BEGG-171
Media and Communication Skills

Block

4

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND CYBER MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 4 : INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND CYBER MEDIA

Welcome to the last block of our course on Media and Communication Skills. This Block is called Introduction to Social and Cyber Media and as the name implies – we introduce you to the various social media that are so much a part of our lives today. The pace of innovation in this line is so rapid that the slogan for information technology is "If it works its obsolete"! This means that even as a product is being perfected to be put in the market,an advanced version is already being developed.

We live in a world where communication happens in many different ways, across multiple channels and in many forms. Our relationships are held together by speech, writing on paper, images on screen transmitted by satellite links, words in text messages on cell phones and emails etc. But perhaps the biggest transformation in our communication landscape has come from the development and spread of the Internet or what we now know as the World Wide Web.

In Unit 1 we talk to you about various types of social media and their uses.

In Unit 2 we take the discussion further and give you more details of the World Wide Web.

In Unit 3 we discuss the impact that the internet has had on Journalism.

And last but not the least, in Unit 4 we discuss the overall impact that the cyber media has had on our society.

And with this we come to the end of our fourth block as well the entire course on Media and Communication Skills. We hope you enjoyed studying this Course as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.
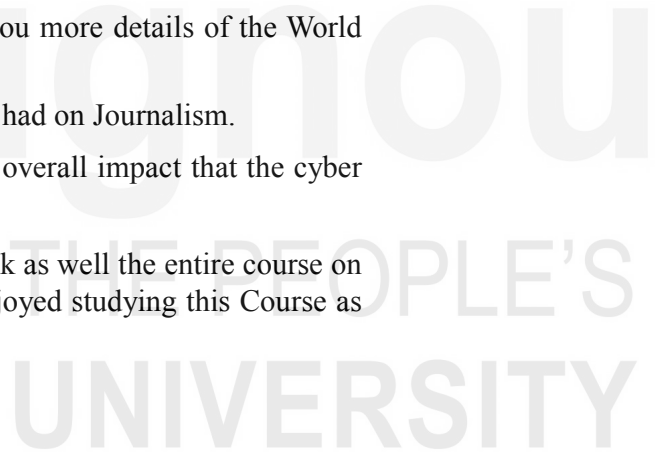
UNIT 1   TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Structure

1.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit will allow you to:

* Understand that computers provide rapid access to up-to-date information by networking

* Find out what a computer network can do for organizations and for individuals

* Look at some of the ordinary words used by computer users, as well as less well-known words connected with computing

* Begin thinking about information sharing in corporate communications, and the use of sms or short messaging services

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The slogan in the information technology is "If it works, it's obsolete". Such is the pace of innovation today that even as a product is being perfected and made available to the market, the research and development wing of an organization is already working to improve it!

Computers provide a speed of access and a universality of access to information that drives continual improvement in other fields as well. Information sharing among special interest groups is now instantaneous. In my personal experience, a surgeon in India performed a complicated surgery that was simultaneously available for viewing at a teaching hospital in the United States. Another surgeon, faced with a stubborn though minor problem in after-surgery healing, put his case on the Internet and was able to tell his patient that around 8% of people undergoing that surgery had a similar problem, but went on to recover fully.

This sense of a global community is made possible by the Internet and email, where interest groups are only a click away. Such is the growth in the use of computers that many of you are probably good users of the Internet already. On the other hand, many of us use a facility without knowing much about it. We ride in cars and airplanes

without thinking about the internet combustion engine or the aerodynamics of flying. In this unit we attempt to refresh our basic knowledge of systems that most of us now use everyday, without thinking.

1.2 COMPUTER NETWORKS: EMAIL, INTERNET, INTRANETS, MULTIMEDIA

1.2.1 Information: Explosion, Control and Dissemination

Nearly a million articles a year are published now in science alone. Rapid advances in research are possible because scientists get information faster. So there is a great need in today's world for storing information, packaging and processing it, and disseminating it or making it available.

You are familiar with the idea of a library as a place for storing knowledge. Books are stored under a system by which you can find them easily by author, title or even subject: the system allows you to *identify* and *retrieve* the information you need. It has been pointed out that these are also the functions of a computer! It can store information, and it has a system by which you can identify and retrieve the information you need. And it can do this much faster than the process of printing and publishing.

A **database** is an organized, integrated and inter-related collection of computer-based data. It has records or information that is machine-readable and it can be searched from a remote terminal, i.e. a computer that can connect with the database may be physically very distant from it. Databases can be internal to an organization (its accounts, its activities and plans, its history, for example). They can also be external, and they may be regional, national or international.

For example, the **Books in Print** database is the world's largest list of books currently available in the market. This database contains information pertaining to over 10 lakh books!

The USA has a database of **Federal Research in Progress** that provides access to information about government-funded-projects in the physical sciences, engineering and the life sciences.

In India, **NISSAT** is a National Information System for Science and Technology. This database was established in 1977.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) State if these statements are true or false.

i) Computers can function as libraries by storing and retrieving information. T/F

ii) A database can be searched from anywhere in the world provided a computer is connected to it. T/F

iii) Databases are only internal to an organization T/F

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2) Name some databases and say what kind of data they store and provide.

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1.2.2 Uses of Computer Networks

Networking of computers allows an automated sharing of resources.

A LAN is a Local Area Network that has a range of less than 10 kilometers. Computers in this network are linked by telephone cable or by fiber optic cable. It is usually a privately-owned network within a single building, or within a small campus such as a University or institution.

A MAN is a Metropolitan Area Network with a range of 10-100 Kilometers. It uses dedicated telephone lines (telephone lines reserved only for the network) or fiber optic cable. It is a bigger version of a LAN.

A WAN is a Wide Area Network, with a range starting from 100 kilometers. It uses telephone lines, or more usually, satellite links. A WAN spans a country or a continent!

The **Internet or the World Wide Web,** known as **www.** is a way of accessing linked documents spread out over thousands of machines all over the world. The idea of the web actually began in 1989 at CERN, the European Centre for Nuclear Research. Its large teams of internationally dispersed scientists and researchers needed to interact with each other in the minimum of time. They needed to exchange and work together on reports, blueprints, drawings, photographs and so on. A prototype of a computer network to enable such sharing of information was made operational and a public demonstration was given at a conference in Texas in December 1991. A company called Netscape Communications Corporation was formed. In 1994 CERN and MIT set up the www consortium, which was joined by hundreds of universities and companies.

Up until the early 1990s, the Internet was largely populated by academic, government and industrial researchers. One new application, the World Wide Web, changed all that and brought millions of non-academic users to the net.

Networks for Organizations

Why do organizations use computer networks?

- Resource sharing: computer networks make data available to everyone in the organization, no matter where they are. This ends "the tyranny of geography". All members of an organization can check their pay slips, the status of the organization's inventory or stock of items, or statistics relating to orders received and items delivered, for example, from wherever they are on a computer linked to the company's network.

  Another example of such networking is that of libraries. If a book you need is not available in your local library, the librarian can check the database of a networked library. If that library has the book in their collection, you may be able to get the book on an inter-library loan.

- Reliability: information storage for industries like banking or air traffic control has to be reliable and unified. A network makes sure that all organizations within an industry have access to the same reliable information. Bankers can check the day's currency exchange rates. Air traffic controllers are linked the world over, to keep track of the airplanes that fly to destinations all over the world.

- Communication: two people separated in space can write a report together! When one of them makes a change, the other can see it immediately.

Networks for People

Our everyday lives are impacted by computer networks in a variety of ways.

- Access to remote information: electronic billing, banking, shopping on-line newspapers.

  Many people receive their telephone bills via the computer. They may also have an arrangement with their bank for the bill to be paid electronically, by debiting their bank account. These days we are all familiar with on line shopping facilities. You can purchase books and airplane tickets on line. You can have flowers and gifts delivered in another city as a gift, by placing an order on line, and paying for it electronically as well!

  Many people who work with the information technology industry read newspapers on line while they are at work. (In this Block we will again touch on this topic, when you are asked to compare the print and online editions of popular daily newspapers.)

- Person-to-person communication: E-mail or electronic mail is now widely used by millions of people. Many of them send messages that contain an audio or video clip in addition to text.

