TECHNO-JOURNALISM: THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE NEWS MEDIA

*English, Grade 12 College Preparation (ENG4C)*

**INTRODUCTION**

This unit is intended to be part of the English, Grade 12 College Preparation course. The following lessons use course expectations listed in the Ontario Curriculum (2007) to promote critical thinking and effective communication skills.

With the proliferation of technology, such as cell phones with camera and video capabilities, social networking sites like Facebook, and microblogging platforms like Twitter, individual untrained “citizen journalists” are more frequently the ones breaking big news stories. Some might argue that this harms the integrity of journalism, while others argue that this technology forces the media to become more transparent, and makes the news more democratic by giving voice to those who otherwise would be silenced.

Through a series of seven lessons, students will examine critically the positive and negative implications of technology’s impact on the news media. Students will be supported in examining multiple perspectives and developing informed opinions, while practising effective oral communication skills and social skills. The overall focus of this unit raises questions about what it means to be a good digital citizen, and throughout the unit students will be encouraged answer these questions and demonstrate good digital citizenship.

The resources provided in these lessons will contain some sensitive materials that match the realistic viewing experiences to which adolescents are exposed. Teachers should consider reviewing all lessons, links, and resources to ensure the content is suitable for their given audience/class. In addition, all links and resources should be checked to ensure the content is still available and accessible online.
UNIT OVERVIEW

The purpose of this unit is to encourage grade 12 College English students to think critically about the impact technology has had on journalism.

- Lesson 1: Introduction to Digital Citizenship and the News Media
- Lesson 2: Ethics and Journalistic Integrity
- Lesson 3: The Medium Changes the Message
- Lesson 4: Feedback Frenzy
- Lesson 5: Evaluating Speaking Strategies
- Lesson 6: Research Jigsaw
- Lesson 7: Academic Controversy

Lesson 1: Introduction to Digital Citizenship and the News Media

This lesson introduces students to a number of terms and concepts that will assist them in their exploration of this topic. Students will participate in “four corners” discussions where they will have to question and defend assumptions they currently have about the news media. This lesson also will provide the teacher with opportunities for diagnostic assessment of students’ abilities in the areas of oral communication, teamwork, and critical thinking that will help with the planning of future lessons.

Lesson 2: Ethics and Journalistic Integrity

Lesson 2 uses concept attainment to help students develop an understanding of the concept of journalistic ethics. Using the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, students will read and discuss several different case studies and determine the ethical course of action as responsible journalists.

Lesson 3: The Medium Changes the Message

This lesson presents students with two different news articles dealing with the convergence of technology and journalism. They will have an opportunity to practise and review effective reading strategies for non-fiction, as well as review the difference between fact and opinion. They will sort through the facts and opinions to form their own conclusions, using a graphic organizer called Both Sides Now.

Lesson 4: Feedback Frenzy

This lesson examines the pros and cons of anonymous comment forums on online news sites. Students will practise effective listening strategies while listening to a podcast, and will continue to practise oral communication skills and effective group work by participating in a value line. They will develop an understanding of the concept of digital citizenship and create an anchor chart outlining guidelines for practising good digital citizenship.

Lesson 5: Evaluating Speaking Strategies

Lesson 5 prepares students for their culminating task by presenting them with examples of effective speaking strategies. They will have an opportunity to role play, and to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in terms of speaking skills.
Lesson 6: Research Jigsaw

This lesson provides students with additional material to use in their culminating task. Students will be given the statement that they will debate in the final task, and they will look for information that supports both sides of the debate. Students will be arranged in expert groups, where they will work with peers to find information about a specific topic. Then they will share this information with a home group.

Lesson 7: Academic Controversy

Lesson 7 gives students a chance to debate the impact of technology on the news media using a strategy called Academic Controversy. In addition to this debate, there are three extension activities that may be used as culminating tasks.

Strategies used in this unit have been adapted from:

- Beyond Monet, by Barrie Bennett and Carol Rolheiser, 2001
- Think Literacy Cross Curricular Approaches, 2003
- Strategies That Work, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis, 2007

Note to teachers: The resources provided in this unit include Overhead Projection Sheet Outlines and Student Handouts.
LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE NEWS MEDIA

75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

• ORAL COMMUNICATION – LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND
  o 1.2 Using Active Listening Strategies – Select and use the most appropriate active listening strategies when participating in a range of situations (e.g., offer encouragement while participating in a rehearsal for a small group presentation; ask questions that link others’ comments in a discussion; maintain appropriate posture and eye contact while listening to a student presentation)

• ORAL COMMUNICATION – SPEAKING TO COMMUNICATE
  o 2.1 Purpose – Communicate orally for a range of purposes, using language appropriate for the intended audience (e.g., present each side of an argument to different audiences; role-play making a presentation to solicit a business start-up loan from a lending institution; dramatize a scene from a work of prose; deliver a presentation to a younger class on suitable attire and behaviour in an employment interview; respond appropriately to audience questions during a presentation).
  o 2.2 Interpersonal Speaking Strategies – Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of interpersonal speaking strategies and adapt them to suit the purpose, situation, and audience, exhibiting sensitivity to cultural differences (e.g., respond appropriately to constructive criticism; re-explain parts of a presentation on how to apply for OSAP after the audience responds with confusion; assess the background knowledge and needs of the audience before speaking; invite silent group members to contribute to a discussion).

• MEDIA STUDIES – UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
  o 1.4 Audience Responses – Explain why the same media text might prompt different responses from different audiences (e.g., explain why a baby boomer might react differently from a teenager to an anniversary television broadcast about a world-changing event such as the 1963 assassination of U.S. President Kennedy or the 1989 dismantling of the Berlin Wall).
  o 1.5 Critical Literacy – Identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power (e.g., explain how the vocabulary used in a radio news report might influence audience perceptions of the event; based on the advertising accompanying a television sports event, suggest what some of the values and priorities of its audience might be; comment on the apparent cultural values reflected in a website).
  o 1.6 Production Perspectives – Explain how production, marketing, financing, distribution, and legal/regulatory factors influence the media industry (e.g., Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission [CRTC] regulations that forbid direct marketing appeals during children’s programming; Canadian-content legislation related to radio music programming).

• MEDIA STUDIES – UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS AND TECHNIQUES
o 2.1 Form – Identify general and specific characteristics of a variety of media forms and explain how they shape content and create meaning (e.g., graphic novels emphasize the type of content – such as action and setting – that is appropriate to visual presentation; television broadcasts of major sporting events focus on the progress of play, while newspaper accounts of these events focus on background, explanation, and analysis).

- MEDIA STUDIES – REFLECTING ON SKILLS AND STRATEGIES
  o 4.1 Metacognition – Explain which of a variety of strategies they found most helpful in interpreting and creating media texts, then evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as media interpreters and producers to help identify the steps they can take to improve their skills (e.g., identify a particular challenge they faced in creating a media text and explain how they solved it).

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does changing and emerging information technology change the way we have to think about our media consumption?
- How do we respond critically to the different types of news media with which we are presented?

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

The purpose of this lesson is to provide the teacher with diagnostic information about students’ prior knowledge of content, as well as evidence of their readiness and ability in terms of skills that will be required for the culminating task. Students will develop and express opinions on topics related to digital citizenship and news media. They also will begin to develop an understanding of key concepts and terms used in this unit. An Oral Presentation Observation Checklist (1.1 REF) is provided for the teacher, to record evidence of participation in the discussions.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

FOUR CORNERS – Use the Four Corners strategy for this part of the lesson (Beyond Monet, 162). Place a sign in each of the four corners of the room: Strongly Agree, Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree.

Before beginning, explain to students that you will be reading a series of statements. After each statement, you would like them to think about whether they strongly agree, somewhat agree, strongly disagree, or somewhat disagree with the statement. It may be helpful for the teacher to do a think-aloud to model the process for students if they have never done a four corners exercise before. Do this by reading through a sample statement, and then talking through your reasons for choosing the corner you most strongly identify with.

For at least the first statement, you may wish to have students record their reasons for choosing their corner. This helps to ensure students actually go to the corner that represents their opinions rather than choosing the corner their friends are in.

Read the first statement and allow students approximately two minutes to silently consider their responses. Remind them that they will need to be prepared to share their reasons with their classmates.
Instruct students to go to the corner that best represents their opinions. Once there, they should discuss their reasons for this choice with the other people in the corner. If the group is particularly big, have them break off into smaller sub groups, so that everyone has a chance to talk.

Ask each group to decide on one or two reasons to share with the rest of the class, and inform students that you will be choosing a spokesperson from each corner. This helps build in individual accountability while maintaining a certain degree of safety. Allow approximately two minutes for the groups to choose their reasons. Then choose a student to share.

Four Corners Statements:

- I can trust the majority of news that I read, see, and hear to be factual and accurate.
- Journalists have a responsibility to the public to make sure that the information they publish is truthful.
- If something important is happening in the world, it will be covered by the mainstream news media.
- The mainstream news media report lots of stories on violent crime because we live in an increasingly more violent society.
- Blogs, Twitter, and social media sites like Facebook are good sources for news.
- Allowing individuals to post comments anonymously on news stories is a good idea.

**KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS** – Divide the class into small groups of two to four students, where they will complete a concept sort, matching terms to definitions. Hand out, to each group, an envelope into which you have placed Concept Sort (1.2 H), cut into pieces. Explain to the students that the terms are in a large font, while the definitions are in a smaller font. Students will need to work together to match up the terms to the definitions. This will be like a puzzle, with the answers laid out on the table.

Once students finish their sort, the teacher can display the finished chart, called Digital Citizenship and the News Media: Key Terms and Concepts (1.3 OH), and have students check their answers. As you discuss each answer, check for understanding by having students hold thumbs up, down, or sideways to indicate whether or not they understand the term and definition. Hand out the worksheet called Digital Citizenship and the News Media: Key Terms and Concepts (1.4 H). Leave the overhead sheet up, for students to use while they complete this worksheet.

