The Screen Revolution

A public deliberation

In this deliberation, approaches to managing this revolution will have their own priorities and agendas. Each is intended to make participants think critically about what they most value, and what they’re willing to sacrifice for it.

Approach 1:
We are at a turning point in a shifting paradigm of constant access to information, and as such the Internet is a revolutionary leap forward for the exchange of ideas and free markets. The decisions being made now will affect future generations, and an expanding global community must be acknowledged. Direct or indirect censorship by concerned citizens, special interests, or government could stifle this great resource.

Approach #2:
The Internet is like the Wild West. It threatens privacy as well as personal security. Our top priority must be protecting our children and ourselves, even if it means sacrificing some functionality to do so. We must push the government to institute laws and restrictions that hold Internet companies responsible for maintaining standards of privacy.

Approach #3:
The Internet is fundamentally changing the way we live. Much of what we do professionally and interpersonally has a home online. This is negatively affecting our health, our ability to communicate interpersonally, and our ability to focus for long periods of time. We must think about the way we develop our relationships with technology.
Screen Technology

The Problem

Screen technology is revolutionizing lives and presenting unforeseen challenges. And while uses and concerns about previous technological innovations like radio, film, and television have evolved as users integrate them into their lives across decades, the internet and its ubiquitous accessibility has thrown its influence in our lives into high gear. Media theorist Neil Postman warns that technological developments are often a Faustian bargain: They giveth and they taketh away. He warns that we must always ask: Technology for what purpose?

As Americans join the rest of the world in the midst of struggling over the balance between the role of government and corporations and personal privacy and freedom, and technology’s influence on the fundamental ways we live our lives and communicate, this deliberation will consider approaches that seek answers about what we value and how those values can guide policy and personal decisions about the screens in our lives. In this deliberation, approaches to managing this revolution will have their own priorities and agendas. Each is intended to make participants think critically about what they most value, and what they’re willing to sacrifice for it.

History

The origins of the World Wide Web reside in the hands of a few skilled engineers. J.C.R. Licklider, an American computer scientist, worked with the government to develop ARPANET, the first form of the Internet to come online in 1969. The initial purpose of the Internet was to ensure communication in the chance of nuclear warfare. However, developments to the Internet over the coming decades allowed for the information online to be available to students and others with less technical knowledge. Thus, the purpose of the connections matured into a nonviolent transfer of information between users. In 1990, Tim Berners-Lee worked with the European Organization for Nuclear Research to develop the first HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and the first web browser (Kazmierczak). The turning point for the Internet that enabled it to be utilized by the masses was with the introduction of the Mosaic graphical web browser. This allowed for users to easily observe uploaded content on the Internet, and gave companies a reason to develop their own websites. By the end of 1994, many notable websites were already online, including IMDB, MTV, Lycos, and Yahoo!.

The final turning point for the expansion of the Internet came with Microsoft’s full-scale entry into the browser, server, and ISP markets. The heavy involvement of heavyweight computing companies drove the economies of scale to make owning a computer and connecting to the Internet much cheaper than before. In time, new technologies like DSL and cable modems further drove down the cost required to get onto the World Wide Web. Since the 1990s, the Internet has matured and developed into a streamlined and efficient mechanism for education, entertainment, business, and more. The onset of Web 2.0 in 2002 allowed for new ways to share and exchange content with others. Weblogs, RSS feeds, and user-edited content all vastly redefined information on the Internet and have since changed the landscape of the web. With the arrival of Wi-Fi, EVDO, WiMax, 3G and 4G-LTE, the Internet has expanded to virtually everywhere. Major companies like Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, YouTube, and Wikipedia have
revolutionized humankind, and they have drawn in billions of unique users. As of 2011, there was a recorded 2.3 trillion Internet users - a 528.1% increase since the year 2000 (Computer History Museum). In the United States, over 70% of web audiences use Facebook. The vast universe of the Internet has reshaped and reformed society as a whole.

Expansion of the Internet

A survey conducted in 2009 reveals that 74% of American adults ages 18 and older use the Internet. 60% of American adults use broadband connections at home and 55% of American adults connect to the Internet wirelessly (Rainie, Lee). With the innovation in laptops, smartphones and especially tablets in the last three years, those statistics most likely reflect even higher percentages. According to IMS research, over 5 billion devices were connected to the Internet in 2010. They also predict that by 2020 there will be 22 billion Internet connected devices. Essentially, two waves of connectivity exist. The first was the connection of PCs and laptops and the second being rooted in the cellular industry. Not only is the use of Internet on traditional devices increasing steadily, the connectivity of mobile devices is growing at a much faster rate. Internet has expanded to even more devices including television, game consoles, tablets, net-books, eBook readers, digital picture frames, and cameras. Internet access in 2012 has become so convenient that having it at all times is essentially the norm. The prediction comes from analysis of growth in categories such as cell phones and television as well as projecting the expansion of Internet to automobiles and industrial applications (Hackenberg, Stacy).

Social Movements

The Internet has also had a significant impact on inciting change across the world. The Arab Spring has become one of the most important milestones in Internet history; primarily because of the way it has changed organized revolution in our world. During the span of approximately one year, rulers from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen have been forced from power; while countless other countries currently undergo significant uprisings. What is most unique about the revolts is that the Internet and social media were the causes as well as the ignition for the uprisings. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are all playing an enormous role in both rallying protesters to speak out against oppressive regimes and exposing the brutal realities of them to the world. The revolutions that occurred allowed for thousands of civilians to tweet, share on Facebook, and upload videos of the state unrest and police brutality; this offered an unprecedented chapter in the history of revolution, as millions were able to publicly show their own sides of the developing stories. Today, a record number of posts on such sites encourage social protesting and take advantage of social networking’s beauty: the masses. Now a revolution does not have to be exclusive to a few factions – it can be open to all, through the interconnectedness of the web (Blight). The Arab Spring will have an immense long-term impact on the Middle East and societal changes as a whole. The onset of our generation means that political leaders will be held
accountable for their decisions, and can be incited to make changes due to new tools (like social media). Power does not rest solely with the lawmakers anymore – the arrival of the Internet and its impact in spurring social change has granted the layman with the ability to actively make a change in their surroundings.