- Interactive entertainment: You can choose a video (such as a movie) to watch from a central service provider using the remote control of your television. Video servers can store and output a large number of movies simultaneously. They are programmed to accept user requests, locate the movie from the storage device and play it in the output device, and bill the customer. The video servers can store a large number of movies. There is also a mathematical way of computing the probability of how often a particular movie is requested by the customer. Suppose the server stores seven movies. By Zipf's law, "the most popular movie is seven times as popular as the number 7 movie"

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

  b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Say whether True or False.

   i) The Internet was invented to sell things across the globe   T/F

   ii) A LAN is smaller than a WAN.   T/F

2) Name and briefly describe some uses of networking for an organization

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3) List and describe some uses of networking for individuals.

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Personal e-mail has become a way of life in the 21st century. A newspaper report from the New York Times News Service (Published in *The Hindu* on May 30, 2007) says that the British Library, which has a collection of such historic objects as the Gutenberg Bible, the Magna Carta and Shakespeare's First Folio, is collecting e-mail notes for a month. The projects is known as Email Britain.

The Library wants "memorable or significant e-mail" messages that fall into any one of these 10 categories:

Blunders, complaints, spam, humour, life-changing e-mails, news, love, and romance, everyday e-mail, world around you, tales from abroad.

Here is an example of an email – company network (the person was later fired!):

"To: All Users

Subject: The person who ate my muffin!!!

It would have been better if U asked for one of my muffins instead of just taking it without permission."

(A muffin is a small round cake or bun, often eaten with butter)

Here is an example of a complaint, a note sent to a restaurant:

"I really really ridiculously enjoy eating chicken and bacon sandwiches… Unfortunately however, a Chicken and Bacon and Salad sandwich that I purchased today … was not only an insult to man's greatest edible achievement, but also taints your own brand's impeccable reputation for excellence and customer satisfaction."

And this is a description of a life-changing moment. [Note: The London Eye is a giant wheel installed during the millennium celebrations (the year 2000). A work "do" is an informal British way of referring to a party at work. You will find this meaning listed in the dictionary under the entry for a *do* as a *noun*.]"

Last night Dave surprised me and took me on the London Eye (I thought I was going to his work do.) Anyway to cut a long story short… he asked me to marry him – after lots of really girly behaviour of sobbing my heart-out I nodded my head!"

1.2.3 Words for the Web

Many words relating to computers have become part of our everyday language. A **Desktop** computer sits on your desk, and a **laptop** is meant to sit on your lap. The **screen** has **icon** or images that symbolize the **programs** installed on your computer. These programs or instructions in the brain of the computer constitute the **software.**

The **hardware** is the machinery of the computer: its **motherboard,** for example.

To start a program, you click on an icon, which opens a **window** or a screen. The computer's **memory** is of two kinds: the long term memory is data stored on a **hard disk.** You can also make your **data portable** by storing it on a **CD,** a **DVD** or a **pen drive** (also called a **zip drive**).

From the user's point of view, the Internet or the World Wide Web consists of a vast world wide collection of documents, usually called **pages**. A web page may contain **links or pointers** to other pages anywhere in the world. You can get this linked page by clicking on the link, a **hyperlink**, which is usually underlined or in special colour. Pages that are linked in this way form a **hypertext.** That is, they are not a single text, but the pages can be put together by the user while reading, to from a large text of the user's choice.

You search the web or find your way through it **(navigate** the web**)** using a **browser.** The browser has a **button** on which you click, which lets you return to a previous page, save a page or print a page. To **surf** the Internet means to rapidly look through its sites (just as one surfs the ocean, or rides its waves using a surfboard). To surf the Internet, you need to be connected to it with a **modem.** You will also need a **browser,** which is software that enables you to view the web pages. To go to a particular **website** you need to type in its **URL** or web address. If you are not sure of the address, or not sure on which site or sites you can find, you can **browse** the page using menus links. You can **scroll up** or **down** the page (move the text up or down on your screen) by using a **button** or **mouse.**

You can **download** programs and information from the Internet. **Freeware** is what you don't pay for; **shareware** can be tried for free for a certain period, and then has to be paid for. You must be careful not to get a **computer virus** from the Internet. You can buy **anti-virus software** to protect your system against viruses. Otherwise, your computer might **crash!**

Activity

How many of the words in bold do you know? Try to learn the words that are new to you, using a computer to do the activities of surfing, downloading etc., suggested by the words. (Visit an internet café if you don't have a computer of your own.)

1.2.4 Languages for the Computer

The Web is basically a "client server" system of networked computers. The languages in which web pages are written are HTML and Java. HTML is a "markup language". It contains explicit instructions on how documents are to be formatted, just as a copy editor in a publishing house "marks up" a document to tell the printer how to format a text.

So in HTML,

<B> means : start boldface mode

<?B> means : leave boldface mode

<I> means : start italics mode

</I> means : leave italics mode

Documents written in a markup language contrast with documents like this one, produced in a "What You See Is What You Get" or WYSIWYG mode using Microsoft

Word. In the file you are now reading, the "markup" or the set of formatting instructions is stored in a hidden or embedded mode, or it might even be kept in a separate file.

Java allows highly interactive Web pages. Using Java you can design a web page with which a user can play noughts and crosses, or chess. Or you can get an income tax form, fill in items, and see the calculations made instantly. This is possible because Java uses "applets" or small applications that your computer downloads along with the Web page. For example, a game-playing program, written in Java, is downloaded along with the Web page.

1.3 MULTIMEDIA

What is Multimedia?

Multimedia has been called "the rising star in the networking firmament". It allows audio and video to be digitized and transported electronically.

What is a digital signal? It is a signal that is not continuous (an analogue signal is a continuous signal). Think of a light switch: it is either *on* or *off*. It is digital. But some switches rotate continuously, to allow the light to grow gradually brighter or dimmer. These are analogue switches. (The American spelling is *analog.*)

The difference between analogue video and digital video is the following. Analogue video scans an image in horizontal lines. Digital video is a sequence of "pixels", that is, "picture elements", or small "dots of information" in a rectangular grid.

Today the term "multimedia" is restricted to mean "two or more continuous media", that is, "media that have to be played during some well-defined time interval, usually with some user interaction". So this term is used for a computer that has audio and video capability, and with which a user can interact.

Literally, however, multimedia is just two or more media. Even a simple book with illustrations uses "multi media"! Books have had pictures in them, to decorate or to illustrate the text, from earliest times. Then came a time when a book would be sold along with a cassette which had the book read out – a "talking book", as it were. Can you think of some uses for talking books?

Children used to have grandparents or parents read out stores to them; now they can use the cassette instead, looking at the pages of the book – the print and the illustrations – as they listen. The read-out version of the book usually has a bell or a small sound to indicate at what point the child should turn the page to the next page.

Many people spend a lot of time driving to and from work. They find talking books a useful way of catching up with their "reading" : a cassette plays in the car as they drive. Or a CD (compact disc)!

And of course, talking books help the blind or the "visually challenged" to read. The well-known writer Ved Mehta describes how he used to listen far into the night to the great English and Russian classics in translation on gramophone records, read out by the best actors of the day. Ved Mehta is probably one of the most well-read people today!

In education, radio broadcasts have been used along with course books for distance education programmes. As video and television became available, these visual media were also integrated into courses.

1.3.1 Uses of Multimedia

Who uses multimedia?

Companies use it to make presentations. Sales charts and other graphics can be animated, given attractive music and voice over, and interwoven with video clips showing actual product use, customer responses, or projections for the future; and all this can be combined with the sales executive's own voice or visual presence.

Institutions use it to give "visitors" a guided tour. Multimedia can create a "virtual world", which can take you on a tour of the institution. Many institutions now have their "prospectus" on a CD which tells you what the institution stands for , lets you see who its officials are and listen to them, show you the campus and the buildings, and talks with the customers or students of the institution.

Advertisers use it sell their product. They can mix animation and real-life video, fantasy and reality, using multimedia. Text can be animated, and so can pictures. One advertisement has a car that winks at us with its headlight. One of the earliest enduring images of Indian advertising was a little girl in a white frock for a popular brand of soap powder. The girl twirls her dress, and as she does so, she turns into an image on a packet of soap! You see these advertisements on television, of course, but also on the internet.

