The Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship

1. Digital Etiquette: electronic standards of conduct or procedure.
Technology users often see this area as one of the most pressing problems when dealing with Digital Citizenship. We recognize inappropriate behavior when we see it, but before people use technology they do not learn digital etiquette (i.e., appropriate conduct). Many people feel uncomfortable talking to others about their digital etiquette. Often rules and regulations are created or the technology is simply banned to stop inappropriate use. It is not enough to create rules and policy, we must teach everyone to become responsible digital citizens in this new society.

   • NetManners.com [http://www.netmanners.com/]

One of the significant changes within the digital revolution is a person’s ability to communicate with other people. In the 19th century, forms of communication were limited. In the 21st century, communication options have exploded to offer a wide variety of choices (e.g., e-mail, cellular phones, instant messaging). The expanding digital communication options have changed everything because people are able to keep in constant communication with anyone else. Now everyone has the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with anyone from anywhere and anytime. Unfortunately, many users have not been taught how to make appropriate decisions when faced with so many different digital communication options.

   • Drivers Against Texting and Talking [www.dattgroup.org]

3. Digital Literacy: process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.
While schools have made great progress in the area of technology infusion, much remains to be done. A renewed focus must be made on what technologies must be taught as well as how it should be used. New technologies are finding their way into the work place that are not being used in schools (e.g., videoconferencing, online sharing spaces such as wikis). In addition, workers in many different occupations need immediate information (just-in-time information). This process requires sophisticated searching and processing skills (i.e., information literacy). Learners must be taught how to learn in a digital society. In other words, learners must be taught to learn anything, anytime, anywhere. Business, military, and medicine are excellent examples of how technology is being used differently in the 21st century. As new technologies emerge, learners need to learn how to use that technology quickly and appropriately. Digital Citizenship involves educating people in a new way—these individuals need a high degree of information literacy skills.

   • Four NETS for Better Searching [http://webquest.sdsu.edu/searching/fournets.htm]

Technology users need to be aware of and support electronic access for all to create a foundation for Digital Citizenship. Digital exclusion of any kind does not enhance the growth of users in an electronic society. All people should have fair access to technology no matter who they are. Places or organizations with limited connectivity need to be addressed as well. To become productive citizens, we need to be committed to equal digital access.

Technology users need to understand that a large share of market economy is being done electronically. Legitimate and legal exchanges are occurring, but the buyer or seller need to be aware of the issues associated with it. The mainstream availability of Internet purchases of toys, clothing, cars, food, etc. has become commonplace to many users. At the same time, an equal amount of illegal/immoral goods and services are surfaced such as pornography and gambling. Users need to learn about how to be effective consumers in a new digital economy.

   • GetNetWise: Use Security When Sending Sensitive Information (video) [http://security.getnetwise.org/tips/secure-web.php]

Digital law deals with the ethics of technology within a society. Unethical use manifests itself in form of theft and/or crime. Ethical use manifests itself in the form of abiding by the laws of society. Users need to understand that stealing or causing damage to other people’s work, identity, or property online is a crime. There are certain rules of society that users need to be aware in an ethical society. These laws apply to anyone who works or plays online. Hacking into others information, downloading illegal music, plagiarizing, creating destructive worms, viruses or creating Trojan Horses, sending spam, or stealing anyone’s identify or property is unethical.

   • Copyright Infringement or Not? The Debate over Downloading Music [http://www.readwritethink.org/resources/resource-print.html?id=855&tab=1]
   • B4U Copy [http://www.b4ucopy.com/risks.html] from the Business Software Alliance (includes online quiz)
   • Business Software Alliance education page [http://w3.bsa.org/education/]
Just as in the American Constitution where there is a Bill of Rights, there is a basic set of rights extended to every digital citizen. Digital citizens have the right to privacy, free speech, etc. Basic digital rights must be addressed, discussed, and understood in the digital world. With these rights also come responsibilities as well. Users must help define how the technology is to be used in an appropriate manner. In a digital society these two areas must work together for everyone to be productive.

   • Koppel on Discovery: Your Digital Footprint [http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/koppel/interactive/interactive.html]

Eye safety, repetitive stress syndrome, and sound ergonomic practices are issues that need to be addressed in a new technological world. Beyond the physical issues are those of the psychological issues that are becoming more prevalent such as Internet addiction. Users need to be taught that there inherent dangers of technology. Digital Citizenship includes a culture where technology users are taught how to protect themselves through education and training.

In any society, there are individuals who steal, deface, or disrupt other people. The same is true for the digital community. It is not enough to trust other members in the community for our own safety. In our own homes, we put locks on our doors and fire alarms in our houses to provide some level of protection. The same must be true for the digital security. We need to have virus protection, backups of data, and surge control of our equipment. As responsible citizens, we must protect our information from outside forces that might cause disruption or harm.

   • Microsoft Online Safety [http://www.microsoft.com/protect/]
   • StaySafeOnline.org: National Cyber Security Alliance [http://www.staysafeonline.org/]

Web sites covering several themes:

   • Net Cetera: Chatting with Kids About Being Online [http://bulkorder.ftc.gov/] free handbook to order in bulk
   • OnGuardOnline [http://www.onguardonline.gov/games/overview.aspx] lots of games to download into your own site
   • Look Both Ways Foundation [http://look2ways.com/education/lessons.htm]
   • Digital Citizenship Ning [http://digitalcitizenship.ning.com]
   • Cyber-Savvy Teens: booklet [http://www.cskcst.com/booklet/]
   • Anne Bubnic’s Digital Citizenship links on Diigo [http://www.diigo.com/list/abubnic?&page_num=1&count=20&tab=0]
   • Digital Citizenship and Creative Content (free curriculum units) [http://digitalcitizenshiped.com]
   • WebWiseKids [http://www.webwisekids.org]
   • Wired Safety [http://www.wiredsafety.org]
   • iKeepSafe Internet Safety Coalition [http://www.ikeepsafe.org] (includes links to videos they’ve posted on YouTube)
   • CTAP CyberSafety: Awareness, Education, Prevention [http://www.ctap8.org/cybersafety] (includes downloadable poster)