**Conveniences**

There are many conveniences associated with the Internet. One of the most widely recognized is communication, which has made huge advances since the creation of the Internet (Bessette). From Skype to Facebook to email, the progress of communication is widely recognized. Another convenience is online education. Many kids are now cyber-schooled and adults are receiving college degrees online. The Internet also has allowed many work-related conveniences. People can browse for jobs online, advertise themselves, and work from home. Another advantage of the Internet is that people can save time by doing daily activities from home such as online banking, and online shopping (Benefits).

The Internet also has many visible impacts on the way businesses function. Business can advertise their company as well as recruit employees online. It is also much easier for businesses to gather data from online research. By receiving faster information, time is saved, which leads to money being saved. This cost effectiveness is also visible in various business functions, such as Bookkeeper. These programs help the business make their processes faster and better, save time, and reduce labor costs. Another prominent example of the Internet at work in businesses is globalization. Businesses can form international relationships and partnerships. They can find new vendors and customers through this process (Bryant). Businesses have undoubtedly been greatly affected by the Internet.

**Technology in the Classroom**

Technology has become increasingly more involved in our lives, and this statement certainly does not exclude its use in the classroom. Computer-based learning is incorporated in K-12 education, including computers, computer games, iPads, and other means.

Some advocates for computer education agree that it would save schools money in the long run by making education more efficient. Critics argue that relying heavily on technology-based learning can cause some teachers to not be hired or even fired. With computer-based learning, it is thought that the student to teacher ratio is 50:1, whereas a normal classroom without such reliance is the standard 20:1 (Clemmitt 1).

No matter how effective the computer learning tools are, teachers provide the social interactions that computers simply cannot allocate. Computer programs (such as computer games) have proven successful for elementary level children learning simple mundane tasks, such as addition/subtraction. Should more difficult lessons in secondary and post-secondary school be taught online? Cyberschooling has been expanding,
and is now being offered in 27 states (Battaglieri 1). There is no evidence, however, as to its effectiveness, since there is little governmental oversight.

Another issue is cheating on computers, known as “cybercheating.” Cheating has increased over the years in secondary and post-secondary education because it is quicker and easier to do so (“Computers” 1).

Censorship and Protection of Rights

The strong protections for freedom of speech and expression against federal, state, and local government censorship are rooted in the First Amendment to the United State’s Constitution. These protections extend to the Internet and as a result very little government mandated technical filtering occur in the U.S (Potter). Nevertheless, the Internet in the United States is highly regulated, supported by a complex set of legally binding and privately mediated mechanisms. After a decade and half of ongoing contentious debate over content regulation, the country is still very far from reaching political consensus on the acceptable limits of free speech and the best means of protecting minors and policing illegal activity on the Internet. Gambling, cyber security, and dangers to children who frequent social networking sites are important ongoing debates. Significant public resistance to proposed content restriction policies have prevented the more extreme measures used in some other countries from taking hold in the U.S (Goyette).

In recent months, the SOPA and PIPA legislation debate has become quite well known. But what exactly do these bills entail? The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) already protects copyrighted material, and focused on removing specific, unauthorized content from the Internet. SOPA and PIPA would give the Justice Department the power to go after foreign websites committing or facilitating intellectual property theft (Condon). The government would be able to force U.S. based companies, like Internet service providers, credit card companies, and online advertisers, to cut off ties with those sites. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, argue that innovation and jobs in content-creating industries are threatened by growing Internet piracy, and support these bills (Goyette). However, Internet companies oppose them because start-ups wouldn't be able to handle the costs that come with defending their sites against possible violations, and sites would not be able to pay the large teams of lawyers that established sites like Google or Facebook can afford (Condon).

Psychological and Physiological Effects

Increasing use of screen technology in our lives has caused both positive and negative health, specifically psychological and physiological, effects. Cyber bullying, “the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person” has become an increasingly talked about Internet related topic. This type of bullying can be obvious, or accidental — the impersonal nature of IM/texting/email makes it difficult to discern tone and meaning. According to the National Organization Against Crime, 1 in 3 teens have been victims of cyber bullying. Those that have been victims are at greater risk for anxiety, depression and other stress related disorders (“Cyberbullying”). As dramatized in the ABC Family movie Cyberbully and Glee’s season finale, the effects of cyberbullying can even lead to suicide. Another threat on the
Internet is cyber harassment or stalking. These cyber predators use the Internet and other online communication to target their victims. Young adults do not realize that engaging in activities with strangers online can have just as detrimental an effect on their health as doing so in non-cyber ways. Cyber harassment can cause nightmares, hyper vigilance, anxiety, helplessness, shock and fear for safety (“Cyberstalking”).