On-the-job training and updating is done with multimedia. Demonstration and introduction to new technological advances, product guides, procedures for using machinery, demonstrations of equipment, and knowledge renewal are some of the ways in which this technology is used. Since this technology can be interactive, individual trainees can take a course at their own pace and in their own time, to renew their knowledge and keep up-to-date. Aircraft mechanics, fire fighters, and industrial workers can now learn while on the job.

Educational multimedia is an entire industry in itself. Children in many countries – even India— now spend more time at a television or computer screen than with a book. The concept of "edutainment" allows the child to learn while "playing". One award-wining interactive game taught simple geography in the guise of a detective game. The user registered as a detective. (S)he had to solve a crime by pursuing the members of a gang who flew to destinations all over the world. Clues were given to the destination (e.g., "They have gone to climb Mount Everest", "They are enjoying the beach at a French-speaking part of India"), and the user had to book air tickets to the correct place by using the clues. In this way, the user picked up some basic geographical knowledge. Other more straightforward multimedia packages are available for learning and checking your knowledge of biology or mathematics, of cricket or chess, and so on.

Multimedia is used for learning languages! Learners' Dictionaries for English (for example) now come with CDs that "speak" a word you choose, in two accents: British, or American.

People like you and me can send an animated greeting card through email for birthdays, anniversaries and festivals, which will sing and dance at the user's end. These cards are created using multimedia. So multimedia is used for general **social interaction**.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What is multimedia?

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ii) What are some of the uses of multimedia? If you have any experience with multimedia, please give your own examples as illustrations.

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1.4 THE SPREAD OF INFORMATION IN CORPORATES

As corporates get larger, so do their needs to communicate, both internal and externally. The communicative potential of video has made it a perfect business partner to the corporate world. Video is used for annual reports and for new magazines within corporations. Video conferencing has made possible instant interactive communication within the country as well as globally. The use of video in training has been taken to a very advanced stage. There may be a training video to familiarize the staff of a company with a new telephone system, for example or about a bank's plan to relocate its employees. Corporate health videos are also attested, such as a video on the hazards of drunken driving (useful during the holiday season of Christmas and New Year), or an exercise video that encourages staff to keep fit. Many of these videos are produced by specialized production houses that make the videos professionally comparable with network programming. Corporate videos is thus a good example of a parallel narrowcasting network that has sprung up. The tapes are distributed to various employees or groups, or else the company may have an intranet or even a satellite it leases for its offices in various cities.

1.5 TEXT MESSAGES

Text messages are short written messages between mobile phones. Text messaging is popularly called 'sms' or short messaging service'. Because it takes a long time to type full messages, and because space on the mobile phone is limited, the size of the message is better kept small. So text messages have evolved to use abbreviations.

Be careful not to use these sms forms in formal writing, such as in your examinations, formal letters, reports, and so on. There is nothing wrong in inventing such new forms for a new medium of written communication. Writing systems have arisen in response to the needs of communication on the one hand, and of the materials available for writing on the other.

However, we must stress the need for you to choose the appropriate style of communication for the appropriate occasion. Knowing the sms forms in addition to ordinary English spelling maybe essential, but do not think of substituting text messaging for educated written English!

1.6   LET US SUM UP

- There is a need today for storing information, packaging and processing it, and disseminating it or making it available.

- A computer can store information, and you can identify and retrieve the information you need. It can do this much faster than the process of printing and publishing.

- A database is an organized, integrated and inter-related collection of computer based data.

- The networking of computers allows an automated sharing of resources. A LAN is a Local Area Network that has a range of less than 10 kilometers. A

MAN, a Metropolitan Area Network, has a range of 10-100 kilometers. A WAN Wide Area Network, with a range starting from 100 kilometers.

- The Internet or the World Wide Web, known as www. allows access to linked documents spread out over thousands of machines all over the world . The idea of the web actually began in 1989 at CERN, the European Centre for Nuclear Research.

- Until the early 1990s, the Internet was for academics, government and industrial researchers. The World Wide Web brought millions of non-academic users to the net.

- Organizations use computer networks for resource sharing, reliability in information storage, and for communication.

- Our everyday lives are impacted by computer networks in access to remote information, person-to-person communication by E-mail or electronic mail, and for interactive entertainment.

- Many words relating to computers have become part of everyday language.

- The languages in which web pages are written are HTML and Java. HTML is a "markup language".

- Multimedia allows audio and video to be digitized and transported electronically, Multimedia is used by companies, institutions, in advertising, for training and knowledge updating in certain jobs, in education, and for social interaction.

- As corporates get larger, so do their needs to communicate, both internally and externally. Corporate video is a good example of a parallel narrowcasting network. The tapes are distributed to various employees or groups, or else the company may have an intranet or even a satellite it leases for its offices in various cities.

- Text messages are short written messages between mobile phones. Text messaging is popularly called 'sms' or 'short messaging service'. Text messages use abbreviations.

- It is essential to know the ordinary English spellings of sms forms.

1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) i)   True

   ii)   True

   iii) False

2) The Books in Print database is a list of books currently available. It contains information about more than 10 lakh books. NISSAT in India is a National Information System for Science and Technology. The USA has a database of Federal Research in Progress which has information about projects funded by the government in engineering and the physical and life sciences.

Check Your Progress 2

i)   False

ii)   True

2)   All members of an organization can check their pay slips, the organization's inventory of goods, or statistics relating to orders received and items delivered, wherever they are, if the information is available on a network.

Another example is libraries that are networked. If a book you need is not available in your local library, the libraries can check the database of a networked library, and may be able to get the book for you by inter-library loan.

Information storage for industries like banking or air traffic control has to be reliable and unified. A network makes sure that all organizations within an industry have access to the same reliable information. Bankers can check the day's currency exchange rates. Air traffic controllers are linked the world over, to keep track of the airplanes that fly to destinations all over the world.

Communication on network is instantaneous across the globe. So two people separated in space can write a report together: when one of them makes a change, the other can see it immediately.

3)   Computer networks provide access to remote information and so make possible electronic billing, banking, shopping, and on-line newspapers.

Many people receive their telephone bills via the computer. They can arrange with their bank for the bill to be paid electronically, by debiting their bank account. On line shopping facilities allow you to purchase books and airplane tickets on line. You can have flowers and gifts delivered in another city as a gift, by placing an order on line, and pay for it on line as well!

Many people read newspapers on line while they are at work. E-mail or electronic mail is now widely used by millions of people. These messages can contain an audio or video clip in addition to text. It is now also possible to choose a video to watch from a central service provider. Video servers are programmed to accept user requests, locate the movie from the storage device and play it in the output device, and bill the customer.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Multimedia allows audio and video to be digitized and transported electronically. So this term is used for a computer that has audio and video capability, and with which a user can interact.

Today the term "multimedia" is restricted to mean "two or more continuous media", that is, "media that have to be played during some well-defined time interval, usually with some user interaction". Literally, however, multimedia is just two or more media.

ii)   Multimedia is used by companies, institutions, in advertising, for training and knowledge updating in certain jobs, in education, and for social interaction.

Companies use it to make presentations. Institutions use it give "visitors" a guided tour of the institution in a "virtual world". Advertisers use it to sell their product.

On-the-job training and updating is done with multimedia. Demonstration and introduction to new technological advances, product guides, procedures

for using machinery, demonstrations of equipment, and knowledge renewal are some of the ways in which this technology is used. Since this technology can be interactive, individual trainees can take a course at their own pace and in their own time, to renew their knowledge and keep up-to-date. Aircraft mechanics, fire fighters and industrial workers can now learn while on the job.

Educational multimedia is an entire industry in itself, and multimedia is used for learning languages. Animated greeting cards that can be sent through email for birthdays, anniversaries and festivals, illustrate the use of multimedia in social interaction.

Check Your Progress 4

Answers to sms or text messages

C (see)	U (you)	@ (at)	CU@7 (see you at seven)
R (are)	B (be)	4 (for)	How RU (how are you)

2 (to or too)

Text message example

b4 (before)   l8r (later)   4U (for you)   2day (today) 2morrow (tomorrow)

gr8 (great)

UNIT 2   THE WORLD WIDE WEB

2.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit will allow you to:

*   understand the Internet as a medium of communication,

*   identify the main elements of the World Wide Web,

*   understand how writing for the Web differs from writing for print media, and

*   learn how to create simple content for the web.

