



# Guide to Safety and Quality Online

A TOOL KIT FOR YOUTH INFORMATION WORKERS



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## Introduction

We live in an information society. This is due in no small way to the growth of access and use of the web across Europe and beyond. If young people are to be able to participate, it's vital that they be literate and skilled in using the digital technology that's making the information society a reality.

In this booklet, we explore how digital technology is changing what it means to be information literate. We look at how the web's not just the subject of conversation, it's a platform where those interested in the debate about online youth information can share and learn from each other. We assess the implications for both how we use the web to find quality information, and how we can create and distribute it. We consider the links between quality information online and a rounded web safety strategy.

As the web emerges as a key part of young people's social reality, the idea of digital community grows in importance. Young people's sense of community is often pulled in different directions. It can open up new opportunities, but equally it can present new risks. Youth information workers can play a critical role in this process, helping young people to be better equipped to recognise and react to these new opportunities and risks.

This booklet explores the most recent developments in how young people use the web. Its central aim is to help youth information workers ensure that young people can safely access the quality information they need, to be fully literate digital participants in today's information society.

### HOW WE SITUATE ONLINE YOUTH INFORMATION

“Internet is a powerful source of information and communication, as well as an integrated part of the social environment of young people. Provision of generalist Youth Information and Counselling online, as well as orientation on the Internet are new tasks, which are complementary to existing Youth Information work.

In addition to the role of Youth Information, helping young people find the right information and take their own decisions, Online Youth Information supports them to maximise the benefits of the Internet and minimise its potential risks.”

Taken from the “Principles for Online Youth Information” adopted in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) on 5 December 2009 by the 20th General Assembly of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet has been designed to be used as separate units. Each unit focuses on different issues in online safety and information that you, in your work as a youth information worker, may come across.

Each unit is broken down into the following sections:



**Introduction:** An introduction that sets out the issues and highlights different keywords and terms.



**In context:** A section that explains, with the use of specific examples from youth information work, how you might encounter these issues in online information quality and safety.



**In practice:** A section which presents practical examples you can take away and use in your day-to-day work to extend your knowledge and understanding.



**In training:** A section which offers an example of the kind of activity which you can run with the young people you work with, to explore some of these issues discussed in the unit.



### TIPS

There are practical tips throughout the text that you may use for your day-to-day work in youth information.

### LINKS

There are references and links to further information and resources at the end of each unit of this booklet.

### WEBSITES

Throughout the booklet we make references to different websites and products. You can find a comprehensive list of these with the relevant links in the appendix.

### SHERYICA

There is more information online to accompany this booklet at [sheryica.org](http://sheryica.org), the online platform for youth information workers across Europe, with additional resources, tips and discussion of the issues covered in this booklet. More information here: [www.eryica.org/safetyandquality](http://www.eryica.org/safetyandquality)

### TRAINING THE YOUNG PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH

The training activities have been developed and tested with two different groups of 20-25 young people from across Europe. The training activities are designed to be adapted to the needs of the young people you are working with. This booklet will provide you with outlines of different activities that you can run to help bring about fruitful discussion and learning about the issues in each unit. All the activities are based around group work. If you are not familiar with group working, it's worth considering involving youth workers who have experience in running group activities to support you.

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# information literacy in a digital age

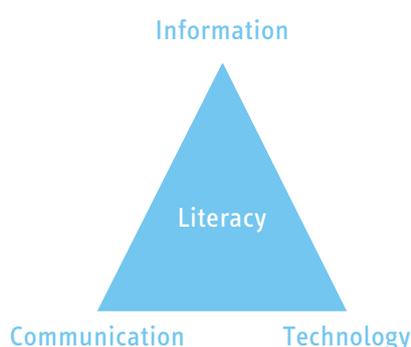
Literacy provides young people growing up with the means to make themselves understood and to understand others. Digital technology has provided new and varied ways to communicate and access information. So much so, it's changing what it means to be literate with information.



## Introduction

### WHAT IS LITERACY?

We are very familiar with the idea of literacy and how it relates to our capacity to read and write. We readily understand that literacy is both the ability to decode (i.e. read) and encode (i.e. write) information using some kind of technology.



These ideas about information, communication and technology are all fundamental to what we mean by literacy. Information is the currency at stake when we talk about literacy, while communication is what makes that information valuable. Technology is key as it provides us with the means to communicate and share the information we have.

When this technology is something as everyday as a pen and some paper, it's easy to forget that literacy assumes a basic level of technical knowledge to be able to read and write at all. Today it seems as if technology is playing an ever more visible role in how we communicate and process information. But is this any different from how it has always?

What's different is the scale and speed of this technological change. It is even affecting what it means to be literate. Literacy is becoming less and less understood as something we can accomplish at one point in our lives. Instead, our ability to understand information and communicate with others is something we need to refresh throughout our lives.

### INFORMATION LITERACY

As youth information workers we're particularly interested in the idea of information literacy. The term information literacy was first used in 1974 by Paul Zurkowski connected to the work of the Information Industry Association in the US. Since then information literacy as a concept has developed and become more complex, in particular where it's been applied in academic work, libraries or other places where information is organised and classified.

There is not one common definition for what information literacy is. Although there's a certain amount of consensus that it involves a critical approach to searching for, evaluating and using information. The UK Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) sums it up as follows:



“Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner”.

Information literacy is an idea that predates the founding of the World Wide Web by a long way. Since Tim Berners Lee made the web publicly available in 1991, thinking about literacy has developed with all kinds of interrelated concepts like media literacy, digital literacy and even network literacy. It’s a complex issue - but what runs through much of the current debate is the sense that the web is changing the skills we need to access information.

Youth information powered by the web is better equipped to ensure that young people are “able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information”. [Source: American Library Association-Presidential Committee on Information Literacy 1989]

Keywords: [information literacy](#), [social media](#), [social bookmarking](#)



## In Context

### HOW HAS THE WEB CHANGED YOUTH INFORMATION?

As workers in youth information, we strive to enable access to the information we know can make an enormous difference to the lives of young people. This question about how literacy is changing in a digital age presents us with a massive and ongoing challenge. It’s reshaping the way young people access information and leading to changes in how youth information services are provided.

This evolving sense of what literacy means is something youth information workers must be aware of. It can provide us with a valuable insight into the world that young people are discovering as they grow up. It can also give us the means we need to help young people improve their literacy in an increasingly digital society.

The quantity of online information available has grown, driven by the rise in social media such as social networks (like Facebook), blogs (like WordPress), wikis (like Wikipedia), etc., that’s transformed the way information can be published and distributed. This is youth information in the age of the read write web, where it is just as easy to write on the web, as it is to read from it.

The growth in the amount and variety of available information has given a new importance to the way youth information workers manage it. A whole range of skills are needed for assessing the unprecedented quantity of information and being able to judge the quality of it.

New platforms such as mobile applications, gaming devices and other interactive tools are changing the format of the information available beyond text to other kinds of media. This explosion in information content is matched by increasing ways to consume information. Never has the potential for information to empower young people been greater than it is now. Yet without the new skills needed to navigate the ocean of information opened up by the web, youth information workers can not deliver to meet this potential.



## DIGITAL AGE: NEW MODEL OF YOUTH INFORMATION WORK

The role of youth information work is different to how it was over 25 years ago. Youth information workers acted almost as a portal to the information young people needed. Today, youth information workers play a role actively facilitating and enabling young people to access the information they need.

- Information monopolist model: young people were much more dependent on youth information workers who had privileged access and or resources necessary to get the majority of information they needed
- Information guide model: young people with access to the web are often a lot less dependent on youth information workers for access to information-but instead need more support and guidance interpreting information or verifying its credibility

Today, the role of youth information workers is to develop new ways to share and help increase their information literacy skills. Facilitating young people's access to information is not just about providing an internet-enabled computer in a youth information centre, it's about helping young people to use the information they find to make informed decisions in their lives.

Youth information workers have all kinds of opportunities now to share their skills with the young people they work with. These skills include being able to recognise when you can benefit from better information, being able to locate this information and then know how to evaluate its quality.

Given the considerable number of skills needed, it's clear that the use of information in our everyday lives is common, yet complex. Often we use information skills almost unconsciously we don't always realise all the different skills needed, whether it's understand a train timetable, making sense of a map or finding a phone number.

Everyone can find themselves needing help navigating their way around this information. Skills in information literacy are not just an essential part of the service, they are what enable youth information workers to do the work they do. These skills are what they can offer to pass on to the young people they work with.



## In Practice

### WHAT ARE THE KEY YOUTH INFORMATION SKILLS THAT TRANSFER TO WORKING ON THE WEB?

Let's go through the basics. In terms of thinking about how to share information literacy skills with the young people we work with, it's helpful first to break down what these skills are.

#### 1. Define why the young person needs the information

This can sound very obvious, but clarifying why the young person is looking for information and support at the beginning of the process can save time. This can be done through a simple needs assessment that gives the young person the opportunity to explore and share what issues they're facing. A needs assessment might include:



- What issues need to be considered immediately? What needs can be addressed in the longer term?
- Are they seeking specific technical information or are they looking for emotional support and guidance?
- Can separate issues be considered one after another or is it better to tackle the young person's issues together?

## **2. Set out a search strategy for the information needed**

Sketch out a plan, based on the issues the young person raises that includes the different search tools or information sources that may be useful.

- What are the keywords or phrases relating to the topic being searched for? (we look at search in more detail in Unit 2)
- Are there particular sources that are more reliable and should be prioritised?
- Are there experts or sources who may be able to point in the right direction? If not, are there any other sources of information that come to mind?
- How long will it take to carry out the search? Will it cost money to access the information you need? If a third party website requires personal information from the young person, will it protect the young person's confidentiality and privacy?

## **3. Find and assess the information**

It's important to include different formats in your search for the right information. Different young people may prefer different formats, and certain issues are better served by information in non-text formats, e.g. virtual visits explained in video format to a health centre or law court.

- Explore different search tools such as: search engines using keywords, sharing queries on online social networks and social media or searching more specialist and structured online databases.
- Record where you've searched so that it's possible to come back to them-should you need to.

Once you find information you think responds to the issues faced by the young person, it's key to assess the information's appropriateness.

- How reliable is the source? Is it recent? Does it provide links or additional sources for the claims it makes? Who else links to this source? Does any organisation endorse or recommend this information?
- Are there alternative sources that make similar claims? How do the sources compare?
- What is the perspective of the author or entity publishing the information? Should the author's commercial considerations be taken into account? Does the information come from a source campaigning on a particular agenda?
- Can you fact check some of the claims made by the source? How accurate is the information?



#### **4. Organise and use the information**

It's worth considering how you're going to record the information you find and identify as useful and appropriate.

- The way you record information can allow you to use this information later
- Deciding what to record and what not to record can help you analyse the information's value
- You can record information in different ways. You could record it as text, structure it in a spreadsheet or table, save it as links or social bookmarks or even share it across a social network to help engage others in the search

Before you decide to follow up and pursue any particular pieces of information, it's crucial to think through the next step.

- Check out what ongoing support is available for the young person you're working with, and if further information is required
- Explore ways in which new information can be shared or updated with others who might equally benefit from the information
- Be sure to use the information in an ethical way, for example always credit the original source and avoid charges of plagiarism



## In Training

### THE TERM TWISTER

Preparation time: 2-4 hours

Running time: 15-30 minutes

Number of participants: 5-25 people

This activity is a great way to be able to get a sense of the different words and ideas that the young people you're working with understand and which they don't. This activity gives you a way into understanding how confident the participants are and their level of information literacy. Make sure that participants had a chance to get to know each other before you do this activity as it involves a lot of physical contact. You can adapt the difficulty level or topic by selecting your own terms or keywords to use.

#### Learning Objective

- To identify and understand the keywords and terms associated with safety and quality in online youth information

#### Learning Outcomes

- To be able to explain different terms and keywords associated with safety and quality in online youth information
- To be able to discuss the words in the game and their meanings with peers

#### Delivery Methods

- The participants divide into small groups of 3-5 people
- Each participant takes it in turn to take a card from the trainer with the description of a term
- The participants each read out the description or definition on the card to the group. The participant then has to find the term the description refers to on the grid set out on the floor. In the first round, the participant stands on the square with the term/keyword they choose. If wrong - they are corrected by the trainer or facilitator of the group
- In the second round (after each of the participants has had a turn and is standing on a square on the grid of keywords), participants pick another term's description at random. This time for the second term they must move one foot onto the square of the second, whilst keeping the other foot on the first term.
- In the following rounds (3 and 4), participants use their hands to reach the squares on the grid they pick, whilst keeping their feet on the original squares.
- The group should do their best to cover all the terms on the grid. The winning group is the one which touches on the most squares at the same time.
- The facilitators have the option at the end to bring all the groups together and lead a short discussion about the terms the participants have discovered during the game

#### What you will need

- If you break into smaller groups you'll need a facilitator for each group who distributes the cards with the descriptions on each round
- Four pieces of flip chart paper for the base of the twister grid on the floor.
- Print out one term per A4 piece of paper and stick to the grid
- Print out the terms on cards with the correct description for each trainer
- Space to stretch out!
- 20-30 minutes for whole activity

#### Handouts

Glossary



#### FURTHER LINKS FOR UNIT 1: LITERACY IN A DIGITAL AGE

Q&A: Blur Author Tom Rosenstiel - On verification and critical thinking in the new, open journalistic era - By Craig Silverman - Columbia Journalism Review  
[www.cjr.org/behind\\_the\\_news/qa\\_blur\\_author\\_tom\\_rosenstiel.php](http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/qa_blur_author_tom_rosenstiel.php)

Understanding information literacy: a primer; an easy-to-read, non-technical overview explaining what information literacy means - United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Horton, Forest Woody - 2008  
[portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=25956&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=25956&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

What Is Web 2.0 - O'Reilly Media  
[oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html](http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html)

Digital Literacy- European Commission Working Paper 2008 - Vienna, Austria  
[ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/digital\\_literacy/digital\\_literacy\\_review.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/digital_literacy/digital_literacy_review.pdf)

Defining digital literacy - What do young people need to know about digital media?  
[www.idunn.no/content?marketplaceId=2000&languageId=1&contentItemId=2913391&pageName=printVersion&siteNodeId=2913412&skipDecorating=true](http://www.idunn.no/content?marketplaceId=2000&languageId=1&contentItemId=2913391&pageName=printVersion&siteNodeId=2913412&skipDecorating=true)

David Bawden - Origins and Concepts of Digital Literacy (Chapter One)  
[www.soi.city.ac.uk/~dbawden/digital%20literacy%20chapter.pdf](http://www.soi.city.ac.uk/~dbawden/digital%20literacy%20chapter.pdf)

## digital lives

With the lives of young people becoming more influenced by digital technology, so youth information workers are reassessing the role of technology in their own work. The web is not just the subject of this conversation about the future of youth information, it also provides a means to have this conversation in a new and exciting way. For this reason, it's critical for youth information in practice to connect with the digital lives of young people.