It is seemingly impossible in this day and age not to be “plugged-in” 24-7. Overstimulation, information overload, has been studied extensively in children and young adults and both positive and negative effects have been discovered. This overstimulation attacks our senses, emotional equilibrium and our sense of self-control. Evan Schwartz of Wired claims that ADD may be “the official brain syndrome of the information age” (Evan). There is also the threat of seizures due to excesses of dopamine, delay of language development, and under-functioning prefrontal cortex’s because of our constant exposure to visually stimulating but brain stinting technologies. Evidence also exists for the positive effects of increasing screen exposure including rising IQ’s due to our constant use of fluid intelligence and heightened dexterity because of video games. It has also been argued that our brains are simply changing and that the net-generations ability to flip between “34 conversations across six different media” is a small victory in itself (“In Defense of Distraction”).

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Approach # 1

We are at a turning point in a shifting paradigm of constant access to information, and as such, the Internet is a revolutionary leap forward for the exchange of ideas and free markets. The decisions being made now will affect future generations, and an expanding global community must be acknowledged. Direct or indirect censorship by concerned citizens, special interests, or government could stifle this great resource.

The Internet as a Market for the Free Exchange of Ideas

“Persecution for the expression of opinions seems to me perfectly logical. If you have no doubt of your premises or your power, and want a certain result with all your heart, you naturally express your wishes in law, and sweep away all opposition. ...But when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas - that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.” - Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., 1919

The notion of a “marketplace of ideas” was introduced to U.S. law in Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.’s dissenting opinion in Abrams vs. United States in 1919, but many American political philosophies were founded on this idea of a free exchange of thought. The Preamble to the Bill of Rights states that “further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added” to the Constitution “in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers.” Pursuant to that goal, ten amendments were drafted for the protection from constitutional abuse; the First Amendment protects the freedom of speech, and the Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures and protects the freedom to be secure. These measures were included for a reason, and many have argued that they protect exchanges of ideas as inherent to the functioning of the country. Independent of formal legal documents, Thomas
Jefferson wrote in a letter in 1813:

“That ideas should freely spread from one to another over the globe, for the moral and mutual instruction of man, and improvement of his condition, seems to have been peculiarly and benevolently designed by nature.”

Even more recently, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Article 19 of this enumeration of basic human rights states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

The “free exchange of ideas” has been a popular notion in the overall formation of our system of government, and as such, it should be considered in a discussion of the largest free exchange of ideas in the world—the Internet.

Certainly there is a difference between postulating on the abstract notion of intellectual liberty and attempting to find a reasonable set of standards for a global information network. Given the growing threats of cyber stalking, online piracy, and corporate dominance, it is obviously prudent to protect people from dangers of those we cannot interact with personally. However, the part of the argument that warrants attention is the point at which any kind of censorship would infringe on people’s capacity to be connected to this global network. While some of the recently proposed policies on Internet censorship would protect from certain types of online infringements, the argument can be made that those protections might ultimately rob us of a valuable resource. Because of the Internet’s role in establishing a global community, current and future Internet censorship must be explored.

The Internet’s Role in the Creation of a Global Community

Since the advent of the Internet almost 15 years ago, the world has seen many great changes in areas such as economics, politics, social perspectives, and technological advances. These changes have spread throughout the globe. Ideas of democracy and civil liberty have spread to countries ruled by dictators and militant regimes, such as the Arab Spring, and voices are being heard in parts of the world that have never been listened to before. The Internet is arguably the primary facilitator for such events.

There is a popular notion that the Internet is the beginning of a global community. The Internet, being a globally connected network, allows people to communicate across the world in ways that were never before conceived; a family in the Sudan region of Africa can Tweet about their government struggles, or a man from Indonesia can better his life by becoming educated through the resources of the Internet. However, the current state of the Internet is not yet able to produce this ideal result of a global community. According to Ethan Zuckerman, a senior researcher at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, the building of a global community involves two aspects:

- International media coverage
Global access to the Internet

In the United States, news media have a tendency to ignore international stories, filling their time slots with talks about celebrities, domestic events, and U.S. wars in the Middle East. Alisa Miller, CEO of Public Radio International, stated that in 2007, 79% of United States news media were domestic stories, with only 1% of coverage on topics like Russia, China, global climate, etc. This trend has not changed since 2007. In fact, despite over 54% of U.S. Internet users claiming they are more involved in reading international news stories, there has been a decline in U.S. media covering global issues. Shown below is Alisa Miller’s map of U.S. media coverage, inflated to correlate land mass with media coverage, given at a 2008 TED conference. In response to such statistics, Ethan Zuckerman founded Global Voices, a blogging community focusing on moving Web users out of increasingly isolated social and local network bubbles and into a wider population of diversity and important secular issues.

Secondly, to create a global community, the Internet must be provided to all areas of the world. Despite a Globescan survey conducted for the BBC indicating that four out of five people across 26 countries believe that “Internet access should be a fundamental right,” only about 2 billion people have access to the Web. According to World Internet Stats, this means there is only a 32% Internet penetration of the world’s population, with the majority of users connecting from already developed countries. Thus, many remote areas are lacking Internet access, regardless of the high demand for social networking sites and content-sharing sites throughout the world. According to the New York Times, Internet providers are not willing to provide access to isolated parts of the world because it is costly for companies to provide the necessary bandwidth to users in areas where they do not have many, if any, servers. Without economic incentives to provide Web access to countries where big Internet businesses do not reside, global education and connection are great difficulties.

It may be that building a global community is the most important task of the 21st century. The information era is now upon us, and creating a global standard of education, understanding, and interaction will likely be pivotal in moving us towards a more peaceful, developed, and wonderful world. Because of the Internet’s critical role in helping to create a global community, Internet censorship now and in the future must be considered.

