



研究生入学 英语辅导教程

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前 言

《研究生入学英语辅导教程》是大学英语测试类选修课教材之一,旨在基础英语教学之上进一步培养学生的英语应用能力,帮助学生为全国硕士研究生入学考试做好应试准备。

本教材适用于有一定英语基础、达到《大学英语课程教学要求》中较高要求的学生,使用本教材的学生应具备大学英语四级较高水平。

本教材课文选自英语国家的期刊文章,每篇 800 词左右。主要的题源期刊是:《时代周刊》、《经济学家》、《新闻周刊》、《科学》、《美国新闻与世界报道》等,部分文章直接取材于网络。

考虑到本教材的适用对象,我们将所选课文的难度控制在研究生入学考试的中等以下难度,目的是帮助学生为研究生入学考试做好基础知识的准备,补充练习部分的短文除少部分取自题源期刊外,其余部分直接取自近年硕士研究生入学考试真题。

本教材分为 10 个单元,每个单元由两部分组成。Section A 包含课文及与课文相关的阅读理解、词汇和翻译练习,课文长度略长于一般阅读理解的文章,能帮助学生在理解的基础上循序渐进地记忆并积累一些有用的词汇和语言知识;Section B 包含针对研究生入学考试所编写的补充练习(包括完形填空、阅读理解的各种题型和写作)。两个部分围绕同一个话题选材,以便帮助学生就一些常见的热门话题(教育、法律、医学、科技、妇女运动等)积累相关知识,更好地了解西方文化领域内的基本观点。

在本教材练习部分的编写过程中,我们充分考虑了研究生入学考试的大纲要求,编写了 Reading Comprehension、Translation、Cloze、Writing 等常考题型,帮助学生通过练习积累相关话题的词汇,提高阅读理解能力。

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Unit 1 Education and Language Teaching

Section A Text

Falling Through the Cracks in a Rural School

Daniel Spangenburg, a high-school senior in Berkeley Springs, W. Va (西弗吉尼亚州), dreams of attending a prestigious college like Carnegie Mellon or Cornell. His teachers say he's smart, motivated and exceptionally mature. Only two obstacles stand between Spangenburg and his dream: he comes from a poor family and attends a rural high school. "With the right kind of college education, Daniel could do great things," says Berkeley Springs high principal George Ward. But so many smart rural kids fall through the cracks. Top schools don't know Daniel exists.

In an ideal world, the nation's elite schools would enroll the most qualified students. But that's not how it works. Applicants whose parents are alumni get special treatment, as do athletes and rich kids. Underrepresented minorities are also given preference. Thirty years of affirmative action have changed the complexion of mostly white universities; now about 13 percent of all undergraduates are black or Latino. But most come from middle, and upper-middle-class families. Poor kids of all ethnicities remain scarce. A recent study by the Century Foundation found that at the nation's 146 most competitive schools, 74 percent of students came from upper-middle-class and wealthy families, while only about 5 percent came from families with an annual income of roughly \$ 35,000 or less.

Many schools say diversity — racial, economic and geographic — is key to maintaining intellectually vital campuses. But Richard Kahlenberg of the Century Foundation says that even though colleges claim they want poor kids, "they don't try very hard to find them."

As for rural students like Spangenburg, many colleges don't try at all. "Unfortunately, we go where we can generate a sizable number of potential applicants," says Tulane admissions chief Richard Whiteside, who recruits aggressively — and in person — from metropolitan areas. Kids in rural areas get a glossy brochure in the mail.

Carnegie Mellon's dean of admissions, Michael Steidel, drives through Berkeley Springs a few times a year, but he's never stopped to scout for students. He cuts through the small mining town in the Blue Ridge Mountains en route from the Pittsburgh campus to more affluent high schools around Washington, D.C. "The admissions office doesn't have the money or the time," he says, "to help rural kids unravel the admissions process. Recruiting kids like that is almost one-on-one." When prestigious colleges do reach out to rural students, they often focus on local applicants. Dartmouth encourages applications from kids in New England farm towns. Every year Cornell accepts 175 transfer students from area community colleges, where these kids often end up.