## Introduction

Around the world we've found it hard to make sense of how new technology is affecting the lives of young people. For much of the last decade, many have described young people's increasing use and familiarity with digital technology as bringing about a new generation of 'digital natives'.

The way young people have been quick to adopt new technology, using it in new and creative ways, has often been reflected in popular culture like music, television and film. There are all kinds of these stereotypes, such as the teenager hacking into a top secret information system or a young computer genius achieving the impossible. This perceived ability that young people have with new technology, has encouraged the public's distrust of and admiration for young people in equal measure.

In other words, as a society we often have mixed feelings about this association between young people and their use of new technology. The challenge for youth information workers is to go beyond this general perception and better understand:

- how the young people they know are using technology; and,
- how they themselves can use new technology to improve the way they work.

### DIGITAL NATIVES, DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS

In 2001, Marc Prensky wrote an article called "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants". In it, he described students as representing the first generation to "have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age". Prensky used this term digital natives to describe how a whole new generation of young people was different from previous generations, simply because they had grown up surrounded by digital technology.

The reason that Prensky thought young people in this generation were different came down to this:

People who start from a young age acquire a natural ability and style of using digital technology, that those who start later in their lives just don't have.

Today there are many books and blogs alike that explore this idea of young people as 'digital natives'. Examples include:

- 'Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives' by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser;
- 'Grown Up Digital' by Don Tapscott;
- 'Educating the Net Generation', edited by Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger.

Though different authors use different terms (like 'net generation' and 'millennials' to refer to this group of young people), they are all interested in the implications for society, education and commerce of having a new generation of young people who approach digital technology in a new kind of way.



## DIGITAL LIVES OF A NEW GENERATION

Critics of the term ‘digital natives’ point out the problems with thinking about young people digital lives in this way. Many dismiss the term ‘digital natives’ as a huge oversimplification of a whole generation. It doesn’t really explain the enormous range of differences in how young people actually use the web. We know that all kinds of factors can influence how young people use digital technology, such as their standard of living, the amount of support they get from their parents, how interested they are in technology, etc. Calling them all digital natives doesn’t really help us understand these differences.



Another criticism is that the term ‘digital natives’ draws an unhelpful dividing line between the generations: the younger are natives, the older are immigrant. Whether youth information workers have or haven’t grown up with digital technology in their lives, has no bearing on whether they can support, guide or serve young people in terms of their information needs. The principles of youth information go beyond the technology itself, so the real challenge is how to apply these principles in the age of digital technology. This is a challenge whichever generation you belong to.

Keywords: digital natives, digital immigrants, avatar



## In Context

### DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT INFORMATION NEEDS IN THEIR DIGITAL LIVES?

As youth information workers, it is important to consider the context before assuming we know how young people behave online and whether that changes how they may seek information or support.

According to some research in the UK, the age of the young person is one important factor that influences how young people behave online. When researchers asked young people (16-24 year olds) in the UK whether there were things they could talk about online, that they couldn’t face-to-face, they found that:

- 56% of 16-18 year olds agreed
- 47% of 22-24 year olds agreed

The responses suggested that the older the young people became, the more willing or able they were to talk about personal issues face to face with others, away from the digital lives.

Age can be a factor that influences what young people do in their digital lives, but so can the nature of issue. The same research suggested that for issues regarding relationships, young people are far more likely to turn to friends (47%) and than family (18%).

However, for finance issues, young people are much more likely to turn to family, specifically parents (33%), rather than friends (7%) and a little more likely to try to access information via internet search, an online forum or help-site (24%).

Issues such as sex (29%), health (27%), and drugs (36%) were issues where young people are more likely to use the web to look for information and support.

[Source: Life Support: Young people’s needs in a digital age”, report written by Hon. Professor Michael Hulme Associate Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies, Lancaster University, 2009, based on a quantitative survey commissioned by YouthNet and undertaken by The Futures Company.]

#### UNDERSTANDING THE STAKE YOU HOLD IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Youth information operates in the context of the community that the young people we work with live in. It’s crucial that youth information workers play a role in helping young people to understand their attachment to the wider community that they may live in digitally. Through engaging in public discussion about issues like information quality and safety, young people can get a clearer sense of their connection to their peers, value the knowledge they have and learn from the experience of others. Connect Safely, based in the United States, explains the dynamic of the community in young people’s digital lives:

“When people see themselves as community stakeholders – citizens – they behave as citizens because they tend to care about the well-being of the community itself and the individual and collective behaviours that affect it.”

For this reason, opportunities to discuss online safety with the young people you work with are incredibly important. It’s easy to mistake a young person’s technical expertise or skill in their digital life, with a well rounded understanding of how what they do in their digital life impacts on others.



## In Practice

#### KEY ASPECTS FOR PROVIDING QUALITY YOUTH INFORMATION ONLINE SAFELY

Although there is a lot written about young people today and their relationship to technology, there is a lot we either still don’t know or that comes down to a question of values. It is crucial that as youth information workers, we welcome discussion about issues in youth information in the context of how the young people we know use the web.

The following are examples of issues that you could spark discussions with the young people you’re working with. Some of these are adapted from the work of John Palfrey and Urs Gasser at the Berkman Center.

- Does the web represent a new place in the world where we are exposed to new issues that require new solutions? Or are many of the apparently new issues that we come across on the web, really very similar to many problems young people have faced before the existence of the web?

This discussion about whether we’re entering new territory or just rediscovering issues in a new context is ongoing. For many in youth information work, this sense that the web presents all kinds of new and unknown challenges can be really discouraging. Does it mean that we have to unlearn everything that we’ve been taught up to now?

On the other hand, there can be something very reassuring for young people when youth information workers can make the link and extract lessons from the past. For example, the issue of cyberbullying is often present in the media as a new threat to young people. However, if youth

workers can successfully adapt offline anti-bullying strategies to online bullying, there's more of a chance of confronting the threat of cyberbullying together.

- Is new technology too often dividing our attention and make it hard to focus on the information we need? Or is new technology opening up new opportunities to find and access information online?

Concerns have been raised about the way young people use technology and what the psychological impact of these behaviours might be. Others point out the huge wealth of knowledge and learning resources that are at the finger tips of so many young people today.

- There is a risk that the anonymity on the web can be used by others to deceive us. At the same time, online anonymity can give us the safety and distance we need sometimes to share and discuss personal issues that affect us.

There is a worry that young people are missing out on the valuable time needed to develop social skills through face-to-face conversation. They highlight the opportunities young people today have to build and maintain rich and rewarding social relationships through the web, which give young people the safe environment they need to talk about all kinds of highly personal issues they might otherwise have never expressed.

- How can we embrace social media and build our social networks with our peers, while at the same time look after our privacy wisely?

The communication on the web has made it easier to express all kinds of personal thoughts, feelings and experiences. Networks grow because they allow us to read or see what others may be thinking or feeling. When we post, we can't always see or even imagine all the people we're sharing our content with. Privacy online can be difficult to manage-understanding what is in or outside your control is crucial.

- Is it possible for adults such as teachers, youth workers and parents to fully understand young people who've been surrounded by digital technology since they were born? Is the gap between the generations too wide for each side to understand each other's digital lives?

How can adults engage the young people they are in contact with by adapting their services and systems to the web-ready world that young people have grown up with. For example, rather than explaining why information on Wikipedia is limited, use it as an example of how you assess information by examining the discussion page of a Wikipedia entry and its previous edits.

#### PRACTICAL GUIDANCE ABOUT ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIGITAL LIVES

One very specific example of young people's digital lives is about learning to live in online social networks like Facebook. Online social networks are impacting on youth information by providing pages for youth information centres to communicate publicly, offering new ways to reach young people and affecting how young people share and find information.

Larry Magid and Anne Collier have written a really practical guide to using Facebook. It's directed at parents but it provides plenty of guidance that youth information workers may also find useful.



Young people's online social life often reflects their life offline, it "can also amplify, perpetuate and widely distribute real-life problems or conflicts – very rapidly. Something posted in anger or on impulse is extremely difficult to take back, so it has never been more important for users (of any age) to think before they "speak", post, or send a text message." [Source: A Parents' Guide to Facebook - Anne Collier and Larry Magid - Co-Directors, ConnectSafely.org – 2011]



Here below are just a few points from their guide for anyone using online social networks that we've adapted for youth information work:

#### DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

By participating in online social networks and other kinds of social media, we are leaving our own digital footprints on the web. As a result, when we post we need to learn to consider what the impact might be on our online reputation. We should really think carefully before posting. The fact that we're effectively leaving digital footprints every time we post online should really make us want to behave respectfully to others online, just as we would offline. One example of where this online reputation is having a growing influence is the fact that employers are referring to online information about prospective candidates.

#### CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS AND CONTACTS CAREFULLY

There is often a social pressure on young people to add friends particularly those in their social peer group. Many young people report adding their entire class or year group from school as friends on their social network because they think this what's expected. After all, it's this social pressure to fit in and be a part of the group that explains the rapid success of online social networks like Facebook.

This means though that social pressures that once just existed at school or college, can now be present in the lives of young people outside of their time in education. This can make it super important to quickly understand the difference between public posting on a wall, private messaging and customising access to content you post on a social network. It's important to think carefully about who you accept as a friend, and about being prepared to remove someone as an online friend if necessary.

#### YOUR PROFILE AND YOU

Many social networks and online communities come with the profile page where you can upload an image of yourself or an avatar and post various other bits of personal information. Most profile information is generally optional. It is usually safest to avoid posting any kind of contact information. It is also important to check all the privacy settings for your profile and make sure you're happy with how they are set. It's also worth using the option on Facebook to see your profile as your friends or others may see it.

Facebook has been largely responsible for changing the culture on social networks around using your real name for online profiles. It is generally considered safer on balance to use your real name, as this is the norm on Facebook. As a result, it discourages people from pretending to be people they are not.

It is worth taking into account what the norm is on the social network you are on before deciding. It is also worth looking at any additional safety features for young people aged under 18 years old.

## LISTS AND GROUPS

Within many social networks there is the possibility to create groups or mini-networks from your friends or contacts. Skilled use of groups or lists can help the user control and manage their privacy more effectively. Photos, status updates and other kinds of sharing can be restricted to a customised list (such as family or close friends). Facebook's new group functionality has been set up to facilitate easier sharing between smaller more intimate groups.



## MULTIMEDIA AND APPLICATIONS

Photo-sharing on social networks is huge. However, functionality like tagging photos with the name of different users who appear in the picture has caused problems. It's an issue that demonstrates the limits of the control an individual has over their personal information on the social web. Users may find themselves tagged in photos they have not posted or taken. As a result these photos can end up in their friends News Feeds. Users can remove the name from being tagged on a photo, but if they want to remove the photo entirely they need to contact the user who's posted it. It is possible to report a photo that you feel is attacking you. However, another quicker option in Facebook is simply to limit who can tag you in a photo.

Facebook and other big social networks have become a platform for third-party software developers to create all kinds of programmes from games to websites. It is important to be aware of the safety implications of installing these applications. Once installed, they can begin sharing your personal data and information with many more people than you may be aware.

## LOCATION INFORMATION

Facebook Places, Foursquare, Google Latitude and others are all networks that allow you to share information about where you are. Most of these programmes require you to "check-in" to places you visit with the option of providing more information about your trip as you go. If you have such location-sharing software installed on your mobile, you should be familiar with how it works- or at the very least, know how to disable it.

## REPORTING ABUSE OR COMPLAINING

Most social networks have internal processes and functionality that allow users to flag up abuse or other kinds of problematic content. It is important to understand what the social network's policy of confidentiality may be if you decide to report something or someone.

An alternative on most social networking sites is to block and or report the person causing the problem. In the UK for example the police have created the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) button that allows users to report online content they find worrying or concerning direct to the police [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk). INHOPE provides links to national internet hotlines for reporting illegal content from across the world. INHOPE is co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme of the European Union.

## USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A YOUTH INFORMATION WORKER



It is recommended to create a professional or work profile on a social network so that it is explicitly clear that this profile is used in a professional context when you use it to contact and communicate with young people. Alternatively, it's important to ensure that young people you're working with cannot access any content on your profile that weakens your role as a youth information worker.



