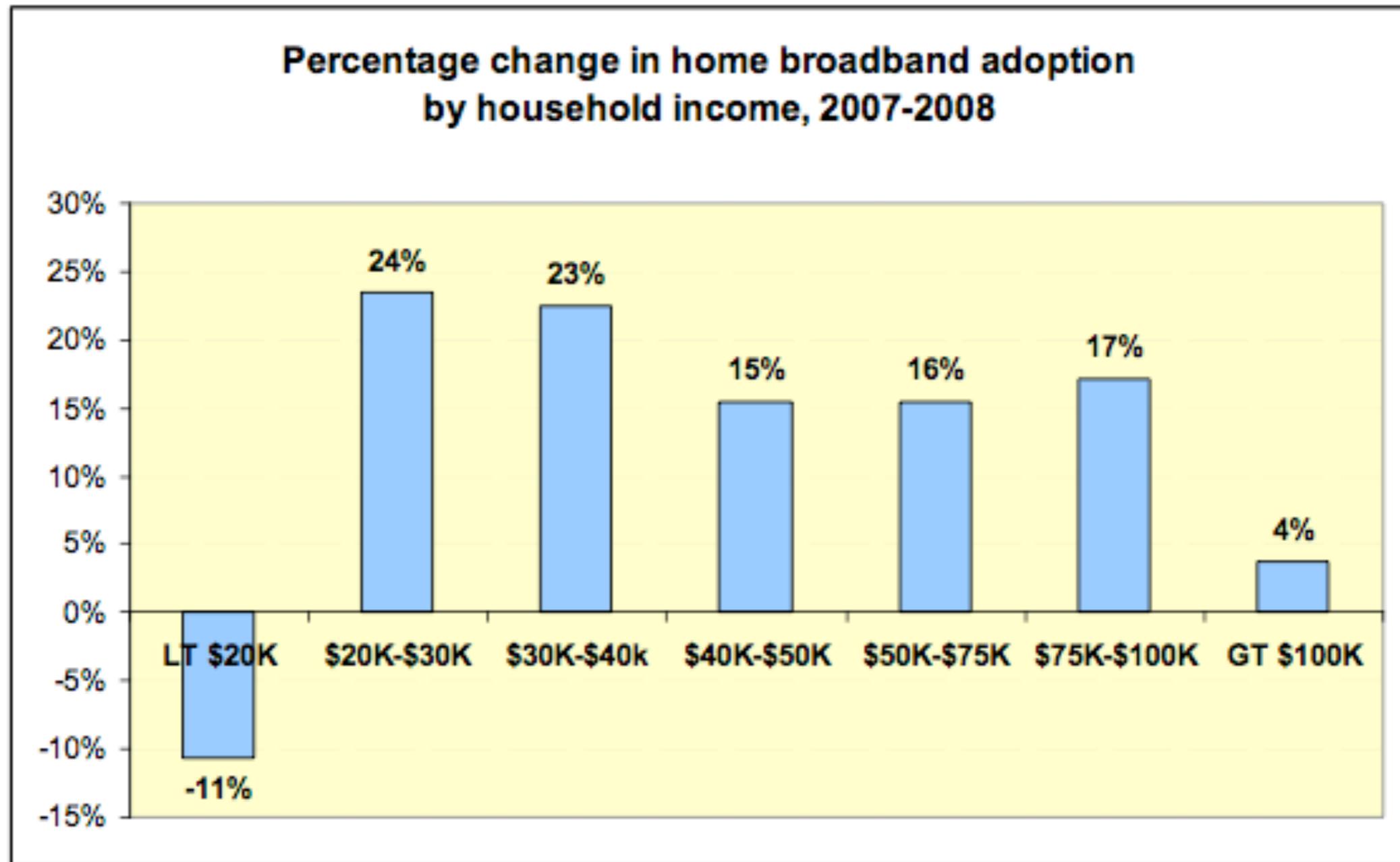
But i think sometimes you don't understand what we're really looking at until you see what the numbers really are. If you watch TV you'll think that everyone is online, has perfect hair and desires a new car.

# it's not just money



55% of adult Americans now have broadband internet connections at home 10% of people have dial-up 25% of low income people don't have bb at home. Half of Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 have broadband at home. Some 19% of those 65 and older have home broadband access as of April 2008. dialup is getting more expensive as broadband is getting cheaper.

# the more things change



the only people who are getting LESS broadband are the people who can't afford it.

# why not broadband?

- 19% of dial-up users said **nothing** would convince them to get broadband.
- 14% of dial-up users (24% in rural America) say that broadband service would have to **become available** where they live.
- one-quarter (27%) of adult Americans are not internet users

# who cares if you're offline?

A close-up photograph of Barack Obama speaking into a microphone. He is wearing a tan suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red tie. His mouth is open as if he is in the middle of a speech. A large, light gray speech bubble with a black outline is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'Please get online, thank you.'