Even when poor rural students have the grades for top colleges, their high schools often don't know how to get them there. Admissions officers rely on guidance counselors to direct them to

promising prospects. In affluent high schools, guidance counselors often have personal relationships with both kids and admissions officers. In rural areas, a teacher, a counselor or even an alumnus can help put a rural student on their radar screen. But poor rural schools rarely have college advisers with those connections; without them, admission can be a crapshoot.

Spangenburg would like to roll the dice; he's just not sure how. Tall, soft-spoken and handsome, Spangenburg is the cream of the 660 students in his school. More than half his classmates live below the poverty line. Just 40 percent of graduates get some higher education, most often community college or vocational school. About 10 percent go to the state university in Morgantown; Spangenburg's scores guarantee him a full scholarship there.

But stepping from his small community to a pricey, competitive college requires a big leap of faith. He's studied the websites of his dream schools, but is too nervous to e-mail admissions officers or faculty members, even though colleges encourage prospective students to get in touch. He's thinking about visiting Carnegie Mellon, but hasn't yet. Berkeley Springs' guidance counselor, Linda McGraw, has been some help. But she's quick to point out that she's more social worker than college adviser. Months ago, Spangenburg grilled her about early action. For other details about college life, he relies on friends of friends.

In the past few years some schools have begun to open that door a little wider. At MIT it's something of a mission for Marilee Jones, the dean of admissions. Twenty years ago, 25 percent of each MIT class were first-generation college goers from poor backgrounds who used the celebrated engineering school as a ticket out of the blue-collar world. Five years ago, when that number dipped below 10 percent, Jones began scouring the country for bright kids, and then paired the potential applicants with MIT faculty and students who could answer questions about college life. In four years Jones has doubled the number of poor first-generation students at MIT.

As college-application deadlines loom in the next two months, Spangenburg reads and rereads the brochures he's saved and tries to imagine himself amid the crowds of smiling, well-dressed students ...

Notes

1. **Berkeley Springs** 柏克萊泉

Bath (Berkeley Springs), West Virginia. Bath is a town in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, the United States. It is the county seat of Morgan County. The town is incorporated as Bath, but it is often referred to by the name of its post office, Berkeley Springs.

2. **Carnegie Mellon** 卡内基·梅隆大学

Carnegie Mellon University, also known as Carnegie Mellon or simply CMU, is a private research university in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the United States.

3. **Cornell** 康奈尔大学

Cornell University is an Ivy League university located in Ithaca, New York, the United States. It is a private land-grant university, receiving annual funding from the State of New York for certain educational missions.

4. **affirmative action** 平权法案

Policies that take factors including "race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or national

origin" into consideration in order to benefit an underrepresented group, usually as a means to counter the effects of a history of discrimination.

Vocabulary

prestigious / pre'stɪdʒəs / *adj.* admired or respected as one of the best and most important 有声望的,有名望的

obstacle / 'ɒbstəkl / *n.* something that impedes progress or achievement 障碍,绊脚石

elite / eɪ'liːt / *adj.* selected as the best 杰出的;出类拔萃的

alumni / ə'lʌmni / *n.* (alumnus 的复数) male graduates of a school, college, or university (男)毕业生, (男)校友

complexion / kəm'plekʃən / *n.* the way something appears to be 情况,局面

ethnicity / eθ'nɪsəti / *n.* a particular ethnic affiliation or group 少数民族;种族特点

diversity / daɪ'vɜːsɪti / *n.* the fact of including many different types of people or things 多样性,差异

generate / 'dʒenəreɪt / *vt.* to produce or cause something to create 产生,发生,引起

recruit / rɪ'kruːt / *vt.* to find new people to work in a company, join an organization or do a job, etc. 吸收(新成员),招聘