2.1   INTRODUCTION

We now know how the computer can help us communicate with people around the globe and those not as far away, and how networking has made a difference to the case and speed of such communication in both professional and personal spheres. In this Unit we will go on to talk about one aspect of computer networking – increasingly important activity, as more and more people look to this medium as their main source of information and entertainment. This unit introduces you to the process and principles of writing for the Web.

2.2   THE WORLD WIDE WEB

We live in a world where communication happens in many different ways, across multiple channels and in many forms. Our relationships are held together by speech, writing on paper, images on screens transmitted by satellite links, words in text messages on cell phones and emails, as well as face-to-face conversation. But perhaps the biggest transformation in our communication landscape has come from the development and spread of the Internet – or what we now know as the World Wide Web.

The Internet, which was first developed in 1982, is a "mega" network of computer networks spread across the world. Originally used mainly for information sharing between research institutions, the Internet gradually became a popular medium for

communication, first among universities, then spreading to the information technology corporate before hitting the general public in the mid-1990s. Since then it has grown rapidly, and current estimates are that nearly 1.8 billion people use the Internet for some form of communication and research (www.internetstats.com). In India, perhaps similar to the rest of the world, more that 60 percent of users are below the age of 30, and about 25 percent are below 21 (www.sify.com).

The World Wide Web is the part of the Internet that is visible to us – it provides the 'face' of this network and links the thousands of information sources contained on the computers that form the network. It is organized sources contained on the computers that form the network. It is organized in a way that can be accessed easily by users. It provides the interface between the physical network of wires and satellite and microwave links and servers and the information contained within, and the user. Now, however, we tend to use the terms 'Internet', 'Web', 'Net' and 'Cyberspace' more or less interchangeably to mean the online space that we access to find information, communicate with friends and colleagues, or be entertained through multimedia content.

While we do not need to know much about the technical details that make the Web possible, it does help to understand how information is organized in this medium, so that as writers we can create material that best utilizes its capabilities.

Activity

Observe and discuss: What are the different kinds of 'sites' that one finds on the Web? How is your reading experience different on the Web as compared to other texts such as books, newspapers, or magazines? Which do you prefer and why?

2.3   THE WEB AS A MEDIUM

One of the things that makes the Web different is the fact that it is not just text we are dealing with; it brings together text, sound and images and in a way that allow us to switch from one to the other easily. This is why the Web is called a '**convergent'** medium, because it brings together the characteristics of other media – print and audiovisual – onto a single platform. We therefore refer to people who make use of the Web as "users" rather than "readers" because they not only read text, but view pictures and listen to sound on this medium. This makes the reading or "using" experience quite different from say, reading a newspaper, or magazine.

Readers can also move through a web text in different directions, accessing information in "layers" of detail according to need and convenience. What does this mean for a writer? It means that the structure of the writing must take into account how a Web user approaches a piece of writing. If, like most media writers, your intention is to keep the reader on your page, then the page must be written and presented in a way that keeps the reader interested enough to not switch to another site.

The writer must also consider the potential of the medium and make full use of it. So while in a printed text, one can illustrate ideas or enhance them with pictures and graphics, on the Web, you can use not only illustrative graphics, you can also animate them. You can plug in video and sound, and link to other resources that will help you explain your subject better.

However, this convergence also can be a bit distracting. A person who is reading something on the computer screen, on the Web, can have at any moment several windows open, engaging in a different kind of interaction in each. He or she could be simultaneously reading the online version of a daily newspaper, searching for information on a certain topic using a search engine like Google, listening to music from a digital radio channel or from a CD, and chatting with a friend on an instant messaging service, all while working on a document using the computer's word processor. The text on your web site competes with all these things for attention, all of which are available on the same physical interface, all instantly accessible to the user. Attention spans therefore, are considerably reduced. So the writer must be able to package information into small, easily digestible units

Another major distinguishing feature of the Internet is its **non-linearity**. This means that a text can be constructed in small units that do not necessarily flow in a sequential order, and which may link to other short units in related but separate subject heads. The same property which allows a user to go from text to image to sound, also allows the user to go from an article on sports in India to a related piece on cricket, to another on politics and funding in performance sports, or yet another on the history of women's cricket, all beginning with the same set of key words. This movement can happen either because a search engine such as Google will throw up a variety of related articles or because articles are linked to each other and to extended bits of text (called **hypertext**). You may have noticed certain highlighted terms in a Web document that show up as "links" when your cursor moves over them. Each of these highlighted terms leads to an article that expands the term or explains it further or leads to related information – these are **hyperlinks.**

Activity:

Go to a company web site or a portal such as yahoo.com or rediff.com. Can you identify the hyperlinks? Do you come across any hypertext that pops up as your mouse goes over the words?

And what does this mean for the writer? It means that texts are not planned in single long units, but as blocks of related sub-texts that can be linked in a variety of ways depending on how people might wish to access the information in them. This again means that writers generally create short pieces of text that can function as independent units or can be linked together to form a longer unit.

Of course, there are spaces on the Web that allow for more lengthy, detailed documents, and there are users who require these, but by and large, writing for the Web must keep in mind the characteristics of the medium and the needs and usage patterns of the majority of readers.

Activity

Look at the front page of a newspaper and the home page of the electronic version of the same paper. How are the two 'fronts' organized? What are the major differences in organization and in structure? Is the language any different? How does the 'look' of the page differ and does this influence readability in any way?

The web page of *The Hindu*, a daily newspaper, has a listing of the main sections on the left and a panel with short introductions to the main stories, indicating that there is more if readers want to read further. If you visit the site (www.thehindu.com) you

will see that there is a ticker running below the main story much like the ones on television, giving the breaking news. Below the main story is a listing of other major stories in the issue, readers can click on if interested.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

          b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) The _____ or the _____ is perhaps one of the major developments that has influenced how we access information and communicate with each other.

2) The Internet is a network of _____.

3) The first use of the Internet was in _____ for information sharing among researchers.

4) The _____ is the part of the Internet that is visible to us.

5) The bringing together of text, images, video and sound is known as _____.

6) _____ is a major characteristic of the Internet, which allows people to move in several different directions through a document.

7) Texts are planned as _____ of _____ linked in several ways.

8) Words that "pop up" as your cursor moves over text on the screen are called _____.

2.4 CREATING CONTENT FOR THE WEB

While writing for the Web is, in essence, no different from any other good writing there are a few things to keep in mind while structuring the information for the Web user. The characteristics of the medium – convergence, non-linearity, and hyper-textuality – influence the way people read, and therefore the way writers put together material.

2.4.1 Elements of the Web

First, it is important to understand the components of the Web. A few of the structural elements that make up the World Wide Web are listed below.

A web browser is an interface tool that allows you to see and read content from the Internet. It is a user friendly device that converts code into text and images in a way that makes it possible for us to read, listen or see material. Commonly used browsers are Internet Explorer, Netscape and Mozilla Firefox.

A web page is a discrete unit of content, usually limited to one screen or a little more. A web page has a specific address – a 'url' (uniform resource locator) that is assigned to it and that makes referencing easy.

A web site is normally made up of several pages of related content that are linked together.

A home page or landing page is the main introductory page of any site. It usually contains information that tells users what the site is about and links to the various

parts of the site. It is somewhat like a combination of a magazine cover and its contents page.

A portal is a web page that leads to several other sites or information sources tied together by a theme or common structure. The term portal signifies that these pages are like 'gateways' to the collection of information. The portal of rediff.com, for instance, does not have any introductory text, but simply links to other parts of the site and to stories of the day.

A 'window' is a frame that is open on your computer screen, usually corresponding to a location on the Web or a document from your computer.

"**URL**" is **uniform resource locator,** is an 'address' on the Internet that identifies the location of a document. The URL helps us access material on the Internet.

It usually appears as a string of letter and numbers following the term http://www.in the address box of your browser.

Hypertext is information linked to a word, image or phrase that appears as a pop-up box inside the page you are viewing. Sometimes this appears even as you move your mouse over (known as a 'mouse over' effect) the highlighted term, or it may appear only when you click on it.

