

U. B. Aware

Ms. Obama

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Perils of the Internet

“Over the past decade, the Internet has become a focal point for teenage pop culture (“Welcome...”).” According to the CBC, 99% of Canadian students use the internet and 60% of those use chat and instant messaging (“Cyber Bullying”). While this is not necessarily bad, it has led to a growing number of online perils. One that is often discussed in high schools is cyberbullying. Another common problem is the belief that the internet is private. A third problem is internet luring where online predators and gangs lurk in webspaces waiting for vulnerable users to trap. There are a growing number of risks on the Internet and all users should become knowledgeable so that they do not become victims.

In the past, bullying was isolated to the school, park or the walk home. In today's electronic world that has changed.

For tweens and teens today, bullying is no longer just threatening notes or lunchroom confrontations; it has expanded to in-boxes, buddy lists, cell phones, and Web pages. It can happen 24/7, involve images or video, and spread faster than whispers in the hallway. (Goodstein 76)

“In one prominent case, students in Burlington, Ont., created a site dedicated entirely to humiliating a 17-year-old classmate, David Knight, by branding him a pedophile and bombarding him with hateful emails” (Gillis 35). He is but one case in the ever growing cyber bullying phenomenon that studies show lead to suicide and even homicide. Research shows that many school shootings, including Columbine, are perpetrated by students who claim to have been bullied (Goodstein 77). Bullying is a serious offence. It can cause irreparable emotional damage. Users of the Internet must be careful not to use their anonymity to cause emotional harm to others.

Privacy is another issue on the internet. Far too many users believe that their postings on the internet are private; between them and the recipient. The reality, however, is that once the statement is typed, it can be copied, saved and forwarded. In addition, all the information posted to social networks is no longer owned by the user. “So if you're using Gmail or Yahoo mail or Flickr or .. YouTube or belong to Facebook ... you've given up complete control of your personal information (Ruffolo 8).” As a case in point, a Facebook member recently copied their whole friend list to another website to share with others. Also

beware that employers routinely ask prospective employees to see their Facebook and internet information. And don't forget that the information is available to authorities too – the police, the government and customs. For example, a UofT professor recently was denied access to the United States because he admitted in an online article that he had tried LSD more than 30 years ago (Mickleburgh C5). Clearly the internet is NOT private and users should never type anything that they wouldn't want their employers to read, even 30 years in the future.

Internet luring is another serious threat to users of the internet. Under assumed personas, in chat rooms, and Facebook, predators are looking for personal information. Usually, they start out being very kind and friendly so as to give confidence. Gradually, they entice the user to take risks; give their name; give their school; give their phone number, or even worse, get them to agree to a physical meeting in order to perpetrate an assault, abduction, or black mail. Alex, a victim of luring, found out for himself the perils of the internet when his "virtual game had become a reality; 12 against one" ("Alex's Story"). He was lured by gamers to take his computer to a tournament. What he met was a street gang that assaulted him and destroyed his computer. He learned too late that the people he thought were his friends were just strangers. Now he knows not to give out private information and never to meet a stranger, particularly in a remote place.

In conclusion, while teens enjoy the fascinations of the internet, they must also be aware of the perils. Users must stop and think about the information that is posted to ensure their personal safety and their reputation long into the future. The internet is not private and includes potentially dangerous people who will try to lure others into threatening situations. In the real world, teens are street proofed; in the internet world, they need to be cyberproofed too.

Works Cited

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- Mickleburgh, Rod. "A Few Trips Decades Ago Put an End to This One." Globe and Mail 25 April 2007: C5.
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Corrections

- All should be double spaced
- Need header information
- No need to put "p" with the page number
- No quotation marks needed for a long block quotation.
- Need to put a citation for all factual information such as Goldstein information about shooting being caused by students who are bullied
- Works Cited page must be in alphabetical order
- Need angle brackets around all URL's in MLA Works Cited Page
- Underline titles in MLA style
- Indent second line, not first, in Works Cited Page
- Force a Page Break for Works Cited
- Period at the end of all citations in Works Cited