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To the Teacher

IN APRIL 2008, the Center for the Digital Future Project at the University of Southern California released its seventh annual "Surveying the Digital Future" report. The survey found that the Internet is perceived by users to be a more important source of information for them than all other principal media, including television, radio, newspapers, and books.

According to Jeffrey I. Cole, director of the Center for the Digital Future:

Understanding how people use the Internet is even more important than understanding the impact of television. While television is primarily about our leisure time, the Internet is already transforming work, school and play. Virtually every business, political and social activity will be affected by the Internet, and most activities will be dramatically transformed. Child rearing, consumer behavior, education, politics and religion are being changed dramatically by the Internet; these changes have unprecedented effects on our culture that need to be better understood.

This revised book, the fifth in a series that helps students develop critical-thinking skills through media literacy, focuses on the Internet. The guiding principle of this book is that the Internet can be used to teach critical-thinking skills. The units in this book provide students with information about the Internet as an entertainment medium, as a business, and as a source of social and cultural exchange. The activities require students to describe this new information and apply it in varied exercises. Students will analyze and evaluate how the Internet affects their lives and the lives of others. They will encounter ethical considerations and discuss issues of gender, age, and ethnicity. Students are also provided opportunities to use their own creativity and ideas in Internet applications. Ultimately, this book strives to make students more informed and more discerning Internet users.

The Internet's rapid diffusion and its sharply escalating impact on society make it difficult to assemble materials about the Internet that do not quickly become dated. With this in mind, an effort has been made to develop activities in this book that focus on "big picture" aspects of the Internet rather than current fads and short-lived phenomena.

To the Student

THE PEW INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT pays close attention to how we use the Internet, and in particular, how teenagers use it. In 2008, the Project said, “The Internet is fully entrenched in the lives of young people—94% of teens now go online.”

Although most adults use the Internet today, many of you are probably the most knowledgeable users of the Internet in your home. If you already know a lot about the Internet, the *Media Literacy: Thinking Critically About the Internet* activities strive to challenge you instead of insult your intelligence. If you do not know as much about the Internet as you would like, the activities will help you explore and learn.

You may be required to use the Internet to find information. The best way to begin looking for information on the Internet is to start at a **search engine**. The following are just a few of the more useful search engines available:

- Alexa: www.alexa.com/search
- Alta Vista: www.altavista.com
- Bing: www.bing.com
- Excite: www.excite.com
- Gigablast: www.gigablast.com
- Google: www.google.com
- Yahoo: www.yahoo.com

Search engines typically use Boolean logic. George Boole (1815–1864) was a British mathematician and logician whose work has been used to develop patterns to search for information on the Internet. The four most common operators (symbols or words) used in a Boolean search are:

+ Using this symbol between search terms will take you only to those Web sites that contain all of those words. For example, typing *Cleveland + LeBron + James* at a search engine will create a list of Web sites that contain all those words.

– Using this symbol allows you to look for Web sites that contain a word or phrase but not another. For example, typing *Cleveland – LeBron* will create a list of Web sites that contain the word *Cleveland* but not *LeBron James*.

OR Using this word will find sites that have any of two or more words. For example, typing *Cleveland OR LeBron OR basketball* will find all the sites that have one or more of those words.

“” placing a phrase or sentence within quotation marks will take you only to sites where those words appear exactly as quoted. For example, typing “*LeBron James’s Nike contract*” will create a list of Web sites where that exact phrase appears.

There are probably several words in this book that you are not familiar with. You will find a glossary at the back of the book. Words that are defined in the glossary are highlighted in bold when first used in each unit.

The objectives of this unit are to help students:

- examine their Internet habits
- use the Internet to make significant decisions in their lives
- create their own Web sites
- investigate some of the ethical challenges that the Internet presents
- explore the interactivity of the Internet
- practice safe Internet usage

MANY TEENAGERS ARE ALREADY “power users” of the Internet. Thus, it is important that they develop a self-awareness of their Internet practices. This unit seeks to help students become discerning and effective Internet users. Several activities offer students opportunities to use the Internet to research important issues in their lives.

Because the Internet is designed to be easily accessed and facilitates rapid, widespread communication, it allows students’ voices to be heard. However, the Internet can also be easily misused. This unit strives to assist students in adopting ethical standards for Internet usage.