A hyperlink is a link to another page or a document related to the one you are currently viewing. When you link on a highlighted term or an image, the browser takes you to this other document, or other 'location' on the Web. Hyperlinks represent a method of cross-referencing that allows you to easily access related content on the Web.

Activity

Spend some time browsing the Web and see if you can identify these various elements. Write down the urls of some web sites that you like to visit often. Can you see how the home page differs from the "inside" pages of a site?

So when you create content for the Web, you must think not only of what information is going into the document, but how it is to be organized and linked with other information.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) The main characteristics of the Web as a medium are _____. _____ and _____.

2) A _____ allows you to see and read content from the Internet.

3) The introductory page of any web site is called the _____ or _____. or _____.

4) A page that leads to several other sites or units of information is called a _____.

5) URL stand for _____.

6) _____ on a web page are devices that allow you to move from one page or document to another and represent a form of cross-referencing.

2.4.2   Building a Site Map

The first step in creating material for a web site is to build what is called a site map. This is an outline of all the elements that will go into the site, sort of like a list of chapters in a book.

The site map not only shows the listing of topics that will be included in the site, but also the "levels" of access. In other words, the site map shows which will be primary links direct from the home page, and which pages will be linked through the secondary or inside pages, and so on. The main effort in creating content for the web lies in this stage. Once the structure is clear and makes sense, then filling in the details is done.

At this stage you must decide how you want to direct the user through your site, and also how most people might 'navigate' or make their way through the site. Your decision on how to build the site map may take into account the following –

* What information are most people likely to want?

* What information does the organization want people to have at first glance?

* What is needed to show people at first glance what this site is about?

* What kind of information can be put together?

* What level of detail is required in each part of the site?

2.4.3   Writing in Screen-Sized Chunks

Once you have built a site map, the next step is to fill in the outline. Each section of the site map will have a specific **url,** which means that a user may come directly to that page if his or her search has used keywords present in the section. This means that the writer must include enough contexts that allow the reader to understand how this page relates to the rest of the content on the site. At the same time, this section of the site must make sense to a reader without having to go back to the first page, or the home page.

Basically, writing for the web is like packaging information into small, related chunks which fit with each other – people can then take the chunk they want and go into more details if they wish. But each chunk should make sense in itself. This is why it is important to have a good, logically organized site map that can direct the way you write up the content. Ideally, each section should be no more than a screen in length – this is about 250 to 300 words. If more detail is required, then encourage the interested reader to go to one more level in the site rather than burdening all readers with too much information. Suppose you were writing an article on career options in the broad field of communications. If you were writing this article for the education supplement of a newspaper, you would perhaps plan a 500 word article that began with a general overview of what the study and practice of communications is all about, and then lead into specializations and sub-specializations, and what sorts of career opportunities exist in each of these, ending with a summary of future directions in the field.

If you were to convert the same topic for use on a web site, you would first section the whole article into meaningful units, and then write the units in a way that they can make sense independently. This would mean a small amount of repetition in terms of setting the context and providing a sense of linkage with the other links. The introduction would necessarily have to include a mention of the other sections so that they can be hyperlinked either directly through the text or listed as links on

the side or at the bottom/top of the screen. The outline may look something like this:

Career Options in Communications

Overview of the field

The study of human communication

Interpersonal communication

Mass communication

Advertising

Public relations

Journalism

Print journalism

Elections journalism

Communication for social change

Film studies

Audio-visual production

New media and their applications

Media convergence and its impact on the job market

Profiles

Future outlook

Frequently asked questions

When you expand this site map, the first section may read something like this, with the terms in **blue** linking to **inside pages**

Careers in communications

Communications is a broad and diverse field of study and practice. It rages from the study of interactions between two or more people in various settings, to information and entertainment targeted at large groups. It includes commercial applications such as **advertising** and **public relations**, as well as public service or public interest applications like **journalism** and **communication for social change.** It occurs over a variety of media, from print to electronic (radio and television) to new technology (the **Internet**)….

Of course, there are sites that offer lengthy content under a single link, for instance stories in online newspapers and magazines. These too tend to have short (one or two line) descriptions on the home page of the publication, with word "more" at the end for users to click on in case they wish to read further. These lengthier links assume that only interested or dedicated readers would read on further and, therefore, would not mind scrolling down the screen to read the whole article.

Activity

Take a long feature from a newspaper or magazine and see how you can rewrite if for a web site by breaking it up into Sections. Then go to a web site and see how a long piece of text has been cut into Screen-sized Segments. Try to reconstruct the outline based on the structure of the units. Can you comment on the logic of the structure and how it reflects a web user's preferences?

2.4.4 Hyperlinks and Pop-up Windows

As you create content for a web site, you must keep in mind that it is not necessary to elaborate into short notes that can appear as pop up windows or linked as hypertext. This allows you to write spare, skeletal text that addresses the general reader who can go to the next level or click on these hyperlinks if he or she requires more detail.

What this means for you as a writer is that you have to think about your text at different levels of complexity. At the first level is the most basic information. The next level can elaborate on this basic information, or go into different aspects of the topic, and different levels of detail can be accommodated through hyperlinks and pop up boxes

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Activity

Look through a reference book such as an illustrated encyclopedia or a user manual. You will probably notice several boxed items and illustrations that go with each chapter or block of text. How would you recreate this text for the web? Which items would go into pop up windows or be packaged into hypertext?

2.5 WRITING FOR BROWSERS

Most web users don't really read every word on a page. They browse cyberspace looking for things of interest; they scan text and focus on small parts of it that interests them. So writing for this kind of a user is a bit different from writing for a reader of printed matter. Here are some things to keep in mind as you create content for the Web.

Make it scannable

The text should use key words so that someone who is quickly going through it will be able to pick up on what the main theme or topic is. Think about how users might search for this kind of information. What are the key words they are likely to search by? Who is your article or web site aimed at and what are their key interests? Because information on the Web co-exists with so much material, it is often difficult to get people to stop and look at your material – unless it is clearly marked out by common key words that most people interested in the topic would use. Another device that makes text easily scannable is good sub-headings and bulleted lists. Such highlighting pulls the eye toward the information and makes it instantly understandable.

Make good use of hyperlinks

As mentioned in the pervious section, the nature of the medium allows you to package information in small clusters and not clutter up the main text with too much detail. Use the hyperlinks function to provide details that not all readers would be interested in, but which is important to include nonetheless.

Provide sufficient context

Remember that we users can reach any part of a web site directly without going through the home page which might have all the introductory material. So you should make sure that each page has enough contexts to tell the reader where they are and how this information makes sense.

Know your potential audience

Like all good writing, web writing must keep in mind the average reader; this can be difficult because the Web is an international medium, its users may be anywhere on the globe. If your web site is not targeted at any particular geographically situated community, then you can take time to ensure that it address the needs of a global audience. This information must be as widely applicable as possible, and understood by people from everywhere.

In summary, writing for the Web does not require any specific skills that are different from any other form of writing. It takes good organizational skills, the ability to structure information in a logical and efficient manner, and clarity of expression. Perhaps there is more emphasis on structure and conciseness than in other media, because of the nature of this medium.

2.6   LET US SUM UP

• The World Wide Web is an increasingly important medium of information and entertainment.

• The World Wide Web is the document delivery system that resides on the Internet, which is a global network of computers.

• The Web is a convergent medium, which brings together text, sound and images.

• Users can access information in layers of detail, according to how a web site is organized.

• The Web is a non-linear medium, which means that readers can move back and forth and to different sites to access information, all very quickly.

• Web content takes the from of short blocks of text linked together

• Hypertextuality is a feature of the web that allows related content to be linked together and for the user to navigate between different bodies of related material.

• The first and most important stage of created material for a web site is to build a site map, which is like a detailed outline.

• The site map is filled in with short chunks of information, usually no more than one screen in length.

• Each screen of information should contain key words to make it searchable and scannable.

• Use graphic devices like bulleted lists and sub-headings to help a reader scan the text efficiently.

2.7   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1)   Internet; world wide web

2)   computers

3)   universities

4)   World Wide Web

5) convergence

6) Non-linearity

7) Blocks; sub-texts

8) Hypertext

Check our Progress 2

1) Convergence, non-linearity and hypertextuality

2) Web browser

3) Web page or home page or landing page

4) Portal

5) Uniform resource locator

6) Hyperlinks

UNIT 3   INTERNET AND IMPACT ON JOURNALISM

Structure

3.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit familiarizes you with the role of the Internet in writing and media.