The Current State of Internet Censorship in the United States

The United States Constitution is the highest law of the land. On December 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights, which includes the first ten amendments to the Constitution, was ratified. The First Amendment reads:
“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; of abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

The First Amendment’s protection of the freedom of speech and the freedom of press has helped the United States to maintain a low level of Internet censorship relative to other countries in the world. Reporters Without Borders, a non-profit French organization that primarily advocates the freedom of press, has recently shown an interest in fighting Internet censorship. Aside from initiating a yearly “World Day Against Cyber-Censorship,” the non-profit organization has also compiled Internet censorship statistics for every country in the world. As shown in the map below, the United States is considered to be under “some censorship.”

The majority of attempts aimed at censoring the Internet in the United States have arisen from the desire to protect children from obscene and explicit Internet material. The first instance of Internet censorship in the United States, the Communication Decency Act (CDA), was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in February of 1996. The CDA regulated obscene and explicit material on the Internet as a means of protecting minors from such material. The CDA was challenged in federal court by citizens who argued that the CDA’s ambiguous terminology suppressed their freedom of speech. In 1997, it was ruled that the CDA’s use of terms such as “indecently” and “patently offensive” was vague and could potentially violate the rights protected under the First Amendment. In the case of Reno vs. ACLU, it was concluded that the CDA was not the “least restrictive” method for protecting minors from obscene and explicit material. The court decided that such filtering would be the responsibility of parents, an approach that protected the rights of adults who wished to share and receive this form of free speech over the Internet. Since this decision by the Supreme Court, similar acts, aiming to filter explicit Internet material for the protection of minors, have also been overturned. Currently, Internet filtering in the United States is primarily accomplished through private companies who
serve schools, businesses, parents, and other groups who wish to block access to certain areas of the Internet.

A second attempt to filter the Internet in the United States has been made at the state level. In 2004, Pennsylvania forced Internet service providers to block residents’ access to websites that the attorney general’s office labeled as child pornography. However, this act was also deemed unconstitutional and overturned. Currently, 25 states have Internet filtering laws that apply to publicly funded schools and libraries. In most of these 25 states, schools and libraries are only required to implement Internet use policies. However, under more extreme state laws, schools and libraries are required to install Internet filtering software on their computers. Additionally, state laws adopted by Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, and Utah require Internet service providers to offer products or services to subscribers allowing them to control their children’s Internet usage.

Although the protection of minors has been the driving force behind Internet censorship in the United States, the following issues have also prompted attempts:

- National security
- Computer security
- Intellectual property issues

The Internet’s Relevance to Teens and Generation Y

The generation with the most expertise and experience with the Internet is now in school or in positions with low levels of power. According to a study by Pew Internet & American Life Project, Generation Y comprises 30% of the Internet using population alone.

Teens and Generation Y are more likely than any other Internet-using group to use the Internet for the following:

- Enjoying entertainment - videos, games, virtual worlds, music downloading
- Updating, keeping track of, and communicating with family and friends
- Reading and writing blogs
- Sending instant messages to friends

According to research by Kalmus and Veronika, these age groups are considerably more likely to use the Internet to engage in social media websites.
Because of the current upcoming generations’ extensive experience with the Internet, it is likely that they will be responsible for creating future Internet censorship policies.

**The Future of Internet Censorship in the United States**

The coming years are going to be of the utmost importance to nations worldwide in relation to Internet censorship and effects that censorship could, and would, have on a global scale. These policies will likely be decided by Generation Y and even younger generations.

While recent bills in the United States, such as the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA) were aptly named in order to gain popularity and support, the details surrounding potential censorship acts need to be acknowledged.

Historically, censorship has been used in times of threat and vulnerability as a way for governments to gain control over citizens. Many believe that censorship should not be considered in a democratic nation such as the United States, as it rejects the building blocks on which this country was formed.

"If we want democracy to survive in the Internet age, we really need to work to make sure that the Internet evolves in a manner that is compatible with democracy. And that means exercising our power not only as consumers and Internet users and investors, but also as voters, to make sure that our digital lives contain the same kind of protections of our rights that we expect in physical space." -Rebecca MacKinnon, author of the book, "Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom."

"But when ideas are blocked, information deleted, conversations stifled, and people constrained in their choices, the Internet is diminished for all of us. What we do today to preserve fundamental freedoms online will have a profound effect on the next generation of users.” -United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton

The Internet is still growing, both in size and information. New users are introduced to the Internet each day, and new nations will soon be online as well. As noted by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at a Conference on Internet Freedom in the Netherlands in December of 2011, the number of users online has exceeded 2 billion, and that number is expected to double over the next 20 years. As a result of Internet growth and debates surrounding Internet censorship, it is likely the Internet will soon take a new direction.

When deciding what direction the Internet takes, Generation Y and younger generations must consider many perspectives while crafting the policies. It will be important to keep in mind the Internet’s role in creating a global community. Free exchange of ideas, freedom of speech, government control and oppression, exposure to indecency and obscenity, Internet education, parental filtering, state-controlled filtering, and intellectual property are only a sampling of the many topics worth considering when discussing Internet censorship. However, one thing is certain—future Internet censorship policies must adhere to the freedoms protected by the highest law of the land, the United States Constitution.
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Approach #2:

The Internet is like the Wild West. It threatens privacy as well as personal security. Our top priority must be protecting our children and ourselves, even if it means sacrificing some functionality to do so. We must push the government to institute laws and restrictions that hold internet companies responsible for maintaining standards of privacy.

Our Rights Outside the Internet

In order to understand rights to privacy in regards to the internet, it would be useful to understand what privacy rights and laws exist in the United States in general. In truth, there are few explicit laws that protect privacy. Even the Constitution does not explicitly express the right to privacy; however it does protect certain aspects of privacy. One crucial component is the Fourth Amendment, which states “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probably cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.” Clearly, the Bill of Rights was drafted long before the invention of the internet, and therefore people continue to debate what entities are covered by the Fourth Amendment, such as digitalized documents. Should people’s personal “papers and effects” that are on the internet be protected under this provision?