**EXIT TICKET** – Before students leave, they will reflect on issues and concepts addressed in class. Distribute an Exit Ticket (1.5 H) to each student, and the class to complete the worksheet, and hand it in on the way out the door.

**ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

As students are discussing, the teacher should make anecdotal notes about how well students are able to discuss and interact in small groups. An Oral Communication Observation Checklist (1.1 REF) is provided to assist with this assessment. This will help inform instruction for teaching oral communication skills necessary for the culminating task.

The teacher also can use the ideas voiced by students during the Four Corners exercises, as well as the information on the Exit Tickets (1.5 H), to adjust the focus of future lessons.
**Implications for Future Lessons/Homework / Extension Activities**

The culminating task for this unit will be an informal debate. Depending on students’ readiness and ability, the teacher may need to include additional lessons modelling active listening, disagreeing agreeably, encouraging, and speaking respectfully. Based on observations from this lesson, the teacher may consider creating, with the class, a chart where students identify what active listening and the other skills listed above look like, sound like, and feel like. Then students can do some role playing to practise the skills.

As an extension, the teacher could locate a current story covered in the mainstream media, either through a newspaper or clip from television news. The class would view this story, and then research the ways in which the same story is covered by an alternative news media such as:

- AlterNet (American): [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)
- The Huffington Post (American): [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)
- Al Jazeera (English version): [http://english.aljazeera.net](http://english.aljazeera.net)
- Rabble (Canadian): [http://rabble.ca](http://rabble.ca)

**Cross Curricular Connections**

- Canadian and International Law (CLN4U) – Heritage, Law and Society: Analyse contemporary events and issues that demonstrate a possible conflict between the law and societal values.

**Materials and Resources**

- Four Corners signs (Strongly Agree, Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree), placed in each corner of the classroom
- Overhead projector/data projector/interactive white board
- Oral Communication Observation Checklist (1.1 REF)
- Concept Sort (1.2 H), cut up and placed in envelopes (one per group)
- Digital Citizenship and the News Media: Key Terms and Concepts (1.3 OH), for taking up Concept Sort exercise
- Digital Citizenship and the News Media: Key Terms and Concepts (1.4 H) (one per student)
- Exit Ticket (1.5 H) (one per student)

**Important Terminology/Background for Teachers**

- **Citizen journalism, or participatory journalism**, is a form of journalism where news is collected, reported, analyzed and disseminated by members of the general public, rather than by trained reporters. Citizen journalists often use mobile phones, blogging, Twitter, and other types of social media to report news. Critics of citizen journalists cite concerns about lack of objectivity.
- **Digital citizenship** is the concept of behaving in a responsible, safe, and courteous manner in digital spaces.
- **Journalistic integrity** is a code of ethics adhered to by professional journalists in order to maintain credibility. News organizations often will create their own codes of ethics, or canons of
journalism, which generally outline principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability.

- **Social media** refers to the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate through the internet to share information and resources. One of the defining features of social media is that it encourages active participation, rather than passive consumption of information. Examples include Twitter, Delicious, Diigo, blogs, Facebook, and wikis.

**LINKS/RESOURCES**

- “The rise of Iran’s citizen journalists”-July 30, 2009
  [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8176957.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8176957.stm)

- “Citizen journalism’ battles Chinese censors” June 26, 2007

- Citizen Journalism-What is it? Youtube video explaining citizen journalism
  [www.youtube.com/watch?v=58iZpMRclwI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58iZpMRclwI)
Oral Communication Observation Checklist

Use this sheet to record observations of students’ listening and speaking skills and any observations you make about issues you may need to address through explicit teaching of oral communication skills.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Active Listening</th>
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CONCEPT SORT

- alternative media
- citizen journalist
- journalist
- podcast press
- bias
- columnist
- journalistic integrity
- social media
- blog
- digital citizenship
- mainstream media
- spin
media (newspapers, radio, television, movies, internet, etc.) which are substitutes for business or government-owned mass media

a tendency or preference toward a particular perspective or side of the story

an online diary or journal often expressing views on a particular topic such as politics or music

a form of journalism where news is collected, reported, analyzed and disseminated by members of the general public, rather than by trained reporters

a journalist who writes for publication in a series, creating copy that sometimes can be strongly opinionated

the concept of behaving in a responsible, safe, and courteous manner in digital spaces

the profession of reporting or photographing or editing news stories for one of the media

a code of ethics adhered to by professional journalists in order to maintain credibility

media with the largest distribution channels, owned by large corporations, with a tendency to reflect popular ideologies

syndicated audio program delivered over the internet, so that individuals can download the program to mp3 players or computers

members of the print media responsible for publishing the news

the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate through the internet to share information and resources

altering or highlighting particular aspects of a story to convey an intended opinion
# Digital Citizenship and the News Media: Key Terms and Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Alternative media</td>
<td>Media (newspapers, radio, television, movies, internet, etc.) which are substitutes for business or government-owned mass media</td>
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<td>Bias</td>
<td>A tendency or preference toward a particular perspective or side of the story</td>
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<td>Blog</td>
<td>An online diary or journal, often expressing views on a particular topic such as politics or music</td>
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<td>Citizen journalist</td>
<td>A form of journalism where news is collected, reported, analyzed and disseminated by members of the general public, rather than by trained reporters</td>
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<td>A journalist who writes for publication in a series, creating copy that sometimes can be strongly opinionated</td>
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<td>Digital citizenship</td>
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<td>Mainstream media</td>
<td>Media with the largest distribution channels, owned by large corporations, with a tendency to reflect popular ideologies</td>
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<td>Podcast</td>
<td>Syndicated audio program delivered over the Internet so that individuals can download the program to mp3 players or computers</td>
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<td>Press</td>
<td>Members of the print media responsible for publishing the news</td>
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<td>Social media</td>
<td>The various online technology tools that enable people to communicate through the internet to share information and resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spin</td>
<td>Altering or highlighting particular aspects of a story to convey an intended opinion</td>
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EXIT TICKET

Name: _______________________________

Reflecting on today’s lesson, please choose one of these statements to complete as thoughtfully and thoroughly as you can.

1. One of the ideas we discussed in Four Corners that got me thinking was ____________________________
   because _____________________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________________

2. Something that we talked about today that really confused me was ____________________________
   because _____________________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________________

3. One of the things we talked about today that I think I already know a lot about is ________________
   because _____________________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________________________
LESSON 2: ETHICS AND JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY

75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- READING AND LITERATURE STUDIES – READING FOR MEANING
  - 1.3 Demonstrating Understanding of Content – Identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts (e.g., write an executive summary of a research report; use a graphic organizer to categorize the information in a passage of text as “most important” or “least important”; compare the arguments in two opinion pieces on a current issue, recording similarities and differences in a Venn diagram).
  - 1.8 Critical Literacy – Identify and analyse the perspectives and/or biases evident in texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, commenting with growing understanding on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power (e.g., identify gender or cultural bias in job advertisements; determine whether the voices represented in a text are appropriate for that text, and suggest how the meaning would change if different voices were represented; identify a trend in popular fiction and describe what this trend reveals about current society; identify the use of exclusive language in texts).

- MEDIA STUDIES – UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
  - 1.5 Critical Literacy – Identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power (e.g., explain how the vocabulary used in a radio news report might influence audience perceptions of the event; based on the advertising accompanying a television sports event, suggest what some of the values and priorities of its audience might be; comment on the apparent cultural values reflected in a website).

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are the moral and ethical implications a journalist must consider before reporting a story?
- How do journalistic ethics affect the ways in which stories are reported in the news?

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Technology has changed the way stories are reported in the news. Mobile phones and social media allow average people to become citizen reporters. Some people consider this “democratization of the media” as a positive change, while others are concerned about the lack of journalistic integrity surrounding this new frontier of journalism. Before students consider the ways that the media have transformed the message, they first need to develop an understanding of the ethical considerations that professional journalists must make before publishing a story.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

THINK PAIR SHARE – Begin by reviewing some of the terms/concepts discussed yesterday through Think/Pair/Share (Beyond Monet, 94). Pair up students or have student pair themselves.
Choose one of the terms from the previous day’s lesson, and ask them to think silently about the definition of this term. Alternatively, students may write their definitions on paper. After about 60 seconds, ask students to turn to their partners and share what they came up with. If they both are stuck at this point, ask them to check their notes, close their books, and then try again. Repeat this exercise for four or five of the more challenging terms/concepts.

**CONCEPT ATTAINMENT** – On the overhead projector, put up the Journalistic Ethics Concept Attainment Data Set (2.1 OH), with a cover sheet to block viewing. Explain to the students that you are going to present them with a list of examples of situations in journalism that require decisions. All the examples on the YES side have something in common. The examples on the NO side may look similar to the ones on the YES side, but they are missing an important attribute. It will be their job to discover what are the differences between the two columns.

By moving the cover sheet, reveal one set at a time. After reading the first set, ask students to silently consider the differences between the two statements. Encourage them to write down their ideas, but not to share them at this point.

Reveal the next couple sets, one at a time, and instruct the students to continue to record their ideas. When they have enough information gathered, ask students to share their hypotheses with a partner. By the time they have seen most of the examples in the yes/no columns, students should be able to see that “yes” means that the individual has journalistic ethics or integrity, and that the “no” situations show a lack of ethics or integrity.

Even though you have not yet discussed this concept as a class, you can check for understanding by revealing one of the testers below the yes/no columns. Ask students to hold a thumb up if they think it would fit into the YES column, a thumb down if they think it would fit into the NO column, and a thumb sideways if they are unsure. If the majority of the class seems to grasp the concept, then ask students to share what they think the concept is. If they still seem unsure, return to the data set to review the ideas presented there, and then try another tester.