aggressively / ə'ɡresɪvli / *adv.* in a very determined way to succeed 有进取心地;执著地

metropolitan / ˌmetrə'pɒlɪtən / *adj.* relating or belonging to a very large city 大都市的

brochure / 'brəʊʃʊə / *n.* a thin book giving information or advertising something 小册子

scout / skaʊt / *vt.* to look for something in a particular area 搜索;寻找

cut through to take the shortest course by going across and not around a corner 抄近路穿过,斜穿过

affluent / 'æfluənt / *adj.* having plenty of money, nice houses, expensive things, etc. 富裕的

unravel / ʌn'rævl / *vt.* to understand or explain something that is mysterious or complicated 阐明,解释

counselor / 'kaʊnsələ / *n.* someone who gives advice about problems 顾问

crapshoot / 'kræpfʊt / *n.* a risky and uncertain venture 有风险的事业

dice / daɪs / *n.* one or more small blocks of wood, plastic, etc. that have six sides with a different number of spots on each side, used in games 骰子

vocational / vəʊ'keɪʃənəl / *adj.* relating to the skills you need to do a particular job 职业的

prospective / prə'spektɪv / *adj.* of or concerned with or related to the future 预期的,未来的

grill / grɪl / *vt.* to ask someone a lot of questions about something 拷问

dip / dɪp / *vi.* to become lower or go down 下降,下沉

scour / skaʊə / *vt.* to search very carefully and thoroughly through an area, a document, etc. 搜寻

loom / luːm / *vi.* if a problem or difficulty looms, it is likely to happen very soon 迫近

Exercises

I. Reading comprehension

Choose the best answer to each of the following questions according to the text.

1. According to the passage, American schools _____.

- [A] favor the most competent students
 - [B] enroll the children of their alumni
 - [C] don't conform to some national law
 - [D] discriminate against lower-class students
2. According to the passage, which of the following is false?
- [A] Many schools would rather enroll students from upper-middle-class families.
 - [B] Diversity is a very important factor to maintain vitality of campuses.
 - [C] Only about 5 percent of all undergraduates are black and Latino in America.
 - [D] Now, after thirty years of affirmative action, there are more students from underrepresented minorities.
3. Colleges go to cities to enroll students because _____.
- [A] they think students in urban areas have more intellectual potential
 - [B] they don't want to travel far to search for applicants in rural areas
 - [C] students in rural areas may have many economic problems
 - [D] it is much easier to find enough prospective students in cities
4. By saying "can be a crapshoot" (Para. 5), the author suggests _____.
- [A] rural students have an access to college
 - [B] it is very hard for rural students to go to college
 - [C] poor rural students can't afford admission fees
 - [D] poor rural schools are not on good terms with colleges
5. Spangenburg is _____.
- [A] very proud of his performance at school
 - [B] one of those top students in his high school
 - [C] is determined to go to Carnegie Mellon
 - [D] can get much help from his guidance counselor
6. At MIT, many first-generation poor students _____.
- [A] were grateful to the college for their enrollment
 - [B] regarded the college as an opportunity to change fate
 - [C] were glad to get away from their poor families
 - [D] got some help from MIT faculty and students
7. Which of the following might Marilee Jones agree with?
- [A] Colleges should spare no efforts to look for brilliant poor students.
 - [B] Renowned universities certainly attract brilliant poor students.
 - [C] Colleges can benefit greatly from the enrollment of poor students.
 - [D] Many colleges have realized the importance of enrolling poor students.
8. College-application is so difficult for rural kids because _____.
- [A] colleges will give preference to students from alumni families
 - [B] it would be more convenient for universities to enroll metropolitan students
 - [C] rural kids cannot get as much information as those in the cities
 - [D] all of the above

II. Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks with the words given below. Change the form where necessary.

prospective	cut through	affluent	recruit	diversity
metropolitan	elite	generate	prestigious	complexion