There are, however, some laws and acts that protect certain private information under specific circumstances. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) addressed the privacy of health data. It requires health-related entities (such as health insurers, medical service providers, employer sponsored health plans) to take steps to maintain confidentiality of communications with individuals regarding Protected Health Information (PHI). PHI is any information regarding health status, health care, or payment of health care that can be linked to an individual. Covered entities may only disclose PHI under certain circumstances, and they must attempt to only disclose the minimum amount of information.
necessary. Furthermore, there is The Privacy Act of 1974, which pertains to the federal agencies and the personally identifiable information they maintain in their systems of records. The Act prohibits information to be disclosed from systems of records without the written consent of the subject individual, although there are several statutory exceptions. Both of these acts take strides towards protecting the privacy of personally identifiable information.

On a slightly different note, one significant concern in the internet world is that of sex offenders being able to interact with children, and the danger of anonymity due to the nature of the internet. In response to offenses, rules and regulations have been established in the “real world.” The Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sex Offender Registration Act requires that every state develop a program to register sex offenders. An amendment to this act, Megan’s Law, requires relevant sex offender information to be released to the public. Versions of Megan’s Law have been passed in many states, but in all places in which it is established (all but 5 states), some form of notification must occur when a convicted sex offender moves into a neighborhood.

Our Rights on the Internet

Although most people are familiar with their privacy in the physical world, people’s rights online are less understood. As more people use various forms of social media, our lives online are increasingly becoming blurred with our scholastic and professional lives. Now more than ever, people are experiencing the repercussions of events that occur in cyberspace. Whether it’s a student, teacher, actor, athlete, or politician, people across the country are being affected by what they and others put online. Recently, Natalie Munroe, an English teacher in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, garnered national media attention after being fired for writing a controversial blog post about her students. This is just one example of many similar cases. Whether people realize it or not, one picture on Facebook or frustrated tweet at the end of the day can have serious negative consequences on one’s career. Privacy settings can be confusing, and it almost has to be assumed now that information put up online can be seen by anybody. For example, Twitter’s Privacy Policy even states, “Most of the information you provide to us is information you are asking to make public.” The default option on Twitter is to make all information public and seen by everyone. Even Facebook has most information automatically set to public, forcing users who want more privacy to go through a series of clicks to change their settings.

These websites even collect information from users that they don’t knowingly share. Facebook and Twitter use plug-ins on other websites to collect data concerning usage, even when a user isn’t connected to their account. Google also stores information about users, saving each search a user searches using the Google search engine. The company even collects and process
information about user location whenever a Google profile such as Gmail or Google+ is accessed, and uses trackers in personal emails called pixel tags “to improve user experience and the overall quality of (their) services.” Although all of these practices are made known to users in each company’s privacy settings, the average user does not know their rights online or how they are being applied.

Privacy concerns are not just limited to what people post using social media. The Wall Street Journal reported today that Google has been collecting location data from its Android smartphones. When the phone recognizes a wireless network, regardless of whether or not it's encrypted, it sends information, including GPS coordinates up to the Google location servers. In addition, research revealed that iPhone and iPad 3G have been storing unencrypted and unprotected logs of users’ geographic coordinates in a hidden file.

Companies sell information about customer behavior. For a few cents, a company could tell a saleswoman at Nordstrom that the person who was about to walk in had already stopped at Steve Madden and was looking for red shoes. That is the idea of the practice known as behavioral exchanges. Companies do not sell products or ad space, but information about Web site visitors. When you receive a catalog in the mail, seemingly at random, it is usually because a marketer has bought data about your online activities. These activities can contain information such as income level, interests, age, gender, etc.

BlueKai and eXelate are two examples of tracking companies. They both track who is interested in what through a cookie, an invisible bit of code on a Web page. When someone does a search, for instance, on Expedia.com for first-class flights to New York City in April, that information can be captured by a cookie, and Expedia.com can sell that cookie using BlueKai and eXelate. A buyer would want that cookie so that the company could cut down on wasted ads. Once the buyers log in to the behavioral exchange service, they select the criteria they want, and the exchange tells them how many cookies are for sale. BlueKai has about three million cookies for in-market sedan buyers and nine million for cell phones.

Advertising Companies Target Consumers

These companies also use information from Internet behaviors of consumers to determine what products to advertise. In “The Web’s Cutting Edge, Anonymity in Name Only” from the Wall Street Journal in August of 2010, representatives from these companies suggest that with one click, information on the consumer can determine the likelihood of their age, education, relationships and typical spending habits. While this information may not always be correct, it does help websites customize their advertisements to best appeal to consumers.

These tracking companies can either sell the information directly to advertisers to target customers about specific products, or they can sell the information to an exchange which combines it with other sources of offline personal data such as property records. This can then
be used to create a unique ID number for you and then be used to target you when these advertisers buy ad space in websites.

Social media sites, like Facebook, can also use information users share to target Facebook ads to specific audiences. Facebook then reports back to the advertisers the results of these ads, such as how many impressions, times the ad appears to users, and clicks the ads generated. The information shared remains anonymous, however, sometimes advertisers will embed the ad with cookies to make their future ads more effective. Embedding these cookies does allow the advertiser to track user behavior, and provides less anonymous information.

