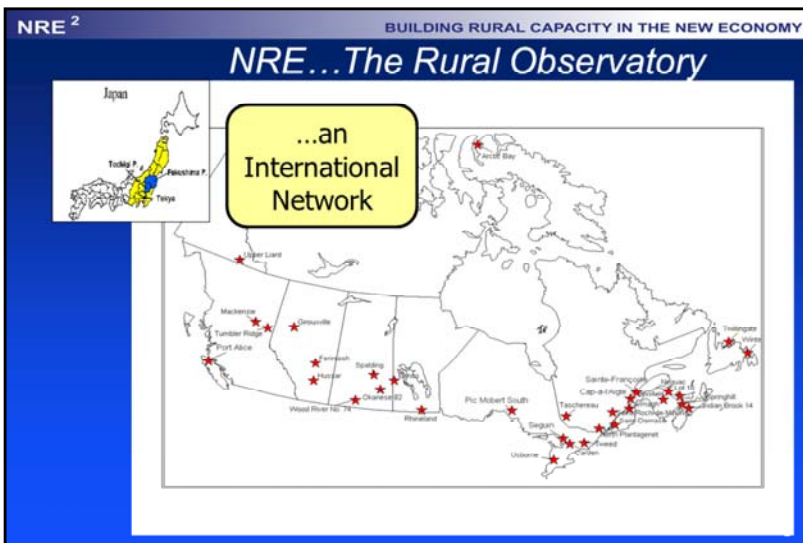- Acknowledgements:
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Concordia University
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
- Statistics Canada
- CRRF
- NRE Research Team
- Rural Citizens in our field sites

- This presentation can be found on the NRE website

- NRE Project
- 9-year project
- 15 researchers, 11 universities
- One feature: the Rural Observatory
  - (S) 32 systematically identified rural sites
  - Work with people in the sites over many years
  - Community profile data (every 2 years)
  - Household survey (1995) households in 21 sites (2001)
- Japanese colleagues' response
  - (S) 2 sites in Japan
- Our concern is with the future of rural Canada
 - How can we best position rural Canada for the new economic, political, and social conditions?

Questions re. AB Supernet

- How is the Internet used by people in rural communities?
- What difference (if any) does the community context make?

•The Questions

•What difference (if any) does the Internet make to community vitality?

•Given the time available, I am not able to deal with all of aspects of this question, but have focused on results from two related question:

•(S) How is the Internet used in rural communities?

•(S) What difference (if any) do the contextual characteristics of the community make
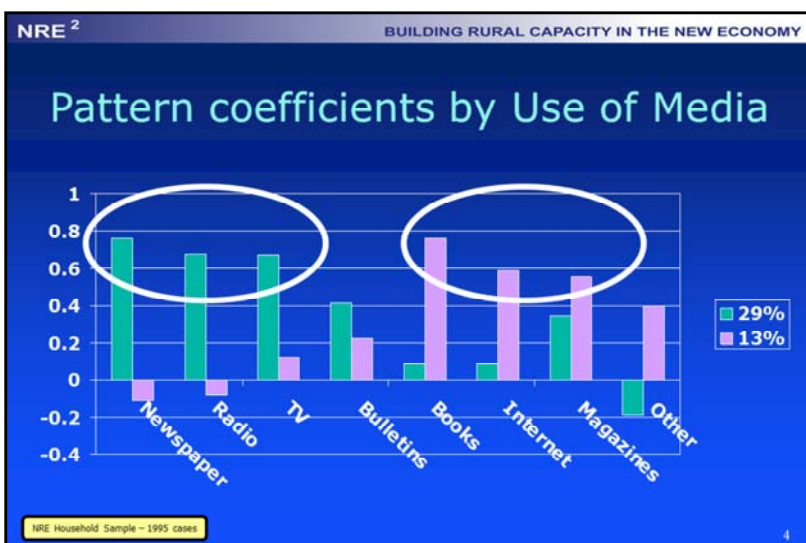
First question: How is the Internet used in rural communities?
•Household survey
    •Asked respondents for information regarding their internet use
    •Also asked them who they turned to for help and information when they were faced by major changes in their households.
    •NOTE: this is not just data on the use of the Internet (and other forms of media), but on the use of the Internet where it matters – to deal with challenges faced by the household.
    •(S) This figure represents the results of this latter series of questions.
        •(S) The first set of bars represents one type of household
        •The higher the bars, the more these types of media are used together when seeking help
            •[Factor analysis of the use of various media for social support]
        •(S) The predominant type of household uses Newspapers, Radio, and TV together when seeking support for major changes
            •29% of the variance
        •(S) The second most frequent household uses Books, the Internet, and Magazines (13% of variance)
•NOTE: New technologies are typically used in combination with old
•Critical to remember in enthusiasm for e-government and e-commerce
    •There is a tendency for new technologies like the Internet to be proposed as a substitute for the more traditional media like books, newspapers, radio, TV, bulletin boards, telephone, word-of-mouth.
        •E-government is one of the biggest champions of this
•However, the Internet is not necessarily a substitute for other media
    •Internet needs infrastructure and skill-building capacity, but also it needs measures for confidence-building
        •People need to learn what information they can trust and what they cannot trust
        •They need to learn where they can put their eggs in the technology basket and when they need backup
            •As a teacher – there was a long period where I would never go to a presentation without my acetate sheet backups for my powerpoints
        •This development of trust is often developed through corroboration via other media
    •The relative independence between Internet users and Newspaper/Radio/TV users also suggests we may overlook important sectors and types of people in our enthusiasm
        •Elderly (many people are intimidated by ATMs, etc.)
   •Also will mean that we might overlook opportunities for integrating people with the Internet – especially if they rely on non-traditional media for building their confidence
   •Strategic implications:
        •Build credibility by publishing tips and suggestions in traditional media
        •Libraries a good strategy (books and magazines)
        •Newspapers, Radio, and TV users are potential target group
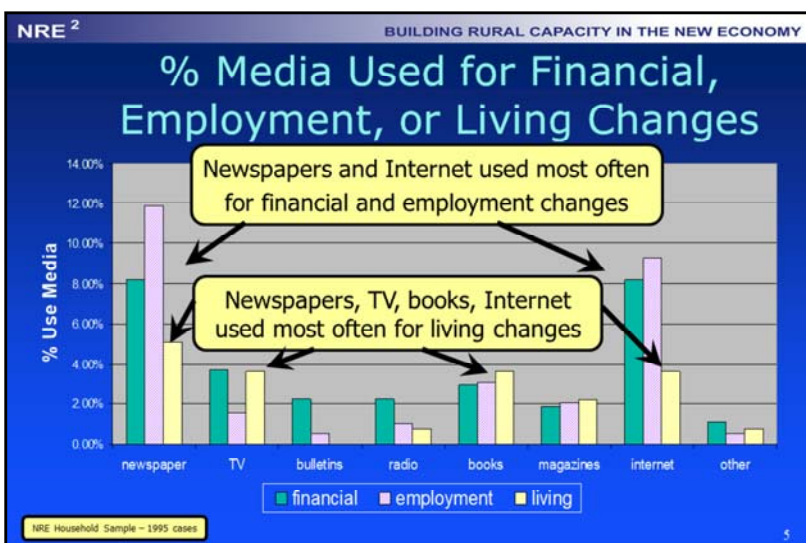
•We also investigated the extent to which the nature of the issue was related to the media used