1. We are having difficulties in _____ well-qualified staff.
2. Even though the Ig Nobel (搞笑诺贝尔奖) is not exactly a(n) _____ award, winners travel from all over the world to collect their trophies.
3. Serving foreign markets can be an attractive way for a company to _____ growth and higher profits and meet other corporate objectives.
4. The _____ in the Asia-Pacific region serves as a favorable condition for their complementary cooperation within companies from different economies.
5. While the two talked merrily over cups in a small restaurant, in came a martial looking, handsome man with a huge build and a red _____.
6. Some residents were unable to enjoy the outdoor living which Webb had advertised, and Webb was faced with sales resistance from _____ purchasers.
7. We can _____ a small passage that'll bring us out at the main entrance of the theatre.
8. She left the small island and became famous in _____ France.
9. The entire society will embark on a road of civilized development with developed production, _____ life and a sound ecological environment.
10. Bright teenagers from underprivileged backgrounds are actively recruited by _____ private universities, which supply generous financial aid.

III. Translation

Turn the following sentences into Chinese.

1. A recent study by the Century Foundation found that at the nation's 146 most competitive schools, 74 percent of students came from upper-middle-class and wealthy families, while only about 5 percent came from families with an annual income of roughly \$35,000 or less. (Para. 1)

2. "Unfortunately, we go where we can generate a sizable number of potential applicants," says Tulane admissions chief Richard Whiteside, who recruits aggressively — and in person — from metropolitan areas. (Para. 3)

3. Spangenburg would like to roll the dice; he's just not sure how. Tall, soft-spoken and handsome, Spangenburg is the cream of the 660 students in his school. (Para. 6)

4. Twenty years ago, 25 percent of each MIT class were first-generation college goers from poor backgrounds who used the celebrated engineering school as a ticket out of the blue-collar world. (Para. 8)
-
-

Section B Supplementary Exercises

I. Use of English

Read the following text. Choose the best word(s) for each numbered blank. (2003 年真题)

Teachers need to be aware of the emotional, intellectual, and physical changes that young adults experience. And they also need to give serious 1 to how they can be best 2 such changes. Growing bodies need movement and 3, but not just in ways that emphasize competition. 4 they are adjusting to their new bodies and a whole host of new intellectual and emotional challenges, teenagers are especially self-conscious and need the 5 that comes from achieving success and knowing that their accomplishments are 6 by others. However, the typical teenage lifestyle is already filled with so much competition that it would be 7 to plan activities in which there are more winners than losers, 8, publishing newsletters with many student-written book reviews, 9 student artwork, and sponsoring book discussion clubs. A variety of small clubs can provide 10 opportunities for leadership, as well as for practice in successful 11 dynamics. Making friends is extremely important to teenagers, and many shy students need the 12 of some kind of organization with a supportive adult 13 visible in the background.

In these activities, it is important to remember that the young teens have 14 attention spans. A variety of activities should be organized 15 participants can remain active as long as they want and then go on to 16 else without feeling guilty and without letting the other participants 17. This does not mean that adults must accept irresponsibility. 18 they can help students acquire a sense of commitment by 19 for roles that are within their 20 and their attention spans and by having clearly stated rules.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. [A] thought | [B] idea | [C] opinion | [D] advice |
| 2. [A] strengthen | [B] accommodate | [C] stimulate | [D] enhance |
| 3. [A] care | [B] nutrition | [C] exercise | [D] leisure |
| 4. [A] If | [B] Although | [C] Whereas | [D] Because |
| 5. [A] assistance | [B] guidance | [C] confidence | [D] tolerance |
| 6. [A] claimed | [B] admired | [C] ignored | [D] surpassed |
| 7. [A] improper | [B] risky | [C] fair | [D] wise |
| 8. [A] in effect | [B] as a result | [C] for example | [D] in a sense |
| 9. [A] displaying | [B] describing | [C] creating | [D] exchanging |
| 10. [A] durable | [B] excessive | [C] surplus | [D] multiple |

