

Chapter Ten

Accessing the Internet in a Legal and Safe Manner

10-1 Restricting Access

There is no quality control on the information that can be accessed via the Internet. Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to restrict access to specific information. For example, parents may want to prevent their children from visiting adult web sites or chat rooms with undesirable discussion topics, hospitals may restrict specific types of patient information to hospital staff, or e-commerce transactions handled by credit card may be limited to only the Accounts Receivable staff for processing.

Firewall software is used to control access to resources on the network from outside, but can also control access to Internet resources. Many networks also have built-in security features that can be set up to protect the server from unauthorized access by either internal or external users. For the home or school user, there are several companies that provide special software to restrict access to the Internet, or at least to certain types of sites on the Internet. These software programs are Internet filter software that can be used to block access based on keywords entered into the software.

10-2 Recognizing Copyright Issues

It is very easy to locate information via the Internet and then copy or download the information from someone else's site to your system. Add the fact that one has a sense of being anonymous when working on the Internet, there is a temptation to simply "take" and use the information. However, information on the Internet is subject to the same copyright rules as information in any other media. So as a general rule, the information is copyright-protected. This extends not just to book material, but also to music, video, essays, white papers, pictures, software programs, web sites, etc. A trademarked item will

display ™ symbol next to it. Copyright implicitly belongs to the owner of the web site or published material, even if no copyright symbol (©) or text appears on the product. In some cases, the originator may also have a patent on the product or technology, meaning that person has the exclusive rights to make, use or sell this product or technology. They may choose to license or grant you specific rights to make or sell the product or technology, but you cannot advertise the product or technology as your own. An example of this would be the Apple Macintosh computer where Apple owns the patent for this computer and licenses out information on the computer to programmers who want to create software for this computer type. If you want to use information and you are not sure about the copyright situation, send the web site owner an e-mail asking for permission to use the information. Be sure to describe how you intend to use the information and that you would give them credit.

The following is a list of some sources you can research for more information on copyright or trademark laws and what is applicable in your location:

<http://whatiscopyright.org>

www.copyright.gov (United States Copyright Office)

www.copyright.com (Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.)

www.mpaa.org/Anti-piracy (Motion Picture Association)

www.tmexpress.com (Trademark Express)

http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview (Copyright and Fair Use at Stanford University Libraries)

http://strategis.gc.ca/sc_mrksv/cipo (Canadian Intellectual Property Office)

Many academic or educational institutions are offered a package deal for a product or service due to the volume they consume. Most companies will offer a bundled package with rights to print or make as many copies as often as they want or need. For example, most software companies offer academic versions of the full retail version that a company purchases; the academic version is generally a reduced version of the full retail version and is designed to serve the purpose of the school for their curriculum. This is a much more cost effective method for schools to afford a product or service and still have access to newer technologies or concepts

10-3 Identifying Ethical Issues

The sense of anonymity that the Internet gives one has caused some people to do things that they would not do in ordinary circumstances. Consider some of the following as examples of being ethical and responsible while using the Internet:

Libel is when one makes an untrue statement in public that defames another person's character or reputation. The person who has suffered libel (slander) can sue you for damages. It does not matter whether the libelous statement was made verbally or in print. The same rules apply on the Internet.

Plagiarism There have been many cases in recent times where people have committed plagiarism in projects with dire consequences for their careers. Plagiarism is when you use information created by another person and present it as if it were your own, either in its entirety or with a few words changed randomly in the paper. Whenever you can, always try to cite the sources for where you found the information and the author of that product or service. Give credit where credit is due — with the originator!

Criminal Activity The Internet is a communication medium; it can be used, for example, to send threats to other people or to make undue/unwanted advances, sexual or otherwise. People can pretend to be someone else while working online as a way of committing crimes. Another type of crime is pretending to be a big organization, who then receive money for products and services that are never delivered. It is illegal in most countries and therefore constitutes a crime.

Hacking into another computer with the intent to destroy or cripple a company's business is also a crime. Creating viruses and sending them to people so that computers or information is destroyed, or simply to disrupt a company's business is considered criminal activity.

Unethical Behavior There are some actions that are not directly illegal but are nevertheless considered unethical behavior. For example, there are sites that offer shareware software which can be downloaded for evaluation on the understanding that if you like it, you will pay the nominal fee for it. If you

download the software knowing that you don't intend to pay, it is unethical. **Pranks** can be funny if done in good taste but can so easily be hurtful and should be avoided. The Internet, because of the anonymity, is a prime target for pranksters. For example, a prankster could send someone an e-mail saying that the boss is not happy with whatever and wants to see you immediately. A while later, the prankster sends another e-mail saying that he or she was "just joking". Another example would be starting a hoax about a non-existing virus. One should always keep the golden rule of Netiquette (and real life) in mind: do unto others as you would have them do unto you!

10-4 Protecting Yourself

There is also the question of who owns any original work that you may do on a public computer. For example, if you work on a resume at an Internet café, does the resume belong to you or to the café? Or if you attend night school while working full time, if you produce your essay using resources available to you at the company site, do you own that essay or does the company? And what about the a letter you write to the bank requesting transfer of funds for your mutual funds that you created and stored on the company notebook during your flight home from a business trip? This issue is one that is debated and discussed by many people, and there is no absolute rule. Most companies recognize that employees will do some personal work on the company computer and are flexible about the employee storing the data on their server or local drive of the computer. In general, if you work on something that is personal during company time on a company computer, because the computer belongs to the company, the material you created also belongs to the company. This principle varies between schools, just as it varies between

companies. Therefore, check with your instructor prior to beginning any work on a school computer that is not part of your official curriculum.