There are a number of different ways you could use social networks in youth information work:

- Social networks can help you to bring groups of young people together, to work on a project, help develop a service or create a base from which young people can offer their peers support
- Social networks may help extend the group work you do offline, by giving young people the opportunity to stay in contact and share progress between meetings
- Social networks can help create groups where young people don't get the opportunity to meet together or at least only infrequently
- Social networks can provide you with an opportunity to expand the reach of your services but being able to spread the word about what you can offer and by leveraging the networks of users willing to champion your work.



## In Training

### MAKING A MOVIE: “WELCOME TO PLANET NET”

Preparation time: 2-4 hours

Running time: 3-4 hours

Number of participants: 6-25 people



This activity sets young people with a challenge. It challenges them to discuss together the key issues of living digital lives. They then have to agree a narrative and story for communicating these issues to their peers. The challenge of creating a movie helps to get the whole group working together as a unit to produce a piece of work that can be shared with others at the end of the activity.

#### Learning Objectives

- To clearly explain and communicate the key opportunities and risks of using the web

#### Learning Outcomes

- To describe and analyse different opportunities and risks associated with the web
- To understand the challenges of communicating clear messages to peers about issues in online safety and information quality
- To understand what peers think are the key risks and how they can be managed; and the key opportunities and how they can be taken advantage of

#### Delivery Methods

- Participants are set the challenge to record a short movie (approximately five minutes long) that can be shown to people who know nothing about the web and how it works, so that they get a better idea of the risks and opportunities of using the web. If video recording equipment is not available, audio recording equipment could be used. It could equally work as a live puppet performance or theatre.
- Participants are shown a short film that helps them understand how to use the technical equipment
- Participants in groups have time to discuss the key issues they would like to address through their short movie. They then discuss and plan the storyboard and script for their movie.
- It is important that everyone in the group is involved in the different parts of making the movie. For example, they should take turns to perform in front of the camera and help shoot the movie.
- Participants have time to shoot the movie. To keep the activity simple it may be best to try to avoid involving any post production process. The simplest is to shoot the movie in chronological order. Scenes that are not suitable or are of poor quality can be reshot. This means that once the movie is completed, no post production work is required and the movie can be rendered as is.
- The rendering process can take some time depending on the size of the movies and speed of the processing equipment you have access to. If possible, reserve a time when each group’s movie can be shown and watched together. Or at least uploaded to a video-sharing website so that all involved can see the final movies.

#### What you will need

- Simple video cameras such as Flip video cameras or mobile phones that don’t require much technical expertise to use. If you don’t have any you could use simple audio recorders.
- Clothes and props so that the actors in the movies can play different parts and help inspire the participants imagination.
- Space for participants to shoot the different scenes of their movie
- Computer or computers to help render the movies once shot and completed
- Projector with speakers to show films once they are completed

## FURTHER LINKS FOR UNIT 2: DIGITAL LIVES

Inhope - The International Association of Internet Hotlines  
[www.inhope.org](http://www.inhope.org)

Click Clever, Click Safe : Directgov (UK)  
[clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html](http://clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html)

Digital Ethnography: a Kansas State University working group led by Dr. Michael Wesch dedicated to exploring and extending the possibilities of digital ethnography  
[mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg](http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg)

Grown Up Digital : Don Tapscott  
[dontapscott.com/books/grown-up-digital](http://dontapscott.com/books/grown-up-digital)

Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives&quot; by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser  
[borndigitalbook.com](http://borndigitalbook.com)

Educating the Net Generation, edited by Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger  
[www.educause.edu/educatingthenetgen](http://www.educause.edu/educatingthenetgen)

New report reveals young people's hybrid lives - YouthNet  
[www.youthnet.org/mediaandcampaigns/pressreleases/hybrid-lives](http://www.youthnet.org/mediaandcampaigns/pressreleases/hybrid-lives)

Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants -- A New Way To Look At Ourselves and Our Kids -- From On the Horizon (MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001)  
[www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf](http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf)

The Digital Native - myth and reality - Neil Selwyn - Institute of Education - University of London  
[www.scribd.com/doc/9775892/Digital-Native](http://www.scribd.com/doc/9775892/Digital-Native)

Digital Natives - Berkman@10  
[cyber.law.harvard.edu/berkmanat10/Digital\\_Natives](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/berkmanat10/Digital_Natives)

Connect Safely |Facebook Privacy Chart for Teens | Safety Advice Articles  
[www.connectsafely.org/Safety-Advice-Articles/facebook-privacy-chart-for-teens.html](http://www.connectsafely.org/Safety-Advice-Articles/facebook-privacy-chart-for-teens.html)

Connect Safely - A Parents Guide to Facebook - Safety Advice Articles - Larry Magid and Anne Collier  
<http://www.connectsafely.org/Safety-Advice-Articles/facebook-for-parents.html>

So-Called "Digital Natives" Not Media Savvy, New Study Shows - Read Write Web  
[www.readwriteweb.com/archives/so-called\\_digital\\_natives\\_not\\_media\\_savvy\\_new\\_study\\_shows.php](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/so-called_digital_natives_not_media_savvy_new_study_shows.php)

Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU  
[ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/social\\_networking/docs/sn\\_principles.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/social_networking/docs/sn_principles.pdf)



# searching for quality information

Given the amount of information available online, a key challenge is finding quality information. In the early years of the web, search engines were heavily relied on to find quality information using keywords or search terms. In recent years, it's increasingly social networks and our links to other people online that we depend on for finding quality information.





## Introduction

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SEARCH

Soon after the web began and there were still relatively few well-known websites, web addresses passed by word of mouth. Quickly, as more and more websites went live, commercial search engines such as Altavista, Lycos, Yahoo and HotBot, stepped in to help us find what we were looking for.

Websites who wanted to be found, had to go to each search engine and enter the URL of their website and explain a little bit about what the site was. The website would then be indexed with the search engine, if approved at the end of a process that could take up to two weeks.

Alongside search engines, sites called portals that categorised links to other websites began to appear. These portals became a new way of finding the information online you needed. They were often put together by enthusiastic people sharing a hobby collecting listings of links they thought may interest others.

In 1998 a project called Google was launched. They used special programmes called “spiders” that “crawled” the web visiting and “indexing” websites. These programmes allow Google to rank search results quickly and effectively using a technique called ‘PageRank’ which took into account how often a site was visited and how many other sites linked to it.

### SEARCH TODAY

Nowadays Google has become the word we use to mean searching the web. When someone says: “Did you google that?” They often just mean: “Did you look for that on the internet?” Google and the success of this way of indexing and searching the web has contributed to the problem we call ‘information overload’.

A search on Google often leads to thousands if not millions of results, so the task of ensuring that the best information is on the first page has become harder and harder. The challenge is made even more complicated because it means finding information that is relevant and appropriate to the person looking. To solve this, many believe that the answer lies in taking advantage of our personal “social graph” - a fancy way for referring to the people you’re connected to on online social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

Keywords: [hoax](#), [scam](#), [online social networks](#), [social graph](#), [social bookmarking](#), [search engine](#), [wiki](#), [blog](#), [micro-blogging](#), [online communities](#), [post/upload](#), [Wikipedia](#), [WHOIS information](#), [EdgeRank](#)



## In Context

### KNOWING QUALITY INFORMATION WHEN YOU FIND IT

One of the key tasks of youth information workers is to facilitate young people’s access to quality information. But to do this, we need to be able to identify the criteria that helps us judge what quality information is.

So here's one quick and easy way to remember what quality information is taken from Mick Conroys training methods from the ERYICA YIntro-Manual: think of CRAP information. Here's the key to what CRAP means:

- C - Clear • R - Relevant • A - Accurate • P - Pitched

<b>Clear</b> Quality information is clear information. It needs to be focused, understandable and be backed up by clearly labelled sources.
<b>Relevant</b> The quality of the information found is relative to the needs of the young person searching for the information. It may be clear, but unless the information's also relevant to the person, it may not be appropriate and could actually be harmful.
<b>Accurate</b> The information may be clear and straightforward and it may also be suited to the person in need. But is the information also up-to-date, factually correct and suitably objective?
<b>Pitched</b> Finally, how well pitched or appropriate is the information for the specific situation the young person finds themselves in? Does this information suit the needs and abilities of the young person?



#### HOW TO ASSESS THE QUALITY OF ONLINE INFORMATION

Here are some key questions that, as a provider of youth information, you can use as the basis for a more thorough quality assessment of online information.

##### 1. Who is providing the information?

- Who is the author of the content or entity legally responsible for publishing the information? Is it a governmental entity, lobbying body or a commercial organisation? Are they trying to sell a product? Are they trying spread a particular message? Could it be a hoax or a spoof (a fake)? The 'About Us' section may clarify this, otherwise look at the disclaimer or legal information. Does the domain ending provide a clue? Who registered the domain name (WHOIS information)?
- What is the author's reputation or level of qualifications on the subject? Why does the author provide this information? Is the author giving an opinion? Is the information biased or distorted?
- Is the information meant for a specific country? It's important to bear in mind that laws and regulations may differ between different countries even though they may share a common language. For example, the law in the US is very different to the UK, as is the law in Flanders and the Netherlands, or the law in Portugal and Brazil. Is the information forbidden or outlawed in your country?
- Is it possible to contact those responsible for the information, either the author or the publisher? What kind of contact details are there? Is there an email or named individual? A telephone number or a postal address?

## 2. How accurate and timely is the information?

- When was the information originally produced? Does the information source continue to be maintained and managed? Is the information you're looking for particularly time-sensitive?
- When was this information last reviewed and checked out? Are the links on the site all up-to-date?
- Is there out-dated information? Is there a news section? If so – is it current and recent?
- Are the sources of information clearly indicated? Can the accuracy of the information be verified?
- Is the content of this information source reproduced from other sites or published elsewhere on the web? Do they have the legal right to publish this information? This is particularly important if you're thinking of reproducing this information.
- How extensively does this information source link to external sources? Are there many inbound links to this online information coming from other websites? You can find this out by typing "link:" before the web address in the search box of a search engine like Google.

## 3. Is the site easy to access and simple to use?

- Is the text spaced out and easy to read on the screen? Alternatively, is it easy to download a printable version of the information?
- Can you find what you need easily? Is the information source well designed? Is it easy to navigate around the site? For instance, does it have good search and tagging functionality?
- Does the information source have a site map or other navigational tools that clearly display how the content on the website is set out at a glance?
- Is the design, language and content tailored to the needs of young people?



Remember the basic rules that apply to information offline, are equally important online:

- find out who you're dealing with
- think about their motives for producing the information
- always double check and compare the information you find
- don't be paranoid, but stay reasonably critical
- if in any doubt – leave the information to one side or redouble efforts to check its veracity

### INFORMATION QUALITY IS A SAFETY ISSUE

Unfortunately, as well as low quality information there are other websites that are designed with the intention of misinforming users. There are hoaxes, parody sites (e.g. fake websites imitating the design of better known sites), spoofs and also scams aiming to cheat users on the web by collecting identity or credit card details.



A very good site called Internet Detective explains how to evaluate information in a practical and youth friendly way. It also shows examples of hoaxes and spoofs, and provides further links to websites created to expose fake sites: [www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective](http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective)



## In Practice

### A PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION TO FINDING WHAT YOU NEED ONLINE

Although on the surface Google's search engine appears simple, there are lots of built-in features which are not immediately obvious. Searching the web is fundamental now in youth information work. Let's take a look at how you can get the most out of using an online search engine like Google.

#### SEARCHING WITH GOOGLE

To find information on a topic in Google, as with other search engines, it's important to be clear what exactly you are looking for. If you can, a limited number of well chosen keywords can make all the difference to the results you get.

For example, sticking to generic terms like "housing" will be unlikely to find specific information sources if you're looking for very particular information, such as, what apartments are available to rent in Luxembourg.

Searching for [youth information Rotterdam](#) will bring up the local youth information centre in Rotterdam in the first 10 links, while [where do I find the local youth information centre in Rotterdam?](#) will not.

#### TOP TIPS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR SEARCH RESULTS IN GOOGLE

- "European Youth Information And Counselling Agency" will search for sites containing that exact phrase, while [European Youth Information And Counselling Agency](#) will find sites with those words but not necessarily in that complete phrase.
- [Youth information site: www.eryica.org](#) will only search within the domain [www.eryica.org](#) for the term youth information. [youth information site: fr](#) will restrict search results to those domains ending in .fr (French sites). This is useful particularly where a website's own search facility is poor or non-existent.
- Using the minus sign allows you to exclude certain words from the search results. [Youth Information -sex -drugs -"rock and roll"](#) will produce an overview of youth information work whilst leaving all the fun out of it.
- [Holiday Paris OR London](#) produces results for both Paris or London useful for someone looking for tourist information in either city.
- If you want to search for a word and its synonyms or related words, using the tilde sign, e.g. [~money](#) will also include terms like gold, financial and currency.
- [Link: www.eryica.org](#) produces search results for all those sites which link to the domain or web page you include. This is really useful if you're interested in checking the reputation of a particular website.
- [Related: www.eryica.org](#) produces a clean list of domains which Google assumes are similar or closely linked in some way due to how they mutually link to each other. Choosing well known sites in a particular field or issue of youth information, can be a really useful way of establishing quickly key information sources in the same field.

