



Chapter 1

The Digital Citizen

Our species needs, and deserves, a citizenry with minds wide awake and a basic understanding of how the world works.

Carl Sagan



Expectations: What Will You Learn?

The Digital Citizen is an ethical and moral individual who considers his or her actions and their consequences. These individuals are aware of the risks and benefits of the unparalleled degree of access we have to information.

This chapter is the starting point for our journey of exploration and discovery. Here we will learn about protecting and respecting others and ourselves. We will explore real-world examples and contemplate how we can deal with some of these issues. We will consider intellectual property and alternatives to piracy. The goal of this chapter is not to frighten or scare you, but rather to raise an awareness of both the positive and negative aspects of the Internet.

Digital Citizen Terminology

Flaming is when a person publicly attacks or “outs” a person. This can often be a series of posts or comments using discussion boards and forums or chatrooms and instant messaging.

Discussion boards are a web space where users can post or write comments. These can be restricted to only members of the space or open to the public. Many discussion boards or forums are moderated.

Moderation is the process of approving comments or posts by a moderator. Once approved, other users can see the comments or posts.

Posts are comments, statements, articles, or presentations published by a user. The term *post* covers blog entries (see Chapter 7), short messages using tools such as Twitter (see Chapter 6), email messages to discussion boards or forums, or updates on a social networking site (see Chapter 8).

Spam is unsolicited or unrequested email often sent by fictitious companies. Spam is a huge issue creating vast email traffic and causing great annoyance.

Piracy is the illegal copying and/or distribution of copyrighted materials. This can include music, images, movies, television programs, written works, and other intellectual property.

Predator is a person using the Internet and online social mediums to groom, stalk, and make contact with a goal of sexual exploitation.

Grooming is a technique used by predators to select and prepare a person for meeting the predator. This technique involves building a degree of trust between the victim and the predator.

Cyberbullying is the process of attacking and bullying a person using electronic mediums such as email, instant messaging, discussion boards, cell phones, and so on.

Bloggers are the authors of blogs, or web logs (see Chapter 7).

Phishing is a technique used to gain personal and private information. Usually phishing occurs when you receive an email from an apparently legitimate source asking you to provide information or to link to a web site to update your personal information. The information that is collected (such as bank account or credit card details) is used by the email or web site authors.

Malware is a term used to describe malicious software. This can include viruses, trojans, adware, spyware, and so on.

Open source software (OSS) is software, often produced by a community of developers, that is freely available for use and often for distribution. OSS can be modified, as the source code is open to view and change.

Profile is the personal information that is entered in social networking (see Chapter 8) and other sites.

Tenets of Digital Citizenship

In Rome, to be a citizen was a goal to aspire to. A Roman citizen was exempt from some charges, protected against certain punishments, and empowered with rights such as voting, making contracts, marriage, and standing for office. But with these rights also came responsibilities. The citizen of Rome had to:

- speak Latin
- pay taxes
- serve jury duty
- be registered and identified by birth certificate and census
- uphold social responsibilities and be seen as virtuous

To be a digital citizen has similar benefits and responsibilities. A good digital citizen will experience the advantages of the digital world and, like the Roman citizen, will also be

identifiable, speak using the appropriate language, serve his or her duty to judge what is appropriate within the laws of the land and ethical behavior, uphold their social responsibilities, and be virtuous.

The Internet is a little like the proverbial elephant that never forgets. Our digital footprints are not like the footprints on the beach, washed away by the next wave or rising tide. Rather, they are like footprints left to dry in the wet concrete of the footpath—permanent.

The digital citizen needs to follow six tenets of citizenship:

- respect yourself
- protect yourself
- respect others
- protect others
- respect intellectual property
- protect intellectual property

Respect Yourself

This means being a virtuous citizen. It is too easy to present yourself in an unflattering or even inappropriate manner. Respecting yourself starts with the name you use to present yourself online. How often do we see social networking or Twitter names that are suggestive, questionable, or downright crude? How about the images posted to social sites that are provocative, revealing, or less than flattering? Not respecting yourself can come back to haunt you. Increasingly, employers are searching social networking sites to research potential employees.

How do your profile, online name, and image portray you as the potential member of a professional organization?