After having read this unit you should be able to:

- Understand the niceties of the Internet

- Its role in the Media

- Blogging/ New Media/ Participatory Journalism

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Writing paper, pen, a dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedia or an almanac are the basic tools of a writer. The latest but most effective addition to this list is the Internet, almost encompassing all other mentioned tools. It can be described as a worldwide system of computers connected to one another, allowing the transfer of information in seconds. Most people think the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) are the same thing, but the Web is a subset of the Internet. And, like such systems as e-mail, Usenet, FTP (file transfer protocol), the Web requires certain software for Internet users or surfers or netizens (citizens who are net savvy) to access it.

3.2   A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTERNET

The Internet was the brainchild of scientists who wanted to build computer networks so that researchers worldwide could share ideas. This project was named ARPANET, in honour of the agency that paid for it – The Advanced Research Projects Agency, a unit of the Department of Defense of the United States of America. In 1969, the network connected four computer sites only. When the World Wide Web (WWW) was developed in 1993, interest in the Internet exploded. The Web uses HTML (hypertext markup language), which enables a person to find information on any subject worldwide by simply clicking the mouse on a word that leads to another

document in a different computer. By the end of 2016, as many as 14 crore Indians were using the Internet. The number is fast increasing day by day.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

   b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i)   What is APRANET?

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ii)   What does the term "HTML" stand for?

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iii)   When was the World Wide Web developed?

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iv)   How many Indians use the internet?

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3.3   JOURNALISTS AND THE INTERNET

Journalists use the Internet daily as a tool for reporting events and issues comprehensively to viewers and readers. The Internet helps every stage of the reporting process from thinking of a story idea to presenting the story. Reporters also go to the Internet to find story topics, identify experts and monitor a subject. They use it to check names, addresses and other facts. The Internet helps journalists

tackle broad themes, find background information on unfamiliar people or issues and keep up with the developments.

3.3.1 Advantages and Disadvantages

There are many effects which the internet has on journalism and most of them are positive although some have proved to be harmful as well. One of the more positive effects it has had is that it actually is one of the easiest ways of having content distributed on a large scale. It is the chosen way for journalists to reach out to a larger and more diverse targeted audience. Another advantage is that the content can be updated very fast and the web design can be changed very easily. Any "breaking news" can be announced almost instantly without having to wait for papers and other publications to be printed and delivered. Journalists now have smart phones, tablets and I pads and other such devices so that they can provide any news within minutes. Many journalists are now even choosing to tweet while on the move to keep people up to date.

It goes even further because by placing news online it means that people can leave comments and start a discussion with other people about an article. Previously people would have to write in to the editors or phone-in which was a lengthy process.

The Internet saves journalists' time and news organisations money. Only a few years ago, journalists found information only by visiting libraries. Many towns lack good libraries with reference materials, so reporters had to travel to nearby cities or settle for incomplete information. Even with the telephone, journalists had to make many calls, leave messages and wait for return calls before finding the information they needed. With the Internet, reporters can find diverse voices and up-to-date information quickly, and at their fingertips. The Internet enables reporters to write more stories and better stories.

The Internet also has some disadvantages. The users may have a hard time sifting through the mountains of information on the Internet. And some of the information may be questionable. Furthermore, journalists should not solely depend on online sources as many important documents are not online. In spite of the drawbacks, the Internet gives reporters new choices for finding information. They can use e-mail, go directly to a Web site, browse the Internet, and explore a search engine, read newspapers and magazines online or on 'blogs'.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i)   Why do journalists depend so much on the Internet these days?

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ii)   What are the disadvantages of the Internet?

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3.4   E-MAIL

The advent of telephone service in the 19th century revolutionized newsgathering. Electronic mail (e-mail) is doing the same thing in the 21st century. Reporters use e-mail to contact hard-to-reach or reluctant sources. Even people who travel a lot make time to check their e-mail. In fact e-mail is a way of keeping in touch with sources, exchanging ideas with colleagues or communicating with readers or viewers. There are several free e-mail sites such as gmail.com, aol.com, rediffmail.com, hotmail.com, yahoo.com, etc. to feed the increasing demand of email service seekers in the world. But the romance with emails has its pitfalls too.

Keep in mind what Eliot Spitzer, the former New York governor said on the subject: "Never talk when you can nod. And never write when you can talk. My only addendum is never put it in email."

However, in this age of web, it is not possible to avoid email communication. Emails have become an integral part of our daily life, whether we like it or not. Is it not better to understand the niceties of this boon of technology?

Rule 1: MOST IMPORTANT - Replying

If a mail is sent to you by your supervisor, team lead manager or just a senior, you have to reply to him. Examples of some simple replies are:

1)   "Thanks got it".

2)   "OK"

Even in the case when people who are reporting to you send you an email a prompt reply or even acknowledgement is highly recommended.

Rule 2: Using Cc and Bcc field

To: Your actual main recipient (to whom this email is a must read)

Cc: (send a Carbon copy) of the email to the parties whom you want to inform.

Bcc: (send a Blind Carbon copy) of the email to some other party that you think needs to know about the subject, without letting other parties (i.e. the To and Cc recipients) know about this person's knowledge.

Rule 3: Attachments, use sparingly

Only include attachments when it is absolutely necessary that the receiver should have the original file. Instead paste the entire content of excel or word document in the mail body itself.

1)   PDF and PPT can be sent as attachments, as they can't be copied entirely in the body.

2) Larger excel and word files which can't be copied should be send as attachments.

3) Use JPG instead of GIF format while sending an image as an attachment.

Rule 4: Include clues in the "Subject" field

Action Required,

Please respond by xx/xx/xx,

As Requested,

Time sensitive,

Feel free to change the title in a response or forward if it will clarify your expectations for the recipient

Rule 5: Avoid Capital letters/words in your email.

Never use capital letters while typing an email message to anyone. For starters, caps are considered impolite and resemble shouting in speech.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What do you understand by the term "E-mail"?

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ii) Give the names of some E-mail sites?

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iii) What are the golden rules for E-mail communication?

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iv) What do you understand by the term 'Bcc" and "Cc"?

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3.5 INTERNET ADDRESSES OR URLS (UNIVERSAL RESOURCE LOCATORS)

The amount of information on the Internet is hard to imagine. Some experts say that Internet volume doubles every 90 days. Everyone has a reason to put information on the Internet. Because so many people use the Web for so many reasons, journalists must question the reliability of Web-delivered information. Reporters need to find out who put the information on the Web and why, and then verify any information they use.

Every screen of information on the Internet has an address, called its URL or universal resource locator. The "http" (hypertext transfer protocol) is the protocol or computer scheme used to access information. This protocol allows computers to move information (text, graphics, audio and video) around the Web. It allows a person to click on words to find another document residing in another computer. The "www" is part of the host computer's name. But keep in mind, that not every address on the World Wide Web has "www" as its prefix.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) Explain what do you understand by the terms Internet address and URL (Universal Resource Locator)?

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ii) Why is an internet address or URL important for an Internet user?

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3.6 OPERATING SYSTEMS, WEB BROWSERS AND SEARCH ENGINES

The Internet is a repository or mine of information. Internet users depend on operating systems, web browsers and search engines for finding information.

The commonly used operating systems belong to the family of Windows operating systems having different versions such as Windows 98, Windows XP (2000) or Windows Vista (2007). Linux, a new entrant, is successfully challenging the monopoly of the Windows family.

It is hard to imagine how the usage of Internet resources would be possible without web browsers. A web browser is a software application which enables a user to display and interact with text, images, videos, music and other information typically located on a Web page at a website on the World Wide Web or a local area network. Web browsers format HTML information for display. Therefore, the appearance of a Web page may differ between browsers.

Some of the Web browsers currently available for personal computers (PC) include Internet Explorer (with several versions; the latest IE8), Mozilla Firefox (also with several versions, Safari (developed by the Apple and used in the iphone), Netscape and Opera etc. The latest to join them is the Chrome, developed by Google. It has unleashed a browser war. Browers do not get talked about much. A lot of people simply click on the "icon" on their computer that take them to the Internet—and that is as far as it goes. And in a way that is enough. Most of us just get into a car and turn the key. We do not know what kind of engine we have or what features we have. We are just happy that it takes us where we have to go.