Tracking consumer behavior is not a novel idea or unique to the Internet. According to the New York Times article “How Companies Learn Your Secrets” from February, 2012, marketing divisions in Target use consumer behavior to figure out when women are in their second trimester. This time period is prime because new parents will often form new brand loyalty. However, birth announcements are often public and so new parents receive a deluge of coupons and ads about infant products. By assigning customers a unique Guest ID based upon simple behaviors such as credit card or coupon use, information can be gathered and track on users’ age, marital status, relationships, location, and approximate salary. This information can even be combined with information from data exchange online to determine websites customers visit. Buying products such as unscented lotions, and calcium or zinc supplements can indicate that a woman is close to her due date. This combination of consumption and Internet-user behavior can help advertisers and companies target us throughout each and every day.

**Protecting Children Online**

As alluded to earlier, adults are not the only ones affected by online privacy issues. In fact, a study by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that over ninety percent of children over the age of three use a computer. Advertisers focus on these young computer users and track their activity online in order to collect personal information and target advertisements towards children (What They Know). In response, the government passed the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA, in 1998. This law applies to websites directed toward children under the age of thirteen and any website that knows it is collecting personal information from children.

These websites are required to post a link to a clear privacy policy on the home page and on every page that collects personal information (Online Privacy). The website is also required to explain what information is obtained and how it is collected and then used. Parents must be provided with contact information for everyone who collects or reviews their child’s information and parents must give permission before their child’s information can be collected, used, or shared. In addition, websites cannot require children to provide information in order to use the website if the information is not necessary. The Federal Trade Commission reviewed COPPA in 2006 and decided to keep the law. Since the inception of COPPA, the Federal Trade Commission has successfully brought charges against several businesses for violations of the law.

Not all legislation to protect children, however, has been successful. Also passed in 1998 was the Child’s Online Protection Act, or COPA - not to be confused with COPPA. It wasn’t long before this act was contested. Almost immediately after the bill was signed, the American Civil
Liberties Union contested COPA under the first amendment. The Child Online Protection Act required websites to verify that a user was over age eighteen before allowing them access to information harmful to minors (such as sexually explicit material) (American Civil Liberties Union). Each violation would incur a fine of $50,000. Due to the challenge to COPA, a judge prevented the law from being enforced until the matter was resolved. The issue traveled through various local and national courts until it was finally denied an appeal to the Supreme Court in 2009, which ended the bill once and for all. Courts objected to the bill because of first amendment infringement, the loose definition of “harmful” material, and the supposed ineffectiveness of COPA to regulate every infraction.

In its decision to permanently keep the injunction against COPA, the Supreme Court reasoned that there exists software that does a better job of preventing minors’ access to harmful websites than did the bill itself. This filtering software can block access to certain objectionable websites as well as block most outgoing information that might compromise a child’s identity or safety. These programs can even be set up to block online chat rooms and instant messaging. However, these programs are not perfect and kids can find ways to get around the software.

Finally, children are often targets of child predators and cyberbullying. Their safety is a concern but is left mostly up to parental supervision and even those laws that are in place require tech-savvy parents to monitor their children’s online activity. The anonymity of the internet opens the door for sexual predators, and children can be particularly at risk.

**Summary**

Unlike various acts in place to protect privacy offline, there are few measures in place to protect internet users. Individual privacy is at risk because of tracking companies that collect personal information and sell it to the highest bidder. In addition to a lack of protective laws, children are especially vulnerable because of people’s ability to be anonymous online. We must push the government to institute laws and restrictions that hold Internet companies responsible for maintaining standards of privacy.

**Works Cited**


<https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy/>.
Approach #3:

The Internet is fundamentally changing the way we live. Much of what we do professionally and interpersonally has a home online. This is negatively affecting our health, our ability to communicate interpersonally, and our ability to focus for long periods of time. We must think about the way we develop our relationships with technology.

Our Relationship with the Internet

The many hours spent on-line in our day-to-day lives should raise questions about its impact on our lives. As it has become as necessary as it is desirable, this useful tool has been shown to cause stress, take up time, and create problems within our interpersonal relationships.

Perhaps surprisingly, being on the computer is a contributor to stress. A study done by Swedish computer magazine *PC for Alla* looked at many facets of computer usage and how it causes stress. Slow load time for web pages, online ads, computer crashes, slow broadband connection, interacting with computer support, and keeping track of multiple passwords, all result in an average frustration level of 49.7% for men and 55.8% for women.

Beyond this stress, the influence of computers can be seen by the amount of time we use them. A yearly survey of the amount of time spent online reveals many interesting trends. First and not surprising, internet use has increased over time. In 2010, people who claim to spend over an hour online each day reached 50%. This number is confirmed by the Internet usage statistics which say that in North America 78.3 percent of the people in the Americas use the Internet and only 30.2 percent of the entire world population uses the Internet. To contextualize, although the Americas consist of 13.6% of the world population they report 23.3% of the world Internet usage.
Not only are we using the Internet a lot, the way that we use it takes away from valuable time that might be spent on more productive endeavors. In America, where the internet is mostly easily accessible, we tend to use it for our job, school, and leisure. But where do we draw the line? Time spent on social networking consumes more than double the next closest category of gaming. As Americans use well over one billion hours per month online, we must ask how other areas of our lives might be suffering and how it matters. Over time the internet has gone from being a useful tool in the workplace to being a site of deposit for enormous amounts of our time.

Face-to-Face Communication – Is Screen Technology Taking it Away From Us?

Can there be too much of a good thing? Certainly the internet has given us access to information and one another like nothing before. But the way we communicate seems to be changing dramatically, quickly. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that face-to-face interactional abilities and traditional social skills may be compromised by the decreased need for and use of them. The interweb, specifically social media sites, allows for a new way to communicate. We can post things anonymously, for example. We even have our own cyber-language via abbreviations and acronyms. Could this new way to share be more harmful than helpful? What are the other “side effects” of the internet?

