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EDIT 605.FTU1

Assignment #2

Communicating on the Net

The Internet is the fastest growing communications medium to date. It has affected every facet of our lives. Businesses, large and small, can enhance their day- to-day operations, customer service and staff relations. Schools and classrooms have evolved to allow more effective communication in a multitude of ways – teacher-to-parent, student-to-teacher, or student-to-expert, just to name a few. Not only have new communications expanded areas of business and education, they have also broken down boundaries of communication between the people and our government. Most federal, state and local government districts host and maintain a public website. People are spending more time "online" then ever before. We must pay close attention to make sure that new technology does not isolate society and diminish the importance of face-to-face communication.

But, what are these new types of communication? People can communicate via the Internet in a multitude of ways. Probably the most popular form of communication is electronic mail or commonly known as e-mail. E-mail allows the user to transfer a message to friend, co-worker,

classmate, or relative, whether they are just down the street or across the world. One important feature of e-mail is its time-efficiency. In the case of businesses, e-mail is essential for two people communicating in two completely different non-compatible time zones. Also, you can prioritize your e-mail by sorting and opening them in order of priority. And, e-mail leaves a "paper trail." A student can no longer claim that they didn't know the assignment. Another great benefit of e-mail is its flexibility, you can check your e-mail from just about anywhere: on your personal computer, laptop, PDA, or even your wireless phone. As beneficial as e-mail is, you must always be careful in the way in which it is used. In Lydia Ramsey's article, "The Top Twelve E-Mail Mistakes that Can Sabotage Your Career," Ramsey states "e-mail is as much a part of your professional image as the clothes you wear, the postal letters your write, the greeting on your voicemail and the handshake you offer." When sending e-mails be sure to avoid a few common email faux-pas: take time out to fill in the subject line so that your recipient knows the intentions of your e-mail, personalize your message, keep it brief, always proof-read and include your signature with contact information. When composing e-mails remember that your message is non-verbal, it does not have body language or tone of voice. Always be conscious of how your words will come across in an e-mail.

E-mails are not the only way to communicate on the Internet. Maillists or Listservs are common ways for a user to communicate with more

than one person. Participants have access to a variety of information on specific topics by joining one of these special interest discussion groups. Listservers can distribute on-line newsletters, journals or magazines. This can be quite beneficial to people of the any member of a professional community including teachers. Sites such as Tile.net and CataList, are catalogs or listings of a variety of mailing lists. Any members of the group can post a reply or new topic. Some listservs have moderators but not always. Remember this is a discussion group. One should always be sure to question the accuracy of the information in which IT is received from a maillist or listserv.

Newsgroups are another manner in which users connect on the Internet. Newsgroups are a subsidiary of the Usenet system, which is commonly referred to as a Bulletin Board System. These bulletin board groups are an excellent mode of communication for students, teachers and professionals. Members of newsgroups post messages, from different locations, on specific topics. In order to organize and simplify the vast topics discussed on newsgroups the following hierarchies, which Are developed in 1987: ***comp*** computers, ***news*** information on usenet, ***misc*** miscellaneous, ***rec*** recreation and hobbies, and ***sci*** science, ***soc*** social issues and talk and ***talk*** current issues, also known as "The Big 7." Later additional topics were added such as ***biz*** business and ***alt*** alternative. There are many directories for finding a useful newsgroup. The major search engines

including Yahoo.com and Google.com have their only newsgroup directories and are great for links to political discussion and societal issues. Once you have found the newsgroup you are looking for users can engage in useful question and answer discussions.

Newsgroups are sometimes replaced with online journals, called Weblogs or Blogs. In "Teaching with the Internet K-12: New Literacies for New Times," Leu & Leu describe Weblogs as, online journals which "often include photos and graphics and are easily recognized by their standard two or three column template. The widest column is usually for the authors and users responses, which are listed, in chronological order. One of the other two columns usually contains a "blogroll" which is a list of links for to other blogs. There are all types of blogs. Leu & Leu states "Weblogs are very popular because they are easy to use and inexpensive or free." There are all types of blogs. Rebecca's Pocket has links to a variety of weblogs. Educators can go to The Educational Bloggers Network Weblog for a network of blog sites. Or check out Memeorandum.com for "fresh new news and stewing views."

Instant Messaging is a way for two people or more people to converse in real-time over the Internet. Messages are viewed line by line, which makes the communication more like a telephone conversation rather than writing a letter. The term Instant Messaging is a trademark of AOL Time Warner, however, there are many other messaging services including: Yahoo!

