Stay on the Path Lesson Four: Scavenger Hunt

This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework.

Overview

This four-lesson unit on search skills and critical thinking teaches students how to *target* and *specify* their online searches to avoid unwanted results, how to judge whether a link, search result or website is legitimate or phony and how to find legitimate sources online for media works.

In this final lesson of the unit, students apply their searching and critical thinking skills to learn how to find legitimate online sources for downloading and streaming movies, music and videos.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- learn how to avoid unwanted search results
- learn how to target and specify their searches
- learn how to judge the legitimacy of a result or a website
- learn to treat intellectual property (their own and others') with respect
- become aware of the laws that govern copyright in Canada

Preparation and Materials

- Arrange for computer and Internet access for all students
- Photocopy the handout *Finding Legitimate Music, Videos and Images Online*

Procedure

Begin by reminding students that anyone with Internet access can put up material such as blogs, images, websites, etc. – which means that we have to be very cautious when using the Internet as a source of information. There are other things that people post online as well: ask the class what things they might look for on the Internet besides information.

Record all of their suggestions and make sure that music and videos (movies, TV shows, short videos, etc.) come up. Draw students' attention to those and ask where they go to find them: record their answers without commenting.

Legitimate Sources

Ask how many make sure when they're streaming or downloading music or videos that the place they're getting it from is *legitimate* (in other words, whether it's being done with the permission of the person who owns the copyright). Ask students if they can think of reasons why you might want to stick to legitimate sites and make sure the following points come up in the discussion:

- Some sites that aren't legit are also sources of malware
- Uploading or downloading copyrighted material without permission is against the law
- Artists and other copyright owners deserve to be paid for their work and to control what's done with it
- Many other people who work in the entertainment industry depend on the money that comes from legitimate sales to keep their jobs

Now ask students: How can you tell that a site is legitimate?

Responses might include:

- The site is well-designed and looks professional
- The site charges money to stream or download content
- The site has ads from popular brands
- I found the site through a search engine I trust

(Source: Childnet, http://www.childnet.com/resources/downloading/how-can-i-tell-if-a-website-is-legal-or-illegal)

Tell students that *none* of these are reliable signs that a streaming or download site is legitimate. As well, sites that are legitimate in one country may not be legal for Canadians because their licences don't cover Canada (U.S. TV networks, for instance). Here are two good ways to be sure that a site is legitimate:

- If it's the official website of the copyright owner (a band, video maker, etc.).
- If it has been identified as a legitimate site by an industry group like Music Canada, the Entertainment Software Association of Canada or the Motion Picture Association-Canada. Examples of legitimate sites include Netflix, iTunes, Cineplex, CBC, National Film Board of Canada and TVO.

You may also choose to show students the following video on copyright: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=y306vJ-TAAo

Scavenger Hunt

Distribute the handout *Finding Legitimate Music, Videos and Images Online* and review the terms and concepts with students.

Have students conduct a "scavenger hunt" by looking for:

- a novel or play they could adapt into a movie script without paying or getting permission
- a legitimate place to watch a recent episode of their favourite TV show
- some music they could use for a dance recital without having to pay or get permission
- a legitimate place to watch a blockbuster movie that was just released in theatres last week
- a photograph of a lake you can use as the cover image on a school report

Give students a reasonable amount of time to search and then ask them what they've found and how they know they can use it. In the discussion, include the following points:

- A novel or play would have to be in the *public domain* or released under a Creative Commons licence to allow you to adapt it without paying or getting permission. If it was Creative Commons, you still need to check the license because there might be limits on how you can use it. (More information on this can be found in the tip sheet *Getting the Goods Ethically*.)
- The only way to be sure that a TV show is streaming from a legitimate site is to make sure that the site has the licence to stream it (check a list like the one at http://www.mpa-canada.org/. Examples of legitimate sites include Netflix, iTunes, Cineplex, CBC, National Film Board of Canada and TVO.
- Remind students that even if they buy music from a legitimate site they're not necessarily buying the right to use it in something like a video or a public performance. To do that they'll have to find music that's either in the public domain or released under a Creative Commons licence, or allowed by law under Canada's user-generated content exception. Remind students that both the *composition* and the *recording* have to be Creative Commons or in the public domain.
- The fourth task is a trick question: there won't be any legitimate sources to watch a blockbuster movie that's in theatres now. Remind students to watch out for things that seem "too good to be true."
- Warn students not to use the word "free" in their search strings. Besides the fact that this often leads you to sites that aren't legitimate, it's also one of the search terms most likely to lead you to a site that can damage your computer ("The World's Most Dangerous Search Terms. McAfee, 2008. http://promos.mcafee.com/en-US/PDF/most_dangerous_searchterm_us.pdf)

Finding Legitimate Music, Videos and Images Online

Sometimes it can be pretty hard trying to figure out what you're allowed – and not allowed – to use when you're looking for things online.

