3. Internet – Participating in the knowledge society

> **"** "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."
>
> *Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, January 1997-December 2006*

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 10 – SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

Do you read the disclaimer when you are consulting a website?

How can you be sure the information you find is factual and objective?

Do you consult several websites to check your facts?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 11 – FINDING QUALITY INFORMATION ON THE WEB

Before downloading files, do you check that your anti-virus software is active?

If you get your news from the Internet, do you seek multiple perspectives on the same story?

Clean out your cookies from time to time to avoid being "profiled" by search engines.

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 12 – DISTANCE LEARNING AND MOOCs

Choose a method of distance learning that is appropriate for you: determine what type of learning (synchronous, asynchronous, open schedule, hybrid distance learning) will best help you reach your goals.

Before selecting a distance learning course, research the reviews – both from students and teachers.

Take adequate precautions to ensure that your computer equipment and software is secure from hackers, viruses and other threats.

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 13 – SHOPPING ONLINE

Do not make online purchases on unsecure Internet connections.

Understand and agree to the key information provided about the product or service.

Disable in-app purchases on your smartphone or tablet.

Do not believe all user recommendations you see, creating "user" recommendations can also be a money-making business.

Finding quality information on the Web

The original idea behind the creation of the Internet[1] was to develop an electronic library for the easy access and distribution of information[2]. In many ways this goal has been accomplished: today the Internet functions as an enormous library where most public and private libraries from across the world are present. They provide information about services, programmes and activities, and give access to physical books listed in catalogues and which can be ordered over the Internet. Digital libraries give access to books and collections online, usually digitised as html script[3] which gives the appearance of a web page[4], as Word or PDF documents[5] or as plain text (ASCII)[6]. Some major libraries and museums enable you to browse through their digitised versions of rare books and artefact collections[7].

1. http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ii_summary.htm
2. http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ii_summary.htm
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTML
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Html
5. http://www.census.gov/main/www/pdf.html
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCII
7. http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Default.aspx

▰▰ The Internet also goes way beyond libraries in offering information and can provide up-to-date, reliable information on whatever interests you: current affairs, technologies, hobbies, entertainment, art, sports and more. This is available through a broad range of sources including 24-hour news channels[8], newspapers[9], journals[10] and news aggregators, commonly known as newsfeeds or RSS feeds (rich site summary, see <www.whatisrss.com>), and these are available through many websites and social media platforms. Users subscribe to these to regularly receive the latest aggregated web content from online newspapers, blogs, podcasts and video blogs (vlogs) in one location for easy viewing.

▰▰ Today, around many Europeans keep up with national and international news via the Internet, and use it to obtain health information. Getting news from social media platforms is also a growing trend. News discussion forums and newsgroups offer fertile platforms for discussion and a means of getting multiple perspectives on topical issues whilst also sharpening students' debating skills. There are hundreds of thousands of such forums worldwide and the more active groups receive hundreds of new messages each day. The messages are divided into threads, which record and display the sender's name and the time the message was sent. Most servers and browsers today can point you to forums of interest to your students[11].

▰▰ Twitter is another means of getting information updates from the Internet. You can use your own Twitter address to follow news outlets, journalists and experts in the fields you are interested in, or sign up to a Twitter list so that you can follow anonymously[12]. Google alerts can similarly be used to follow news on specific topics, but if the key terms are not carefully and clearly defined you may receive too many alerts to be useful. Social media platforms are progressively adding new functions to keep you updated on world news too.

IMPORTANCE IN EDUCATION

- The research skills necessary to navigate both traditional and online libraries are similar. It is crucial that children are guided by their parents and teachers to learn and practise these skills from their first steps on the Internet.

- There are thousands of category-specific libraries on the Web at <http://vlib.org/> and <http://www.sldirectory.com/libsf/resf/libplans.html> that relate specifically to curriculum areas and themes. "Essentially, webquests are mini-projects in which a large percentage of the input and material is supplied by the Internet. Webquests can be teacher-made or learner-made, depending on the learning activity the teacher decides on."[13] The model at <http://webquest.org/> can be very useful when creating activities for classroom participants to use library facilities on the Internet while developing a range of core skills, such as research, archiving, literacy, analysis and evaluation.

- Newsgroups and discussion forums are a useful resource for developing critical thinking and debating skills, on condition that young people are encouraged to check their facts by consulting several different sources. They can also provide a platform to share information and learn from the experience of others.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RISKS

- Cookies (the small files left on your online device to store information about you and your preferences) can improve your browsing experience by remembering your preferences or avoiding that you sign in each time you visit certain sites. However, by using cookies, search engines will lead you only to like-minded sites, and could gradually narrow your perspective on news stories and topical issues.

8. http://wwitv.com/news_tv_live/
9. http://www.onlinenewspapers.com
10. http://www.e-journals.org
11. http://www.newsforum.com
12. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter
13. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/webquests

- The Internet has democratised journalism by giving people of all ages the possibility to actively contribute content. The offer of information on the Internet is therefore becoming endless, underlining more than ever the importance of distinguishing between quality and unreliable content and also between information and infomercials, that is, advertising that looks like objective information.