Getting acquainted with some of the many search functions on Google can be a great investment in time, improving the speed and quality of the search results you get when looking for information on the web. [www.google.com/support/websearch](http://www.google.com/support/websearch)



## FOLLOW THE PEOPLE, THEY'LL LEAD YOU TO THE INFORMATION

So what is social searching? The power of information on the web is that it's produced by people. Follow the people, not just the keywords, and you could find much better quality information. For example, rather than searching Wikipedia by typing in words, check who the authors are that you respect and find interesting, then check out what other articles they've written.

Very often on Wikipedia, as with other communities on the web, identifying the leaders or people with whom you share common interests can often point you in the right direction. All kinds of social media work on this principle where you don't just follow topics or keywords, you follow people. Flickr does it with photos, Twitter does it with mini updates or posts, Delicious does it with social bookmarks. By following people who share your interests, you don't have to go looking for the information you need, instead it comes to you.

If search engines know more about who you're connected to- the better search engine developers think they will be able to serve you search results you're interested in. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, calls this the social graph. The social graph is a way of mapping your links to the people you're connected to on different social networks like Twitter and Facebook.



Understanding who you're linked to and the online communities you're a part of, can help you find the information you need. First, you can use your links to ask people directly for the information you're looking for. In addition, websites are now increasingly using the information about who you're connected to, to better understand your personal context and what information you might be looking for.

An example of the social graph in action is the way Facebook filters updates in your News Feed under the tab 'Top news'. Facebook quite often knows the kind of relationship you have with the people in your network and it knows how often you interact with them (post on their wall, send a message, etc). So they think they can make a pretty good guess that status updates from your spouse or parents, or from a friend you message with constantly should be ranked higher in your 'Top news' feed than others.

Facebook calls this "EdgeRank". They believe that by keeping status updates in your News Feed from people you have a stronger connection with or the most popular posts (most 'likes' and comments), they think that they stand a better chance of engaging you.

## THE NEXT STEPS FOR SOCIAL SEARCH

One of the latest content areas to expand in this field are question and answer websites information that allows users to search/follow content both by topic or by person. Two interesting examples of this trend are Aardvark and Quora because they use contrasting user models. Aardvark aims at creating an intimate experience by simplifying the browsing experience and aiming to find people you know who can respond to your questions.

On Aardvark you find answers by asking your own questions-answers are prompted by contacting people from your extended social network until someone responds. Quora goes the other way offering a rich browsing experience and encourages users to follow the responses to questions that interest you, by pushing out notifications each time a question gets a response.

As search gets more social, so youth information workers need to take more care making sure those without access to large social networks are not left behind in the hunt for information.



## In Training

### WEB SEARCH QUIZ

Preparation time: 4-6 hours

Running time: 1-2 hours

Number of participants: 6-25 people

This activity turns web search into a competitive game. It's a great way of practically demonstrating many of the issues are involved in searching for information online. By setting challenges and picking your quiz questions carefully, it's possible to highlight specific problems with just accepting the first result you might find or failing to double check the information.

#### Learning Objectives

- To understand the criteria of quality information online and how to find it

#### Learning Outcomes

- To understand reliable search techniques to find information online
- To be able to assess the accuracy and reliability of the information found online

#### Delivery Methods

- Preparation - the facilitator needs to prepare a number of questions for the quiz. The most appropriate questions are those that require the participants to run web searches to find the answers
- Participants are organised in groups. Each group picks a name. As the quiz progresses, groups are scored
- Each round is won by the group who is first to answer the quiz question correctly. Groups only have one chance to answer the question each round
- The winning group is the one with the most points at the end of the quiz
- The facilitator should explain the thinking behind each question and the reason for the answer at the end of each round

#### What you will need

- Access to internet-enabled computers. Each group of participants should have access to a computer
- A bell or something to sound each time a group has an answer ready they think is correct



### FURTHER LINKS FOR UNIT 3: SEARCHING FOR QUALITY INFORMATION

More search help : Google search basics - Web Search Help  
[www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?answer=136861](http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?answer=136861)

Information Quality Resources  
[informationqualityresources.blogspot.com](http://informationqualityresources.blogspot.com)

Evaluating Web Sites: Criteria and Tools | olinuris.library.cornell.edu  
[www.olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webeval.html](http://www.olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webeval.html)

Criteria for evaluation of Internet Information Resources  
[www2.vuw.ac.nz/staff/alastair\\_smith/evaln/index.htm](http://www2.vuw.ac.nz/staff/alastair_smith/evaln/index.htm)

Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply- Questions to Ask  
[www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html)

Presidential Proclamation National Information Literacy Awareness Month | The White House  
[www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Presidential-Proclamation-National-Information-Literacy-Awareness-Month](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-National-Information-Literacy-Awareness-Month)

Internet Detective - safe online research tool - information quality  
[www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective](http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective)

CILIP | Policy and advocacy - Information literacy: the skills  
[www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/learning/information-literacy/Pages/skills.aspx](http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/learning/information-literacy/Pages/skills.aspx)

Trust Online: Young Adults- Evaluation of Web Content  
[ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/636/423](http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/636/423)

Information Quality- is the truth out there  
[www.ils.unc.edu/~fents/310/](http://www.ils.unc.edu/~fents/310/)

Finding Quality Information On the World Wide Web  
[www.iona.edu/faculty/afranco/iima/webliog.htm](http://www.iona.edu/faculty/afranco/iima/webliog.htm)

The development of children's web searching skills - a non-linear model  
[informationr.net/ir/11-1/paper240.html](http://informationr.net/ir/11-1/paper240.html)

Evaluating online information  
[ilrb.cf.ac.uk/movies/flash/3Info\\_research.html](http://ilrb.cf.ac.uk/movies/flash/3Info_research.html)

UCLA Library | College Library | Research Help | How-to Guides  
[www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/11605\\_12008.cfm](http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/11605_12008.cfm)

Evaluating Quality on the Net  
[www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html](http://www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html)



## creating quality information

The web has evolved over the years into a social space where people meet, discuss and share. As a result, the web's not just a place to find information, but also to create and distribute it. This more social web presents new opportunities for youth information services to create and distribute information designed to suit the needs of the young people they work with.





## Introduction

Helping you find information is just the half of it. The potential of the web is in how it enables youth information workers and young people alike, to produce and share information. However, it is one thing to be able to create quality information, quite another to adapt it successfully for the web.

With the expansion of this more social web, we have new ways to publish and distribute information. But it comes with a number of challenges:

- Producing clear information in a web-friendly format
- Making the information we produce findable on the web
- Using our connections and contacts to improve the reach of the information
- Involving young people more in the way we offer information services

Exploring these challenges of using the web more to produce and deliver youth information services can lead to you rethinking the way you work. Building the web more into your work can start in small ways. As you engage more with the different challenges the web may present, it can be a really empowering process getting you to ask and discuss some often pretty fundamental questions about the nature of youth information. Using the web more can get you thinking more about the kinds of information you offer, the organisations you partner or work with, and who the young people are that use your services.

Keywords: [plagiarism](#), [creative commons](#), [copyright](#), [usability](#), [personalisation](#), [RSS](#), [web 2.0](#), [open source](#), [search engine optimisation](#), [e-learning](#), [keywords](#)



## In Context

### CREATING QUALITY YOUTH INFORMATION ONLINE

Jakob Nielsen is a leading thinker in how to make the web ‘usable’. He began running experiments about usability on the web in the mid-1990s, just as people started writing more for the web. When it comes to communicating specific information, Nielsen found that the credibility of those publishing the information is crucial. He suggested that users scan the web rather than read it, picking out the words and phrases that interest them. For example, he found that 79 percent of the users he tested “always scanned any new page they came across”, while only 16 percent read every word.

Nielsen’s insight was to recognise that as users browse on the web, they often make the decision about what information to read or not before they fully understand the credibility of information’s author or publisher. As a result, information that’s presented in a credible format stands a much better chance of being read. For Nielsen this credibility can be improved through such things as high-quality images, lots of links to external websites and good concise writing.

To make text on a page scannable Nielsen suggested the following:

- highlighted keywords (hypertext links serve as one form of highlighting; using bold, underlining and colour are others)
- meaningful sub-headings (not “clever” ones)



- bulleted lists
- one idea per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first few words in the paragraph)
- the inverted pyramid style, starting with the conclusion
- half the word count (or less) than conventional writing

[Source: Jakob Nielsen, “How Users Read on the Web”, Alertbox, 1st October 1997]

Nielsen’s notion of credibility is as crucial on the web today for youth information services as it was when he first ran his usability experiments over a decade ago. In December 2009, ERYICA adopted its “Principles for Online Youth Information” which built on the broader principles established in the European Youth Information Charter in 2004. These principles seek to establish what makes a real difference to the quality of youth information online. [Source: [www.eryica.org/en/content/principles-online-youth-information](http://www.eryica.org/en/content/principles-online-youth-information)]

#### HOW HAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WEB AFFECTED HOW WE PRODUCE YOUTH INFORMATION?

In the mid 1990s, many youth information workers across Europe wondered whether the internet would be a passing trend. This has turned out not to be the case and youth information continues to be transformed by how the web is developing.

An early impact on youth information was how workers began to use the internet as a research tool. This was followed by the growing expectation on the part of young people for their local information centre to have some kind of presence on the web. There has also been the added pressure for youth information centres to have a website they could show to funders, the media and supporters.

Today, increasingly a youth information centre’s users will expect more than just a website that lists opening times and posts pictures of what the centre looks like on the inside. Creating quality information has become as much about creating a web presence and an online network, as it has about simply publishing information on a youth information centre’s website.



Words like ‘interaction’, ‘social networks’ and ‘Web 2.0’ are often referred to in online youth information. The term “online youth work” is starting to be recognized as a form of youth work in its own right. In countries such as Finland there are specialised publications, training and funding structures for online youth work already in development.

Youth information centres are learning to use the internet as an integrated part of their services and information channels for young people. Nevertheless, there’s often still room for improvement in how to use the existing online tools.

#### SHIFT FROM WEB 1.0 TO WEB 2.0 IN YOUTH INFORMATION

Web 2.0 has become a term that sums up a second wave of development in the technology that powers the web. In part, it’s a term for how easy it is for users to contribute, adapt and modify content on the web sites they use.

This development has opened up greater possibilities for information producers to get feedback (e.g. commenting through forums) from users, to involve users in how they organise their information (e.g.

through tagging) and help share the information with others (e.g. through blogging). An example is Young Scot Extra in the UK who have used the Facebook social plugin which allows users to comment on the Young Scot articles when logged in to Facebook. Young people commenting can share the article and their thoughts with the friends, which helps raise awareness of this youth information.

That said, in youth information there are still situations where it may be more appropriate to publish in a Web 1.0 format. Youth information providers may decide to maintain high levels of editorial control over certain information they publish to ensure it is safe and accurate. Commenting on information content that may be controversial or sensitive may be better managed in a separate forum. Inviting users in the discussion of personal and sensitive issues responsibly, requires youth information providers to make an assessment about whether they have the resources to ensure they can maintain a safe and supportive environment.

#### HOW TO BE FOUND ON THE WEB

Creating a good website is just the beginning. It's important to work on making sure your site can be found by those who need it. We know that many young people go to the information they find after typing a few keywords into Google. This means a big part of being found on the web is working to ensure your content is ranked as highly as possible by Google and other search engines. This is often referred to as search engine optimisation - ensuring search engines can index your information efficiently.

Exactly how you achieve a high ranking on search results is secret and changing all the time. If it was transparent, it would be open to abuse. However, there are certain basic steps a youth information centre can take to make their content more search engine friendly:

- think about what people are going to type into a search engine to find your website and then make sure those keywords appear in your content. For example, it might be the name of the project, the organisation or the place you're based in. It could be keywords young people use to describe the issues your information mentions. You can get more information about the keywords visitors to your website are using with online measurement tools like "Nielsen Netratings" or "Google Analytics".
- Use title tags on your website. The title tag is the first line that shows up in Google search results. Make sure this title tag explains what the content is about. This information can be the difference between whether a young person clicks on the link to your website or not.
- Use the description tag - the second line that shows up in search results. This description tag can be used to enter in more detail about what your website or the particular web page is about. Don't worry too much about the keywords tag.
- Other websites linking to you is an important way of improving the visibility of your site within Google because of the way PageRank works:

"Google uses many factors in ranking. Of these, the PageRank algorithm might be the best known. PageRank evaluates two things: how many links there are to a web page from other pages, and the quality of the linking sites. With PageRank, five or six high-quality links from websites such as [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) and [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) would be valued much more highly than twice as many links from less reputable or established sites." [Source: [www.google.com/librariancenter/articles/0512\\_01.html](http://www.google.com/librariancenter/articles/0512_01.html)]



- One way to improve the amount of links that point to your content is to get involved in the conversation taking place on the web about the kind of information you're creating. You could start blogging about your work and link to other places you value highly. Offer tips posting links by micro-blogging or joining in on forums relevant to the issues you're addressing. Once you're part of these conversations it becomes easier to flag up links to your site in a way that's relevant.
- The domain name of your site can improve your visibility on Google-choosing keywords, using the name of your service or organisation can help give you a head start. For example, by partnering with an organisation that owned the domain ([www.selfharm.org.uk](http://www.selfharm.org.uk)) YouthNet managed to ensure that content relating to self harm on TheSite.org was ranked highly in Google in the UK.
- Google refreshes its entire index usually every month, and it's getting quicker at finding new content. There may be some delay though between you posting content and it appearing in Google search results. If your content is time sensitive-the quickest way to disseminate your website and make it findable is by using social networking sites. You can push your content updates out to your followers and supporters in the moment.
- You can speed things up and make it easier for Google to find content on your site by adding a URL manually ([www.google.com/addurl/](http://www.google.com/addurl/)) or you can submit an entire site map to Google ([www.google.com/webmasters](http://www.google.com/webmasters)) that gives Google a text list of all the URLs on your site.
- Create dedicated landing-pages for special topics or issues, e.g. [www.eryica.org/training](http://www.eryica.org/training). Give these pages a clear and meaningful name and try to ensure the text on the page includes the keywords you've identified young people type in when searching on the web.