Many of the social sites will also ask you to comment on your sexual orientation, relationship status, experimentation with drugs, and, in more extreme cases, your sexual activities or preferences. You need to consider the potential outcomes of revealing these aspects of your life to what is increasingly a public forum. While many social networking sites do have privacy options, the default level of access could allow others to see your most personal and intimate information accessible via applications (such as tools created in social networks that access your profile) or via your friends, their friends, or associates.

Recommendations

- *Select names and images that portray you in a positive light.*
- *Do not post any information that you would not want your mother, grandparent, or employer to see.*
- *Leave questions about your relationships, experimentation with drugs, sexual activities, preferences, or other such personal information blank.*

Use ethical approaches such as:

- *I will show respect for myself through my actions.*
- *I will select online names that are appropriate.*
- *I will consider the information and images I intend to use before I post online.*
- *I will consider what personal information about my life, experiences, experimentation, and relationships I post.*
- *I will not be obscene.*

Protect Yourself

Sometimes even innocent things can hold the potential of unintended and unexpected consequences. A few years ago, I had my attention drawn to a social networking page of a student. The page was not inappropriate or obscene; it did not contain references to sex or drugs or even “rock ‘n roll.” The student was a bright and bubbly 12-year-old girl, interested in horses, skiing, and having fun. She was sharing with her friends and her profile was public. The information she posted was innocent, but in her naivete she had posted images of herself dressed only in her bikini, together with a “week in–week out” schedule of her activities, such as, “. . . every Tuesday I ride at the pony club and on Wednesday I am skiing at Snow Planet.”

Unintentionally, she had provided any potential predator with a profile of herself, complete with information about where to meet her, along with some conversation starters about her interests, hobbies, friends, and music. The young girl had done nothing inappropriate; she was simply open and trusting. She was naive, as you would expect of a young child. However, the consequences could be devastating.

Adults do not fare much better. Open statements about your sexual orientation can bring about social isolation, cyberbullying, and potentially physical assaults. In many cultures, you risk prosecution or persecution by announcing that you are of a different faith, are not heterosexually oriented, support a particular political party, or hold strong opinions about some matter.

For this reason, you need to consider what you write. And this caution is not just limited to social networking sites. Blogs, wikis, Twitter, YouTube, and instant messaging services also allow you to express your opinions.

While some countries uphold the rights of freedom of speech, this is not the case in all nations around the world. In some countries, there is potential risk for venturing to publish views and opinions that are contrary to the doctrine of the ruling parties. As we have seen in China, North Korea, Myanmar, and more recently in Iran, expressing your opposition can be a danger to you and your family.

The rise of citizen journalism, where bloggers, tweets, and wiki authors report newsworthy events via these mediums, has also led to other risks, not the least of which is prosecution for defamation. It pays to be sure of your facts before you publish. No matter how passionate you are about a topic, or how big you perceive the injustice to be, discretion is the better part of valor.

Many of us will, at some stage, find ourselves the target of bullying or online abuse. If this does happen, it's crucial that you don't try to deal with it on your own. Tell someone you trust—a friend, parent, teacher, employer, or counselor. Report the abuse to the moderator of the site. Don't respond to it. Record it for evidence.

In 2007, Oxford Internet Surveys' *Internet in Britain* report found that almost 12 percent of Internet users have met an online acquaintance offline. The Internet provides a great medium to meet new people and develop new friendships, but it is crucial that this is done with an awareness of the nature of the Internet. The public profile a person puts forward may be a facade of lies that hides the true person behind it. In the United States, it is reported that one in eight marriages in 2008 started with an online relationship. Social media has huge potential for establishing new relationships but does have a similar potential for risk.