**CASE STUDIES** – Hand out the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (2.2 H) to students and explain to them that this code is an example of the kinds of guidelines journalists use when investigating and reporting stories. They will use this code as a guideline when they consider one of five case studies.

Use a strategy such as numbered heads (Beyond Monet, 106) to form groups of four. Alternatively, you could group students based on abilities or interests. Give each group a piece of chart paper and a marker.

Hand out the Case Study Instructions (2.3 H) to each group. Read through these instructions, and then tell the students to letter off A, B, C, or D. Student A will read the case study aloud to the rest of the group. Student B will record the group’s findings. Students C and D will review the Code of Ethics to see which areas might apply.

Once everyone has a role assigned, hand out Case Studies (2.4 H), and assign one case study to each group. If you have a larger class, more than one group could do each case study, or you could add some situations of your own to create more case studies. At the end of each case study, two options are presented. All group members are responsible to vote for one of the two options.
Once the students have discussed the case, they will record their findings on the chart paper. Students should identify the issue and record the decisions that were made by the group. Groups should provide rationale for their choices, which can also be recorded on the chart paper.

Instruct the groups to post these answers in a designated area in the room. When all groups are finished, the A student from each group will stay with the posted chart paper, while the other group members circulate around the room to view the other case study answers. Encourage them to ask A about the case and the group’s findings, and then to offer additional suggestions.

When everyone has had a chance to see all the case studies, instruct the students to return to their seats, and lead a whole-class discussion about what they discovered in their groups. How difficult or easy was it to decide what to do? Why?

**REFLECTION**—Students will reflect using Think/Pair/Share, or in writing, on whether or not it is important for a professional journalist to adhere to a code of ethics. Encourage them to give as many reasons as possible for their opinion.

**ACTIVISM**

Students could conduct an “ethics audit” of their local paper, or their local television news, to determine how closely their local media appear to adhere to the journalistic code of ethics.

**ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Written reflection can serve as a formative assessment.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LESSONS/HOMWORK / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

The teacher could adapt the case studies to reflect current issues in the media, or local issues in their community.

**CROSS CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS**

- Canadian and International Law (CLN4U) – Heritage, Law and Society: Analyse contemporary events and issues that demonstrate a possible conflict between the law and societal values.
- Business and Technological Communication (EBT4O) – Understanding the Impact of Technology: research and demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which communications technologies influence business practices

**MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

- chart paper
- tape
- markers
- overhead projector or data projector
- Journalistic Ethics Concept Attainment Data Set (2.1 OH), copied onto an overhead sheet or prepared for data projector/interactive white board
- Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (2.2 H), photocopied (one per student)
- Case Study Instructions (2.3 H) (one per group)
Case Studies (2.4 H), photocopied and pasted on cards (one per group)

**IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY/BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS**

The teacher should familiarize him or herself with the *Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics*.

**LINKS/RESOURCES**

- Media Awareness Network, “You Be the Editor”
  [www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/broadcast_news/you_be_the_editor.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/broadcast_news/you_be_the_editor.cfm)

- Society of Professional Journalists website
  [www.spj.org/index.asp](http://www.spj.org/index.asp)
### JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

#### CONCEPT ATTAINMENT DATA SET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Before reporting a story, the journalist tests the accuracy of her sources.</td>
<td>• A journalist is writing about a neo-nazi but avoids printing his statement because she finds it offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A re-enactment of a crime is used to tell a story and it is identified as a re-enactment.</td>
<td>• A journalist chooses not to reveal the source of his information because the source is a prominent business man who runs large ads in the journalist’s paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A violent crime has been committed and police have a suspect in mind. The journalist has reason to believe she knows who the suspect is, but avoids identifying him before the police have charged him.</td>
<td>• Photographs of a car accident show the parents’ dead bodies and a crying child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A journalist turns down a gift offered to him by the CEO of a business he is reporting on.</td>
<td>• A journalist omits information that is damaging to a particular political candidate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A journalist is married to the chief of police so he does not cover stories about local police matters to avoid conflict of interest.</td>
<td>• On her own time, a journalist takes on a role as a spokesperson for a company she has been investigating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• After a story has gone to print, a reporter realizes an error. He draws attention to the error and corrects it in the next day’s paper.</td>
<td>• A journalist accepts money from a clothing company to write a truthful but favourable story about that company.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE: Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behaviour and adopt this code to declare the Society’s principles and standards of practice.

SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT
Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources’ reliability.
- Always question sources’ motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labelled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public’s business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

MINIMIZE HARM
Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort.
- Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention.
- Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone’s privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Balance a criminal suspect’s fair trial rights with the public’s right to be informed.

ACT INDEPENDENTLY

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public’s right to know.

Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favours, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favoured treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favours or money; avoid bidding for news.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is voluntarily embraced by thousands of journalists, regardless of place or platform, and is widely used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide for ethical behaviour. The code is intended not as a set of “rules” but as a resource for ethical decision-making. It is not — nor can it be under the First Amendment — legally enforceable. The present version of the code was adopted by the 1996 SPJ National Convention, after months of study and debate among the Society’s members.
CASE STUDY INSTRUCTIONS

- Student A will read the case study aloud for the group.
- Student B will record on the chart paper a brief outline of the key details of the case, the group’s findings, and their reasons.
- Students C and D will refer to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics for guidelines and ideas.
- All students will contribute to the discussion.
- Before deciding which choice you would make as editor, you must refer to the Code of Ethics. Which guideline would apply to your case? State it.
- Post your Case Study on the piece of chart paper.
- Record your decision on the chart paper, and support your decision using evidence from the Code of Ethics.
- Post your chart paper.
- Student A will stay with the chart paper and must be prepared to present the group’s case to other groups.
CASE STUDIES
(ADAPTED FROM THE MEDIA AWARENESS NETWORK)

CASE STUDY NUMBER ONE

It is your newspaper’s policy to include cause of death whenever possible in obituaries of newsworthy people. A prominent cleric dies, but relatives refuse to discuss cause of death. A reporter is able to confirm from a close family member the cause was an AIDS-related illness.

Do you:

A. Go against wishes of the family and print that AIDS was the cause of death.
B. List the cause as complications of pneumonia, without reference to AIDS.

CASE STUDY NUMBER TWO

A once-prominent merchant, who disappeared from public life 20 years ago after a trial and conviction of fraud, dies. He had been well known not only for the store that bore his name but also because of his community service as head of several local fund-raising charities, his membership in leading civic and social clubs and because he was a decorated Second World War veteran. He served a short term in prison, his store was sold and eventually closed.

Do you:

A. Instruct a reporter writing the obituary to include details of this disgraceful episode in his life because his trial at the time was a major news story and to leave it out would look like a cover-up.
B. Tell the reporter to leave it out in deference to the family. The man has not been in the news for 20 years and nothing will be served by rehashing his misdeeds. Let him be remembered for his accomplishments.
CASE STUDY NUMBER THREE

During an armed robbery of an electronic store, two gunmen hold several customers hostage. After hours of negotiations, police storm the store and shoot the gunmen to death. In the gunfire, one of the robbers kills one of the hostages.

Later, a coroner tells your reporter that the dead hostage may have been committing a crime himself, because he had video equipment hidden in his clothing, which was "apparel that shoplifters use." The fact that the dead hostage may have been killed while shoplifting is news.

Do you:

A. Use the information, being careful to attribute it to the official sources.

B. Do not use this information because the dead man can't explain himself, and while the evidence is suspicious of shoplifting, the dead man's family shouldn't have to endure shame as well as grief.

CASE STUDY NUMBER FOUR

A reporter and photographer are assigned to interview a popular politician, who has recently completed an alcohol-recovery program paid for by a group of citizens. He is now pledged to a life of sobriety. One photo taken in his office reveals what appears to be a liquor bottle partially hidden in a bookcase, behind some folders.

Do you:

A. Erase the bottle from the picture.

B. Publish the picture intact and let readers come to their own conclusions.
**CASE STUDY NUMBER FIVE**

For three weeks there has been a persistent rumour in the business community that a local manufacturing firm plans to lay off up to one-quarter of its work force. Your reporter checks it out from all angles but the best sources come up with nothing. Although baseless, the rumour persists.

**Do you:**

A. True or not, you believe the rumor is news because it’s so widespread. You ask that a story be written reporting it is a rumor and also that no basis in fact can be found.

B. You decide to print no story because some readers may interpret it as a sneaky way of hinting the rumor may be true. Also, publishing non-news about a baseless rumor seems irresponsible.
LESSON 3: THE MEDIUM CHANGES THE MESSAGE

75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- READING – READING FOR MEANING
  - 1.1 Variety of Texts – Read a variety of short, contemporary student and teacher-selected texts from diverse cultures, identifying specific purposes for reading.
  - 1.2 Using Reading Comprehension Strategies – Select and use the most appropriate reading comprehension strategies to understand texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts.
  - 1.3 Demonstrating Understanding of Content – Identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts.
  - 1.4 Making Inferences – Make and explain inferences about texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, supporting their explanations with well chosen stated and implied ideas from the texts.
  - 1.6 Evaluating Texts – Evaluate the effectiveness of texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, using evidence from the text effectively to support their opinions.
  - 1.8 Critical Literacy – Identify and analyse the perspectives and/or biases evident in texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, commenting with growing understanding on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power.

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is the difference between fact and opinion?
- How do we think or use information critically to form opinions?

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will consider the ways in which technology has altered how news is produced, and how we receive and interpret news. Specifically, students will examine two perspectives on how professional and citizen journalists use Twitter to gather information and report the news. Using critical thinking strategies, students will formulate opinions on whether this technology hurts or improves the quality of news reported.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – Students will begin by considering the difference between the ways they receive information and the ways their parents’ or grandparents’ generations search for information. Hand out Venn Diagram (3.1 H). Tell the students make a list on the first side of the Venn diagram of all the different sources they would consult if they wanted to find out about something important that was happening in the world. Examples might include Google, Wikipedia, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Newsvine, blogs, text messaging a friend, in addition to newspapers, television, radio, and online news sites. Have students share some of their examples with the rest of the class. Then, instruct the students to list, on the other side of the Venn Diagram, the different sources their parents or grandparents would consult. Alternatively, ask students what sources
of information they think people would have consulted 20 years ago. When they are done, tell the
students that any sources that are the same should go in the middle section of the Venn Diagram, and
they should write these in this space now.