In general, it's important to understand that in the age of web information overload, youth information services have greater responsibility to make their content findable. This means doing what you can to ensure young people are able to find your information as quickly and easily as possible. For more information about making your website more findable to Google have a look at: [www.google.com/intl/en/webmasters/](http://www.google.com/intl/en/webmasters/)

### SHARING IS QUEEN

Information and advice can be shared across networks and communities on the web rapidly and at little cost. Collaboration between communities with a common interest can be one way to create information with less financial resources.

Eryica has developed its own community of youth information workers across Europe called Sheryica ([sheryica.org](http://sheryica.org)) where news and information can be shared. Open source software has increasingly gained in popularity because it's often more customisable and greater value. High profile products like Mozilla Firefox (web browser), Apache (web server) and Android (mobile operating system) are demonstrating that open source software is a force to be reckoned with. The open source movement has encouraged greater collaboration and participation, and at the same time made all sorts of software accessible to smaller scale information creators such as youth information centres.

A key consideration for any producer of youth information online must now be: how shareable is the information on my site? There are a number of steps you can take to improve how easily young people can share your information and content:



- You can decide to produce content which is licensed under creative commons. This clarifies the terms and conditions under which users can share your content. Some social media sites such as Flickr allow users to attach licenses to content at the click of a button.
- You can add sharing buttons to your content pages, such as ‘email this to a friend’, ‘add to Delicious’, ‘Digg this’, ‘add to Facebook’, ‘add to Twitter’, etc.
- Clearly display links to the social networks your organisation or service is participating in so that visitors to your site can follow you after their visit. They’re then more likely to share your content without having to come back and visit. For example, when you post content or links to a Facebook fan page, young people following you on Facebook ‘liking’ or commenting on your updates will be sharing links to your content with their friends, extending your potential reach.
- If you have a blog or produce news content, it is worth creating an RSS feed or email newsletter so that young people interested can receive updates without having to come back to visit your site.
- You can build partnerships with different organisations or sites which young people use, and share content with them as part of a formal agreement.

You can also develop an online community on your own website which allows you to offer more personalised support. This can help you refine how you share your information services with the young people you work with. At its most sophisticated, personalisation can mean users can select how content is organised and formatted on a web page. A very advanced example of this (a user friendly drag and drop system) is the BBC homepage: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

Personalisation can be technically complicated to achieve, so one approach can be to use products that allow users to customise the look of their website: such as Drupal, Ning or Wordpress.

### Copying and plagiarism

Copying information in the past used to be either complicated or tiresome or both. Text, images and anything that is digitized can now be duplicated at the touch of a button. It’s the “copy paste” phenomenon.



This situation has legal and ethical implications, such as infringing copyright or getting involved in plagiarism. It is important to make sure you have permission to reproduce images and text before reusing. Using creative commons licensed content helps clarify whether you can share, remix and reuse.

This new ability to copy digitized media is also influencing how cultural work and artistic creations are produced. This has created a vast discussion within formal education, but it’s also relevant to youth information. Not just because of the teaching and guiding role youth information workers may have, but also because of how copyrights affect the way we process information, acknowledge our sources and protect our own work.

Due to the degree of concern within formal education institutions about plagiarism and copyright, there is already a lot of material that has been produced. Although this work is aimed primarily at students and their parents it can often be adapted for issues in youth information.



## In Practice

Some of the best known online social networks at the moment are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Some social networks are more specialised, for instance LinkedIn is mainly designed to be used for professional reasons. Other social networks are designed for more general use. Social networks also vary within different cultures and groups within societies. In some countries, Facebook's dominance is challenged by social networks like Netlog in Belgium, Hyves in the Netherlands, VZnet Netzwerke in Germany or Tuenti in Spain.

There's a more comprehensive list of social networks on Wikipedia:  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_social\\_networking\\_websites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites)

Social networks have become a social environment where young people play out an increasing part of their social lives. This means youth information workers should not just see social networks as a tool, but also as a place:

“Social media in youth information work could be seen as outreach on the internet. We go with our services to the places where young people are.” - Mika Pietilä, National Coordinator of Youth Information in Finland on [sheryica.org](http://sheryica.org).

Youth information services are beginning to better understand how to be present through social media in the same way as they are with other social environments. In the past, there has often been a distinction made between online as virtual life, and offline environments – like a park, a shopping centre or a youth club- as real life. More and more it is becoming apparent that young people merge the two.

In other words, online communities are seen by many young people as just as much a part of their real life, as the time they spend in offline social environments. If we want our youth information services to reach out to these young people, we need to think through the following:

- Better understand where young people are present online. How can we make our information services more accessible? Different online communities appeal to different age groups and different interests. To make the connection with these communities of young people, we need first to understand the community we're working with. For example, in Austria and Belgium on Netlog, the younger age group was mainly around 14. Some youth centres have created a presence on there, although currently increasingly this target group of young people are moving to Facebook.
- Before performing online outreach, we need to think carefully about whether the format and content of our information services is appropriate to the online community we're seeking to reach. For example, short teasers or summaries that are entertaining and include links to more detailed content, are often easier to share in online communities like Facebook or in newsletters we email out.
- Online community management can take up a lot of time and effort. Make sure you have the resources to cope with what may be required should any community you create get a lot of attention and interest. Be clear about who you are and who you work for. Establish clear expectations with your users by being explicit about how often you'll be able to respond to questions or comments. Reading through posts, answering and establishing a certain culture or netiquette, on any online community you manage is fundamentally your responsibility.



- When you use a commercial website to provide youth information, you need to get acquainted with their terms of service. The content you create and publish on a commercial website may, at least in part, belong to the website you publish it on. You could risk of losing that content if, for example, the site decides to close. It is wise to think through privacy issues that might arise and how you propose to manage your users' privacy issues. Here are two examples of different terms of service with different commercial websites: Facebook [www.facebook.com/facebook](http://www.facebook.com/facebook) or YouTube [www.youtube.com/t/about](http://www.youtube.com/t/about)
- Think carefully about what you want to use your social networking presence for. For example, Young Scot uses their presence of Facebook for communication and highlighting their existing services.
- Plan out your online activity as much as possible to keep your presence up to date. Look at key dates, events, periods of the year and plan out what you aim to highlight during these times. For example: European Youth Information Day, World Aids Day, exam periods in schools, etc.

#### THE USE OF AUDIO AND VIDEO IN YOUTH INFORMATION

With all the new possibilities that web 2.0 has given us, the way we communicate on the internet has moved increasingly away from a reliance on text to multimedia. Pictures and short movies are being used to communicate information messages more than ever before. For example, instruction manuals that used to be produced as printable documents, are more often short "how to" videos. E-learning is another development where you may be able to see the computer screen of the person training you. The web is being used to bring the learner and their tutor together. Pictures and movies are shared all the time on social media and we keep in contact by Skype or MSN talking to each other via a web cam.

For youth information, this move from text presents new opportunities and challenges. What happens if young people don't come to our centres anymore, but prefer to talk to us sitting behind their screen? Some examples that illustrate this clearly and show the potential of video are: "[the machine is us/ing us](#)" and "[the internet has a face](#)" both from Dr. Michael Wesch, Kansas University, [mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/](http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/)



Some examples of how to use multimedia and make the move away from text include:

- Encourage the young people you work with to create small movies about an issue or topic that concern them.
- Record a piece of audio to explain or discuss an issue instead of writing about it.
- Use existing videos to illustrate topics in a more fun and entertaining way (attention to copyrights!).
- Create an online educational game about a certain topic:
  - A project funded as part of the EU YOUTH programme (2007) dealt with the use of e-games for youth work. It has a special section for [Youth Information](#).
  - An educational game about obesity called "The Obs" has been developed for the Wellcome Trust by the Centre for Science Education at Sheffield Hallam University (2005) [www.wellcome.ac.uk/obs/activity.htm](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/obs/activity.htm)

All these formats have benefits not only for making information more accessible for young people who do not want to or are not able to read, but are usually also fun to produce. New formats can give young people a tool to express themselves about an issue that they are passionate about in a different kind of way. Once produced images, audio or video can be shared on the web to generate further discussion and debate.

## CROWD SOURCING: OR THE WIKIPEDIA APPROACH TO INFORMATION QUALITY

Crowd sourcing is using the combined knowledge of a large group of people to produce information. The most well known example is Wikipedia, which was criticized a lot when it started because of a perceived lack of standards in information inaccuracy. In a high profile story, Wikipedia was shown to be just as reliable, if not better, than the prestigious Encyclopedia Britannica. Today, there is better understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of crowdsourced information such as Wikipedia.

Crowd sourcing can potentially increase the participation of young people in youth information work. Wikis can provoke heated and passionate discussions within the youth information field, mainly turning on the accuracy of the information, the allocation of resources and the responsibility for young people who act on the published product.

Whether we create information directly via a wiki, youth information workers could use the example of Wikipedia to explain many of the issues in producing and publishing information online. As danah boyd writes in her piece called “information access in a networked world”, understanding the way in which Wikipedia works and produces information, can help you better understand the issues with online information :

- Understand how the information has been put together - Wikipedia can help with this because it gives you access to how information is produced in the edit history and discussion pages
- Be able to interpret the information (extract knowledge) - Wikipedia challenges writers to provide sources for their information - readers should be able to check sources - if no sources are given they can draw their own conclusions
- Use critical thinking to question what may be presented as true - Wikipedia stimulates discussion about the accuracy of information that may be presented in a certain way online
- Assess the facts for contradictions or gaps - Wikipedia encourages readers to point out the gaps and contradictions when and where they spot them
- Be able to contribute and share information publicly - Wikipedia encourages users of the web to get involved in the challenge of creating publicly accessible sources of information - as a result young people can get a better idea of what’s involved in providing youth information



## SHARING AND PRODUCING INFORMATION

### Do's

- Always give credit if you are using someone else's ideas/work
- Acknowledge all the online sources you have used by adding clear references
- Be aware that sometimes naming the source, e.g. when reproducing something on your website is not enough – some experts/artists/writers forbid the reproduction of their work or only allow it under certain circumstances or with payment
- Keep track of who wrote the information, where and when you found it when doing research, this will help you when you come to write your references
- Be aware that you yourself have copyrights when producing an original work (e.g. a brochure on a certain topic) and create clear rules within your organisation how you wish to deal with it (e.g. protect it under a creative commons license)

### Don'ts

- Simply cut and paste information from the internet into your work
- Use pictures, graphics, videos and other material found on the web to enrich your own website without checking and respecting the copyrights
- Use another person's work and hand it in as your own work





## In Training

### Youth Information Do-it-yourself: Getting the very best information

Preparation time: 2-4 hours

Running time: 1-2 hours

Number of participants: 6-25 people

This activity gets young people thinking about what makes information good quality and how to explain that to others. In particular, this activity focuses on how to present content on the web. It's good to start the activity by choosing an example you think demonstrates good and effective presentation online and one that shows poor presentation skills.

#### Learning Objectives

- To better understand what quality information is and how it can be accessed online

#### Learning Outcomes

- To be able to identify what the key basic criteria are for quality information online
- To be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of what the issues are in assessing and evaluating information online
- To be able to explain to peers how to check the quality of information found online

#### Delivery Methods

- Introduction: trainer talks about quality information and how people can access it online
- The group of participants see one example of text which is badly adapted to the web. They then see another example of text which is much better suited to the web
- For the discussion part of the activity, the participants are divided up into small groups where they can discuss the issues in identifying quality information on the web
- The group must produce a text together which highlights the key tips and advice they would like to share with their peers. These recommendations must tackle the problems faced by young people when trying to assess the quality of information they find on the web.
- The small groups come back together and each group then presents their text to the main group
- The trainer or facilitator sums up the key points of the discussion

#### What you will need

- Laptops or access to computers for each group- so they can quickly and easily share their text with the rest of the group for their presentation
- Projector to show the presentations
- Alternatively, if there is no projector, groups can present their work on flip chart paper
- You might need a memory stick to gather the text documents written by each of the groups to be able to present them on the projector



#### FURTHER LINKS FOR UNIT 4: CREATING QUALITY INFORMATION

Reading on the Web (Alertbox) - Jakob Nielsen - 1997  
[www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html)

Quora  
[www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)

Social graph - Wikipedia  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_graph](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_graph)

Researching with Wikipedia  
[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching\\_with\\_Wikipedia](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching_with_Wikipedia)

YouTube - Et Plagieringseventyr (A Plagiarism Carol) - A video from Norway about plagiarism (English subtitles)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwbw9KF-ACY&sns=em](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwbw9KF-ACY&sns=em)

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation guide for parents on avoiding plagiarism  
[www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2009-12-24-plagiarism-parents.pdf](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2009-12-24-plagiarism-parents.pdf)

Creative Commons  
[creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)

YouTube - Google's Matt Cutts - How to Get Better Visibility on Google  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GK0aQrCDEo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GK0aQrCDEo)

EdgeRank: The Secret Sauce That Makes Facebook's News Feed Tick  
[techcrunch.com/2010/04/22/facebook-edgerank](http://techcrunch.com/2010/04/22/facebook-edgerank)

Information Access in a Networked World - danah boyd  
[www.danah.org/papers/talks/Pearson2007.html](http://www.danah.org/papers/talks/Pearson2007.html)

Youth Information and Counselling - 2011- Mika Pietila and Jaana Fedotoff  
(not published)



## opportunities and risks

The starting point of web safety strategy in youth information is to ensure young people know how to access quality information online. Beyond this, a crucial aspect of youth information is to engage fully in a balanced discussion about the opportunities and risks that digital technology represents for young people.