Recommendations

- *Think about the information you are posting. What will it mean to an outsider viewing it? What will it mean without the prior information your audience (friends, blog subscribers, Twitter followers, and so on) may have?*
- *Don't publish a schedule of your activities.*
- *Set the privacy settings on your tools to control access to your updates, posts, or profile.*
- *Be sure of the facts you post.*
- *Remember this adage: "Send in haste, repent at leisure."*
- *It's easy to send an email or post a message in a moment of passion or impulsiveness, but once sent, it's almost impossible to delete. Think before you post.*

Use ethical approaches such as:

- *I will ensure the information, images, and materials I post online will not put me at risk.*
- *I will not publish my personal details, contact details, or a schedule of my activities.*
- *I will report any attacks or inappropriate behavior directed at me.*
- *I will protect passwords, accounts, and resources.*
- *If I am meeting someone in the real world that I have met online, I will discuss it with people I trust, such as parents, colleagues, or friends, and never meet them alone.*

Respect Others

As a responsible cyber or digital citizen, we model respect for other people. In the past, gossip was limited to your immediate field of friends and acquaintances, but with the advent and uptake of digital technologies, the potential audience for gossip and innuendo is global. The ease with which anyone with Internet access can publish is incredible. Publishing in a digital medium is as simple as typing or speaking. As you will read in Chapter 7, anyone can set up and publish a blog in a matter of minutes with the potential of an immense audience.

Being disrespectful online is called *flaming*. Among many possible examples, flaming could involve writing a post or thread or uploading a YouTube video that attacks a person. A good general rule to follow is this: if you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online.

Respect for others goes beyond the material we might publish. It includes the sites we visit. Whether it is gossip, hate, racism, or pornography, we should be discerning because by visiting, we give our tacit approval for sites such as these to exist.

In particular, the pornography industry is one of the saddest in the world. According to a range of estimates, upwards of 12 percent of all web sites and hundreds of millions of porn pages generate billions of dollars in revenue annually. Beneath its facade of ecstatic pleasure lies persecution, desperation, abuse, hopelessness, sadness, and despair. How many young children have been drawn into these sordid scenes in order to make enough money to survive? Does the sex industry portray real human relationships? Do the eyes of the models show passion or sorrow?

Recommendations

- *If you have nothing nice to say, then say nothing.*
- *If it's inappropriate or questionable, don't forward it, don't visit it, and don't condone it.*
- *Teach and talk about real relationships.*

Use ethical approaches such as:

- *I will show respect to others.*
- *I will not use electronic mediums to flame, bully, harass, or stalk other people.*
- *I will show respect for other people in my choice of web sites.*
- *I will not visit sites that are degrading, pornographic, racist, or inappropriate.*
- *I will not abuse my rights of access or enter other people's private spaces or areas without permission.*

Protect Others

As digital citizens, we have a duty to protect other people. We can't stand idly by watching bullying or abuse and breathe a sigh of relief that it is not us who are the targets. We can't accept flaming, bullying, or inappropriate behavior. And we certainly can't sit idly by and watch others suffer. By sitting by quietly as a person is flamed in a threaded discussion, or attacked by a troll in a chatroom, we encourage the attacker and validate their position. You cannot sit by and let such behavior continue.

Every social networking site, instant messaging tool, chatroom, wiki, blog, and social medium has a "report abuse" contact. USE IT! We can protect others by not ignoring abuse and reporting behavior that is inappropriate or unacceptable.

Don't forward emails that are derogatory—delete them. If the conversation in a chatroom changes and begins to have sexual or sinister overtones, report it. If you are not the target, it may be one of your friends. Consider what it would feel like if you were the recipient of such activity.

Recommendations

- *Have a policy of zero tolerance for unacceptable behavior. Report abuse.*
- *Don't forward unacceptable material—delete it. Stop the trail at your trashcan.*
- *Consider the other person's feelings and act accordingly.*

Use ethical approaches such as:

- *I will protect others by reporting abuse.*
- *I will not forward inappropriate materials or communications.*
- *I will not visit sites that are degrading, pornographic, racist, or inappropriate.*

Respect Intellectual Property

There is so much information out there, and there are so many amazing materials to share. Many individuals have given of their precious time for free to create these resources. This final facet of good digital citizenship is to respect or honor intellectual property. Honoring intellectual property is not hard and requires little more than common courtesy, such as:

- citing the source of images and information
- giving credit when credit is due
- asking permission before you use resources
- linking to web sites rather than downloading and reposting
- sharing your own materials

Recommendations

- *Always seek permission before using information or media.*
- *Always cite information sources appropriately.*
- *Respect the authors' rights to not allow use of their works.*
- *Lead by example and share your own work.*

Use ethical approaches such as:

- *I will request permission to use resources.*
- *I will suitably cite any and all use of web sites, books, media, and so on.*
- *I will validate information.*
- *I will use and abide by the fair use rules.*

Protect Intellectual Property

The term *piracy* conjures up ideas of sailing ships, eye patches, and swashbuckling adventure. However, the reality of piracy is simple—PIRACY IS THEFT!

