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Digital Literacy: Access, Understanding and Skepticism

Knowing vs. Understanding

Knowing how to use a computer doesn't necessarily translate into fully understanding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of using digital technology. How do you access digital information? Do you understand how to use Internet search engines strategically? Are you aware that your Internet use and personal preferences can be monitored and tracked? Do you understand that not all Internet information is necessarily credible?

We can value opportunities to access information in its many forms—but should remain skeptical and vigilant in evaluating its credibility.

We must remember that although the Internet is the latest technological invention for information access and communication, the importance of being a skeptical consumer of that information continues to be crucial. The notion of being a lifelong learner and wanting to expand one's knowledge must include scrutinizing the information we access and examining topics from multiple perspectives – even those we disagree with. The best critical thinkers do that and we should too.

How is it that we correspond by email, conduct searches, visit social media sites and view websites at no cost?

The answer is as old as newspapers, but looks a little different in the digital age – **advertising**.

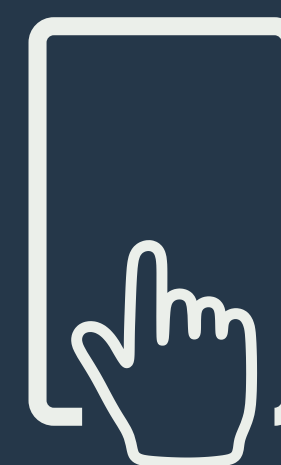
What if you had to pay for every Internet search or every webpage visited?

The 1st Amendment idea of free speech or a free press doesn't mean that access to information is free from cost. It means that, in general, the government cannot censor information before it is disseminated. If consumers had to pay the full cost of newspaper content, radio or television programs or Internet activity, only the wealthiest people would be able to access those communication channels. Fortunately, much Internet content can be accessed at no cost, provided a computer and a monthly connection fee can be afforded.

What is digital advertising?

Paid messages placed in media channels with or without an identified sponsor.

- Online newspaper ads
- Radio and TV commercials
- Internet promotion, sponsored web searches, social media and webpage advertising



Digital advertising

Learn more about different types of digital advertisements and how to be an educated consumer.



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