Messenger, which lets you communicate by the use of text, video and/or voice and Jabber, which allows access to other networks such as AOL Instant Messenger. According to Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, some "organizations create their own private instant messaging network by enabling them to limit access to the server (often with the IM network entirely behind their firewall) and administer user permissions. Typically, a dedicated corporate IM server has several advantages such as pre-populated contact lists, integrated authentication, and better security and privacy."

Text Messaging is similar to instant message in that it is Short Message Service that is available through your wireless phone. E-mail, Instant Messaging and text messaging have affected the way people write. Most e-mail systems are word-processing based, which provides the user and/or student with spelling and grammar checks. A lot of these word processing features have an auto correct feature, which corrects spelling and grammar without even alerting the user of the mistake. In addition, with applications such as instant and text messaging, comes the use of acronyms. These acronyms are a time-saver, but most linguists including Professor N. Baron, "fear for the sanctity of proper English." In a discussion broadcasted on On the Media Baron discusses how "there is a complicated relationship between technology and language" and whether instant and text messaging "are going to maintain into the regular off line language." While these forms

of short message communication are helpful, we must be sure to teach students the proper ways of writing and grammar.

Internet communication is an integral part of creating business relationships. E-mail and websites are a great way to improve and strengthen communication between colleagues and present and potential customers. While e-mail improves communication, it also saves companies money. Sending e-mail reduces the cost of postage, paper and the phone bill. In an office environment, Internet communication can be used for email, researching information, and accessing new information and documents. Companies may also choose to use the Internet for on-line customer support. This allows for quick responses to customers' inquiries. By creating a company newsletter businesses may keep up with employee and customer relations on a regular basis. Businesses can save a ton of time and money having "virtual" meetings or trainings using video-conferencing.

With the development of the Internet, students may become more independent learners. E-mail can be used to help expose students to a wide variety of cultures and broaden the student's views on the world. Sites such as www.epals.com and www.gaggle.net can allow for students to set up pen pals with anyone, anywhere in the world. Students can also communicate with experts on sites such as Virtual Reference Desk, where students can search by category or ask an expert. Teachers can use e-mail for a variety of purposes: as an alternative to office hours, to distribute information, and/or

for students' homework submission. Maillist and listservs are great for class discussions or opinions from experts.

The Council for Excellence in Government studied how the Internet is "profoundly changing the way our society communicates, works and learns." In its article, "E-government: the Next American Revolution," the Council discusses how the Internet can "revolutionize the performance of government and revitalize our democracy." In order to allow for "we the people" to have a more active role in our government, the e-government movement created a vision which would allow for "a place not only to get information but also to complete transactions with government, get services, talk with elected representatives – even to vote." Currently people can pay their taxes online, can visit a government website, renew your driver's license or apply for college financial aid. Today most federal, state and local government agencies maintain or host a website where visitor may be able to give feedback or ask questions.

People are spending more time "on-line" then ever before. According to a Stanford University early study of the Internet's effect on society, the invention and popularity of the Internet has had several effects on society:

- "People spend more our on the Internet the more years they have been using it.
- A quarter of the respondents who use the Internet regularly (more than 5 hours a week) feel that it has reduced their time with friends and family, or attending events outside the home.
- A quarter of regular Internet users who are employed say the Internet has increased the time they spend working at home without cutting back at the office.

- Sixty percent of regular Internet users say the Internet has reduced their TV viewing, and one-third say they spend less time reading newspapers.
- The least educated and the oldest Americans are least likely to have Internet access, but when they do use the Internet, their use is similar to others' use."

The general public must be careful to not let these new forms of communication isolate us as a society. People are starting to work more at home which means less time spent with their family. The article states that people in the "mainstream (are) online but the digital divide persists. There is a major difference between school districts and homes (the "haves" and the "have-nots") with access to the Internet. According to the Council for Excellence in Government, "the digital divide is still a significant socioeconomic fact, with 45 percent of Americans on the wrong side of the gap." We as a society need to focus on closing that gap as soon as possible by making Internet access more readily available to people at libraries or community centers.

Although Internet communication enhances businesses, classrooms and society, it not a replacement for real face-to-face communication. While the Internet does allow for quick, time saving communication across any distance, it has changed our perspective on communication. The Internet allows for communication with new people, friends, relative and colleagues at a moments notice. Work invades the home or just about anywhere if you have a wireless phone. This kind of immediate gratification helps put people

in at their company's beck and call. Internet communication in the classroom

can cause less development of socialization skills. There are multiple

benefits to these new technologies but we must ensure that it is not at the

expense of our close personal relationships.

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