Ask students to consider the differences between the two sides of their Venn diagrams. In general,
students may notice the technological differences, but you also should draw their attention to the
participatory nature of newer technologies such as social networking sites, blogs, and Twitter. Many
online versions of newspapers also allow readers to comment in an un-moderated way. Ask students to
consider whether this is positive or negative. Allow some time to think, and then have the students write
down their opinions.

BOTH SIDES NOW – Tell the students that they will be reading two articles, each of which discusses the
pros and cons of the roles of Twitter and citizen journalists in covering news stories. Invite students to
to consider what they already know about this subject.

Place on the overhead projector a transparency of Both Sides Now (3.2 H/OH), and give a copy of the
same handout to each student (from Think Literacy, 74-77). On the overhead sheet, write the following
statement: Twitter positively affects the quality of today’s journalism. (If you do not wish to use an
overhead, simply write the statement on the board. Tell the students to write the same statement on
their handout sheets.

Review with the students the difference between information and opinion.

Display an overhead transparency of the first article, “Coverage of the G20 proved Twitter’s news edge”
(3.3 H/OH), and hand out photocopied versions to students.

T-CHART – Ask for one idea or piece of information from this article that supports the statement written
at the top of the chart, and record it under the Support side of the T-chart. Then, ask students to find a
piece of information that opposes the statement, and record it under the Opposes side of the chart. As
the students write these answers on their T-chart, you will write them on the overhead of the T-chart.

Once this example has been created, you may continue as a whole class, or allow the students to move
into pairs, or instruct the students to work individually to complete the T-chart for the first article.
Students should put as many examples as possible for both sides of the chart from this article. Observe
students’ progress, and intervene or clarify the task if necessary.

Once they have finished with the first article, hand out “Tweeting tragedy” (3.4 H/OH). Have students
complete the same task for the second article.

When everyone has completed the task, ask the students to read over and consider the two sides of
their T-charts. Remind them that they have been gathering evidence about the statement at the top of
their pages: Twitter positively affects the quality of today’s journalism. Based on the evidence on their
pages, students now should formulate a decision about the validity of the statement, write it in the box
on the page, and list their reasons for their decision in the appropriate section of the chart. Discuss the
answers, and then tell the students to hand in their T-chart organizers.

BRAINSTORM – Ask students to brainstorm additional questions that these articles might raise, or that
students might have about the connections between technology and the news media.
ACTIVISM

Students could listen to the CBC radio Q podcast episode on how social media helped raise funds for disaster relief in Haiti (see Links/Resources), and discuss how they might be able to use social media to raise funds for a particular cause in their community.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Collect graphic organizers Both Sides Now (2.2 H/OH), and assess for understanding.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LESSONS/HOMEWORK / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Use questions generated by students to develop additional lessons on technology and the news media. The teacher could work with the school’s teacher librarian to develop research topics for students to investigate.

CROSS CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

- Canadian and International Law CLN4U - Students could examine the extent to which Canadian citizen journalists are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
  - Analyse how rights and freedoms are protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (e.g., fundamental freedoms; democratic, mobility, legal, equality, and language rights).
  - Explain how rights included in the Charter are accompanied by corresponding responsibilities or obligations.
  - Explain how citizens can exercise their rights under the Charter (e.g., by initiating Charter challenges in the courts to legislation or government action; by raising the Charter as a defence when charged with an offence.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Venn Diagram (3.1 H), photocopied (one per student)
- Both Sides Now (3.2 H/OH), photocopied (one per student, as well as overhead transparency for teacher if desired)
- “Coverage of the G20 proved Twitter’s news edge” (3.3 H/OH), photocopied (one per student, as well as overhead transparency for teacher)
- “Tweeting tragedy” (3.4 H/OH), photocopied (one per student, as well as overhead transparency for teacher)
- Think Literacy: Cross Curricular Approaches Grades 7-12. 2003

IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY/BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

- **Newsvine** is a collaborative journalism website that draws content from users, as well as a number of mainstream news sources.
- **Hashtag** is a key word preceded by the # symbol, used within a tweet, allowing users to search tweets on similar topics.
- **Retweet** consists of tweets that have been reposted by other users.
- Tweet is the 140 character or less messages users post on Twitter.
• **Twitter** is a social networking, micro-blogging platform where individuals create status updates or “tweets” using 140 characters or less. These tweets are delivered to subscribers. The video “Twitter in Plain English” is an excellent resource for this. It is available on Youtube, and the link is posted under Links/Resources.

• **Vimeo** is a video sharing site similar to YouTube [http://vimeo.com/](http://vimeo.com/)

• **Web 2.0** is a term given to web applications that function in a more interactive way. Users are able to create media rather than just consume. Blogs, wikis, and social networking sites are all examples of web 2.0.

• **Webcast** is a video or audio broadcast transmitted via the internet.

**Links/Resources**


- Newsvine [www.newsvine.com/](http://www.newsvine.com/)

- PBS Newshour Extra: A news site geared at teens [www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/)

- “Twitter in Plain English” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o)


VENN DIAGRAM
## BOTH SIDES NOW

Name: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS</th>
<th>QUESTION OR STATEMENT</th>
<th>EVIDENCE THAT OPPOSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DECISION:**

**REASON:**

- 31 -
COVERED OF THE G20 PROVED TWITTER’S NEWS EDGE


The twipping point came late on the Saturday night of the G20 weekend, when a peaceful group of protesters was surrounded by police in riot gear.

Steve Paikin, host of TVO’s The Agenda, had been following the crowd as it made its way through the desolate streets of downtown Toronto, tweeting as he went along.

At first his comments were not particularly remarkable, echoing those of many others — activists, onlookers, bloggers — tracking the G20 security measures. But things changed on the Esplanade, as Paikin’s tweets suddenly grew alarming:

- “cops tightening their perimeter. why? they are forcing something they dont need to force 10:32:03 PM”
- “cops moving closer why? 10:37:09 PM”
- “arresin people 10:47:11 PM”
- “weapons are rubber bulles 10:54:18 PM”
- “i. gone police escor me 11:02:16 PM”

Long after the network crews had packed up, hours after reporters had filed their stories, Twitter was there, providing real-time news plus links to videos from the protest frontlines.

While news channels — which would later boast of capturing huge numbers of eyeballs — endlessly looped that afternoon’s footage of burning police cars, the news had moved on, to The Esplanade and, later still, to the east end detention centre where yet another group of protesters was encircled and rounded up in the wee hours of Sunday morning.

All of it was available via an iPhone webcast, distributed via Twitter, viewed by hundreds.

“All anybody who had a smart phone using Twitter had a real-time intelligence feed of everything that was going on,” says Internet strategist Jesse Hirsh, who describes the experience that night as “transcendent.”

Suddenly, casual usual users of Twitter, those had been previously only signalling their personal thoughts and daily activities, discovered an entirely new way to get news. That was evidenced by the hundreds of new followers gained by Paikin, Hirsh and other journalists using Twitter that night.

That the latest media — whether newspapers, radio, TV or telephones — fuel political and cultural revolutions is not a new idea, of course.

In 1989, for example, the world saw how fax machines helped bring about the fall of the Berlin Wall and generate the Tiananmen Square protests. Later, texting would serve to create flash demonstrations. The
Web would get people organized. Facebook sent thousands into the streets in January to protest Prime Minister’s Stephen Harper’s latest prorogation of Parliament.

There was talk of a “Twitter Revolution” last year in Iran, but subsequent research would show that relatively few tweets came out of that country. Not just because the government was blocking the site, but also because only a few thousand Twitter accounts existed in Iran at the time.

Most of the twittering was in the West, as observers “retweeted” what little news there was, or showed solidarity with the protesters in Tehran.

Still, not only does the medium carry the message, it serves to transform it.

And so, there was a clear dichotomy between television coverage of events and the information available to those following the Twitter “hashtags,” essentially search terms that channel data streams (#G20, #G20report, #G20mobilize).

Concordia University anthropology professor Maximilian Forte, who gives seminars about political activism on the Internet, says he was able to witness that split by tracking two of his students, one who followed conventional media such as cable news, the other in the streets using Twitter.

“The one who was relying only on mainstream media was only writing about anarchists, about what ‘thugs and goons’ they are, how they really deserved to get the crap beaten out of them while focusing on the destruction of private property and, of course, praising the police,” says Forte. “For him, there was this kind of homogenization that all the protesters were the same as these so-called ‘Black Bloc’ people.”

“There’s an interesting divide between society where, sadly, it’s the majority who still see a group of violent anarchists who deserve got the beatdown they got versus all the people who were privy to it via Twitter who are like, ‘OMG the rule of law was just discarded,’ ” concurs Hirsh. “It’s a real stark contrast.”

According to Hirsh, newspapers such as the Star, which had reporters tweeting from the streets and feeding a live blog of events, were way ahead of the game.

“There was a clear contrast between journalists who were using Twitter and journalists who weren’t,” says Hirsh, who comments on media for the CBC. “Journalists giving on-the-ground reports were far more accurate than those in newsrooms like (Peter) Mansbridge or Ann Rohmer. They thought they were doing value-added voiceover, but they really weren’t tied in to what was really happening.”

Which might explain why an Angus Reid poll, conducted in the immediate aftermath of the weekend’s wreckage, would show that a majority of respondents agreed with Forte’s student: most Canadians caught those same violent images on television.

Since that tumultuous weekend, the tweeting hasn’t stopped.