- Very few newsgroups or discussion forums are fully moderated and users are not tracked. They can therefore be exploited for illegal activities, such as distribution of copyrighted material, racist propaganda, extremism or child sexual abuse material. Using such platforms requires a certain sense of responsibility and awareness of acceptable social conventions, as the supposed anonymity they provide can lead to anti-social behaviour, such as posting nasty messages, bullying and flaming[14]. Students should also be led to reflect on privacy issues when they use such forums[15].

- Most libraries will provide access according to certain rules. These rules[16] will require at least that the user honours the copyright criteria of the material. Remember that unless the materials are in the public domain, you may not redistribute or publish them without the permission of the publisher. Copyright is also a personal responsibility. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work without crediting the source. Be sure to credit your sources, and instil the habit among your students.

HOW TO

- Usenet[17] is a worldwide distributed discussion system that consists of a set of "newsgroups" with names that are classified hierarchically by subject. Access to these newsgroups is defined by your Internet service provider (ISP) or school, university or business server[18]. Access to some platforms is free, whilst "premium" services work on a subscription basis.

- Many tools exist for setting up a news or RSS feed. The video "Get organized: streamline your news feeds"[19] provides a step-by-step description of how to use the tools that best suit your needs.

- To set up Google alerts, you first need to create a Google account. You can then type in a list of words, set a few other parameters and Google alert will inform you via e-mail or feed when those terms appear online. You will receive a list of URLs showing updates on your term, or you can add the alert to an RSS feed reader of your choice.

- Using a current theme in your classroom, identify a category library at *<http://vlib.org/>*. Consider building a webquest around resources from this library, or use an existing webquest at *<http://webquest.org/>*and*<http://www.spiritsd.ca/teacherresources/default.asp>*. You can find webquests by using a search engine[20]. Enrich your webquest by setting up a Google alert or joining a Twitter list[21], and compare the quality of information you receive from each.

- Adults, children and young people can find quality news websites and activities on the Scottish-based International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)[22] multi-language site. It offers a broad range of topics from art and history to science and maths. Others are available on the "Great websites for kids"[23] site, developed by a division of the American Library Association. Further information on library and information services can also be found on the IFLA site, which is considered to be the global voice of the library and information profession.

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14. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flaming
15. http://www.webwewant.eu/information
16. http://web.archive.org/web/20160102210205/http://www.gallowglass.org/jadwiga/SCA/libraries.html#Copyright__Plagiarism
17. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usenet
18. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Server_(computing)
19. http://web.archive.org/web/20151231202307/http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2458165,00.asp
20. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine
21. https://media.twitter.com/best-practice/create-and-use-twitter-lists
22. http://www.ifla.org/activities-and-groups
23. http://gws.ala.org

GOOD PRACTICE

- Before encouraging students to use online libraries, make sure to review basic library skills and research strategies[24]. Also ensure they have a solid understanding of copyright protection.

- Make sure there is an anti-virus filter on any devices being used to download files. Before downloading files[25] to the school server, check with your school network administrator that there is adequate protection in place and sufficient space for storing files and archiving[26] them appropriately.

- When setting information-finding tasks for your class, it may be wisest to provide your own list of URLs[27] to be used. In this way you can be sure that the addresses work and that the content is suitable.

- Many files that you will download will be in Adobe PDF format to protect copyright. Make sure that you have downloaded and installed a recent version of the Acrobat Reader in order to ensure that students can open these files. This can be done from the Adobe Systems[28] site.

- The basic safety principles you apply when using the Internet should be applied when using online libraries. Check privacy statements, conditions of usage and scan files for viruses.

- When first joining a newsgroup be sure to check the frequently asked questions - FAQ[29] for guidelines. This will give you an idea of the netiquette of the newsgroup. Different newsgroups have different rules.

- Keep your messages as short as possible but make sure you give all relevant information. For example, if seeking the answer to a technical problem, give precise details about the hardware and software you are using.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Google newsgroups at *<http://groups.google.com/>* has a complete list of newsgroups and an archive of over 1 billion postings.

- David Lawrence and Russ Allbery give advice on creating a Big 8 newsgroup: *<http://web.archive.org/web/20140330141231/http://www.faqs.org/faqs/usenet/creating-newsgroups/part1/>*.

- Wikipedia has an entry for newsgroups: *<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newsgroups>*.

- The British Library offers digitised collections: *<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Default.aspx>*.

- The World e-book Foundation offers thousands of texts: *<http://www.netlibrary.net/>*.

- The Library Spot provides a free virtual library resource centre: *<http://www.libraryspot.com/>*.

- "Teacher tap" has a list of 1 000 + webquests and related resources: *<http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic4.htm>*.

- In the teen publication the Web we want, the chapter "Information is not knowledge" *<http://www.webwewant.eu/web/guest/information>* provides interactive activities for teens to sharpen their critical thinking and journalistic skills.

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24. https://www.pinterest.com/explore/library-skills/
25. http://www.walthowe.com/glossary/d.html#download
26. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archiving#Computing_sense
27. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/URL
28. http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html
29. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faq