If you use information from a known source in one of your papers, you could be sued by the author for copyright infringement or plagiarism.

If you defame or insult someone via e-mail at work, that other person will look at the e-mail as a reflection on both you and the company, therefore opening up a potential lawsuit against both for defamation or libel.

If you are not aware of the rules and guidelines in your location, always ask someone who might have an answer or lead you to where you might find the information. For instance, the best place to start in a company is with the Personnel Director or the Network Administrator; at a school you may want to ask your teacher or the librarian. Most companies and schools have their policies set up as written documentation to confirm the decisions made by the administrators or managers of that company or school. Be sure to read these and understand them clearly before proceeding with going online in that location.

10-5 Buying on Line

Whether you participate in e-commerce really comes down to a question of how safe you feel the transactions are when you buy something online. Many web sites that offer e-commerce will have taken the appropriate steps to ensure safety exists for themselves and their customers. No company wants to make it easy for someone to hack into their system to steal credit card information and/or customer information. Some steps you can take to protect yourself when dealing with an e-commerce web site include:

- Do not ever give out your credit card information indiscriminately.

- Be absolutely sure the web site is a valid company and one that has a good reputation, e.g., Amazon, General Motors, Lexmark, etc.
- If the company offers a deal that seems too good to be true, be sure to do your research on that deal.
- By the same token, if you receive an e-mail or see an advertisement in a popup window about contributing to a worthy cause, be absolutely sure to research and check the validity of this charity or cause.
- Do not share any login ids or passwords with anyone else for any of the web sites where you may have registered or purchased items.
- Be sure not to trade information with anyone you chat with online.
- Try to switch between login id's and passwords with different sites where you may be registered or have purchased items. If someone knows you well, they may be able to determine your password,
- Try to pick passwords that are unique and logical to you, but harder for someone to guess or know, e.g., your mother's maiden name, your first pet's name, your favorite hobby, etc.
- With sites where you may purchase items on a frequent basis, you may want to go online to that site every so often and change your profile information, specifically the password.

10-6 Protecting Your Privacy

Privacy refers to any personal information about yourself that may be accessible to others online. Any time you visit a web site, some information about who you are is left on your computer. This information may be in the form of a cookie, temporary files for the web site, history of where you've been online, or index files. In all honesty, there is no such thing as total or absolute

privacy when you surf the Internet. Information can be tracked by others, including your ISP, whenever you visit any sites on the Internet. This information can be direct via online forms or indirect through cookies or your temporary Internet files. Some sites will track your activities during the time you are visiting their sites, e.g., which pages you went to, which links you click on when you visit their site, how often you visit, etc. One of the best ways you can protect yourself is to read the Privacy statement set out on the web site.

Any company who has a Privacy statement should clearly state what information they seek and how they plan to use it .

Some other steps you can take to protect your privacy include:

- Look for a privacy statement or policy on the web site and be sure to read it first before proceeding any further.
- Be sure not to fill in any forms unless you really want something from that web site. If you cannot go any further into the web site without registering, be sure that this is a reputable company, you have read their privacy statement or policy and understand how they plan to use the data.
- If you do register with a web site, be sure not to select any options that clearly indicate you would be interested in receiving e-mail from third party companies on related products or services.
- Set up your browser to limit the type of information that can be tracked. Delete the cookies from your system if you begin to receive a lot of junk mail.
- Delete the history for sites you have visited.
- Consider having a separate e-mail address for non-personal items, and use an alias instead of who you really are.
- Purchase third party software that directly addresses privacy issues.

10-7 Looking at Personal Responsibility

Disposing of Consumables; Consumables refer to items such as ink cartridges, toner cartridges, paper, disks, CDs, non-working or old computer components, etc. Whenever possible, dispose of these consumables in the most environmentally friendly manner. For instance, recycle anything that is accepted at recycling depots such as paper. A number of companies deal with disposing of any types of cartridges or non-working computer components, including old cellular phones. If you have an old computer that still works, consider donating it to a charitable organization who may be able to use it. The computer may not be very fast for processing documents but may be suitable for checking e-mail.

You may also want to look at refilling your ink cartridges on your own. Before just throwing items away in a garbage container, check to see if there are any companies in your area that can recycle your old computer items safely. Some computer components may contain hazardous material that should be disposed of in a correct manner rather than just being dumped into a landfill.

Sharing Your Knowledge One of the advantages of using the Internet is the ability to find information that has been shared by others. As you gain knowledge of the computer, application programs, or technology itself, consider sharing this knowledge with others. This could be through volunteering your time to teach courses to those who would otherwise not be able to afford to learn the computer, working with charitable organizations for data entry or technical support, teaching or supporting family and friends who are just getting started with computers, etc. You can also share information you have for managing the computer, disposing of consumables, or how to live and work online in a safe and legal manner; in general, how to be a responsible end user.