The process of surfing on the Internet and finding information is facilitated by search engines. At present there is a variety of search engines but the most popular one is Google, which is used by a record number of Internet visitors. Indian search engines are not popular. A very small proportion of Internet visitors use the Yahoo and MSN search engines. Microsoft has also introduced "Bing", a search engine. Internet surfers depend on web search engines for searching information on the World Wide Web.

Search engines are not thinking people. Unlike librarians, they cannot ask a journalist to tell them more about the topic or ascertain what way the journalist is using a keyword. The search engine identifies all web sites containing that keyword, no matter the definition or context. It then lists the Web sites containing the keyword, according to how pertinent the Web site is to the journalist's keyword search. This is called relevancy ranking.

But do not forget the Wikipedia, the biggest single mine of information on any subject or prominent individual. However, the web space does not only contain a mine of information but it is also full of misinformation. The internet users are expected to use their discretion while navigating the web world in search of information.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i)   Why are search engines important for journalists or writers?

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ii)   Give the names of some search engines.

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3.7   BLOGS

Blog term is a mash up or blend of website-logging. It is a shortened term of Weblog. It is not something new. Comments are what make blogs really different from a web site as interaction is unique with blogs. Jorn Barger coined the term Weblog on Dec. 17, 1997. It entered into lexicon – Webster's word of the year -2004. The entry says *"Blog noun (1999, a web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and other hyperlinks provided by the writer"*. It was in 1999 that Peter Merholz shortened it to blog.

By mid-2001 blogging as an activity was gaining momentum but blogs still represented an extremely small slice of the internet pie. Blogging has come a long way from its modest beginnings. These days, there is money to be made, fame to be earned and influence to be gained.

BLOG HOSTS: Starting a basic blog is no more difficult than registering for an email address. Within a few minutes you can start blogging. All you have to do is to sign up with a blog host, pick a name and you are ready to start posting. If you are new to blogging or not particularly computer-savvy, the best way to start blogging is to begin simply- and that means signing up with a blog host. The host will provide a web address for your blog, various ready-made page templates and easy-to-use online tools for adding or updating posts. You won't have to worry about anything vaguely technical such as registering and managing a domain name, learning HTML, or installing special software. Blogger allows you to use your own domain name. Blogger was started in August 1999. It was acquired by Google in 2003.

WHY BLOGGING?

1)   Exploring a hobby or passion

2)   Sharing information

3)   Making money (Advertising on blogs reached $283 millions in 2007)

4)   To fight injustice

5)   As a substitute for therapy

6)   To know you are not alone

7)   To tap the creative inner spirit

BUT

A)   Choose a subject that genuinely interests you

B)   Decide whether any topics are off limits.

C)   Think about your potential readers. (Choosing what to blog about when you start)

SETTING GOALS:

- Writing Well
- Posting frequently
- Interacting with comments

Bloggers speak truth to powers that be, and are starting to fill the checks and balances role formerly performed by the conventional press. The best in blogging pursues the truth, with fact-checking comparable to the best of the press. Phile Meyer, a journalism professor claims in "The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age" that the last print edition of a newspaper will be published some morning in April 2043. MSM (Mainstream Media, like newspapers, news channels) have been described as dinosaur media by some of the Web enthusiasts. But its extinction is not imminent. Lots of bloggers comment on MSM stories. If the dinosaur media disappears like the giant lizards after an asteroid strike, bloggers could be bound for a similar fate. Fascinating hybrid of old-style news and blogging, newspapers are picking up on blogs. Everyone can be a reporter. It is a sort of "court of appeals in news judgements

3.8   LET US SUM UP

Internet and Web have revolutionized journalism. In fact journalism has today become a multidirectional force field, rather than the one-way street of the traditional newspaper or television news bulletin. Moreover, today's newsrooms are essentially collections of networked personal computers.

At the same time, the Internet is something which everyone has access to these days. It is a crucial part of our society. It has changed how we communicate and interact with each other. In fact it has become the vital medium. People visit websites for information, entertainment and news.

Also, because the technology of news-making and distribution is much cheaper and simpler, almost everyone can join the journalistic melee. Every citizen can be a reporter and can take on the powers that be. The difference between the internet, television and radio, magazines, newspapers is the two- way communication.

Blogging, the new *avtar* of media known as the New Media or participatory journalism permits anyone to establish a real-time, on-line personal platform, for use as a public diary or pulpit to the world. But blogging is a gem which takes a minute to learn and a lifetime to master.

3.9   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   The Advanced Research Projects Agency

ii)   Hypertext markup language

iii)   In 1993

iv)   in 2016 approx 14 crore Indians were using the net.

Check Your Progress 2

i)   It saves time as journalists do not have to visit many libraries to find information. So it is an important tool for them.

ii)   Sometimes it is cumbersome to sift through the overload of information available. Sometimes the information is also questionable.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Email stands for electronic mail

ii)   Some popular email sites are gmail.com; aol.com; rediffmail.com; hotmail.com; yahoo.com. These are all free sites.

iii) A reply to an email must always be sent. Attachments should be sent sparingly. The "subject" field should contain clues as to the subject matter of the email. One must avoid capital letters in an email as that is equivalent to shouting in a speech.

iv)   Bcc stands for Blind carbon copy and Cc stands for carbon copy.

Check Your Progress 4

i)   Every screen of information on the Internet has an address, called its URL or universal resource locator. The "http" (hypertext transfer protocol) is the protocol or computer scheme used to access information. This protocol allows computers to move information (text, graphics, audio and video) around the Web. It allows a person to click on words to find another document residing in another computer. The "www" is part of the host computer's name. But keep in mind, that not every address on the World Wide Web has "www" as its prefix.

ii)   Because reporters/users need to find out who has put the information on the web. This can give them an idea as to the reliability of the information.

Check Your Progress 5

i)   Search engines are important for journalists or writers because they facilitate finding and accessing information across the world.

ii)   Some search engines are Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet explorer and Google.

UNIT 4 IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND CYBER MEDIA

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Our aim through this Unit is familiarize you with the characteristics of social and cyber media as well as talk about the impact that it has had on our lives. By the end of this Unit you will be able to judge for yourselves, the great impact that cyber media has had on our society. You will also be able to see the positive as well as negative effects of cyber media. Finally you will also be able to take general precautions to protect yourself from cyber crimes.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The very definition of communication and social interaction has changed in today's world by the rise and evolution of social and cyber media. Social media platforms like facebook and twitter have revolutionized the way we communicate with each other. In the previous unit we saw the impact that the internet had on journalism. In this unit we will see the tremendous impact that cyber media has had on our social, personal and professional lives. However, where there are plus points of any new invention—there are bound to be some misuses too. Pros and cons, use and misuse always go hand in hand. It is up to each individual as well as institution to see that they do not get conned by cyber criminals. A number of people in today's' world have been duped and have had to pay a heavy price both in terms of finances and violation of their privacy. They have realized only too late that they have fallen prey to cyber predators, and there is nothing they can do about it apart from deactivating their social media accounts. However, some small precautions go a long way in preventing such crimes. We will be taking about them in details in this Unit.

4.2 WHAT IS SOCIAL AND CYBER MEDIA?

To understand how the social and cyber media has impacted today's world, we first need to know what exactly Social and Cyber media means.

Cyber media is the medium of communication through internet or cyberspace. These days most communication between organizations, establishments or individuals takes place through the Internet and the World Wide Web which is the part of the Internet that is visible to us. Since this form of communication, (that is published on the Internet or in Cyberspace and portrayed through electronic devices), takes place through the various websites of the World Wide Web, it is also referred to as Web media. We tend to use the terms ''internet', 'Web', 'Net' and 'cyberspace' more or less interchangeably to mean online space that we access to find information or to communicate with others or to be entertained through multimedia content. Cyber media is also referred to as social media, as it offers a platform to users for socializing with each other. It has influenced the lives of people and society in a big way.

Cyber media is, thus, the Internet-based form of communication that allows the Web-users to converse with each other or share and exchange information, ideas opinions, feelings, pictures etc. through a particular network or web. Cyber media comprises blogs, micro-blogs, instant messaging, wikis, photo-sharing and video-sharing sites, podcasts, widgets, virtual worlds and social networking sites.