In This Unit

Blogs has students explore this medium of self-expression and asks students to identify the purposes Web logs serve for both the creators and their audiences. Students are invited to create their own blogs.

Parental Controls has students develop a series of guidelines for Internet access by young children. This activity can be completed individually or in groups.

Safe Chat is designed to be a group project. This activity asks students to generate a list of guidelines for young people using Internet chat rooms.

Defamation challenges students to assess some of the legal and ethical consequences of criticizing others on the Internet.

Cyberbullying and Cyberstalking

engages students in an investigation of the effectiveness and suitability of cyberstalking laws in educational environments.

Social Networking and Privacy asks students to explore the privacy and security issues that social networking sites touch upon.

Downloading, Part I has students confront the practical consequences surrounding the illegal copying of music and movies.

Downloading, Part II encourages students to use their creativity to design an anti-downloading project.

Buying a Car has students use the Internet to conduct the research necessary for the intelligent and informed purchase of a big-ticket item.

Choosing a College, Choosing a Career provides students with the opportunity to systematically investigate their future opportunities.

For Whom Do I Vote? engages students in an online exercise to learn about the positions of candidates for political office.

How Much Should the Government Know About Us? How Much Should Our Bosses Know? introduces students to e-mail and Internet searching systems operated by the FBI and by private employers. Students then develop guidelines for balancing individual rights against national and corporate security interests.

You are the first generation of lifelong Internet users. In the future, when the history of the Internet is told, people will read about how you and your friends began to develop patterns of Internet usage that may endure for hundreds of years. Or maybe not; perhaps some new technology will come along and make the Internet seem about as important as the telegraph. In the meantime, the Internet is a useful source of information and entertainment.

This unit asks you to view the Internet as a consumer. Yet it also provides you with opportunities to look at the Internet as a potential Web designer or content creator. You may never own your own radio station or newspaper. However, you are able to design and launch your own Web site. You can also use e-mail and newsgroups to tell people how you feel about something. Clearly, the Internet gives you power. It also gives others some power over you, as we will see in this unit. With this power comes responsibility.

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Social Networking and Privacy - - - - -

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES have exploded in popularity. Such sites include Facebook, MySpace, and Friendster. Since Facebook began in 2004, it has become quite popular among high school and college students, with millions of users. Facebook estimates that three-quarters of its users sign on every day, and the average user signs on about six times daily.

Students at several schools have been suspended from sports teams or other extracurricular activities, or otherwise punished, for activities that they discussed on Facebook. A Facebook page with objectionable content can even cost you a job. Employers are increasingly checking applicants' Facebook pages during the interview process. College students who work as school employees have lost their jobs because of information the colleges have gathered from Facebook. This information includes discussions and photographs of minors drinking alcohol, students using drugs, and students engaged in sexual activity. Prosecutors in drunk-driving cases have even used party photos from defendants' pages as evidence.

Consider the following questions. Write your response in the space provided. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

1. Some people say that what they do on their own time in their private lives is their own business. Some people disagree and say that anything you post on the Internet is no longer a private matter. Which position do you agree with? Explain.
2. Suppose a student posts stories and photographs on a social networking site about his or her behavior at parties. That student applies for a job. The employer looks on the social networking site and finds out about the student's behavior. Based on that information, the employer decides not to hire that student. Is this an invasion of the student's privacy or not? Explain.

Unit 4: The Internet and You

Activity 6: Social Networking and Privacy *(continued)*

3. Should an employer be able to make hiring decisions based on what job applicants post on their social networking sites? Explain.
4. Should a school be able to discipline a student for activities that he or she talks about engaging in when not in school? Explain.
5. Say a person charged with drunken driving or underage drinking is shown holding alcohol in a Facebook photo. The date on the photo shows it was taken after the person's arrest. Do you think it's okay for prosecutors to use Facebook or other online profile pictures to show what looks like a pattern of criminal behavior by defendants? Why or why not?

Activity 6: Social Networking and Privacy *(continued)*

6. Does your school have a policy about the use of social networking sites? If there is a policy, summarize it below.
7. What do you think about your school's policy? Would you change anything about it? Explain.
8. If your school does not currently have a policy about the use of social networking sites, do you believe it should? If so, what should the policy say? Explain.