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 11. [A] groups | [B] individual | [C] personnel | [D] corporation |
| 12. [A] consent | [B] insurance | [C] admission | [D] security |
| 13. [A] particularly | [B] barely | [C] definitely | [D] rarely |
| 14. [A] similar | [B] long | [C] different | [D] short |
| 15. [A] if only | [B] now that | [C] so that | [D] even if |
| 16. [A] everything | [B] anything | [C] nothing | [D] something |
| 17. [A] off | [B] down | [C] out | [D] alone |
| 18. [A] On the contrary | [B] On the average | [C] On the whole | [D] On the other hand |
| 19. [A] making | [B] standing | [C] planning | [D] taking |
| 20. [A] capability | [B] responsibility | [C] proficiency | [D] efficiency |

II. Reading comprehension

Read the following text. Answer the questions or complete the statements below by choosing [A], [B], [C] or [D]. (2005 年真题)

Americans no longer expect public figures, whether in speech or in writing, to command the English language with skill and gift. Nor do they aspire to such command themselves. In his latest book, *Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care*, John McWhorter, a linguist and controversialist of mixed liberal and conservative views, sees the triumph of 1960s counter-culture as responsible for the decline of formal English.

Blaming the permissive 1960s is nothing new, but this is not yet another criticism against the decline in education. Mr. McWhorter's academic speciality is language history and change, and he sees the gradual disappearance of "whom", for example, to be natural and no more regrettable than the loss of the case-endings of Old English.

But the cult of the authentic and the personal, *Doing Our Own Thing* has spelt the death of formal speech, writing, poetry and music. While even the modestly educated sought an elevated tone when they put pen to paper before the 1960s, even the most well regarded writing since then has sought to capture spoken English on the page. Equally, in poetry, the highly personal, performative genre is the only form that could claim real liveliness. In both oral and written English, talking is triumphing over speaking, spontaneity over craft.

Illustrated with an entertaining array of examples from both high and low culture, the trend that Mr. McWhorter documents is unmistakable. But it is less clear, to take the question of his subtitle, *Why We Should, Like, Care*. As a linguist, he acknowledges that all varieties of human language, including non-standard ones like Black English, can be powerfully expressive — there exists no language or dialect in the world that cannot convey complex ideas. He is not arguing, as many do, that we can no longer think straight because we do not talk proper.

Russians have a deep love for their own language and carry large chunks of memorized poetry in their heads, while Italian politicians tend to elaborate speech that would seem old-fashioned to most English-speakers. Mr. McWhorter acknowledges that formal language is not strictly necessary, and proposes no radical education reforms — he is really grieving over the loss of something beautiful more than useful. We now take our English "on paper plates instead of china." A shame, perhaps, but probably an inevitable one.

1. According to McWhorter, the decline of formal English _____.
 [A] is inevitable in radical education reforms
 [B] is but all too natural in language development
 [C] has caused the controversy over the counter-culture
 [D] brought about changes in public attitudes in the 1960s
2. The word “talking” (Line 6, Para. 3) denotes _____.
 [A] modesty [B] personality
 [C] liveliness [D] informality
3. To which of the following statements would McWhorter most likely agree?
 [A] Logical thinking is not necessarily related to the way we talk.
 [B] Black English can be more expressive than standard English.
 [C] Non-standard varieties of human language are just as entertaining.
 [D] Of all the varieties, standard English can best convey complex ideas.
4. The description of Russians’ love of memorizing poetry shows the author’s _____.
 [A] interest in their language
 [B] appreciation of their efforts
 [C] admiration for their memory
 [D] contempt for their old-fashionedness
5. According to the last paragraph, “paper plates” is to “china” as _____.
 [A] “temporary” is to “permanent”
 [B] “radical” is to “conservative”
 [C] “functional” is to “artistic”
 [D] “humble” is to “noble”

III. Logic and coherence

The following paragraphs are given in a wrong order. For Questions 1 – 5, you are required to reorganize these paragraphs into a coherent text by choosing from the list A – G to fill them into the numbered boxes. Paragraphs E and G have been correctly placed. (2011 年真题)

[A] No disciplines have seized on professionalism with as much enthusiasm as the humanities. You can, Mr. Menand points out, become a lawyer in three years and a medical doctor in four. But the regular time it takes to get a doctoral degree in the humanities is nine years. Not surprisingly, up to half of all doctoral students in English drop out before getting their degrees.