## Introduction

### WHAT OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS DOES THE WEB PRESENT?

It's the role of youth information workers to help facilitate young people's access to quality information, and if possible, create and manage safe spaces online that are designed to address the information needs of the young people they work with.

The digital era brings with it incredible opportunities to share information and open up access to new networks of support for young people across Europe. At the same time, there are new risks associated with how young people are using the web.

If youth information workers have a more general online safety strategy that enables young people to use the web more safely, it can reinforce the production and delivery of quality information. The challenge is to provide young people with the skills and experience they need to provide for their own safety and wellbeing online, where they can learn how to balance the risks and opportunities themselves. The broader discussion of online safety ultimately complements the aims we have to empower young people with access to quality information online.

So when we talk about online opportunities and risks, what exactly are we referring to? The first EU Kids Online project (2006-9) funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme, scoped them out as follows:

Online Opportunities	Online Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to global information</li> <li>• Educational resources</li> <li>• Social networking for old/new friends</li> <li>• Entertainment, games and fun</li> <li>• User-generated content creation</li> <li>• Civic or political participation</li> <li>• Privacy for expression of identity</li> <li>• Community involvement/activism</li> <li>• Technological expertise and literacy</li> <li>• Career advancement or employment</li> <li>• Personal/health/sexual advice</li> <li>• Specialist groups and fan forums</li> <li>• Shared experiences with distant others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illegal content</li> <li>• Paedophiles, grooming, strangers</li> <li>• Extreme or sexual violence</li> <li>• Other harmful or offensive content</li> <li>• Racist/hate material/activities</li> <li>• Advertising/commercial persuasion</li> <li>• Misinformation (advice, health)</li> <li>• Exploitation of personal information</li> <li>• Cyberbullying, stalking, harassment</li> <li>• Gambling, financial scams</li> <li>• Self-harm (suicide, anorexia, etc)</li> <li>• Invasions/abuse of privacy</li> <li>• Illegal activities (hacking, downloading)</li> </ul>

The project classified these opportunities and risks in a way that helps us frame this huge topic. Youth information workers can play a crucial role helping to facilitate the way young people think about and understand the risks and opportunities the web presents.

Keywords: [safety](#), [digital citizenship](#), [phishing](#), [grooming](#), [sexting](#), [cyberbullying](#)





## In Context

### Young people's relationship to information on the web

Youth information workers have a serious responsibility and duty of care for the young people they work with. They need to be able to assess the opportunities and risks associated with the information services they offer. Moreover, they need to think through how they can support and train the young people they work with so that they're aware of these opportunities and risks online.

As the web has become more of a social space, so our way of understanding the safety issues has become more sophisticated. Thinking about online safety has developed beyond the rather one dimensional focus on physical safety and the panic about contact risks such as predator danger. Connect Safely, based in the US, sets out what it calls online safety 3.0. It seeks to raise awareness of the range of different issues that may affect a young person's safe experience online.

- Physical safety – freedom from physical harm, e.g. using the web to meet up with people who turn out to cause them physical harm.
- Psychological safety – freedom from cruelty, harassment and mental harm, e.g. being bullied by others, being exposed to disturbing material, etc.
- Reputational and legal safety – freedom from unwanted social, academic, professional, and legal consequences, e.g. being blackmailed, slandered or suffering characterisation.
- Identity, property, and community safety – freedom from theft of identity, property and general attacks against online communities, e.g. criminals collect identity information they can use to impersonate others to steal their money, users may lose security information for a network they are on such as their email account or social network if it is hacked into, etc.

Connect Safely lays down the challenge to start thinking about online safety in terms of how these risks can affect young people's freedom in their digital lives. Instead of thinking negatively, i.e. avoiding risks, it's about helping young people to explore the freedoms available and better understand the consequences of their actions on the web.

The EU Kids Online project's coordinators Leslie Haddon and Sonia Livingstone have suggested that online risks and opportunities can be thought about in the following ways:

**1. Content (young person as recipient of content)** - risks and opportunities may come with the kind of mass communication that takes place on the web. This might include both useful information or problematic material that young people find by browsing.

**Example of content opportunities:** something as simple as a keyword search about an issue can lead to information which might help respond to a legal worry or a relationships problem that's concerning a young person. In a few clicks, the young person can access information and education resources that explain the issues in more detail and point them in the direction of support.

**Example of content risks:** there is a risk that young people affected by an issue such as self harm or eating disorders, come across disturbing images of self harm online by accident. Exposure to these images may trigger uncomfortable or traumatic feelings in the young persons.



**2. Contact (young person as a participant in online contact)** - with the interactive and dynamic nature of the web, there are risks and opportunities associated with the social nature of what happens online where contact can be made with others, particularly peers.

**Example of contact opportunities:** the web offers people the opportunity to find others who share a particular interest or concern and contact them. The benefits of peer support can connect individuals who may have a lot in common, right at the time they need it most. In particular, sensitive issues where the young person may find it difficult to share personal thoughts face to face with those closest to them. Online, they may be able to talk to others who can offer an external view which they can relate to.

**Example of contact risks:** There are a number of clear risks with peer support. Peers who lack training may provide incorrect information or information that is inappropriate and irrelevant. It may lead to unhealthy relationships between peers where the contact may reinforce negative thoughts or behaviours. For example, young people who self harm sharing their thoughts and feelings may make them both vulnerable to starting to self harm again.

**3. Conduct (young person deliberately or intentionally putting others at risk)** - the web enables young people to initiate their own actions that can positively or negatively impact on the lives of other young people.

**Example of conduct opportunities:** the actions of young people online taking the initiative to create groups to campaign or raise awareness of issues they feel passionate about, is an incredibly empowering aspect of the web. It enables young people to express themselves and pass their knowledge and experience on to others.

**Example of conduct risks:** young people may be actors bringing about increased risk to others by producing problematic content: such as uploading, sharing images of self harm or eating disorders on the web or detailing their own personal experience of self harm. Often many young people, find it difficult to distinguish between where healthy self-expression ends and consideration of the needs of others begins.



Below is the grid drawn up by Leslie Haddon and Sonia Livingstone: “A classification of online opportunities and risks for children”.

		Content: Child as recipient	Contact: Child as participant	Conduct: Child as actor
<b>Opportunities</b>	Education learning and digital literacy	Educational resources	Contact with others who share one’s interests	Self-initiated or collaborative learning
	Participation and civic engagement	Global information	Exchange among interest groups	Concrete forms of civic engagement
	Creativity and self-expression	Diversity of resources	Being invited/ inspired to create or participate	User-generated content creation
	Identity and social connection	Advice (personal/ health/ sexual etc)	Social networking, shared experiences with others	Expression of identity
<b>Risks</b>	Commercial	Advertising, spam, sponsorship	Tracking/ harvesting personal information	Gambling, illegal downloads, hacking
	Aggressive	Violent/ gruesome/ hateful content	Being bullied, harassed or stalked	Bullying or harassing another
	Sexual	Pornographic/ harmful/ sexual content	Meeting strangers, being groomed	Creating/ uploading pornographic material
	Values	Racist, biased info/ advice (e.g. drugs)	Self harm, unwelcome persuasion	Providing advice e.g. suicide/ pro-anorexia



[Source: Livingstone, S, and Haddon, L (2009) - EU Kids Online: Final report. LSE, London: EU Kids Online p.10 (EC Safer Internet Plus Programme Deliverable D6.5)]

This form of classification has been designed for the purposes of research, but it’s also useful for developing new forms of good practice in online safety. It helps to demonstrate the different ways the web can have positive or negative impacts on the lives of young people.

It can be helpful to go through the different activities and services your youth information organisation offers online, and think about each one in terms of the risks and opportunities it presents to the young

people you work with as either recipients, participants or actors. This kind of assessment will help you identify areas for discussion with colleagues and encourage you to develop or redevelop your current policies and practices with a view to web safety.

#### MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The degree to which the media influence research and the development of good practice in youth information is a much discussed issue. When online safety issues are covered in the media, the tone often raises our sense of anxiety or worry and tends to emphasise the risks, rather than the opportunities.

When the EU Kids Online project published in 2009 conducted a content analysis of press coverage of young people and the internet in 14 of the 21 EU countries, considerable variation in themes and style of reporting was found. It revealed that in countries where internet use among children and young people was relatively high, the media coverage seemed to play a key role in highlighting safety issues.

In all countries the clear majority of media coverage of young people and the internet was:

“concerned with risks rather than opportunities: nearly two-thirds of all stories (64%) referred to risks, whereas less than a fifth (18%) referred to opportunities”.

The focus of the media tended to focus on either in content risks (mainly pornography) or conduct risks (mainly bullying), with less relative coverage of contact risks. Interestingly though, stories about cyber-bullying and sexual risks had influenced different countries research agenda most. The risks associated with commercialisation and the web for young people, such as advertising and marketing, got relatively little media coverage. It should be noted, that researchers found a lot of variation within this broad trend between different EU countries.

#### RANGE OF RISKS IN EUROPE

The EU Kids Online project found in its comparative analysis of research across Europe that the following risks (directly quoted from the EU Kids Online: Final report) showed the highest level of incidence:

- Giving out personal information was the most common risk. It seemed that around half of online teenagers do this (disclosing personal information is not a risk itself – it’s a behaviour likely to lead to risks).
- Seeing pornography online is the second most common risk at around 4 in 10 teenagers across Europe. This risk is widely regarded with ambivalence by both adults and children, with considerable disagreement over the potential harm involved.
- Seeing violent or hateful content is the third most common risk, experienced by approximately one third of teenagers. As with pornography, the nature or level of violent content encountered is little researched, partly for ethical reasons.
- Being bullied (ie, ‘cyber-bullied) comes fourth, affecting some 1 in 5 or 6 teenagers online, along with receiving unwanted sexual comments.
- Meeting an online contact offline appears the least common though arguably the most dangerous risk. There is a fair degree of consistency in the findings across Europe: around 9% (1 in 11) of online teenagers go to such meetings, rising to 1 in 5 in Poland, Sweden and the Czech Republic. Often these meetings are with teenagers of a similar age.





## In Practice

### ASSESSING ONLINE RISK

We have emphasised the need for a balanced discussion of the opportunities and the risks. So why are we focusing on the risks here? In fact, the accompanying units in this booklet do a really good job of exploring many of the opportunities, for this reason we're going to use the rest of this unit to explore and discuss some of the risks of the web.

### THE RISK OF SEXUAL OFFENDING ONLINE

In the United States, the 2008 report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force (ISTTF) led by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University looked into the safety issues related to sexual predation. It reviewed work in the field of online safety both in Europe and the United States, and took evidence and advice from a range of stakeholders and experts in the field. In terms of their conclusions, they underlined that sexual predation on young people under 18 by adults (a contact risk), both online and offline, did remain a concern. In 2010 Samantha Biegler and danah boyd wrote a draft literature review which serves to update the 2008 literature that was part of the ISTTF report.

They concluded that research found that “cases of sexual predation typically involved post-pubescent youth who were aware that they were meeting an adult male for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity”. They called for more research into the activities of sex offenders on social networking sites and other online communities.

They also noted that young people more frequently reported sexual solicitation of young people under 18 came from other young people under 18. The report said that “these incidents, too, are understudied, underreported to law enforcement, and not part of most conversations about online safety”. The report picked up an apparent overemphasis on contact risks (like sexual predation), combined with a degree of overlooking conduct risks (like young people bullying other young people).

One of the key points to come out of the ISTTF report was the importance of education in digital literacy and digital citizenship. Much of the risky online behaviour faced by and carried out by young people, is often not criminal activity in the first instance and can be dealt with or responded to by people other than law enforcement authorities.

### YOUNG PEOPLE AS ACTORS AND PARTICIPANTS ON THE WEB

The report came back to conduct and content risks. It found that “bullying and harassment, most often by peers, were the most frequent threats that [young people under 18 years old] face, both online and offline”. In terms of receiving or viewing problematic content the report found that although “unwanted exposure to pornography does occur online... those most likely to be exposed are those seeking it out, such as older male [young people under 18 years old]”.

In addition, it called for more research into problematic content that young people create themselves. It seems clear that a broad approach to safety that considers young people as having digital lives, should involve helping young people to understand the risks that behaviour such as bullying, pose to themselves, to others around them and to their communities.



The report found that the risk profile of young people online can vary on account of a range of factors. Not all young people are equally at risk. The ISTTF report found that those who are “most at risk often engage in risky behaviours and have difficulties in other parts of their lives”.

#### TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF SECURITY AND SAFETY

A big part of the discussion of online safety strategy involves the use of technology to keep young people safe and secure. For example, the sound use of anti-virus software, regularly updating software and encouraging the use of secure passwords are all important technical aspects of online safety. But to work, they all depend on what people do. In fact, security issues like ‘phishing’ and other ‘social engineering’ techniques take advantage of how people use the web.

