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EDIT 605.FTU1

Assignment #1

Searching the Web

Picture this…The year is 1959 B.C. Before Computers, that is, before the Internet…A child is given a report on "Their Favorite Animal." He/she takes home their textbook and where is the first place the child goes? They go to the local public library to do research. He/she may take out a few books, maybe watch a short filmstrip and goes home to write their report. Now the year is 2005 A.D. After Discovery of the Internet, that is. How would that same research report go today?

Dictionary.com states that a paradigm shift is an "acceptance by a majority of a changed belief, attitude, or way of doing things." There has been a fundamental change in the way of gathering knowledge - in the classroom, in libraries and for personal use. A *Changed Belief* – people have gone from believing that books were the only resource available when searching for information to believing that you can find anything you need to know on the Internet. A *Changed Attitude* – learning and researching has become exciting since the invention of the Internet. And definitely, a changed *way of doing things* – searching for information has moved away from using just print media to using the various forms of multi-media via the Internet.

The late '60's spawned the birth of the Internet. It began as a text-based browser in 1969. And in 1977, the first microcomputers entered the school system. In November 1993, Mosaic released the first image supporting browser. And, as they say, "A picture is

worth a 1,000 words." Teachers began to recognize the power of the Internet. According to Wikipedia.com, by mid-1995, popular culture had begun to notice the World Wide Web. And then came the "Browser Wars," a competition between web browsers companies for dominance in the area of browsers. Microsoft dominated the market, over its competitor Netscape by offering its browser for free with every copy of their Window's operating system, which Microsoft already had a monopoly on. The browser you use to search on is just as important as the search engine you use to search. Newer browsers including Mozilla Foundation's Firefox and Opera.com offer features such as tabbed browsing, dictionary features and a "find on this page" toolbar right at the bottom of the Window, all which are extremely helpful while searching. With the endless possibilities out there, some may say that a Second Browser War is just around the corner. Students need to just find which browser works best for them.

In the fall of 1998, 89% of U.S. public and private schools and 51 percent of all classrooms had Internet access (Wirt, 1999). In 1998, the International Society for Technology for Education, also known as the ISTE developed technology standards for all students in grades K-12. The ISTE's mission: "Providing leadership and service to improve teaching and learning by advancing the effective use of technology in education." These standards, National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), set the stage for the Internet's role in the classroom. For example, according to the NETS Standards students are responsible for using Technology as a research tool:

- Students use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.
- Students use technology tools to process data and report results.

- Students evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness for specific tasks.

According to the ISTE, the Internet plays four roles in school improvement and reform models:

1. Students learn to make use of the Internet as an aid to retrieving information from multiple sources.
2. Students learn to use the Internet as an aid to communicating with and collaborating with people throughout the world.
3. Students learn to develop web materials, especially as a component of project-based learning that is rooted in constructivism and in cooperative learning.
4. Students learn in an IT-Assisted Project-based Learning environment, with the Internet playing a major supportive role.

The Internet has also changed the role of the librarian. Today's librarian "expands the services available from the library to include computer-based data and sophisticated information-seeking strategies." (Simpson) The Internet allows for students to have access to a larger, more extensive amount of resources. Librarians are moving away from the traditional library setting and participating in everyday classroom activities. In addition, librarians are becoming experts in the field of technology while also assisting the students in learning how to use technology themselves. In Carol Simpson's article The School Librarian's Role in the Electronic Age, Simpson states "Suggesting resources, locating and acquiring needed materials, recommending strategies, facilitating use of technologies, and instructing students and teachers in optimal information-seeking methods replace the traditional librarian tasks of material circulation." The library has always been and will remain and an excellent resource when it comes to researching.

Finding accurate material is not an easy task for adults, let alone for children. Search Engines come in all kinds. The majority of website traffic comes via search

engines. Search engines help you find what you are looking for on the Internet, or what some may call the *"Information Superhighway*." But, you wouldn't drive on a *Superhighway* without a license. Just as you shouldn't search the Internet without first learning the skills to help you search. There are three kinds of search engines: Directories, Major Search Engines, and Meta-crawlers. Students should be able to discern which type of search engine to use when you they are looking for a broad topic and/or when you they are looking for something specific. Directory searches are great when searching a specific topic while meta-crawlers search other search engines for more complex searches. Not soon after the popularly of the World Wide Web in 1995, emerged innumerous search engines with Google coming out on top. Today, there are all types of search engines – even some for specific topics such as shopping, travel, news, etc. Even most major websites have search engines of their own. Another essential skill needed for searching is knowing how to narrow down search results. Each search engine has a specific set of rules for narrowing keyword searches.   For example, a site such as Altavista.com uses Boolean code (using words like AND, NOT, NEAR) and symbols (such as +/-) to narrow down searches. Being able to narrow down your search is one of the most important skills needed while researching on the Internet.

Once you have selected a site, web searchers should critically evaluate the site. The viewer should focus on quality, design, as well as content. Web sites should have a good visual design including good structure and organization, should be easy to navigate, and have limited graphics, fonts and colors, which allows for easy readability. When traveling the web, check for "dead end" sites, which could be incomplete, inaccurate or outdated. In Roblyer's book "Starting out on the Internet: A Learning Journey for

Teachers," Roblyer states that the "blind acceptance of any information (on the Internet or elsewhere!) is a risky business." It lists four critical evaluation tools for searching the Internet – know your author, make sure the site lists contact information, has frequent updates and references or links other sites. On [Kathy Schrok's Guide for Teachers](#), she lists a set of rules for critical evaluation of websites for students and teachers. Schrok's Critical Evaluation Website Guide for Secondary Level students asks the questions: "Who created the page? What organization is the person affiliated with? Can you tell if other experts in the field think this is a reputable page?" The student's ability to determine the validity of a web page is a vital skill in this age of ever-growing technology.

The irony of this paper in order for me to complete this paper I had to use the skills and tools, which were discussed.   While researching Web Browsers, I discovered that Internet Explorer is not the only option for web users. I used Search Engines to help find various information on specific topics and narrowed down my searches. In addition, I also had to critically evaluate each site. I questioned the validity of a page before I sited it in my paper. Technology is a fast-growing industry. Learning to search, therefore, is crucial.   New discoveries are constantly being made. It is key for teachers to keep up to date with the latest information technology.

The Internet is a reflection of the society we live in. People today, in general, need immediate gratification and visual stimulation. The Internet provides these things. However, at what cost? Some may feel that people's inter-personal relationships suffer and that the Internet has an isolating effect on individuals. But, while the Internet may eliminate some face-to-face communication, it will never be a replacement for personal

interaction. The vast benefits and possibilities that the Internet provides is one of the

most crucial discoveries in Educational Technology.

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