There are lots of terms relating to this: things like *intellectual property*, *copyright*, *public domain* and *Creative Commons* – just to name a few. But at the end of the day, they all boil down to one simple principle:

> *Just because something's online doesn't mean we can take it and use it. Before using, watching, listening to or playing something, we need to think about whether we're doing this in a way that shows respect for the people who made it and own it.*

Part of showing respect involves understanding how copyright works and making sure that you are getting what you are looking for from *legitimate* sources.

Let's start with some of those terms.

Intellectual Property describes anything that is invented or created by someone. These can include books, song lyrics and music as well as TV and movie characters. Intellectual property can be non-physical things like *ideas* (let's say, a song you've created in your head) as well as *physical things* (a CD you and your band make of that song).

How does this work? Intellectual property means that even though you bought and now own a really cool drawing, you don't necessarily have the right to make copies of that drawing to give to your friends. You have to check first to see if it is *copyright protected.*

Copyright is the right of a person who owns intellectual property to control what gets done with their property: who gets to use it and what they're allowed to do with it. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but once they are put into a physical form – like that CD of the song you created – then they can be protected under copyright.

In Canada, it's against the law to make copies of, upload or download copyright-protected works like movies, TV shows or music without permission from the copyright owner. The websites listed here tell you where people in Canada can go online to get music, movies and other media legally.

Music

- Music Canada: http://musiccanada.com/
- Pro-music: http://www.pro-music.org/

Movies and Television

- The Motion Picture Association – Canada: http://www.mpa-canada.org/

An important thing to remember is that almost all of these places only give you a licence to **watch** or **listen to** the movies, TV shows or music. If you want to do more than that – for instance, if you're looking for music to use as a soundtrack to a video that you're making for school – then you need to know about the *public domain* and *Creative Commons,* and the *user-generated content* exemption in Canada's Copyright Act.
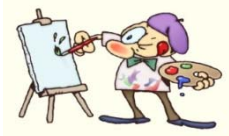
Public Domain

A work that's in the *public domain* belongs to everyone. Nobody can claim to own it and it can be used free of charge: you don't have to get permission. In Canada, you can even change works that are in the public domain without asking permission.

Works can enter the public domain if the copyright owner has said that people can use it without permission or payment.

Works can also enter the public domain if the copyright has expired. How long does copyright last? In Canada it's:

The life of the creator

Other things in the public domain include:

Ideas

(until they are put into a physical form)

Titles, names, slogans, short word combinations

Facts

Anyone can use facts, but you have to describe these facts in your own words: for instance, you can use facts from a magazine article, but you can't just copy how the author of the article says them.

The Internet Archive (www.archive.org) has nearly three million public domain videos and audio recordings from vintage cartoons to podcasts.

Here are some other great sources of public domain materials:

- Historical Stock photos http://www.historicalstockphotos.com/
- Public Domain Images http://public-domain.zorger.com/
- The National Archives Experience http://www.digitalvaults.org/
- Public Domain Sound Effects http://www.pdsounds.org/

Creative Commons

Any time you pay for media, you're actually buying a *licence* to use it and that licence usually has limitations: for instance, buying a song gives you the right to listen to it but not to use it as background music in a movie.

Creative Commons licences let you access and use media for free under certain conditions. For example:

- an Attribution licence means that you must give credit to the work's creator;
- under a No Derivative Works licence you are not allowed to alter the work when you use it;
- a Noncommercial licence lets you use something as long as you're not charging money for what you're creating; and
- a Share-Alike licence means you have to release any product that you use something in under the same Creative Commons license.

If you want to find out more, the Creative Commons wiki has a series of comics to explain how this works: http://wiki.creativecommons.org/Spectrumofrights_Comic1

Here are some great sources for works that have been released under a Creative Commons licence:

- Compfight lets you search the image hosting service Flickr for photos with Creative Commons licences. Make sure you select "Creative Commons" and "Safe" on the left side of the page before putting in your search term http://compfight.com/
- Opsound offers music tracks released under Creative Commons licences http://www.opsound.org/
- Sound Transit offers sound effects released under Creative Commons licences http://turbulence.org/soundtransit/search/
- The video-hosting site Vimeo allows you to use "creativecommons" as a search tag with other tags you're using (so you might use *creativecommons dogs* to find videos about dogs that you can use under a Creative Commons licence) www.vimeo.com
- Wikimedia Commons contains more than 17 million media files that are mostly released under Creative Commons license http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

User-Generated Content

If you have legitimately acquired a media work, Canada's Copyright Act includes an *exemption for Non-commercial User-generated Content* which lets people include images, music, and videos they've legally acquired in something else they're making **as long as what they create is not being used to make money**. This could be for things like making a home video of your friends and family dancing to a popular song and posting it online or creating a 'mash-up' of video clips.