Security policies not focused on safety can often have the unintended consequence of disempowering the very young people it sets out to protect. Youth information organisations whose safety strategy focuses only on technology, such as using web filters or locking down systems to restrict access to websites, can give a false sense of security. These systems are the technical equivalent of the school fence. There are good reasons for putting up a school fence, but particularly as young people grow older the physical barrier is not enough. There comes a point when it’s clearly better to engage the young person and talk through the pros and cons of how they behave. Removing the risk also removes opportunities, and more importantly cuts out the opportunity to have the discussion.

An evaluation of the safe use of information technology by Ofsted, the official body for standards in education in the UK found that online safety was outstanding where schools used ‘managed’ systems. The ‘managed’ systems had “fewer inaccessible sites than ‘locked down’ systems”, as they required “pupils to take responsibility themselves for using new technologies safely”. In contrast, Ofsted found that schools with ‘locked down’ systems were less effective as they left pupils more vulnerable. These pupils were found to be less able to stay safe in situations outside the school’s authority where they had to use systems that weren’t locked down.

#### SOCIAL ASPECTS OF SECURITY AND SAFETY

A safe online information strategy should consider how it can improve the information literacy of the young people it seeks to reach and support. Literacy has focused on making young people comfortable and competent with traditional media. It’s also been about helping to develop critical thinking about sources and content. Now online digital media is more interactive, and information literacy includes learning how to share, upload and create your own content. In the same way, a digital lives approach extends a young person’s learning to improving respect for self, others and the wider community.

A safe online information strategy that focuses primarily on getting the technology right is difficult to achieve because the technology itself is constantly changing. The answer is to consider online safety more broadly and think beyond technological solutions to risk. For example, it is not a case of simply relying on installing anti-virus software on the network. Instead, a more effective strategy to stay virus free is to teach users of the network how to avoid getting viruses in the first place, and reinforce this by installing anti-virus software.





## In Training

### WALKTHROUGH GALLERY: ME AND THE INTERNET

Preparation time: 2-4 hours

Running time: 1-2 hours

Number of participants: 6-25 people

This activity is particularly good for larger groups giving them the space to express both visually and verbally their thoughts and feelings about how the web has affected them. Participants can talk about their own experiences or talk about the experiences of people they know. It's a chance to share about the kinds of opportunities and risks they feel the web presents young people generally.

#### Learning Objectives

- To raise awareness and understanding about the feelings and concerns regarding opportunities and risks online

#### Learning Outcomes

- To be able to identify both opportunities and risks associated with online behaviour
- To be able to articulate peers feelings and concerns about different types of online behaviour
- To be able to conduct a discussion with peers about the opportunities and risks associated with different types of online behaviour

#### Delivery Methods

- The trainer introduces the topic of opportunities and risks associated with the internet. The participants are asked to think about how using the web can sometimes be risky but also present opportunities
- Participants are divided into separate groups.
- Trainer invites participants to share their experiences by first thinking through what some of the opportunities and risks are.
- Trainer invites participants to write down or draw what some of the opportunities and risks are that they have discussed on a big piece of paper covering their table. It is their chance to create a real work of art that will later form part of the 'walkthrough gallery'.
- After 30 mins the groups are mixed up. One person from each group must stay in the group where they are. Everyone else must find a new group to be in. Everyone must be in a new group that does not include anyone from their original group.
- The first round begins with the person from each of the groups who has not moved to a new group explaining to their new group members, what their discussion about risks and opportunities included. They must explain the drawings and comments on the paper their original group worked on. People in the group can write questions down on a piece of paper beneath the work of art about any aspect of it they are unsure about or don't understand. Once the speaker has finished their explanation, they can move on to try and answer the questions.
- For the second of the 'walkthrough gallery' each group should move clockwise to the work of art created by the next group. It is then the turn of the member of the new group that helped to create the work of art to speak up and explain the issues that their discussion covered.

#### What you will need

- Flipchart paper for each group to draw and scribble on to create a work of art about risks and opportunities on the web
- Colouring pens and crayons to draw and colour in the work of art
- Something to stick up or display the paper in the gallery around the room
- Clock to keep time so that each group moves round when they can



## FURTHER LINKS FOR UNIT 5: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

European Youth Information Charter (PDF)

[www.eryica.org/en/content/european-youth-information-charter](http://www.eryica.org/en/content/european-youth-information-charter)

All Reports - EU Kids Online - Research - Department of Media and Communications

[www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/All%20Reports.aspx](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/All%20Reports.aspx)

Netsmartz

[www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx](http://www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx)

WiredSafety: the world's largest Internet safety, help and education resource

[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)

danah boyd | apophenia » Risky Behaviors and Online Safety: A 2010 Literature Review

[www.zephorias.org/thoughts/archives/2010/06/24/risky-behaviors-and-online-safety-a-2010-literature-review.html](http://www.zephorias.org/thoughts/archives/2010/06/24/risky-behaviors-and-online-safety-a-2010-literature-review.html)

Enhancing Child Safety- Online Technologies: Final report of the Internet Safety Technical Taskforce: To the Multi-State Working Group on Social Networking of State Attorneys General of the United States

[cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/ISTTF\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/ISTTF_Final_Report.pdf)

The safe use of new technologies - Ofsted (UK) - 2009

[www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/The-safe-use-of-new-technologies](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/The-safe-use-of-new-technologies)

Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview)



## online communities

The web has become a key way in which young people meet and discuss the issues that concern them-it's become social. This more social web is the basis for new kinds of communities online. As youth information workers, our services can often benefit from better understanding how these communities shape the way in which young people access support and information.





## Introduction

One of the biggest shifts that is taking place on the web is the idea that online spaces are public and can be places where we socialise. Often referred to as online communities, these social spaces on the web are often sources of support for young people where they can share their thoughts and feelings, from the most intimate to the most controversial. These communities bring together young people with common interests, passions or concerns that might otherwise not have had the chance to get to know each other.

At the same time, these communities can be places where young people are challenged to question their own preconceptions about the world. Online communities despite being communities of interest are often places of great diversity. They bring young people into contact with those who may hold opinions or have had experiences which are incredibly different to their own.

For youth information workers interested in thinking through how they reach young people in need, understanding how young people are active on online communities is really important. Getting to know how young people discuss online the kinds of issues you tackle with your services, can help you better understand the needs of the young people you work with.

Engaging with online communities can also help raise awareness about your work. You could foster or develop online communities of your own, alongside your services, where young people can get more of a chance to directly feedback on the work you do or even help deliver these services themselves as volunteers.

### HOW DOES WEB TECHNOLOGY CHANGE THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS?

When we communicate face to face with someone, we don't depend on any piece of technology. If, on the other hand, we pick up the phone and call a friend, our communication is suddenly dependent on the technology we use. For example, telephones are great for talking at any time with people who are based many hundreds of kilometres away. However, the phone is not so good at getting across our facial expressions or body language.

It's the same thing when we communicate by instant messenger, by email or by posting on a forum or social network. These technologies come with opportunities to communicate in ways we couldn't have done as easily, if at all before they existed. But, at the same time each new piece of technology comes with new limitations that we often learn only through experience. For example, you don't really understand the potential to be embarrassed by email, until you've sent your parents an email by mistake which you meant to send to your girlfriend or boyfriend.

Just how the web is affecting how we relate socially to one another, is something that is only recently becoming obvious. You don't understand the possibilities of posting a video on YouTube until you find out more about the story of Matt Harding dancing his way round the world. It is harder to understand the risks of creating a video of yourself impersonating a Star Wars character, once it is posted to the web. As young people are having to navigate these emerging opportunities and risks, one thing that can help them do this is their sense of belonging to online communities of other young people facing the same challenges.



The point is that using the web doesn't come with a simple rulebook about what's socially acceptable behaviour and what's not. This is still to be worked out. Online communities are discovering and agreeing these rules and norms one community at a time. Put in slightly grander terms, the web is changing our sense of citizenship. How we should behave together; how we can avoid harming others; how we can support each other, are all part of what it means to live together online.

Keywords: [online community](#), [moderator](#), [discussion thread](#), [post](#), [online disinhibition effect](#)



## In Context

### LANGUAGE, SOCIAL NORMS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

To improve how we communicate with young people online, as youth information workers, we need to better understand how these spaces operate.

Offline we have been used to being able to separate our public lives from our private lives. As the web has been used more and more as a social space, so it's confused the line dividing what is public and what is private information. Part of the reason for this, as danah boyd puts it, is because "we lack the language, social norms, and structures to handle it". boyd highlights four elements that together help us understand the structures of information sharing on online communities:

- Persistence (hard to remove) - the information young people share about themselves sticks around.
- Searchability (easy to find) - information about young people is findable by searching social spaces online.
- Replicability (easy to copy) - information shared by young people online can be copied easily and can be distributed quickly.
- Invisible audiences (you don't always know who you're communicating with) - intimate information shared by young people online can reach many people other than those for which it was originally intended. It's really difficult to know who you are talking to and sharing with in online communities. Many listeners or readers may be anonymous or come to the information a long time after it was originally shared.

Given these differences surrounding how we share information online, how can young people be given the space and freedom to experiment that's part of the normal process of growing up? How as youth information workers should we be helping young people better understand the benefits of managing what information about themselves becomes part of their digital footprint?

### ONLINE DISINHIBITION: YOUNG PEOPLE BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY ONLINE

Alongside these social differences with how young people behave online, there are also psychological differences to how young people may act in online communities.

John Suler, Professor of Psychology at Rider University in the US, has done extensive research into what he terms the psychology of cyberspace. One notion he's investigated is the online disinhibition effect and what influences the way young people behave online. It's an effect which cuts both ways.



The fact that we feel less inhibited online means that we can be more willing to speak openly about our feelings. We can also feel more free to carry out ‘random acts of kindness’ without worrying about anyone questioning our motives. At the same time, this lack of inhibitions can mean we explore the darker side of ourselves more where, for instance, we may be quicker to resort to rude language or loss of temper. Suler describes six components of this online disinhibition effect:

- “You Don’t Know Me”  
The relative anonymity of the web means people can draw a line between their digital lives and the rest of their lives. They can disassociate their actions online from the full context of who they “really” are. When these feelings are aggressive or negative, it means people feel they don’t necessarily need to take responsibility for those actions.
- “You Can’t See Me”  
Online other people can’t see you and you can’t see them as we’ve mentioned already with invisible audiences. People don’t even need to greet you when they visit your website. This also means you don’t get the benefit of their smile as you talk, but neither do you see when they’re bored or critical about you. This physical invisibility can exaggerate the disinhibition effect making people act in ways online that they wouldn’t face to face.
- “See You Later”  
On the web, communication often takes place over time rather in one particular moment. The people doing the communicating tend to be online at different times, unless it’s instant messenger or chat. Given this built-in delay with emails and forums, what you say is almost magically suspended in time. This division in time means the brain can more easily separate what you say and how others might respond to what you say. People can express all kinds of sensitive emotions, but the pause softens the impact of the reactions from others to these feelings.
- “It’s All in My Head”  
When communicating in text, it’s possible for us to hear the words of others as a voice in our own head. It makes the experience of communicating with other people (writing down thoughts and reading the responses), a little like when we talk to ourselves. This reduces our inhibitions as we’re used to talking with ourselves about all kinds of things we wouldn’t dream about sharing publicly.
- “It’s Just a Game”  
The virtual quality of the online world can make it seem a little bit like some kind of game. As people disassociate themselves from their actions online, digital life may begin to feel like some kind of imaginary dimension.
- “We’re Equals”  
The web succeeds in creating a strong sense of community because members leave their offline social status behind and feel more equal as a result. On the web, people are less inhibited to speak their mind to those who may be considered authority figures offline.

These all become factors that mean young people naturally find it harder to judge the level of risk they are taking, and the potential benefit they may gain. Any approach to providing youth information safely has to discuss with young people how they behave in online communities.



Laying down the law and commanding people to act safely is relatively ineffective in online communities and is best used sparingly, if at all. Instead, effective support for young people is a better strategy. How to act in online communities and how much personal information to share, are the kinds of questions that are more productively dealt with through a process of discussion and agreement between youth information workers and young people working and learning from each other.



## In Practice

### BUILDING SAFE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Online communities can provide extensive benefits to young people. While young people want to make the most of services with an online community such as a forum or social network, they need to understand how to engage in these communities safely. The first step for youth information workers is to ensure that these online communities have clear established rules.

Below are different examples of guidelines for an online community, such as a forum or group chat, that brings together young people who wish to share information and support each other:

- Make safety information prominent, including during the registration process, for any young person using your service, so it's clear and easy to access.
- Offer links to relevant online resources that provide the young people using your service with additional information about online safety and security.
- Make clear what you consider to be the individual responsibilities of young people to respect and protect others in the online community.
- Set out how young people can maintain their privacy and prevent unwanted contact or communication
- Explain clearly how to report abuse or make a complaint to your organisation or service. A good procedure for handling complaints should be in place. In particular, complaints about harassment and inappropriate content must be assessed promptly, and, if appropriate, the offending content must be removed within a clearly defined length of time.
- Explain how users can cancel their account and remove their unwanted profile from any service you or your organisation manages.
- Encourage the young people using your services to develop their own safety strategies whenever and wherever they are online.

### MANAGING HOW YOUNG PEOPLE JOIN YOUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

Registration is an important first step for controlling who is using your service and identifying any basic needs early on in your contact with the young people you work with.

You should provide clear information about what personal details are collected during registration on the community and how they will be used. For example, explain what information appears on the young person's profile, what will be public, and what will be private. Users should then be given the opportunity to hide, limit availability to, or edit this information.

You should meet your legal obligations in your country regarding how much personal information can be collected from young people, including what they consent to.