**Please get online,  
thank you.**

Well the government would like to stop printing tax forms. They'd like to be able to collect information from you digitally. They'd like to help you with better economies of scale. 45% of dial-up users have never looked at state/local govt information online (28% of broadband). 96% don't do it in a typical day (84% bb)

# first things first



a lot of this stuff - learning computer stuff -- happens sequentially, so you can't learn to point and click unless you've learned to click. You can't learn ebay unless you have an email account.

# staff?

- many don't have home computers or no broadband at home
- kimball\_library@hotmail.com ?
- limited time for troubleshooting
- are employed and busy, don't have "play time" to learn new things

# vendors?

- we get what the Gates Foundation gives us and are happy for it
- we upgrade when the vendors say it's time (or don't)
- we bought MP3 players when we switched to Overdrive

# patrons?



Mostly just want our stuff to work, and this is the thing with being a tech leader...

# me! ...ME?



There's a lot of stuff you can be in charge of if you're willing to put in the work. I run the VLA website because no one else wanted to do it and only a few people could do it.

# who leads/who follows?



In urban areas the libraries are trying to keep up with technology. In the rural areas it's often the reverse. We're seeing people buy MP3 players because we have audiobook services. That's a heavy responsibility.

# money problems



So I used to talk about 2.0 blah blah but realistically the fancy pants stuff isn't really where we are at right now. We want things that solve problems that we're HAVING not ones that we anticipate. So let's start small. Every stamp you don't use is (in the US) 42 cents you save.

# get online & save money?



# things that are free

- web space
- photo hosting
- video hosting
- blog software
- (some) tech support
- free vs. “free”



# the 2.0 thing

*Open For Questions*

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## Open for Questions Wraps Up

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The trial run of Open for Questions has wrapped up with the President answering several of the most popular questions during a special online town hall. We will be trying to address more of the questions the President could not get to over the next week or so, and will continue looking for new ways to engage with the public and get your input.

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**92,937 people** have submitted **104,005 questions** and cast **3,603,648 votes**

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to communicate that the Americans are not your enemy."  
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MON, JANUARY 26, 7:55 PM EST

### Timothy Geithner sworn in as Secretary of the Treasury

Timothy Geithner is now officially the 75th Secretary of the United States Treasury.

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#### More Issues

[Read the President's entire agenda.](#)

Once the president has a blog I think we can now finally stop asking whether this is something "trendy" I mean it might still be, but I want to hang out with the trendsetters. Im going to be on a panel about 2.0 stuff at Yale, YALE next week, please buttonhole me about ethical issues between now and than.

# Sharon

“Investing in **wireless** here has drawn a lot of new people to our library.”



# Randolph

As far as I'm concerned, it's nice that we provide **wireless access** - people who can afford to buy technology certainly seem to appreciate it. It's even more vital that we provide computers - because let's face it, **not everyone can afford one**, or has the wherewithal or the wish to manage one.

L. emphasizes that our most important role is as **guides and troubleshooters**. Not only do we help people use the hardware and navigate the web, but we (a-hem, with considerable assistance) **have enough know-how** to maintain the technology.

For my part, I think our most important role is as confidential advisers. Perhaps our experience this summer with the State Police and the enactment of the **new VT statute protecting library patron privacy** have heightened my awareness of just how vital that is.



# Royalton

The tech stuff that seems of the most use to my patrons is the **free high speed access**, and the **wireless**. I have 5 public access computers and there are many hours of many days when all 5 are in use with folks waiting. Many households in this geographical area still can't get high speed access (my household included) and dial-up just doesn't cut it for most things anymore. I myself do the FAFSA here, and people come in and **apply for work**, look up **map info**, file their **taxes** online, download pictures from their email onto disc or flashdrives, download pdf forms, **sell or buy stuff on ebay**, as well as checking email and gaming and research.

I have a website for the library which I do keep **up-to-date** with new books purchased and event notices, and I have been playing around with blogs trying to figure out how best to incorporate that more interactive piece into our site in a manageable way. I am also getting ready to jump on the downloadable audio bandwagon, though don't know if it will be this year or next.



# Roxbury

You should, however, stop and see the new addition if you're going by and we're here! it's beautiful. we got two new public access computers last spring through a **grant**, and have pretty steady use of them, though not overwhelming! i've been a bit preoccupied with getting the construction done, so not much has happened with technology this year. i have **started a website**, with help from Jeremiah Kellogg, and am **struggling** to update it. One of these days i'm going to do **Vermont 23 things**, too. but not today!



# Tunbridge

We have wifi and digital audio books and are getting our catalog online this season but the best thing we offer is one-on-one help, advice and information about what all this technology means.

We're getting the reputation as the library that says "**yes.**"



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