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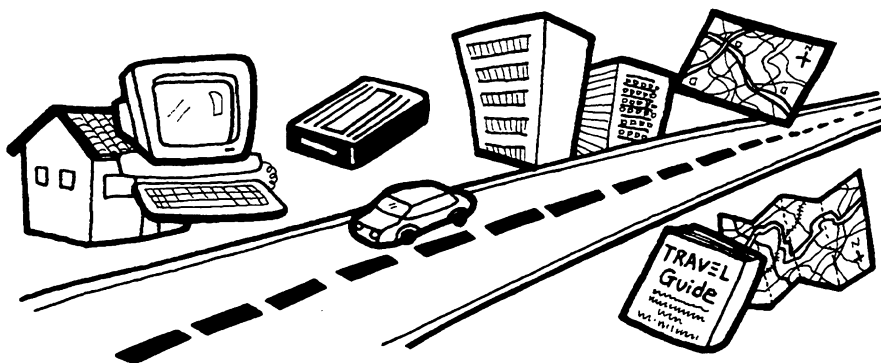
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the wonderful world of the Internet, a vast expanse of information and communication, the freedom of which has not been seen in the history of the world. It is now possible for one to find information on nearly any topic at the touch of a finger upon a keyboard or mouse. Unlike the printed medium, a computer attached to the Internet is not limited to text and pictures. Today's information superhighway is alive with sound, video, and animation. Written correspondence that once took days to be delivered can now be read within seconds after being sent. Even face to face video conferencing with people all over the world can be done if one has the right hardware and software.

If you think you will not be part of this change, look at history. The telegraph, telephone, and television were all considered luxury items at one time and not one of these inventions has grown in popularity at the rate that the Internet has. In fact, the global telecommunication network called the Internet is just the technological evolution of the three aforementioned inventions.

In the face of such a radical change in how we get our information, we must educate ourselves, our children, and our students that it is the information and not the Internet that is important. Students must learn not only how to find the information but to process it, evaluate it, and use it in a responsible manner.

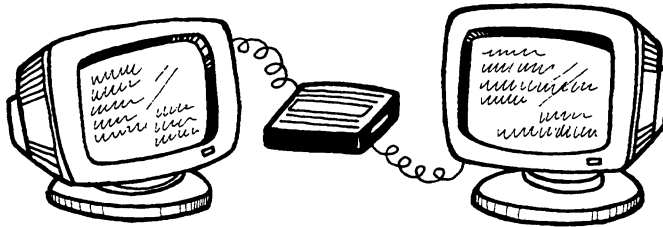
The next five years will create a paradigm shift in the way we and our schools relate to the world. The information superhighway has become a reality. From your school, office, or home you will be able to travel all over the world to gather and share information, interact with others, and take part in discussions and adventures. As more people travel this electronic highway, maps to find information and rules to keep travelling safe become vital to successfully completing the journey.



WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

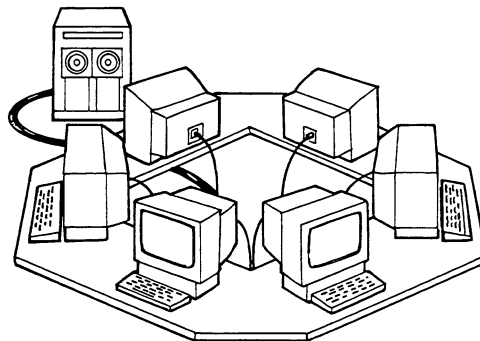
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

You cannot begin a discussion of the Internet without understanding telecommunications. It is the ability for computers to exchange information over distance. This is usually done with a piece of hardware called a modem. Modems translate the digital information that a computer uses into analog, or sound information, that can be transmitted over telephone lines. Once transmitted, a computer equipped with a modem at the other end of the line receives the analog information and translates it back to its digital form. Computers can use this “connectivity” to exchange documents, programs, or mail and even control each other.



WHAT IS A NETWORK?

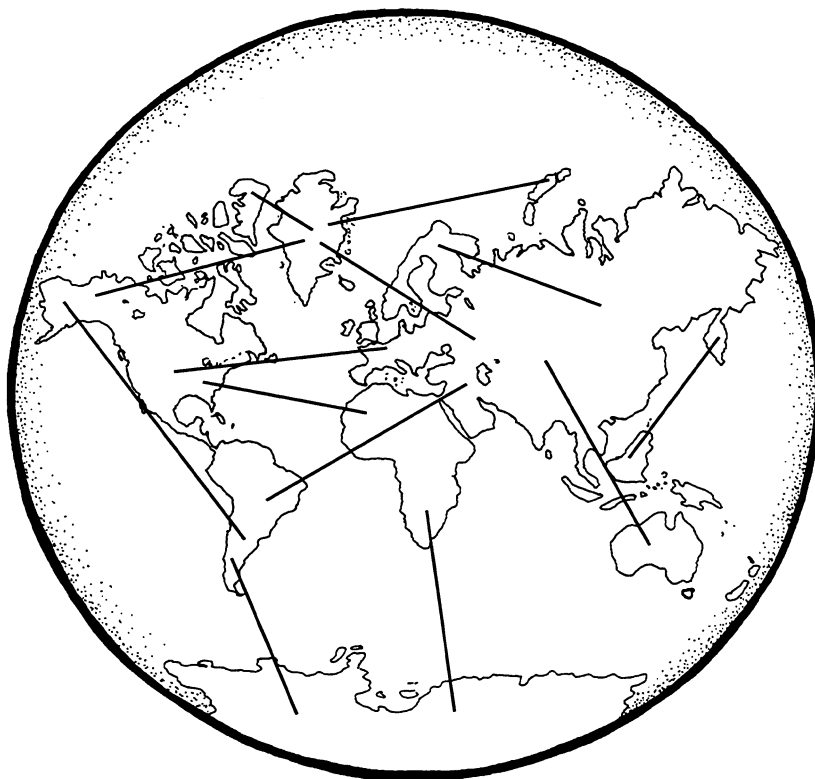
Maybe you have met together with others “to network.” This trendy term, meaning to get together with other people to exchange ideas or information, was actually derived from the computer term “network.” A computer network is any two or more computers that are linked so that they can communicate with each other. Networks are usually “hard-wired,” meaning they do not need modems to communicate. A local area network (LAN) is the connection of computers at a common site, like a school or business. These LANs can be attached to a wide area network (WAN) like a district or county network. Many districts have begun to attach their networks to the Internet.