You should emphasise in accessible and easily understood language what behaviour is and is not acceptable on your services. Young people should be told what happens if they behave in an unacceptable manner.



Examples of unacceptable behaviour on an online community include:

- Making harassing, threatening, abusive, vulgar, obscene, defamatory, racist or any kind of post which is unlawful or specifically not permitted by the community.
- Posting spam (unsolicited or unauthorised advertising).
- Linking to inappropriate websites (hateful, defamatory or illegal).



Examples of agreed behaviour that participants accept on joining an online community:

- Information or advice from other sources or sites must also include the links to where the young person has found them, so their suitability may be judged by others (participants and moderators).
- Anonymity is important on online communities. If a young person knows who someone is offline, or engages with them on other websites, they are asked to keep the user's identity to themselves. There is also no need to mention users' online activity away from the online community.
- Respecting the opinions of others and refraining from making personal attacks against others.

#### INTERACTION WITH YOUTH INFORMATION SERVICE USERS ONLINE

You should urge young people to report problematic content to make the community's managers aware of issues which may go against their rules and guidelines (e.g. something offensive, or a personal attack on another user). Alternatively, young people should be encouraged to notify the community's managers if a young person believes a fellow member isn't getting enough support for a serious problem.

#### MODERATION IS ABOUT COMMUNITY SUPPORT, NOT JUST COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

Moderation is more than just reacting to problems. Sometimes youth information workers might post in a discussion thread to help focus the group conversation. Moderators might also use forums to let young people in the community know about other activities going on, such as upcoming chat sessions, surveys or competitions.

Moderators post in threads to offer support and links to additional resources that may help a young person with problems. In short, the aim should not be to stop conversation, but to create and maintain a pleasant, supportive and welcoming environment for everyone. Young people themselves can act as moderators within forums and help establish the community's rules. For example, when Young Scot's forum was set up the young people involved chose three key rules for the forum:

- Be respectful of others
- No personal information to be added to the forum
- No text speak

Whether or not young people who join the forum go on to become moderators or not, all members can be encouraged to help new members to understand the reasons for the rules or report possible incidents they feel break the rules to the community's moderators.





## COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Always try to prevent bad behaviour in your community, rather than reactively and harshly moderating posts or threads that break your rules. The best prevention strategy is to communicate clearly and quickly with users, before the situation gets out of control. Often, a few polite warnings early on can help reduce the impact of bad or damaging behaviour.
- Praise and thank those who make positive contributions so that the tone of moderators is varied. It's the neighbourly thing to do after all!
- Explain your thinking behind why you moderate or intervene in a discussion. This means the community can better understand the reasons why moderators take action and can learn from what can be difficult experiences.
- Work to stimulate conversation with thoughtful questions and constructive comments. Take the time to listen to what others have to say and understand their point of view. As moderators, remember your role is to help the conversation along, not necessarily to engage in the debate in the same way as the members of the community.
- Be flexible and allow the members of the online community to shape the discussion. If the thread of the conversation goes off course, bring it back on track gently, particularly if community members are requesting this, if you think it's necessary.
- Learn from the members of the community – it's a dialogue. When people are able to learn from one another, there's every chance the community will grow. Remember, the value of the forum or group is ultimately in the community of people who join and adopt it.

[Inspired by Nathalie McDermott [www.onroadmedia.org.uk](http://www.onroadmedia.org.uk)]





## In Training

### WORLD CAFE: DISCUSSING THE DOS AND DON'TS OF ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

Preparation time: 2-4 hours

Running time: 1-2 hours

Number of participants: 10-25 people

This activity gives the young participants the opportunity to discuss the issues involved in being active in online communities in a relaxed informal atmosphere. It's a great way of creating a discussion in a non-judgemental environment. It's crucial to talk through together what is acceptable behaviour and what the consequences might be of different actions young people take online. This activity challenges young people to explain and come to some agreement together about what's recommended and what's acceptable in an online community.

#### Learning Objectives

- To be able to come to an agreement and explain to peers clear recommendations on how to behave in online communities

#### Learning Outcomes

- To be able to identify what the possible desirable and undesirable consequences are of different online behaviour
- To be able to prioritise and assess the severity of risk and degree of opportunity associated with different online behaviour
- To be able to communicate advice to peers about online safety issues associated with different online behaviour

#### Delivery Methods

- Prepare the room, decorating the tables and organising the drinks and snacks.
- The activity involves three rounds, followed by an evaluation round where participants can discuss everybody's ideas together and prioritise them.
- In the introduction, explain to the participants the rules of the world cafe and the focus of the discussion. For example, you could discuss the dos and don'ts of the web.
- Rules of the world cafe are that each table/group has a limited number of post-it notes. One colour of post-its for "dos" and one colour for "don'ts". The post-it notes serve as currency for the group to be able to order treats from the world cafe waiters. The group must discuss together and write down ideas for dos and don'ts on the post-it notes provided. The waiters (the trainers or facilitators) then exchange each post-it/idea for a treat, e.g. snack, sweet, biscuits, a drink, etc.
- Post-its/ideas are collated together on flipchart paper displayed prominently in the world cafe. One sheet of flipchart paper is needed for each round of discussions at the world cafe.
- Example topics for the three rounds:
- Online social networks - what are the dos and don'ts of behaviour on social networking sites like Facebook?
- Content sharing sites - what is good to do and what to avoid when participating in content sharing sites like YouTube?
- Online discussion - what should you do and avoid when it comes to participating in online discussion such as online chat, forums or instant messenger?
- After each round, each group is mixed up and the participants move tables and sit with different people.
- In the evaluation round, the trainers display the flipchart paper from each round in three different areas of the world cafe. The participants choose one of the subjects discussed in one of the rounds and go to where the flipchart paper is with all the ideas from that round. Participants read through all the ideas that came from all the groups and discuss which should be prioritised.



**What you will need**

- Selection of drinks and snacks to create a real world cafe atmosphere
- People to play the role of waiters (usually those running the activity) who can serve the young people sitting at the tables
- Waiter's clothes (aprons, jackets, etc)
- Menu and price list with information about the snacks and treats available
- Post-it notes
- Pens and flipchart paper
- Paper covering the tables so that people can write their ideas directly where they are sitting
- Tables and chairs organised in different groups. Table decorations e.g. candles, flowers, etc., can help provide a real cafe feel.
- Music and anything that gives the world cafe a fun and relaxed atmosphere
- More information about the principles about the world café method:  
[www.theworldcafe.com/principles.html](http://www.theworldcafe.com/principles.html)



#### FURTHER LINKS FOR UNIT 6: ONLINE COMMUNITIES

YouTube - Matt Harding Dance

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvE8iMbT1aQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvE8iMbT1aQ)

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# Glossary

## Avatar

An electronic visual representation of a person using an online service, typically on an online forum or social network.

## Blog (also known as a weblog)

A type of website or part of a website, maintained by an individual or group with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.

## Cache

It's a store of data that can make browsing quicker because it means that the same data from sites a users might visit regularly don't have to be repeatedly downloaded.

## Cookie

A piece of code stored on a user's computer by their web browser. It's used to help remember a user's password on different websites, store their viewing preferences and other things that help simplify browsing the web. Cookies can be manually deleted to protect a user's privacy and prevent someone else pretending to be them online by accessing a website with a saved password.

## Copyright

The right of the creator of a piece of work, granted by a government, to reproduce, prepare other related work, distribute, perform, display, sell, loan or licence what they have created.

## Creative Commons licences

Creative Commons licences are licences that allow artists or creators of content the option to clearly communicate which rights to their content they reserve and which rights they waive. Creative Commons, a non-profit organisation in the USA, founded by Laurence Lessig, allows the public to use these licences free of charge.

## Cyberbullying

The use of the web or mobile phones to repeatedly act with the intention of harming others.

## Digital literacy

The ability to use the internet and other digital media and networks effectively.

## Digital natives

A person who has always had access to networked digital technologies and who has strong ability and confidence using digital technology. A Digital immigrant is someone who can remember a time before there was as much digital technology as there is now.

## Digital safety

Safety from dangers specific to the online environment.



### Discussion thread

Online communities, particularly forums, are made up of separate conversations or threads. Organising online discussions as threads gives participants the opportunity to start conversations. It also allows moderators to manage online conversations by moving discussions that go off topic, closing threads that get overheated or even removing threads that break the community's rules.

### EdgeRank

A mathematical way of understanding the relative relevance of different content on a user's Facebook News Feed.

### E-learning

Electronic forms of supported learning and training that are typically built on access to online networks and information.

### Grooming

Befriending and making an emotional contact with a child or young person, with the intention of having sexual relations with them.

### Hashtags and tagging

Keywords or terms can be assigned to a bit of online information that helps it to be found again by searching. Posts on microblogging services like Twitter or identi.ca can be tagged with words or phrases prefixed with a hash symbol (#).

### Hoax website or email

A website or email that pretends to be something it is not with the intention of cheating a person out of their money or to unintentionally give away personal information, such as their bank account details.

### Information literacy

Being able to recognise when information is needed and having the skill and experience to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.

### IP address

Internet protocol is a number assigned to any device that is accessing the internet.

### Moderator

A person with a specific role in support and managing an online community.

### Meta-tag

Special text or code in the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) that describes content on a web page and is picked up by search engines.

### Microblogging

A way of communicating through updated content which is typically small in size (sometimes just 140 characters in length). It allows users to exchange small bits of content such as short sentences, images or links.



### Online disinhibition effect

An idea developed by John Suler, Professor of Psychology at Rider University in the US, about the psychology behind why users online behave differently to how they might in face to face situations.

### Online social networks

An online platform or website built on social relations between people that gives each user a profile and the means to connect with friends or other people.

### Online communities

Groups or communities of interest that users can join online and communicate with others. Online communities often take the format of forums, discussion boards or online social networks.

### Open source software

A philosophy or way of developing software collaboratively where the core code of the software is publicly available and can be reused and further developed under certain conditions (anyone of a number of recognised open source licences).

### PageRank

A mathematical way of understanding the relative relevance of different hyperlinked content used by Google's search engine.

### Phishing

A criminal attempt to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by pretending to be a trustworthy person or organisation in an electronic communication.

### Plagiarism

The deceptive presentation of work as original.

### Podcast

A series of digital media files (audio or video) that are published online in episodes and can be downloaded, typically through web syndication [see also RSS].

### Post/upload

Contributing content online, such as text on a blog entry, posting links to another's content or adding content on photo-sharing site.

### Privacy settings

The means by which a user of a website can control the access of others to information already published on the website. [see also social media or online social networks].

### RSS

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is used to publish frequently updated content. Users of the service subscribe to an RSS feed to be automatically notified once the content is updated. It's a service often available on news sites, blogs or any other online information that's frequently revised or added to.



### Search engines

Sites or applications designed to search for information on the web based keywords. Typically, they display search results of web pages, images and other types of files based on relevancy to the keywords initially entered by the user.

### Search engine optimisation (SEO)

Making your website as easy and effective to index as possible by search engines.

### Sexting

Sharing sexually explicit content (text, audio or images) with mobile phones. The term combines the words sex and texting.

### Social bookmarking

A way for internet users to organize, save and find links to resources online.

### Social graph

A way for referring to the people you're connected to on online social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

### Social networks or networking

See 'online social networks'.

### Social media

A collective term describing a wide range of different web-based technologies that make communication interactive. Rather than broadcasting information where one sender communicates with one or many people, social media allow information to be shared across networks where multiple senders can communicate with multiple receivers.

### Usability

Usability is how easy an object or product that's been designed and built is to learn how to use.

### Web 2.0

A label given to web sites and applications that allow users to interact and collaborate with each other to produce and share content in online communities. Examples of these kinds of sites or applications include social networking sites (like Facebook), blogs (like Wordpress), wikis (like Wikipedia), video sharing sites (like YouTube), etc.

### Wiki

A website that allows the creation and editing of its content by any number of users via a web browser.

### WHOIS information

A way to find out who is the publicly registered user for a particular domain or IP address.



# References and links

## WEBSITES AND SOFTWARE PRODUCTS MENTIONED IN THE BOOKLET

Aardvark - [www.vark.com](http://www.vark.com)  
Alta Vista - [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)  
Android - [www.android.com](http://www.android.com)  
Apache - [apache.org](http://apache.org)  
Connect Safely - [www.connectsafely.org](http://www.connectsafely.org)  
Delicious - [www.delicious.com](http://www.delicious.com)  
Digg - [digg.com/news](http://digg.com/news)  
Drupal - [drupal.org](http://drupal.org)  
Facebook - [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)  
Facebook Places - [www.facebook.com/places](http://www.facebook.com/places)  
Flickr - [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)  
Foursquare - [foursquare.com](http://foursquare.com)  
Google - [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)  
Google Analytics - [www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)  
Google Latitude - [www.google.com/latitude](http://www.google.com/latitude)  
Hot Bot - [www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com)  
Hyves - [hyves.nl](http://hyves.nl)  
Linked In - [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)  
Lycos - [www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)  
Quora - [www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)  
Mozilla Firefox - [www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox](http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox)  
MSN - [explore.live.com/windows-live-messenger?os=other](http://explore.live.com/windows-live-messenger?os=other)  
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Twitter - [twitter.com](http://twitter.com)  
Tuenti - [www.tuenti.com/?m=login](http://www.tuenti.com/?m=login)  
VZNet Netzwerke - [www.studivz.net](http://www.studivz.net)  
Wikipedia - [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)  
Wordpress - [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com)  
Yahoo - [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)  
YouTube - [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)





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