•This table shows the relative use of 8 types of media (listed along the bottom) for 3 types of issues (financial, employment, living changes)

  •NOTE: does not include other (non-media) supports like family, friends, professionals, groups.

  •(S) Financial issues: newspapers and internet about even, then TV and books

  •(S) Employment issues: newspapers, then internet, books, and magazines

  •(S) Living issues: newspapers, then TV, books, and internet

  •(S) Newspapers and Internet used most often for financial and employment changes

  •(S) Newspapers, TV, books, and the Internet used most often for changes in residence or living arrangements

•These results suggest important strategic considerations for groups and organizations with special interests, services, or products.

  •Design your Internet strategies with a view to the integration of other media

  •Use newspapers and Internet for employment objectives
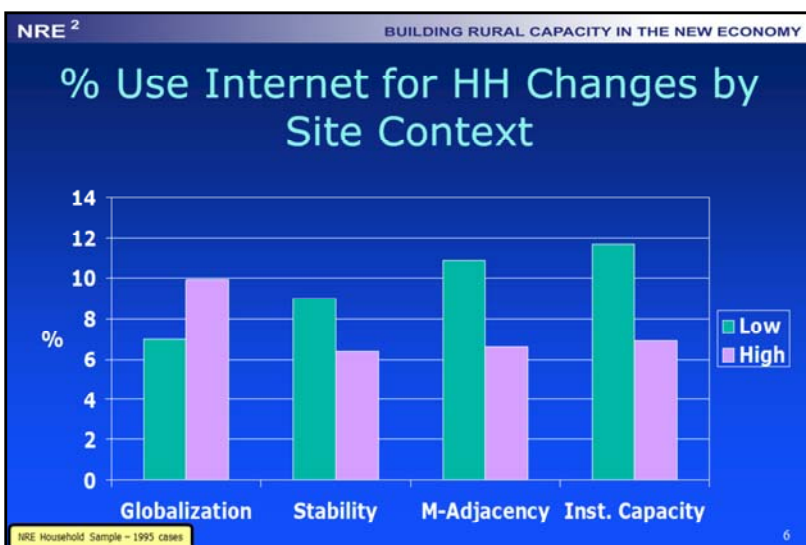
Our research was also designed to examine the impacts of the local context for the use of media in general and the Internet specifically

•We have selected the sites within the Rural Observatory to allow comparisons on 5 key dimensions.

•4 of them are related to the conditioning of local infrastructure, activities, and outsomes

•Integration into the global economy

•Economic stability

•Metro-adjacency

•Institutional capacity

•Do these make any difference to the ways in which the Internet is used?

•% of Households that use the Internet to deal with Major Changes

•Extent to which the community is connected to the global economy

•(S) Stronger connection to the global economy -> Greater use of the internet

•People in communities that trade globally are more likely to use the Internet

•(S) Lower the economic stability -> Greater use of the internet

•People in communities with fluctuating economies are more likely to use the Internet

•(S) More remote from large metro centres -> Greater use of the internet

•People in remote communities may have fewer service alternatives nearby.

•(S) Lower the Institutional Capacity -> Greater use of the internet

•People in communities with few institutions may turn to the Internet for information, services, and support.

•These results provide useful information for community strategies, policy design, and marketing options.

•E.g. Internet seems particularly important for globally connected, remote communities with few institutions

Summary

•(S) New and old technologies are used in combination

•Check out the combinations for strategic expansion of Internet use

•(S) Different technologies are used for different issues and challenges

•Direct your products and services to the appropriate media

•(S) Local context affects the nature of use

•Design your community, marketing, and policy for the appropriate local context

- Invite to explore our research results via the web site

- Also welcome discussion and participation

- Build on the work already accomplished

- We are always seeking to explore ways to leverage each other's strength on behalf of:
    - High quality research
    - Appropriate policy development
    - Effective and appropriate capacity building – at all levels