Consider how one talks to another human being. One should think before they speak, speak with appropriate body language and gestures, as well as articulate to get their message across. The new way we’ve found to talk over the Internet causes us to suffer from what J. Suler calls the “disinhibition effect.” This effect means that as a user, we feel less responsibility for our words. We tend to be more open online due to its utter facelessness. With a somewhat invulnerable feeling, we can create a new persona and virtually absolve ourselves from responsibility (Suler). This could be a troubling notion as nothing is truly private online. Additionally, by creating another “self” or identity, or speaking too candidly with little regard for consequences, we set ourselves up to do this in real life. We may inadvertently form a new prickly personality which may not suit us in a job interview situation, for example.

Let’s look at what companies may think. BusinessWeek featured an article weighing the pros and cons of connecting through social media sites and the internet in order to find a job. Eric Clemons is a professor of information management at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School and thinks that serious business users associate the online social matrices more with spam than substantive relationship building. He claims that one’s “page” “offers little more than a résumé with a head shot” (Goudreau). The other side of the argument mainly centers on an important fact: knowing someone typically helps you network and therefore obtain a job. “Back in 1974, sociologist Mark Granovetter’s ‘Getting a Job’ study revealed that
56% of people found their jobs through personal connections—even if they qualified as only ‘weak ties’” (Goudreau). So while the argument can be made both ways, there is no substitute for a successful interview, despite having a “foot in the door” through a connection.

The Internet allows us to communicate rapidly and across the world, but at what cost? Jennifer Leigh, a consultant, speaker, and author says, “Kids are now typing as opposed to speaking [and] are growing up in a world where the technology used to connect us is actually disconnecting us... It’s become an addiction” (Gormly). Leigh recognizes the superficial quality in kids’ communication on the web. It has less meaning than going up to your friend and actually talking to her face to face, reading her body language. Relying on the internet results in kids losing skills they would otherwise practice were they not hidden behind a screen.

We cannot deny the giant impact technology has had on society, but that we may be taking it for granted is concerning. We are becoming habituated. Were the internet to be shut down for just one day, could you handle it? Could you imagine living without cell phones too? I bet our parents could...

The Internet and Instant Gratification – Why Our Patience is Growing Thin

In a world of search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo!, when we have a question that we need an answer to now, a library or genius friend is no longer required: we have the ability to search the world at our fingertips 24/7. This is a great tool during a heated dinner debate, trivia night, or when you’re looking to learn something new. However, is the availability of information causing us to become impatient? Better yet, is the availability of information causing us to have lazy memories?

In a Columbia University Study led by Betsy Sparrow et al., the phenomenon of instant information and its effect on our memory was researched. In the authors’ words, “It has become so commonplace to look up the answer to any question the moment it occurs that it can feel like going through withdrawal when we can’t find something out immediately” (776). In other words, the internet has become such an integral part of our lives that it’s like a drug – we struggle to function without it. We have become so used to information being readily accessible that we start to hyperventilate when an answer is more than 30 seconds away. Sparrow et al.’s research, as outlined by Patricia Cohen in “Internet Use Affects Memory, Study Finds,” and Annie Murphy Paul in “Your Head is in the Cloud,” had three significant findings that illustrate our dependency on information being stored for us. First, Sparrow et al. found that we can share information with others so easily because we rapidly think of computers (or smartphones) when we need to find something out. Second, if told a piece of information will not be stored externally, we are more likely to remember that information than if we were told that information will be stored and available later. In other words, we don’t bother remembering something when we know we can Google it later and find the same answer again. Third, Sparrow et al. found that people are better at remembering where something (information, a file, etc.) has been stored rather than remembering that thing itself. It is easier for us to remember what folder information is in than to remember the information itself. Sparrow and Paul both discuss how these phenomena can simply be called an extension of what psychologists call “transactive memory.” Transactive memory is an “unspoken arrangement by which groups of people dole out memory tasks to each individual, with information to be
shared when needed” (Paul, 64). We use the people around us to help remember information by splitting up large chunks of it into smaller pieces. Sparrow suggests, and Paul argues that information technology is becoming just another person in our transactive memory circle – we know that our smartphone or laptop will always have those Google search results, so we don’t need to commit them to memory.

Taking the results from Sparrow et al.’s research one step further, since we can obtain information so quickly – often within 60 seconds, our patience for answers seems to be at risk. How many times have you seen someone hit a piece of technology because it was moving “too slow?” We live in a society of instant gratification. We have become used to lightning-fast internet connections at our fingertips, making it extremely frustrating when it takes two minutes instead of one for an article or picture to load. Two minutes is no longer fast enough for us. When we need information, we need it now. David E. Meyer, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan even called the smartphone a “digital Skinner box” (Lohr, 2009), referring to the cognitive psychologist B.F. Skinner who studied the phenomena of conditioning an animal (or a human) to complete a task in order to earn a reward. In other words, we have become conditioned to using our smartphones as those levers to press in order to gain a reward: information in seconds.

All of this research begs the question, “What, if anything, should we do?” In the words of Daniel Willingham, a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, “factual knowledge must precede skill.” (Paul, 2012) Critical thinking and analysis skills need to be developed within a context, and as Paul stated, “you can’t Google context.” Adults and especially children must continue to memorize and learn new information in order to keep cognitive skills functioning at their best. The term “use it or lose it” is all too prevalent in this issue – if we rely on computers and smartphones to do math or find facts for us, we lose all of those thinking skills and we lose patience for ourselves and others. Our children are growing up surrounded by computer screens, televisions, smartphones, tablets, iPods, iPads – it’s information overload. No wonder ADD/ADHD is so common, kids don’t know what to look at or what to watch or why the internet is so “slow” and why their iPod is frozen – they’re relying on screens as a part of their daily lives. The readily available games, entertainment, and information are teaching them that you don’t have to wait for anything as long as you have the internet at your fingertips.