“The use of social media, it really does help to establish a public record, one that could contradict in very graphic and very concrete ways the official record, what is produced by the mainstream media,” says Forte. “The use of social media is putting out other truths for people to understand.”
That’s because not only were there journalists, corporate and alternative, in the streets, but there was also a phalanx of camera-wielding onlookers.

Online, on YouTube and Vimeo, there are countless videos, some amateurish, some slick, documenting the controversial security measures that resulted in more than 1,000 arrests.

From Twitter, which Forte calls the “gateway” that “leaks” into YouTube, blogs and the photo site Fickr, videos and personal narratives are migrating to Facebook, which is very popular among mainstream Canadians. As a result, growing numbers are getting a view of events very different from their first impressions.

Groups are forming to identify undercover police caught on video, to discuss theories about agents provocateurs, to call for answers. There is a groundswell demanding a full public inquiry, with one group counting more than 50,000 members.

The revolution won’t be televised. It may be tweeted.

“The story is still being written,” says Forte.

“To riff on William Gibson’s line, the future is here, it’s just not evenly distributed yet,” says Hirsh. “For those of us who experienced that weekend, who were immersed in the social media, we’re in the future. We had a transformative experience.

“We really feel that we lived it, that we experienced this Internet movement where Twitter transcended all traditional media, transcended the divisions between physical space and virtual space, transcended whether you were on the street or not on the street.

“We are not thinking in this Internet future. For us it’s the present tense.”
It is now widely accepted that the first stories and images to emerge from natural or man-made disasters are more likely to come from citizen journalists using social media tools than from professional journalists. After all, there are more than a billion people in the world who now have the capability to shoot videos, take pictures, write stories and share them with the world.

Sometimes, the product produced by amateur journalists can make history. The murder of Neda Agha Soltan by Iranian police was recorded on a camera phone during anti-government demonstrations in Tehran last June, and quickly became a symbol of the brutality of the Iranian regime.

Her story has now become the subject of a documentary broadcast on the PBS series Frontline, but without that original cellphone video, her death would have passed unnoticed outside of Iran.

So it is not surprising that when a U.S. Army Major opened fire on his fellow soldiers in Fort Hood Texas earlier this month, some of the first news of the incident arrived via Twitter. But those first tweets have sparked an interesting debate that highlights both the strengths and the weaknesses of using social media for reporting breaking news, and the challenges for mainstream media outlets in knowing what to do with the information they find on social media.

The controversy began with a scathing post at TechCrunch by former Guardian technology columnist Paul Carr, with the provocative title "After Fort Hood, Another Example of How 'Citizen Journalists' Can’t Handle the Truth."

The object of Carr’s ire was a soldier named Tearah Moore. She was based at Ford Hood, and happened to be inside the hospital (though not on duty) when the soldiers wounded and killed by the gunman, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, were being brought in to the emergency ward.

And like any good citizen journalist under those circumstances, Moore began to tweet about what she was seeing. Her information was picked up by some bloggers, and several mainstream media outlets were quick to try to establish contact with her (though none actually published her stories or pictures).

The problem, according to Paul Carr, was that some of the information she was tweeting was insensitive and inappropriate (she posted a picture of someone who "got shot in the balls") and some of it was incorrect (she erroneously reported that there was more than one gunman, and that Major Hasan had been killed).

This led Carr to conclude that "for all its sound and fury, citizen journalism once again did nothing but spread misinformation at a time when thousands of people with family at the base would have been freaking out already, and breach the privacy of those who had been killed or wounded."

Not surprisingly, fans of social media quickly rose up to attack Carr’s analysis. "His main assertions are unsupported by the facts, his interpretation riddled with holes, and his straw men pathetically easy to demolish," proclaimed blogger Suw Charman-Anderson.
Charman-Anderson pointed out that the mainstream media frequently peddles misinformation and violates privacy. And indeed, in the confusing hours after the shooting at Fort Hood, many mainstream outlets reported that the gunman had been shot to death.

According to Charman-Anderson, the fact that some people use social tools in foolish ways is no reason to dismiss the usefulness of social media or citizen journalism. “This is not a reflection on social tools so much as it is a reflection of human nature,” she concluded.

This same argument was raised in a debate between Paul Carr and social media maven Jeff Jarvis on radio station WYNC in New York City. “The internet is messy,” Jarvis told Carr, "but you want it to be packaged and filtered."

The internet is indeed messy, and it cannot be packaged and filtered. And that is precisely why mainstream journalists must handle it with care. Paul Carr’s assertion that citizen journalists “can’t handle the truth,” is clearly an over-statement.

Amateurs are here to stay, and as they have demonstrated in Iran and elsewhere, they have a useful role to play. But what happened at Fort Hood is a reminder of the important differences between the mainstream (News 1.0) and citizen journalism (News 2.0).

Mainstream journalists are hard-wired to want to be first with a big breaking news story. But it’s hard to compete with blogs and citizen journalism sites that don’t need to verify information before posting it. In a News 1.0 world, journalists have been trained it is better to be right than first, and it would be unfortunate, and ultimately very damaging, if that important principle was abandoned in a race to compete with citizen journalists like Tearah Moore.
LESSON 4: FEEDBACK FRENZY

75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- ORAL COMMUNICATION – LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND
  - 1.1 Purpose – Identify the purpose of a range of listening tasks and set goals for specific tasks.
  - 1.2 Using Active Listening Strategies – Select and use the most appropriate listening comprehension strategies before, during, and after listening to understand oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts.
  - 1.4 Demonstrating Understanding of Content – Identify the important information and ideas in oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, in a variety of ways.

- READING – READING FOR MEANING
  - 1.1 Variety of Texts – Read a variety of short, contemporary student and teacher-selected texts from diverse cultures, identifying specific purposes for reading.
  - 1.2 using Reading Comprehension Strategies – Select and use the most appropriate reading comprehension strategies to understand texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts.
  - 1.3 Demonstrating Understanding of Content – Identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts.
  - 1.4 Making Inferences – Make and explain inferences about texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, supporting their explanations with well chosen stated and implied ideas from the texts.

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What does it mean to be a good digital citizen?
- What, if any, limits should there be on freedom of expression?

INTRODUCTION/Overview

Many online news sites allow readers to post anonymous comments on stories in an attempt to involve readers in a conversation. Unfortunately, these comments often are abusive and defamatory. Students will consider the pros and cons of perceived online anonymity, and will discuss what it means to be a good digital citizen. They also will practise effective listening strategies while listening to a CBC podcast on this topic.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

FRAYER MODEL – Review the concept of digital citizenship with students. This is the concept of behaving in a responsible, safe, and courteous manner in digital spaces. To ensure that students have a good grasp of this concept, have students complete a Frayer Model (4.1 H) chart. Students will write “digital citizenship” in the centre of the chart, and then define it. Have them work individually, or in pairs, to come up with the characteristics, examples, and non-examples.
GRAPHIC ORGANIZER – Hand out the Graphic Organizer (4.2 H) to students, and ask them to list what they consider to be the pros and cons of anonymous commenting on news sites. Then hand out “News sites reining in nasty user comments” (4.3H), and have students read through the article. When they have read this article, they should add to their organizer any new ideas or details that they discovered. It may be helpful for some students to use two different coloured highlighters or pens to indicate pros and cons before adding them to the graphic organizer. Have students pair up to share their findings, before discussing as a whole class.

PODCAST – Explain to students that they are going to be listening to a podcast on the nature of online comments on news sites. This podcast will contain two interviews with individuals who discuss solutions for dealing with anonymous commenting (the podcast for this activity can be downloaded in its entirety, or played directly from the site). First, set a purpose for listening: Tell students that as they listen, they should identify two or three solutions for dealing with anonymous comments. They also may find some additional pros and cons for their chart.

Remind students that some of the listening strategies they are already using include setting a purpose for their listening, and using a graphic organizer to record their ideas. Ask students for some other suggestions. Examples may include visualizing, making connections, and asking questions.

Play the podcast. After listening, allow the students to share their findings in small groups, and then share with the entire class.

VALUES LINE – In order to synthesize their learning, students will form a value line (Beyond Monet, 74). Indicate that one end of the Value Line represents the strongest agreement with the statement, while the other end of the line would indicate the strongest disagreement with the statement (The class may have to move to the hallway for this activity). Present the following statement to the class: Given that anonymous comments can be abusive and offensive, internet news sites should ban anonymous commenting.

Ask students to arrange themselves on the Value Line according to the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement. Encourage them to talk to other students to get a sense of where they should stand on the line. When everyone has found a place on the line, ask for volunteers to explain why they placed themselves where they did.

ANCHOR CHART – Once students return to their seats, explain to them that sometimes the perceived anonymous nature of the Internet leads people to post things they would not otherwise post. Using their Frayer Model (4.1 H) about digital citizenship as a reference point, ask the class to work in small groups or pairs to develop a list of guidelines individuals should use to ensure that they are practising good digital citizenship. Transfer these suggestions to an anchor chart to post in the classroom.

Suggestions might include:

- Don’t post anything online you wouldn’t want your grandmother to read.
- Think before you post.
- If you wouldn’t say it to a person’s face, you probably shouldn’t post it online.
- Never assume that anything you post is anonymous.
- Don’t respond to negative comments.
- Be constructive and positive.
- Avoid posting personal information.
**Activism**

Students could create a PSA (public service announcement) to inform other students about how to be good digital citizens. Students could write letters to the editor of an online news source that allows anonymous commenting, and share their opinions.

**Assessment Opportunities**

- Frayer Model (4.1 H) may be assessed for understanding of the concept. The Graphic Organizer (4.2 H) may be collected and assessed, to determine how well students are able to select and analyze relevant information, both from the text and the podcast.

**Implications for Future Lessons/Homework / Extension Activities**

Fold the Value Line in half, so that students are facing each other. This way, students at opposite ends of the Value Line are paired up. Ask each person to explain to their partner their point of view, and then switch. Alternatively, students could discuss the Value Line statement using Four Corners (Beyond Monet, 162).

