Digital Citizenship Lesson Plan

Trusting Internet Sources

General Topic (as defined in the Digital Literacy Framework)	RB2
Research and Information Literacy b) Information Processing and Management	
Applicable Grade Range	
3-5	
Outcome(s) to be Addressed	
The student judges the validity of content found on the internet, how to find appropriate material, and what sources can be trusted.	
Importance / Significance of Lesson	
In today's digital age students must develop skills that allow them to think critically about information they find on the internet to determine if it is true or not. By being able to discern the source of information, they will better be able to determine whether they can trust it or not.	
Duration	
60 minutes	
Overview	
Students will look at a variety of different websites on the same topic, determine who has authored them and develop an understanding of what sorts of sites can be trusted online. Teachers will need to choose a topic that is relevant to their needs or of interest to their students.	
Required Resources	
Computer hooked up to a projector Class set of laptops/access to the computer lab OR class set of iPads/iPods Copies of attached resource	

Lesson Plan and Extension Activities

Provide students with the listing of types of websites (attached below) and quickly review each type. Explain that anyone can post anything on the internet, true or not, and many people post information in order to meet their own needs (i.e. To sell something, to sway public opinion, to make claims of their side of the story, etc.).

Look at some of the questions (also attached) that students can ask themselves to help them to determine if the website is reliable or not. Highlight ones that you would like students to keep in mind during this activity.

Have students work in small groups with a computer or laptop. Get them to use www.google.com to search Dog Island. There are a number of sites that will come up, including sites that document an actual series of islands in Florida, as well as the site http://www.thedogisland.com/ (often the top search result) which is a fake site (though wouldn't we all love to believe our dogs could live on an island, free of all their cares and play in the ocean every day).

Have students use the dog island question sheet (attached) to determine information that is true and sources that are reliable. It is important to stress with students that they will need to find information from a variety of sources in order to be able to recognize the cues that something may not be a reliable source of information.

Discuss ways that students can determine the reliability of web sources and brainstorm a list of questions and tips to post in the classroom for future reference.

Adaptations

Younger students will likely look at sources together and discuss whether the site looks and feels good and whether the information provided there is reliable or not.

Older students could do research on a topic of their own and develop a presentation outlining reliable sources and unreliable sources or ways to figure out if a site is real or not.

Additional Resources
www.google.com
www.shsu.edu/lis_mah/documents/TCEA/hoaxtable.html
www.philb.com/fakesites.htm
Cross-curricular Outcomes Also Addressed
Social Studies – research skills Ties can be made to any curriculum based on topics of study.

~developed by Kristin Sward, 2014

Common Internet Sources of Information

The URL for every website contains a domain name that includes a '.' and a series of two or three letters to tell the user what type of group is publishing the information. Here are some common ones you might already know:

.com	Companies or individuals can use this domain
.edu	Generally schools of varying level
.org	Usually non-profit organizations
.gov	Government agencies

A full listing of common domains can be found here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Internet_top-level_domains

Each country is also given a two letter notation. This helps search engines and users better understand where in the world information is coming from (for instance when purchasing something online, you might see that the price is 3.90 and think it is a good deal, but if the website originates in England (.uk) that price is in British pounds which are worth more than our Canadian dollar (sometimes double). In that case the price might not be quite as good as you think. Here are a few country domains (as there are only two letters, they can be quite similar – be careful):

.au	Australia
.ca	Canada
.ch	Switzerland
.cn	China
.de	Germany
.eg	Egypt
.eu	European Union
.fr	France
.gr	Greece
.in	India
.it	Italy
.mx	Mexico
.ru	Russia
.uk	United Kingdom
.us	United States

Note that some seem to make sense while others are quite different (.ca are the first two letters of Canada and .eg are the first two letters of Egypt, but .ch doesn't seem to have much to do with the name Switzerland). A full listing of countries and their domains can be found here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Internet_top-level_domains#Country_code_top-level_domains.

So – which sites can you trust?

Not necessarily any of them. Though typically sites like .gov and .edu should contain information that is helpful for people living in the country or going to the school, it is important to remember that ANYONE can post ANYTHING on the internet and can use any domain they see fit. And many sites using the .com domain are quite reliable sources of factual information that is not necessarily biased by a company or organization trying to sell something or sway people's opinions.

When it comes down to it, you need to look at the information presented on each website you look at and ask yourself some key questions to determine if you can trust the information:

1) Does the information provided make sense with what I already know to be true?
2) Are they trying to sell me something?
3) Can I identify bias (a belief that supports one point of view over another) on the site?
4) Can I find the same information on multiple websites?
5) Does the website contain videos of people making claims or telling me how something is or should be done?
6) Is the website developed by a reputable source (check domain names, affiliations with reliable sources, links to known reliable sources)?
7) Does the site ask me for personally identifiable information or a way to contact me or use my financial information before allowing me to browse the information contained in it?
8) Did I search for this site or was a link provided to me by someone I don't know and trust?
9) Is the information up to date?
10) If I google the site or search it on www.snopes.com, does it come up with hits that say the information provided there is false?

If something looks too good to be true, it often is. But often things that look legitimate and sound real are also fake. Check out some of the very official looking websites included on these lists of hoax sites: www.shsu.edu/lis_mah/documents/TCEA/hoaxtable.html and www.philb.com/fakesites.htm.

In the end you might think the information you are reading on the internet is true. It is hard sometimes for adults to even find reliable sources of information and it is true that sometimes we all believe what we want to be true. It takes a lot of practice to determine reliable sources from unreliable ones.

Date: _____   Name: _____

Dog Island Question Sheet

Find at least 4 websites and answer the following questions using each:

Question	Website 1	Website 2	Website 3	Website 4
1) What is the domain name of the site?				
2) Does it look professionally put together?				
3) Are they trying to sell something?				
4) Can I find the name of the author or group that developed the site?				
5) Is the author or group a reliable source? (try searching them in Google or on Snopes)				
6) Does the information fit with information I already know to be true?				
7) Is there bias on the site?				
8) Can I find similar information on more than one site?				
9) Are there pictures that show the product?				
10) Are there professional videos on the site that claim something is true?				
11) Do I have to share my contact information?				
12) Is the information current and up to date?				
13) Does the website look real and trustworthy?				

Website 1: _____

Website 2: _____

Website 3: _____

Website 4: _____

Which website(s) do you think are reliable sources of information? _____

Which website(s) do you think are not reliable sources of information? _____

What did you learn by asking questions and looking at different sources of information?