**Screen Technology and Health Risks**

Although many of us are admittedly guilty of staring at a computer screen for hours on end, most of us are willing to ignore the cast amount of health risks involved with prolonged usage of a computer.
Staring at a computer screen for a prolonged period of time is first and foremost dangerous because it emits pollutants. Even a PC as new as three months old was found to emit strong indoor pollutants! The sensory pollution was three times that of a standard person. That being said, that means that the sensory pollution was three times that of a standard person. Three people then, would produce the same amount of pollutants as one PC! In addition, PC presence increased the percentage of people dissatisfied with the air quality from 13% to 41%, and increased the time required for text processing by 9%. The most significant chemicals detected from Oss include phenol, toluene, 2-ethylhexanol, formaldehyde, and stene. Studies suggest that “stealth chemicals” also exist and have negative side effects.

Another significant health risk associated with computers is called “computer vision syndrome”. This is a term used to describe the complex of eye and vision problems related to near work experienced during computer use. Many people who work at computer using place report job-related complaints and symptoms including ocular discomfort, muscular strain, and stress. Studies show that Level of discomfort increase with the amount of computer use. Evidence from a 1997 study suggests that most eye problems are reversible with discontinued strained; strain that was shown to be coming much from staring at a computer screen. A national survey of doctors who specialize in optometry found that 14% of their patients had problems related to their computer work, again, most commonly eye strain, headaches, blurred vision and neck and shoulder pain. The list of physical health problems from staring at a screen is simply endless.

The computer screen that is most important to beware of is the older “CRT”, or “cathode ray tube” screens. These screens have been shown to be by far the most dangerous of computers. They emit small amounts of radiation for each image to be projected onto the screen. At close range, this radiation, which is literally pulsating fields of energy, buts biological stress not only on humans, but animals and plants as well. New LCD screens have been shown to be safer, but they still emit harmful levels of radiation. Because of this radiation, the use of laptops, especially when situated on the lap near the male reproductive organs, can be connected to infertility as well.

Beyond the physical health effects of the computer, there are behavioral, and mental effects as well. For example, more game playing on computers has been related to misbehavior. Children are playing violent games that may be inappropriate for their age, that include inappropriate language. The trend of misbehavior has been especially present in pre-teen boys and teenaged girls.

The consistent use of computers could be infantilizing the brain. It causes us to be lazier, less healthy, and generally lacking of essential life experiences that cannot be achieved by sitting in front of the computer.

**Education and the Internet—How Young is too Young?**

This day in age, it has become easier, cheaper, and more accessible to obtain information and learn anything they wish through the use of the internet or programs tailored to provide education. Rosetta Stone for example, is a computer program that allows for users to learn a
new language without the hassle of finding a personal instructor, paying expensive classes, and studying abroad to fully embrace the language. This type of program has done extremely well, and as a result companies have begun to open the market a younger audience, that is, toddlers. It is true that in today’s society functions on the fact that it has become a necessity to be fluent in use of technology and the internet. Children today are more knowledgeable of the internet now than children 10 years ago, and this does not seem to be slowing down anytime soon. Many parents are thrilled to be able to give their children a head start in their learning and experience, but how young is too young?

According to researchers, children under the age of three are not developmentally ready to be using computers. While some software has been developed for children at very early ages, it is believed by many that the use of such software does not tap into the child’s innate desire to experience things through kinesthetic or whole-body exploration. This is believed to be the foundation for learning and without properly promoting a child’s senses, the technology will only inhibit the potential for learning and creativity.

At about three to five years of age, some would say, children are developmentally ready to explore computers. Early use should be limited in duration, and frustration should be avoided. Children at this stage enjoy interacting with active links and areas on the screen, discovering the effects of clicking different choices. Some research indicates that this kind of computer use gives children an increased sense of their impact on their environment, which leads to a greater sense of self-efficacy, in other words, the ability to produce a desired or intended result. Others, however, argue that the impersonal interaction hinders their learning and communication skills, which are crucial at this age. Dependency is another issue for consideration. Children become too reliant on the tools and programs that are offered such that when they are required to solve a problem without it, they find themselves struggling. It is also argued that a child’s motivation is hampered and their attention span shortened through the quick and easy method of acquiring the desired result. "Software is predicated on the idea that the kid does a little bit of learning and then you give him a reward. In motivation research, we have learned that this is a sure way to kill internal motivation—the kind where the person is a self-starter.” As Sherry Turkle, professor of sociology at M.I.T states, “We’re really failing our kids, because we’re giving them computers, but we’re not giving them the skills to understand the intellectual culture the computer carries.”

On the other hand, Susan Haugland, a Southeast Missouri State University child development expert who evaluates computer programs, conducted a study of 4-and 5-year-olds and found that developmental software increased their IQ by an average of six points over nine months of computer exposure. The children also showed significant gains in long-term memory, fine motor skills, and structural knowledge, including the ability to understand and create patterns, and to understand shapes and how they go together. When their computer work was supplemented by hands-on activities that matched the major activities contained in the
software, the children also showed improvements in verbal skills, problem-solving, and conceptual development. But Haugland emphasizes that for optimum effect, classroom activities have to complement the computer content, so they bridge the gap between the real world and what children are doing on the PC.

Works Cited