News sites are not the only places where anonymous, un-moderated comments can become abusive and defamatory. Students could consider the case of Jessi Slaughter (not her real name), an 11 year old girl who posted provocative and controversial videos on Youtube, igniting a tirade of abusive comments from anonymous users (See Links/Resources). Using the anchor chart, students could identify the poor choices the girl made, as well as the better choices that both she and her parents could have made, in dealing with the negative comments. YouTube also has a safety mode at the bottom of the screen that can be turned on to help filter out objectionable material.

**Cross Curricular Connections**

- Healthy Active Living Education, Grade 12, Open – Students could use the concept of digital citizenship to examine what conflict resolution might look like in digital spaces.
  - Living Skills – Conflict Resolution
    - Describe positive and negative aspects of conflict.
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the factors that promote harmony among people (e.g., tolerance, respect for individual differences, empathy).
    - Demonstrate an ability to use strategies to cope with conflict (e.g., using mediation in highly charged situations).

**Materials and Resources**

- Frayer Model (4.1 H) (one per student)
- Graphic Organizer (4.2 H) (one per student)
- News sites reigning in nasty user comments (4.3H) (one per student)
- Computer with Internet access and speakers to play podcast. Alternatively, the podcast could be downloaded and played from an mp3 player.
- Highlighters (2 colours)
IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY/BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

- **Digital citizenship** is the concept of behaving in a responsible, safe, and courteous manner in digital spaces.
- **Filter** is a program that will block unwanted content.
- **Podcast** is a syndicated audio program delivered over the Internet so that individuals can download the program to mp3 players or computers.
- **Social media** is the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate through the internet to share information and resources. One of the defining features of social media is that it encourages active participation rather than passive consumption of information. Examples include Twitter, Delicious, Diigo, blogs, Facebook, and wikis.

LINKS/RESOURCES


- Video outlining the “Jessi Slaughter” case [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnx9YL8SUCM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnx9YL8SUCM)
4.1 H

**FRAYER MODEL**

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**Digital Citizenship**
### ANONYMOUS COMMENTS

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### SOLUTIONS

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NEWS SITES REINING IN NASTY USER COMMENTS

(REFERENCE: BY STEPHANIE GOLDBERG, SPECIAL TO CNN, JULY 19, 2010 12:59 P.M. EDT)

(CNN) -- User comments on news sites, while vital to interactive storytelling in the digital age, often read like scribblings on a bathroom stall: anonymous, offensive and full of hate.

"I hate what you people, and by that I mean the blacks, are doing to this city," wrote one Buffalo News reader last month in response to a story about a local shooting. "Each area you move too [sic] quickly becomes over run [sic] with crime, loud music [at] all hours, adults swearing and screaming at kids, children playing in the street, porches with beer and garbage thrown all around."

Rants like this one prompted the Buffalo, New York, newspaper to discontinue anonymous user comments on its website as of August 2. Commenters will be required to register with their name, city of residence and phone number -- more information than most news sites require -- and staffers will attempt to verify their identities.

The pros and cons of anonymity

The debate over inflammatory online comments always seems to boil down to whether users should be allowed to post anonymously. Some industry observers say many people would be reluctant to comment without the promise of anonymity, which encourages candor.

"By allowing anonymous comments, you're going to get things and information that otherwise would not come to light," said media lawyer Robert Bertsche, who represents the New England Newspaper & Press Association.

For example, if a commenter is working at a company where criminal activity is taking place, there's great social value in that person speaking out -- and they're far less likely to do so if they can't post anonymously, he said.

Others argue that anonymity protects irresponsible or even dangerous commenters.

"With no name attached, the commenters basically wear a hood and swing a sharp axe," said Robert Steele, director of the Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics at Depauw University. "The intent in allowing and encouraging these comments online is to increase page views and time spent on the site. It's a business motivation."

Sullivan of the Buffalo News predicts the paper is likely to see a smaller number of people commenting once the new system goes into effect next month. But she believes it was the only logical next step toward cleaning up the site's reader forums, and she hopes the comments that stories do receive are more thoughtful.

Some Buffalo News users have already expressed concerns for their personal safety if their names and hometowns are posted along with their comments.

Wrote one user, "I'd rather not take the chance that some lunatic does not agree with my point of view and tries to tell me that face to face."
But this isn't a problem for many online readers of The Wall Street Journal, who under site policy have been posting comments with their real names since 2008.

"Real names help [improve the discourse] but it's also about the community of people who are attracted to the content ... certain types of content are more likely to attract people who violate our terms of service," WSJ.com managing editor Kevin Delaney told CNN.

The Journal is able to verify many commenters because subscribers register with their real names and credit card information. However, people who register for free are on the honor system.

"People slip through with fake names, but our commenters, with some frequency, do flag those for us," Delaney said.

Jean Balloon, whose comments have been recommended on the site more than 500 times to date, says she's gotten death threats from other commenters in the past.

"Die and die quickly," read one of the threats, about a comment she posted on a story about BP and the Gulf oil disaster. But that hasn't stopped Balloon from posting her honest opinions online.

"The opportunity to post your ideas and beliefs far outweigh a few crazy people," she told CNN. "I try not to live my life in fear."

**The future of online comments?**

Though soft registration, and requiring readers to provide their real names, still hasn't managed to completely clean up comment boards, there is one technological advance that Bill Adee, vice president of digital development and operations for Chicago Tribune, says significantly reduces the amount of hate speech spewed by commenters.

"As we implement registration that's tied to people's social media profiles, that helps raise the level of discourse on the comment boards," Adee said. "Nobody is going to drop an f-bomb when their grandma can see it on Facebook."

From requiring users' full names and phone numbers to linking user comments with Facebook accounts, news sites are approaching this issue in many different ways. And that's OK, said Myers of the Poynter Institute.

"I don't see there being one approach that's going to work for everyone," he said.

And online comment systems will only continue to evolve. Myers predicts that sites will move beyond banning certain users from commenting or asking readers to flag irresponsible comments. In the near future, journalists will be asked to get in on the action by monitoring and, at times, taking part in the discussion about their stories, he said.

Some beat reporters and bloggers already do this. By entering the comment threads and asking questions of their users, they can help lead the discussion, Myers said.

Journalists "aren't trained on how to interact with their audience," he said. "This idea is fairly new ... [they're] going to have to think about publishing as not the end of the process, but as one step."
In Buffalo, Sullivan believes her site's new system will at least encourage users to be more civil. But even she is not entirely sure if will yield the results the News is hoping for.

"That's the whole thing about the media in the Internet age," she said. "We're just throwing a lot of things up against the wall to see what sticks."
LESSON 5: EVALUATING SPEAKING STRATEGIES

75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- ORAL COMMUNICATION – LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND
  - 1.7 Analysing Texts – Analyse oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, focusing on the ways in which they communicate information, ideas, issues, and themes and influence the listener’s/ viewer’s response.
  - 1.8 Critical Literacy – Identify and analyse the perspectives and/or biases evident in oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment with growing understanding on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power.

- ORAL COMMUNICATION – SPEAKING TO COMMUNICATE
  - 2.1 Purpose – Communicate orally for a range of purposes, using language appropriate for the intended audience.
  - 2.3 Clarity and Coherence – Communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience.
  - 2.5 Vocal Strategies – Identify a variety of vocal strategies, including tone, pace, pitch, and volume, and use them effectively and with sensitivity to audience needs and cultural differences.
  - 2.6 Non-Verbal Cues – Identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, and use them effectively to help convey their meaning and with sensitivity to audience needs and cultural differences.

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are the qualities of an effective speaker?
- How does one effectively support and express an opinion using oral language?

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

In preparation for the unit’s culminating task of a debate, students will identify effective speaking strategies by participating in role playing and watching examples of effective speakers. They will identify their own strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

USING ROLE PLAY TO IDENTIFY PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE – Have students work in pairs and identify themselves as either A or B. A will begin by describing a day in the life of a typical high school student, recognizing that the listener is a peer. B will then describe a teen’s typical day, like A did, but now imagining that person A is a grandparent. When both days have been described, ask students to identify the ways in which their stories changed, based on the audience. Encourage them to think about words used, information given or omitted, pacing, etc. Next, repeat the exercise, but change the purpose. Partner B will tell to a peer the story of a day, with the purpose of entertaining the listener. Partner A then will tell the story to the “grandparent,” with the purpose of gaining sympathy. When both stories have been told, instruct the students to reflect, either orally or in writing, about the exercise they just
completed. How does audience and purpose affect the choices we make, both in content and in word choice?

SPEECHES – Explain to students that they will be viewing two different speeches. The first time they watch the speeches their goals will be to identify the intended audience and purpose, and one or two reasons they know this. Distribute Effective Speaking Skills (5.1 H). Students will make notes on this sheet as they view the speeches.

Links to a number of suggested speeches are provided under Links/Resources in this document. The teacher should choose speeches, either from this list or from their own collection, based on the students’ interests and prior knowledge. Sections of speeches shown should be approximately five minutes, in order to allow multiple viewings. Show the first speech, and allow students time to jot down their ideas on the work sheet they were given. Then show the second speech, and allow time to record ideas. Discuss results as a whole class.

Show the same speeches a second time. This time, direct students to listen for vocal strategies such as tone, pace, pitch, and volume, and to watch for non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact. Students should be able to explain how these help to convey meaning. Discuss what each speaker did effectively.

As a whole class, use the observations to create an anchor chart of effective speaking skills. Students will be able to refer back to this chart during the culminating task. Ask students to complete the personal reflection at the bottom of the handout.

