of the most popular college textbooks. E-textbooks can cost half the price of a new print textbook. But students usually lose access after the end of the term. And the books cannot be placed on more than one device, so they are not easy to share. So what do students think of etextbooks? **Administrators**[2] at Northwest Missouri State University wanted to find out. Earlier this year they tested them with five hundred students in twenty classes. The university is unusual. It not only provides laptop computers to all seven thousand of its full-time students. It does not require students to buy their textbooks either. They rent them to save money. The school aims to save even more by moving to e-textbooks. The students in the survey reported that **downloading**[3] the books from the Internet was easy. They liked the idea of carrying lighter backpacks. And fifty-six percent said they were better able to find information. But most found that using e-textbooks did not change their study habits. And sixty percent felt they read more when they were reading on paper. In all, almost half the students said they still liked **physical**[4] textbooks better.

But the survey found that cost could be a big influence. Fifty-five percent said they would choose e-textbooks if using them meant their textbook rental fee would not increase. Roger Von Holzen heads the Center for Information Technology in Education at Northwest Missouri State. He tells us that administrators are disappointed with the etextbooks now available because the majority are not **interactive**[5]. He thinks growth will come when more digital books include video, activities, games and other ways to interact with the information. The technology is improving. But for now, most of the books are just words on a screen.   (365 words)

III. Information Related to the Text (IRT)

1 History of Online Education

Online education has created possibilities that previous generations couldn't even fathom (推测). Literally, students can earn their entire degree at home, by working when it's convenient for them, while wearing their pajamas. This amazing innovation has allowed for greater access to universities and targeted specializations (专业领域) that may not be locally available. It has also been especially beneficial for working adults or stay-at-home parents who are eager to earn a degree. So, how did online education programs get

started? The history of online education extends back further than you may think, with the very first virtual classroom environments being created in the 1960s. In University of Illinois, scientists created a classroom system based on linked computer terminals. There, students were able to get access to informational resources while listening to a professor whose lectures were brought in remotely, via some form of television or audio device.

E-learning began at just about the same time that a computer was developed for personal practical use. In fact, the concept and practice of distance learning predates (早于) the computer area by almost 100 years. In England, in 1840, shorthand classes were being offered by correspondence courses (函授课程) through the mail. The improvements to the postal service made this method of distance learning popular in the early part of the last century. This led to a large number of "through the mail" type of educational programs. The computer only made distance learning easy

and better. Television, video recorders, and even radio have all made a contribution to distance learning.

Certainly not a form of "online learning" that stands up to the web learning of today, but it was the beginning of enhanced distance learning and the utilization（利用）of computer resources for educational purposes.

Universities quickly began to take advantage of these new resources by offering distance learning courses, using computer networking for information and resource sharing, and more. By the mid-1980s, college resources frequently included online access to course information and student networking tools.

Online courses only began emerging in the late 1980s, with some moderate success. The concept was further popularized as major corporations began using similar utilities to trim their training budgets. While businesses began with software training programs, the largest corporations started utilizing online tools to minimize software distribution（分销）costs.

Another phenomenon that contributed to online learning was the correspondence school. The original correspondence schools worked in a very straightforward way: You registered（注册）by mail, received materials by mail, then mailed the course work back for grading upon completion.

As the digital age swept across the nation, the correspondence school became more grounded in the virtual world, and the first online correspondence school, the University of Phoenix, made its way onto the scene in 1989. It was not a fully accredited（认可的, 验收合格的）institution at that time, however, and it was not until 1993 that the first accredited university, the Jones International University, really opened the floodgates.

It was at this same time that a new innovation in the online world made more universities of this kind possible: the Mosaic（初期互联网的 WEB 浏览器）web interface（界面）. This was the first graphic（图形的）interface that reached out to more common users, allowing for unprecedented（前所未有的）access and support. Since that time, hundreds of standard universities have started offering a variety of online courses.

Many institutions, as well as a number of digital correspondence schools, offer full degrees online. As the web continued to open doors, these universities expanded their degree selection. These days, it's literally possible to graduate with the degree of your choice without ever having to set foot in a classroom.

2 The Past of Online Learning

Distance learning, which includes online education, is nothing new. By the end of the 19th century, schools were beginning to offer correspondence courses in which teachers and students communicated about assignments（作业）by mail. One of the first private correspondence schools in the U. S. was opened in Boston in 1873. That same year, Illinois Wesleyan University became the first U. S. institution to offer courses by correspondence.

As the job market developed post-industrialization（后工业化）, the need for convenient and affordable education options became more prominent. Both correspondence courses, and today's modern incarnation of online learning grew out of the same need for flexible, cost-effective general and professional education.

Online distance learning actually began earlier than you might think. In 1983, Nova University in Florida started to use online technology in education, and by 1986, QuantumLink Tutoring Center and Community College became the first entirely online educational institution. As technology developed over the last 20 years, online education programs expanded as well. In fact, according to the 2009 Instructional Technology Council (ITC) survey, now demand for distance learning in some cases is outpacing supply.

3 The Present of Online Learning

In a 2008 ITC survey, community colleges were reporting an increase in enrollment in distance education programs of 22 percent. Enrollments and course offerings have only continued to increase through 2010.

One of the chief concerns regarding distance education has always been quality. This fear is lessening (减少), though, as more and more colleges and universities are offering a variety of accredited online options (选择权). The Sloan Consortium, a collection of institutions and organizations committed to quality online education, noted that in 2008, over 4.6 million students were taking at least one course online.

In terms of degrees, a new student can choose from a huge variety of online courses and pursue one of dozens of degree programs. Institutions now offer online associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

4 The Future of Online Learning

An increasing number of schools are offering online education options. Unlike older methods of distance education, the internet enables real-time (实时的), interactive (互动的) participation, thus more closely approximating (接近) the traditional classroom experience than prior correspondence courses. The perception (观念) in the past was that online programs were not as closely as effective as traditional programs; however, as the popularity and breadth of these programs increase, in a way, so does their quality. More organizations are becoming involved in assessing (评估) the quality of online education, more programs are becoming accredited, and a greater number of highly regarded schools are beginning to offer online coursework. Moreover, a 2009 U. S. Department of Education study actually found that the most effective learning was a combination of online and face-to-face education.   (1,160 words)

Now please read the following statements 1-10, *and write*:

T (*for* **True**) *if the statement agrees with the information given in the paragraphs*;

F (*for* **False**) *if the statement contradicts the information given in the paragraphs*;

NG (*for* **Not Given**) *if the statement is not given in the paragraphs*.

⇨ *Statements*

_____ 1. The very first virtual classroom environments were created in the 1980s.

_____ 2. The concept and practice of distance learning predates the computer area by almost 100 years.

_____ 3. In the late 1980s, major companies started using online tools to trim their training budgets.

_____ 4. Television did not make a contribution to distance learning.

_____ 5. The first qualified university, the Jones International University, really opened the floodgates in 1993.