But there are some rules: the new work you create can't be a substitute for the original or negatively impact the markets for the original product. Also, it can't negatively impact the reputation of the person who created the original work.
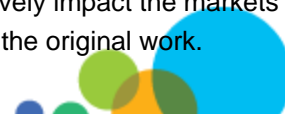
Search Skills Teacher Backgrounder

General searching best practices

Search engines don't index the entire Web — a lot of the information that's available sits in databases or behind pages that require users to log in. Furthermore, all search engines index the Internet using different algorithms, which means each will have a slightly different "snapshot". With this in mind, you will get better results by using different search engines concurrently.

Your search results are only as good as your search terms: sometimes you have to do a few searches with different keywords to find what you are looking for.

To do truly powerful searches, use special keywords (search operators) that allow finer filtering of the results. Here are a few of the most useful:

NOT or **–** eliminates results including the word that comes next (e.g. dog NOT poodle, or dog –poodle)

OR gives you results with both of the search terms on either side of it. This is good when you have two different options or when you're looking for two things that a search engine wouldn't recognize as synonyms. (For instance, if you were trying to decide whether to go camping in Ontario or Newfoundland you could use the search string camping Ontario OR Newfoundland. Without the OR you would only get results that included both Ontario and Newfoundland.)

Quotation marks give you results that include words in a particular order. If you were looking for references to Blackbeard the Pirate under his real name, Edward Teach, you'd get a lot of results that had both "Edward" and "teach" that weren't relevant. By putting "Edward Teach" in quotes you only get results where the two words appear in that order.

Most search engines also have an "advanced search" feature where all you need to do is to fill out a more advanced search form and choose a few options.

This 3-step Web search strategy was adapted from Google's *Search Education* course and other best practices on the Web:

Pick the right search keywords

1. Focus on just the key ideas of your question.
2. Think about how an author of a webpage might have presented/written the information.
3. Sometimes you need to do a few searches and explore your results in order to find the information you are looking for.
4. Use specific keywords related to the context of your search to help to refine it.
5. Use reverse dictionaries or a thesaurus to find other search terms.
6. Try applying specific terms in your search that are often used in the context of your question. For example, using common sentence structures related to your question might help you to find information, such as using "Once upon a time" with your keywords when looking for fairy tales.

Ask yourself:

1.   What unique terms can I use that will help me search effectively?

2.   How can contextual terms help me target my search for what I need?

Understand your search results

1.   Look at the number of results that your keywords return: if it's in the millions, you might need to choose better keywords.

2.   Each result "block" has a lot of useful information to help you decide if it is what you want. Look at the title, the URL and the text summary.

3.   Remember that the summary is not a full summary of the page but an extracted snippet of the page (by a program) and it may not give an accurate representation of what is in the site.

4.   The URL can also give you specific information such as the country where the site is hosted (".ca" for Canada), or if it is hosted by an academic institution (".edu").

Evaluate the credibility of your search results

On the search results page:

1.   Look at the title of the result: does it match the information in the summary?

2.   Look at the URL: does it look like it is related to what is in the title and the summary? Does the domain name reflect an organization you can trust?

3.   Remember that page rank or the order a result appears does not equal credibility.

4.   Try to triangulate your findings (find 3 similar sources).

5.   Look for fact-checking sites and "do one more search".

On the website:

1.   Ask yourself: How might the tone or style of the writing impact its credibility?

2.   Look for misquotes or falsified images.

3.   Review the following sections (where available) on the website itself: the "About us" page, the "Contact us" page and the "site map".

4.   Try finding specific text on the page (use ctrl-f or Command-f to find text on the page).

If you can't find enough information on the website, you might also conduct a search on a WHOIS provider to drill down on the person or company who's behind it.

2. Pre-filtering the Web

There are some ways that you can pre-filter your results or that your results may already be pre-filtered:

•   Your school or school district might use filtering software that automatically blocks access to certain websites (usually pornographic sites).

- You can install commercial software on a specific computer that will block access to specific sites.
- It should be noted that in the two cases above, although access to some sites is restricted, they may still show up in your search results.
- All major search engines have a "safe search" option that filters out inappropriate websites from search results. However, this feature does not restrict access to those websites – it merely filters them out from search results.
- Finally, another way to restrict unwanted websites is to create or use a list of bookmarks to appropriate and relevant websites.