ACTIVISM

Students have seen examples of effective speakers, but the media also provides us with some examples of less appropriate public speaking. Students could watch an excerpt of the TV show “The View,” and identify the negative behaviours. They then could establish guidelines for disagreeing agreeably, and speaking to each other respectfully.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Collect and assess Effective Speaking Skills (5.1 H). Use the personal reflection section at the end of this sheet to have students set goals for oral communication skills.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LESSONS/HOMEWORK / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

This lesson requires students to reflect on their skills. This reflection could be used as evidence for a portfolio on student work. Students also should be directed to use the anchor chart of effective speaking skills when preparing for the culminating task for this unit.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Effective Speaking Skills (5.1 H) (one per student)
- Computer with internet access and data projector.
- Two speeches, chosen from the Links/Resources list below
- Chart paper and markers
**IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY/BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS**

- **Anchor chart** is a poster that serves as a visual reminder of strategies or content that students previously have learned.

**LINKS/RESOURCES**

- Links to some of Rick Mercer’s Rants:
  - Bullying: www.youtube.com/watch?v=USgEmz5WHsA
  - The Queen: www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5GZIDnMzZQ&feature=related
  - Voting: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJajpU_boTE

- TED talks: The TED website contains numerous talks on a wide range of ideas.
  - Jamie Oliver on teaching kids about food: www.ted.com/talks/jamie_oliver.html
  - Sir Ken Robinson on creativity: www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html

- Article on “The View”
  - “Cat Fight! CBS prepares a ‘View’ competitor” http://bit.ly/cVaP0Q
## Effective Speaking Skills

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<td><strong>How do you know?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Effective Speaking Strategies</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Personal Reflection:</strong></td>
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<td>Which of the strategies listed above do you already use? Which ones do you still need to work on?</td>
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LESSON 6: RESEARCH JIGSAW

2x75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- WRITING – DEVELOPING AND ORGANIZING CONTENT
  - 1.2 Generating and Developing Ideas – Generate, expand, explore, and focus ideas for potential writing tasks, using a variety of strategies and print, electronic, and other resources, as appropriate.
  - 1.3 Research – Locate and select information to effectively support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and print, electronic, and other resources, as appropriate.
  - 1.5 Reviewing Content – Determine whether the ideas and information gathered are accurate and complete, interesting, and effectively meet the requirements of the writing task.

- MEDIA – UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
  - 1.2 Interpreting Messages – Interpret media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey.
  - 1.5 Critical Literacy – Identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power.

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are the pros and cons of the convergence of technology and the news media?
- How should the convergence of technology and the news media change the way we consume and participate in the news?

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

In order to prepare for their informal debates, students will need to investigate additional topics and perspectives, on the convergence between new media and news media. It would be helpful to consult with the school’s teacher librarian in planning this lesson. Students will need access to the Internet and school databases for their research, so a lab should be booked in advance.

*This lesson will take approximately two class periods.*

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

DEBATE – Explain to students that they are going to be engaging in an informal debate about the following statement: “Be it resolved that the positive impact of digital technology on the news media outweighs the negative impact.” At this point, students may be concerned about which side of the debate they will choose to argue, so it will be important to inform them that they will need to be prepared to present evidence for both sides of the debate.

ESTABLISHING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - Handout the Research Note Template (6.1 H), and ask students to write down what they already know about the topic identified on the sheet as the Academic Controversy. These ideas should include points that support the statement, and points that refute it. When they have
finished, ask them to highlight information that supports the Academic Controversy statement (the debate topic) with one colour, and highlight information that opposes the statement with another. They will repeat this technique with information they gather during the research period.

**JIGSAW SET UP** – Students will gather research and share it as a jigsaw activity (*Beyond Monet*, 258). Arrange students into groups of five or six. These groups will be the students’ “home” groups. They will be responsible for reporting back to these groups the information that they find when they are in the “expert” groups.

In each “home” group, assign students the following research topics:

- plagiarism
- doctoring images
- freedom of expression
- citizen journalism in developing nations
- the decline of print journalism.

Additional topics could include:

- social media
- news bloggers
- alternative media
- news aggregators

If possible, limit the number of topics (and group members) to about five, in order to keep the project manageable. If one group has six members, you could assign one of the topics to two students, rather than adding topics. Once each student in the “home” group has a topic, instruct the students to move from their “home” groups to sit with their “expert” groups. The expert group is made up of all the students who have been assigned the same topic. Students will be working together in these “expert” groups to research their topic.

Remind students that while their topics may sound broad, they must remember that they are looking at each topic with a more specific focus. For example, when looking at plagiarism, they are trying to find out how technology has affected plagiarism in the news media.

**ESTABLISHING WEBSITE RELIABILITY** – Given the topics, most if not all of the information students will be gathering will be found online. It may be necessary to review with students guidelines for determining whether or not a website is reliable. **Website Evaluation Checklist (6.2 H)** provides a checklist students can use for this purpose. Go over the details on this list, and encourage students to refer to it to check each of the sources they find.

**RESEARCH** – With the help of the teacher librarian, students will begin working in their “expert” groups to research their topics. As they work, the teacher should circulate around the classroom, to help clarify the research topics and to ensure that the students are focusing on facts that are related to the Academic Controversy (AC) statement. Tell the students not to worry at this point whether or not their information supports or opposes the statement.

Once each expert group has four or five strong facts for their topic, instruct students to move with their group to an area where they can review their research and discuss their findings. Provide each expert
group with two different highlight colours, and instruct them to use one colour to identify information and research that supports the AC statement, and use the other colour to identify information and research that opposes the AC statement. After they have categorized their research, expert groups will determine, based on their research, whether they “support” or “oppose” the AC statement.

The teacher should circulate among the groups to ensure that all group members have the same information recorded, so that they will be able to report back to their “home” groups.

Next, students will move back into their “home” groups and, one at a time, will share their research findings with their other group members. Tell the class that every student is expected to make notes of the details about all five assigned topics. The teacher may wish to copy extra research note templates for note-taking purposes. Remind students that they will need thorough notes in order to be prepared for the next day’s Academic Controversy.

**ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- Research notes may be collected and assessed.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LESSONS/HOMWORK / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

This lesson is the stepping-stone necessary for completing the Academic Controversy activity which is the culminating task for this unit; however, the research lessons also could be extended to provide an additional mini-unit on effective research strategies. This would be an ideal opportunity to co-plan with the teacher librarian.

**MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

- Research Note Template (6.1 H) (one or more per student)
- Website Evaluation Checklist (6.2 H) (one per student)
- Library or computer lab

**IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY/BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS**

- Teachers should familiarize themselves with the Academic Controversy process outlined in Lesson 7 before beginning lesson 6.
- News aggregator is computer software or a website that collects a specific type of information from multiple online sources. Individuals can set up feeds on their computers so that they receive alerts each time a new story is published on a specific topic in which they are interested. Rather than searching for the story, the story comes to them.

**LINKS/RESOURCES**

- These sites are good sources for students as they research their topics:
  - Common Sense Media
    [www.commonsensemedia.org/search/news](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/news)
  - The Canadian Journalism Project
    [www.j-source.ca/english_new/](http://www.j-source.ca/english_new/)
Many school libraries have access to online databases that are good sources for research. Some of these databases include:

- Canadian Points of View Reference Centre eLibrary
  [http://elibrary.bigchalk.com](http://elibrary.bigchalk.com)
6.1

**RESEARCH NOTE TEMPLATE**

Name: ________________________________

As you take notes, use two different coloured highlighters to indicate material that supports the Academic Controversy statement, and material that opposes the statement.

For: ________________________________  Against: ________________________________

**Academic Controversy:**
Be it resolved that the positive impact of digital technology on the news media outweighs the negative impact.

What do I already know about this?

**ADDITIONAL RESEARCH:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Source:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
WEBSITE EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Who’s In Charge? Determine Authority

- Is it absolutely clear which company or organization is responsible for the information on the site?
- Is there a link to a page describing what the company or organization does and the people who are involved (an “About Us” page)?
- Is there a valid way of making sure the company or organization is legitimate – meaning, is this a real place that has real contact information (email only is not enough)?

Are You Telling Me The Truth? Determine Accuracy

- Can I easily figure out who wrote the information?
- Are all factual claims clearly substantiated, that is, are there cited (linked) sources?
- Are there any glaring grammatical and spelling errors? This could indicate that the content is not credible.
- How long ago was the page updated? Is there a date stamp on the article somewhere? You’ll need this, especially if you’re using MLA-style citation.
- Can you verify the expertise of the author? Are the writer’s qualifications clearly stated somewhere on the site?

Are You Selling Me Something? Determine Motivation

- Is there an overwhelming bias in the information? Does the writing seem fair and balanced, or is the writing overly slanted towards a particular point of view?
- Is the URL appropriate to the content? You should be able to figure out from the site address to whom the site belongs, since most organizations and businesses put their name in the URL. This is a good way to determine quickly if the site is legitimate for your purposes. For example, if you’re researching mad cow disease, you probably don’t want to get information from the Beef Farmers of America.
- Are the ads clearly separated from the content?

Evaluating Sources on the Web – Use Common Sense

- Use common sense when considering a Web site for inclusion in your research project or academic paper. Just because something made its way onto the Web absolutely does not mean that it’s credible, reliable, or even true.

(REFERENCE: MODIFIED FROM HOW TO EVALUATE A WEBSITE - BASIC EVALUATION CHECKLIST BY WENDY BOSWELL, ABOUT.COM GUIDE)
LESSON 7: ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY

75 minutes

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- ORAL COMMUNICATION – LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND
  - 1.1 Purpose – Identify the purpose of a range of listening tasks and set goals for specific tasks.
  - 1.2 Using Active Listening Strategies – Select and use the most appropriate active listening strategies when participating in a range of situations.
  - 1.3 Using Listening Comprehension Strategies – Select and use the most appropriate listening comprehension strategies before, during, and after listening to understand oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts.
  - 1.4 Demonstrating Understanding of Content – Identify the important information and ideas in oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, in a variety of ways.