WHAT IS THE INTERNET? *(CONT.)*

The Internet is the “network of networks.” It is a global technology network made up of many smaller contributing networks. They all speak the same language called Internet protocol or IP. This system gives immediate access to information. It is like being able to open any book in any library from your computer. You can look at and print articles, documents, and pictures, as well as review current facts about news, weather, and sports that you may use in your classes. However, the Internet is not merely a librarian, this tool also makes it possible for users to communicate through electronic mail (e-mail), in real time on chat lines, or even through video conferencing.

The Internet was created in 1983 with 100 networks and has grown by leaps and bounds. By 1993, there were approximately 10,000 networks attached to the Internet. Most experts believe the number of networks currently attached to the Internet is in the hundreds of thousands. Since each of the connected networks can be as many as tens of thousands of computers, the total number of individual users of the Internet is most likely in the millions.



NETIQUETTE AND NETHICS

THE RULES OF THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

Before we get started with our road trip down the information superhighway, it is important to know the rules of the road.

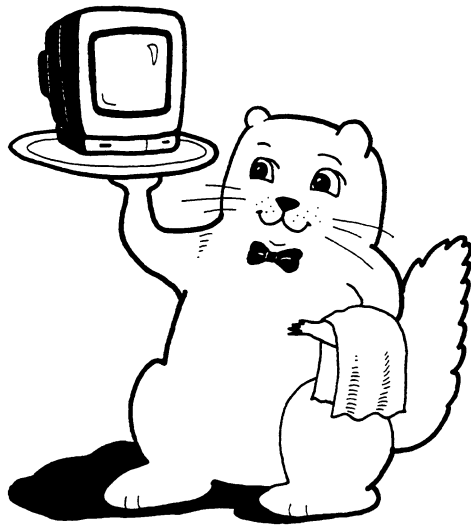
From the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*

Etiquette: n. conventional rules of personal behaviour in polite society

Ethic[s]: n. 1. a. relating to morals, treating of moral questions; morally correct; honourable

Just as there are behaviours which are acceptable at school, students need to learn the correct procedures and rules for using the Internet. Netiquette, the etiquette of the Net, and Nethics, the ethics of the Net, are the rules of the information superhighway.

Before beginning to use these exciting communication and research tools, it is important to understand the many consequences of the new computer connections that will be made. This powerful educational tool is a privilege. It can provide countless hours of exploration and use, but like a drivers licence, it is a privilege that can be taken away for breaking the rules.



SAFE SURFING

RULES FOR SAFE SURFING

Because the Internet is public domain, free speech is not only the right, but the rule. Therefore, nearly anyone can publish nearly anything on it. We must acknowledge the fact that there are inappropriate materials on the Internet and then do everything we can to actively avoid them. We cannot weed out all of the materials that are unacceptable for academic purposes, but it should be clearly understood by all students that access to such material in any form is strictly forbidden.

In order to make the responsibility of using this tool clear, many educational institutions have developed Acceptable Use Plans or AUPs. These AUPs usually include a contract that is quite clear about the responsibilities of the student and must be signed by the student, as well as their parents or guardians. To find examples of AUPs see ERIC Gopher menu at: gopher://ericir.syr.edu:70/11/Guides

Although the actual percentage of unacceptable materials is small, it is a cause for concern for students, parents, and teachers. If a student stumbles onto the information while doing legitimate research, he/she should contact the teacher or person responsible for technology at school.

There is no fool proof way of keeping students out of areas where they should not be. Here are a few general rules of thumb when students are surfing the net:

- Supervision, Supervision, Supervision. Keep an eye on students while they are using the Internet.
- Send an agreement home for parents to sign which explains the benefits and risks of Internet research.
- Make students aware of “Netiquette”—the rules of using the Internet. (See page 11.)
- Take the time to teach students to be responsible net citizens and show them some places you think would be good for them to visit. Set up bookmarks with appropriate sites.
- Create a list of Internet sites that are safe. Require that your students visit only those areas.
- Create your own home page with safe surfing sites on it. These directories can be customised with links to Internet sites that are proven safe and educationally sound.
- Use one of the net monitoring programs that are available to block out inappropriate information. (See page 13.)
- Parents: Spend some family time netsurfing. There are plenty of sites that provide excellent material.

The Internet can be an educational gold mine of information, not only for your students but for you as well. It is the way people will receive most of their information in the future. With a few precautions, teachers and students can reap the benefits of this vast network of information.