No matter what face you put on it, no matter whether it is software, music, or movies, PIRACY is THEFT! It is not acceptable to say that the movie industry, bands and artists, or software producers such as Microsoft's Bill Gates or Apple's Steve Jobs make enough money, so it doesn't matter. The simple reality is that without people purchasing the movies, music, or software, these companies would not exist, and our world would be poorer for the loss of their songs, films, and programs.

BitTorrent, LimeWire, and Kazaa have made the theft of music, movies, and programs as simple as clicking a mouse. Most of us would never consider walking into a video store and stealing a DVD. Yet we use programs that do exactly that. The impact of piracy is often seen to be distant and excused by comments such as, "Well, they are paid millions for that," but piracy costs the recording artists and software producers billions of dollars each year, and it discourages creativity and increases prices. Piracy takes away the opportunity for emerging artists to succeed.

It also has an effect in your own neighborhood—it directly decreases employment. When movies or music are stolen by being downloaded, your local music or video store loses sales, and this undermines the viability of the business and the livelihoods of the owner and employees.

There are alternatives. The Creative Commons licensing agreements have made available millions of images, masses of media, and libraries of books that are available, accessible, and free.

It is worth considering when you publish your works to use the Creative Commons license. Creative Commons is a license or statement of use that encourages people to share. Under the Creative Commons license, you can set the level of rights a user has to your intellectual property. Visit creativecommons.org to find out more.

Recommendations

- *Use media and software within the limits of the licence or copyright agreement.*
- *Use alternative tools produced under Creative Commons or Free and Open Source software.*
- *Acknowledge authors' rights and efforts by suitable citation.*
- *Remove media that has not been ethically obtained.*
- *License your works under appropriate licensing agreements.*

Use ethical approaches such as:

- *I will request to use the software and media others produce.*
- *I will use free and open-source alternatives rather than pirating software.*
- *I will purchase, license, and register all software.*
- *I will purchase my music and media, and I will refrain from distributing these in a manner that violates their licenses.*
- *I will act with integrity.*



Summary

- As teachers, we are role models for appropriate behavior, and our influence on our students is huge and life spanning. Our students are entering a world where everything is available for them at the touch of their keyboard and the click of a mouse. If we can establish suitable processes and behaviors of digital citizenship, then they will have a solid foundation of ethical practice to base their future actions and interactions on.
- Digital citizens are self-aware and respect and protect others. They consider their actions and the impacts of these actions. They are aware of people, software developers, actors, artists and their agents, and agencies' rights to own and distribute media and gain a living from it. They respect these rights.
- With freedom comes responsibility.



Questions to Ask

- In keeping with the moral standard for having a personal online profile, how are you representing yourself in online domains, using mediums such as imagery and text? How do you represent yourself to others who see your profiles?
- How do you treat others as you contribute thought and opinion to public outlets like blogs and wall posts (Facebook) and tweets (Twitter) in addition to your own property?
- If you choose to participate in illegal downloading, are you mindful of the consequences of digital piracy? Are you aware of the widespread negative effects of those actions?
- When you see evidence of online abuse and bullying, how do you react? What action do you take as a digital online citizen?

Resources

A terrific resource for stopping online bullying—www.stopcyberbullying.org

A public ad campaign for the prevention of online abuse and cyberbullying—
www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying

A good web site about social responsibility online—
<http://blog.safetyclicks.com/2009/06/11/parents-are-we-being-digitally-responsible>

Caslon Analytics' online guide to respecting intellectual property—
www.caslon.com.au/ipguide.htm

Information Technology and Innovation Foundation's (ITIF) Strategies for Reducing Digital Piracy—www.itif.org/index.php?id=324

Digital Citizenry Online—<http://digitalcitizen.ca>

Digital Citizenship Etiquette Quiz—
<http://middleschooladvisory101.blogspot.com/2009/10/digital-citizenship-etiquette-quizzes.html>

Downloadable PDF on Digital Citizenship Behavior—
www.digitalcitizenship.net/uploads/1stLL.pdf