[B] His concern is mainly with the humanities: literature, languages, philosophy and so on. These are disciplines that are going out of style: 22% of American college graduates now major in business compared with only 2% in history and 4% in English. However, many leading American universities want their undergraduates to have a grounding in the basic canon of ideas that every educated person should possess. But most find it difficult to agree on what a “general education” should look like. At Harvard, Mr. Menand notes, “the great books are read because they have been read” — they form a sort of social glue.

[C] Equally unsurprisingly, only about half end up with professorships for which they entered graduate school. There are simply too few posts. This is partly because universities continue to

produce ever more PhDs. But fewer students want to study humanities subjects; English departments awarded more bachelor's degrees in 1970 – 1971 than they did 20 years later. Fewer students requires fewer teachers. So, at the end of a decade of thesis-writing, many humanities students leave the profession to do something for which they have not been trained.

[D] One reason why it is hard to design and teach such courses is that they can cut across the insistence by top American universities that liberal-arts educations and professional education should be kept separate, taught in different schools. Many students experience both varieties. Although more than half of Harvard undergraduates end up in law, medicine or business, future doctors and lawyers must study a non-specialist liberal-arts degree before embarking on a professional qualification.

[E] Besides professionalizing the professions by this separation, top American universities have professionalized the professor. The growth in public money for academic research has speeded the process; federal research grants rose fourfold between 1960 and 1990, but faculty teaching hours fell by half as research took its toll. Professionalism has turned the acquisition of a doctoral degree into a prerequisite for a successful academic career; as late as 1969 a third of American professors did not possess one. But the key idea behind professionalization, argues Mr. Menand, is that “the knowledge and skills needed for a particular specialization are transmissible but not transferable.” So disciplines acquire a monopoly not just over the production of knowledge, but also over the production of the producers of knowledge.

[F] The key to reforming higher education, concludes Mr. Menand, is to alter the way in which “the producers of knowledge are produced.” Otherwise, academics will continue to think dangerously alike, increasingly detached from the societies which they study, investigate and criticize. Academic inquiry, at least in some fields, may need to become less exclusionary and more holistic. Yet quite how that happens, Mr. Menand does not say.

[G] The subtle and intelligent little book *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University* should be read by every student thinking of applying to take a doctoral degree. They may then decide to go elsewhere. For something curious has been happening in American Universities, and Louis Menand, a professor of English at Harvard University, captured it skillfully.

[G] → [1] → [2] → [E] → [3] → [4] → [5]

IV. Writing

Part A Practical writing

Suppose you are Li Ming. Write a note to your teacher to ask for leave for a job interview. Your note should include

- 1) the reasons why you ask for leave, and*
- 2) the way you make up for your absence.*

Part B Essay writing

Study the following drawing carefully and write an essay in which you should

- 1) describe the drawing,*

- 2) interpret its meaning, and
3) support your view with examples.
You should write about 150 words.



Unit 2 Information and the Media

Section A Text

Cutting Loose

In the 1990s, people went bananas about wireless. Electronic communications once thought bound permanently to the world of cables and hard-wired connections suddenly were sprung free, and the possibilities seemed endless. Entrenched monopolies would fall, and a new uncabled era would usher in a level of intimate contact that would not only transform business but change human behavior.

To be sure, the wild publicity of those days wasn't all hot air. Marconi's "magic box" and its contemporaneous inventions kicked off an era of profound changes, not the least of which was the advent of broadcasting. So it does seem strange that a century later, the buzz once more is about how wireless will change everything. And once again, the commotion is justified. Changes are afoot that are arguably as earth shattering as the world's first wireless transformation.