- ORAL COMMUNICATION – SPEAKING TO COMMUNICATE
  - 2.1 Purpose – Communicate orally for a range of purposes, using language appropriate for the intended audience.
  - 2.2 Interpersonal Speaking Strategies – Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of interpersonal speaking strategies and adapt them to suit the purpose, situation, and audience, exhibiting sensitivity to cultural differences.
  - 2.3 Clarity and Coherence – Communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience.
  - 2.4 Diction and Devices – Use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology, and a variety of stylistic devices, to effectively communicate their meaning and engage their intended audience.
  - 2.5 Vocal Strategies – Identify a variety of vocal strategies, including tone, pace, pitch, and volume, and use them effectively and with sensitivity to audience needs and cultural differences.
  - 2.6 Non-Verbal Cues – Identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, and use them effectively to help convey their meaning and with sensitivity to audience needs and cultural differences.

- MEDIA – UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
  - 1.5 Critical Literacy – Identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power.

- MEDIA – CREATING MEDIA TEXTS
  - 3.4 Producing Media Texts – Produce media texts, including increasingly complex texts, for a variety of purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.

KEY CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- In order for this activity to be effective, students need to understand how to disagree agreeably. Engaging All by Creating High School Learning Communities, by Jeanne Gibbs, provides a number of effective strategies that can be used to develop team-work and interpersonal skills.
INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Students will engage in Academic Controversy (Beyond Monet, 309), which is a task that allows students to build on skills practised during the Four Corners and Value Line exercises in previous lessons. They will evaluate and synthesize information studied in class and through their own research, by engaging in an informal debate with other classmates. This task may be the culminating task for the unit, or a stepping-stone to one of the extension activities listed below.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY – Review the strategies for effective speaking posted on the anchor chart in the class.

Review the topic stated in the previous lesson: “Be it resolved that the positive impact of digital technology on the news media outweighs the negative impact.” Explain to the class that in an Academic Controversy exercise, students will have the opportunity to examine both sides of the issue. Before beginning, hand out Academic Controversy Steps (7.1 H), and review the steps with students. Depending on the class, it might be helpful to complete a mock Academic Controversy, using a very simple statement such as, “Be it resolved that cats are better than dogs.” Once everyone understands what is expected, you can move on to the researched topic.

Arrange students in groups of four or six, and have students letter off A1, A2, (A3), and B1, B2, (B3). Assign A as Pro and B as Con. Ask students to arrange their desks so that, within their groups, A’s are sitting on one side and B’s are sitting on the other. Each group will stage its own debates.

Allow time for students to prepare their opening points. The A’s will be making points to support the Academic Controversy topic, while the B’s will be making notes that rebut the topic. Using notes from yesterday’s research period, as well as their notes from previous lessons, students should identify approximately three points that make their case, with clear evidence to support those points. In order to increase accountability, explain to students that they all need to be prepared to share arguments, as you will call out A1 or B2, identifying the individual expected to speak. Allow approximately five minutes for these preparations, but clearly identify how much time you are allowing. Consider using a count-down clock or timer.

Identify the individuals who are going to present the opening points (A1 for example) in each group, reminding them to practise effective speaking strategies. Those who are not speaking should be taking down notes, as they will be asked to present a rebuttal to the ideas presented. They should be practising active listening strategies. Hand out Academic Controversy: Recording Sheet (7.2 H), for the students to use as a recording sheet. Then let students know how much time they will have to present. Two to five minutes should be sufficient. Tell the first speakers to begin, and start the clock.

After the first points have been made, when the time is up, the opposite side will have time to prepare a rebuttal. It is their job to identify what they consider to be flaws in their opponents’ arguments. Allow about five minutes.

Present the rebuttal. As with the first step, the teacher can use numbered heads to identify the individual responsible for speaking during this round. Again, indicate the amount of time students will have, and use a clear signal to indicate when the time is up.
Now the Pros and Cons will flip sides in the debate, and then repeat steps four to seven. This forces the students to examine both sides of the Academic Controversy, as they now have to argue against the side on which they started.

Once the debates have finished, have students consolidate what they have learned and identify where they now stand on this issue. Use a Value Line or Four Corners exercise (See lessons 1 and 4 for instructions) for the students to demonstrate the positions they now hold on the Academic Controversy topic.

Finally, have students submit their Academic Controversy: Recording Sheets (7.2 H). Then, as a group, fill out and then submit a Team Assessment (7.3 H).

Note to teacher: Before posting any work online, the teacher should review with students the anchor chart created in Lesson 4. While contributing in a positive way to the exchange of ideas on the Internet is an important aspect of digital citizenship, students also need to take appropriate precautions, such as not revealing personal information, and using a nickname and avatar. Students do not need to post publicly any of the extension activities in order for them to be effective, but doing so does make the activities more authentic.

ACTIVISM

Student could discuss appropriate ways for dealing with and reporting examples of online hate. See Tips for Dealing With Cyberbullies (7.4 H).

Have students read YouTube’s Community Guidelines and Safety Tips (See Links/Resources), and check to see that they understand what to do if they encounter harassment online on a site like YouTube.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- As students are debating, the teacher should circulate and ensure that students are participating equally and practising effective speaking and listening strategies. The teacher could make anecdotal notes during this time. The teacher could use a tape recorder or digital recorder, and move it around to record portions of each debate. This could be used as assessment evidence.
- Students also will be submitting their recording sheets as evidence of ideas discussed. These could be assessed as well.
- Additionally, the teacher could assign one of the extension activities outlined below, or allow students to choose between the different activities as a way to consolidate their learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LESSONS/HOMWORK / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The following activities may be presented as extension activities for this unit:

Choose one of the following activities to demonstrate your knowledge, understanding, and opinion about digital technology and the news media. Your audience is your peers and teachers, and your purpose is to persuade. Choose the option that best allows you to demonstrate your learning.

- Activity A: Blog it out
  - Write a blog post where you outline and support your opinion about the impact of digital technology on the news media. Use other editorials studied as models for your piece.
Your article should be approximately 500 words, and should demonstrate an awareness of audience and purpose, as well as an awareness of the issue.

- **Activity B: Rant Like Rick**
  - Prepare your own version of one of Rick Mercer’s rants, where you outline and support your opinion about the impact of digital technology on the news media. Your rant may be taped or presented live. It should be approximately two to three minutes long, and should demonstrate an awareness of audience and purpose, as well as an awareness of the issue.

- **Activity C: Opinion Collage**
  - Using either traditional methods or an online site such as www.glogster.com, create a collage of images, words, and phrases that outline and support your opinion about the impact of digital technology on the news media. Your collage should include a written explanation of the different images and words/phrases. Your collage should demonstrate an awareness of audience and purpose, as well as an awareness of the issue.

**Cross Curricular Connections**

- Healthy Active Living Education, Grade 12, Open – The social skills and team work skills necessary for this activity tie in well with the Social Skills expectations of this course.
  - **Social Skills**
    - Demonstrate an ability to work effectively with groups of individuals from different cultures to accomplish group goals.
    - Demonstrate an ability to use strategies needed to overcome the barriers to functioning effectively as a group.
    - Demonstrate an ability to use appropriate strategies to reach group consensus; explain qualities and factors that promote and enhance close personal relationships (e.g., communication, honesty, responsibility, equality).

**Materials and Resources**

- Academic Controversy Steps (7.1 H) (one per group)
- Academic Controversy: Recording Sheet (7.2 H) (one per student)
- Team Assessment (7.3 H) (one per group)
- Tips for Dealing with Cyberbullies (7.4 H)
- Timer
- Gibbs, Jeanne. *Engaging All by Creating High School Learning Communities*. Windsor, California: CenterSource Systems, LLC.

**Important Terminology/Background for Teachers**

- **Blog** or **web log** is an online diary or journal, often expressing views on a particular topic such as politics or music.
- **Avatar** is a computer user’s digital representation of him or herself.
**Links/Resources**

- Glogster: a free site that allows students to create multimedia posters and collages.  
  www.glogster.com  
  o Teachers can also create free educator accounts, which allow the teacher to set up student accounts so they do not have to provide their email addresses.  
  http://edu.glogster.com/

- Blogger: a free blogging platform hosted by Google. Students do need to create gmail accounts in order to use this site.  
  www.blogger.com/home

- Edublogs: another site for free blogs geared specifically toward teachers and students.  
  http://edublogs.org

- Rick Mercer’s website  
  www.rickmercer.com

- YouTube Safety Tips  
  www.youtube.com/t/safety

- YouTube Community Guidelines  
  www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines
ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY STEPS

- Groups of 4 or 6
- Letter off A1, A2, (A3) and B1, B2, (B3)
- Plan opening points
- Present opening points
- Plan rebuttal
- Present rebuttal
- Switch sides
- Plan opening points
- Present opening points
- Plan rebuttal
- Present rebuttal
- Whole class discussion
- Reflection
ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY: RECORDING SHEET

Name: ________________________________

CONTROVERSY:

Be it resolved that: __________________________________________

__________________________________________

#### Pro Points:

#### Con Points:

#### Consensus
TEAM ASSESSMENT

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS A TEAM:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Did all of the members of our group contribute ideas?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did all the members of our group listen carefully to the ideas of other group members?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did all of the members of our group encourage other members to contribute their thoughts and opinions?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three ways that we helped each other learn the material:

One difficulty our group had was (explain fully):

To resolve this difficulty we could:

Group Names:

_________________________________________  _________________________________________

_________________________________________  _________________________________________

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**TIPS FOR DEALING WITH CYBER BULLIES**

- Don’t pass along cyber bullying messages.
- Don’t respond to negative or hateful comments.
- Block all communication with cyber bullies.
- Set an example and discourage your friends from posting hateful comments.
- Report cyber bullying to a trusted adult.
- Get in touch with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) for assistance in blocking cyber bullies.
- Report cyber bullying problems to the local authorities and give them copies of bullying messages you've received.