Certainly a huge part of this revolution comes from untethering the most powerful communication tools of our time. Between our mobile phones, our BlackBerries and Treos, and our Wi-Fi computers, we're always on and always connected — and soon our cars and our appliances will be, too. While there has been considerable planning for how people will use these tools and how they'll pay for them, the wonderful reality is that, as with the Internet, much of the action in the wireless world will ultimately emerge from the imaginative twists and turns that are possible when digital technology trumps the analog mind-set of telecom companies and government regulators.

Wi-Fi is itself a shining example of how wireless innovation can shed the tethers of conventional wisdom. At one point, it was assumed that when people wanted to use wireless devices for things other than conversation, they'd have to rely on the painstakingly drawn, investment-heavy standards adopted by the giant corporations that make much money through your monthly phone bill. But then some geeks came up with a new communications standard exploiting an unlicensed part of the spectrum. It was called 802.11, and only later sexed up with the Wi-Fi moniker.

Though the range of signal was only some dozens of meters, Wi-Fi turned out to be a great way to wirelessly extend an Internet connection in the home or office. A new class of activist was born: the bandwidth liberator, with a goal of extending free wireless Internet to anyone venturing within the range of a gratis hotspot. (New York activist Yury Gitman has even created a bicycle that doubles as a hotspot.) Meanwhile, Apple Computer seized on the idea as a consumer solution, others followed and now Wi-Fi is as common as the modem once was.

Another unplanned bonus: more-powerful variants of Wi-Fi, with exotic descriptors like WiMax or mesh networks, have emerged as contenders to finally hook up remote areas that have so far resisted broadband. Pioneers are bringing wireless to places as distant as Pirai, Brazil, and Colorado Springs. As Kevin Werbach, former FCC counsel for new-technology policy, notes, because “it’s low cost and doesn’t require a big upfront infrastructure investment,” wireless technology is the means by which previously unwired chunks of civilization will plug into the cyberaction. Consider the MIT project to install Wi-Fi base stations on intervillage buses in India — when the vehicles stop to pick up passengers, computer users within range can use the signal to download files or send e-mail.

Wi-Fi is only one of dozens of wireless variants in this new revolution. You might know GPS and satellite radio, Bluetooth and RFID, but do you know ZigBee? (Got you there. It’s a means of networking lots of appliances.) The important thing to remember is that as these methods pile up, the result is less and less about losing the wire and more and more about making way for previously unimaginable activities.

When you install cameras in telephones, for instance, photography shifts from the production of flat illustrative artifact into a means of communication. The ease of distribution becomes a force in itself, pushing networks to handle more bandwidth. And the sudden addition of hundreds of millions of instant eyes to the global network provides its own challenges (thus the devices are banned in locker rooms and the Supreme Court).

All over the planet, wireless is making waves, from the text-message-mad teenagers at Tokyo’s Shibuya Station to a Wi-Fi-equipped McDonald’s to Everest climbers calling home from the summit. With dizzying rapidity, wireless innovations are moving from the cutting edge to the routine. Just like what happened with Marconi’s magic box during the first wireless revolution.

Notes

1. Marconi 马可尼

Guglielmo Marconi (1874 – 1937) was an Italian inventor, known as the father of long-distance radio transmission and for his development of Marconi’s law and a radio telegraph system. Marconi is often credited as the inventor of radio, and indeed he shared the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics with Karl Ferdinand Braun “in recognition of their contributions to the development of wireless telegraphy”.

2. WiMax 全球微波互联接入

Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access: It is a communication technology for wirelessly delivering high-speed Internet service to large geographical areas. WiMax offers data-transfer rates of up to 75 Mbit/s, which is superior to conventional cable-modem and DSL connections. However, the bandwidth must be split among multiple users and thus yields lower speeds in practice.

3. FCC 美国联邦通讯委员会

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent agency of the United States government, created by Congressional statute, and with the majority of its commissioners appointed by the current President. The FCC works towards six goals in the areas of broadband,