4.2.1 Social Networking Sites

Most of us today are extensively using social networking sites like **Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, You Tube, LinkedIn, Tumbler, Pinterest,** and many more, for various purposes.

Out of these **Facebook, Twitter**, and **You Tube** are perhaps the most frequently visited networking sites.

Facebook is a socializing networking site that allows people all over the world to relate with friends, relatives, companies and organizations. **Twitter** is an informative micro-blogging website that allows people to post updates in 140 characters or less. **You Tube** is the world's largest video-sharing site. Some other Social networking sites are the **LinkedIn** which is a business related site used mainly for professional networking; **Instagram** enables users to share pictures and short videos using their mobile device; **Pinterest** is a website that offers inspirational and creative content such as fashions, recipes, event-planning and the likes, and draws a large female audience.

The benefits of using Social and Cyber media can be seen at many levels. On a personal level, it helps people to interact with family and friends, to learn new things, to develop their interests, share information and be entertained. Facebook, Twitter and You Tube carry a lot of entertaining content shared by billions of people around the world. On a professional level, networking sites help to add to people's knowledge in a particular field and build their professional network by connecting with other professionals in their field. Cyber media is also of great help to the corporate companies. Thus at the Corporate level, it helps the companies to converse with their customers and clients, gain their confidence, get a feedback from them and promote and elevate the company's brand and services accordingly.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) Name some networking sites that are commonly in use these days.

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ii) List some benefits of networking sites both at a personal as well as at a professional level.

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4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF CYBER MEDIA

Cyber media is the new media as differentiated from the old or traditional or conventional media. Whereas cyber media consists of the internet mobile phones, social networking sites, emails etc., conventional media comprises the broadcast media (radio and T.V.) and the print media (newspapers and magazines). Sometimes, the users of conventional media take the help of Cyber media as well for the success of their stories. For instance, they get information for their stories from the Internet or depend on the images and videos on their mobile phones or on information from their emails to cover stories that are hard to access. Even the BBC prefers its correspondents to be well versed in both traditional as well as online media.

Some characteristics of Cyber media are as follows:-

• Hypertextuality is one of the major characteristics of Cyber media. Any information on the net can be substantiated by other relevant material, linking web pages in one website to those of any other website on the World Wide Web.

• Online readers have the option to interact with Cyber writers in any and every website in the World Wide Web. Online readers can give their views and receive replies from the Cyber writers instantly.

• Cyber media is multimedia as one can supplement ones content with video footage, images, pictures etc.

• Cyber media is accessible twenty-four hours a day. A web page can be accessed by anyone though the Internet at anytime. It is, therefore, not time-bound and has no time limitation.

- Cyber media also has no space limitation as it is borderless. Users of this media in any part of the world can access information or communicate with anyone without restrictions of borders that divide countries.

- The new media is much more difficult to regulate and censor, unlike the old or the traditional media. It is difficult to censor or silence Cyber media as governments cannot easily prosecute someone for posting links on a social networking site or intercept emails, or close down websites or take legal action against Internet service providers. The governments also do not have the infrastructure to control the vast amounts of information flowing constantly through the wide spread networking sites and websites.

- New media, that is Cyber media, is often audience-created and user-driven.

- Cyber media uses digital, online and mobile technology.

4.4 IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND CYBER MEDIA

Cyber media has influenced our lives in many ways and the world without it is simply unthinkable today. In the following passages, we shall discuss how every section of society and every sphere of life has been impacted by social and cyber media.

4.4.1 Impact on Education

Social and cyber media has had a tremendous impact on our systems of education. Students can now browse sources like **Wikipedia, Google**, and others, anytime to get the information they want. Teachers too are taking the help of **You Tube** to show their subject-related videos to the students. As most of the students use **Facebook** nowadays, teachers can send them updates on school events, class schedules, dates for assignment submission etc. by making a common page for all the students to share. Students too can keep in touch with their teachers to solve their difficulties in their course of study from home if they are homebound for some reason. They can also give online presentations, take examinations online and receive feedback from the teachers. They can also easily communicate, discuss and share information for a group project they are to submit through various social sites like **Orkut**, Facebook and **Instagram** etc. This promotes team work. Social networking sites also help students to download matter from the internet or to purchase online goods and also to read e-books on **kindle**.

On the negative side, all the information available on the Internet may not be a hundred percent reliable and needs to be cross-checked before one downloads it. Also children can access any type of reading material on social sites, including explicit pornographic material that may harm them in the long run. Some of the games children access on these sites are extremely violent in nature and can influence their minds and social behavior adversely. Plagiarism is another bane of the internet. The information on any topic under the sun offered by the Internet is so vast that students are easily tempted to copy some of it and pass it off as their own. Sometimes, they use it to do their assignments and homework, thereby killing the initiative to think for themselves.

4.4.2 Impact on the Youth

Today, teenagers and young adults are the most frequent users of online Social media and it has become a way of life with them. It has made their lives easier and efficient. With tight working schedules, the young rarely have time to meet up with

friends. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter etc. help them to socialize with their old friends and also give them a chance to make new friends. Moreover, through Social media, they remain updated with what is happening around the world. It also helps them to stay connected even when they have moved away from each other. Further, it provides them with a platform to create groups having common interests which help them to find opportunities through discussions to promote their respective careers. Social media also helps the young to refine and develop their artistic abilities. Their creativity gets a boost from the creative comments, poems, statements etc. posted by other users and from the encouraging feedback they get from family and friends for their own posts. This also helps to build their self-confidence and make a career choice.

On the negative side, however, the impact of cyber media on the youth does not appear to be all rosy. Accessing social platforms with their computers, tablets, or cell phones and chatting for hours together with cyber friends not only makes them lose many hours of productive work but may also make them incapable of face-to-face interaction. Young ones with a Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram account are logged in all the time which curbs their physical movement. Eye strain and backaches are a common complaint of the cyber addicts. Cyber addiction can also lead to social isolation which in turn, may impair their emotional and mental health resulting in conditions like anxiety and depression.

Sharing of their personal details online by the young users can increase the risk of identity theft, and of exposing them to outside predators and to Cyber bullying. Hackers have been known to have emotionally blackmailed young web users leading to disastrous results like mental agony and even suicides in some cases. A lot of sexually explicit content is easily available online which leads to its gross misuse by the youth.

4.4.3 Impact on Society

The internet has reduced the world to a global village where millions of people are connected with each other through one of its most innovative technologies—Social media. Social networking sites have become the most visited destinations on the Internet. These websites allow users to connect easily and share ideas, feelings and messages very quickly with other users. Verbal communication has given way to online messaging. Whereas sites like Facebook and Twitter use writing as the mode for communication, **Skype** connects people by word of mouth. The incorporation of webcams by most social sites enables people to talk with and even watch each other. The interaction on social sites between friends, relatives, co-workers etc. promotes social behavior and fosters a profound sense of community. Important issues can be discussed on various sites and opinions and judgments can be formed by a variety of people. Groups of people with similar interests can interact with each other thereby ending their isolation.

Sites like You Tube are a constant source of entertainment and offer a platform to users to upload and share videos with one another. The You Tube is also a great platform for film producers and musicians as their fans can easily access their music videos. My Space and other such sites enable easy access to a variety of videos like movies, music, sports and documentaries. News can reach the farthest corner of the world in no time. Some social networking sites are slowly replacing television because they can provide news at a faster rate. In fact most of the news channels and newspapers also have Facebook and Twitter accounts that provide news stories as they are unfolding.

Social networking sites have been instrumental in providing a voice to segments of society whose voices might otherwise not be heard. For instance, in the UK a site called Mumsnet's forced politicians to address parents as equals. In Libya civil society members along with disabled persons' organizations, launched an innovative multimedia compaign called *Zaykum Zayna* ("As You are, We Are"). Through messages on social media, this conveyed democratic values of equality and highlighted the rights of persons with disabilities.

Although the advent of Cyber and Social media has offered us numerous advantages, yet there are still groups around the world, such as the elderly the illiterate and the poor who have limited or no access to social sites. Also, like the young, other age-groups too in society are becoming addicted to social sites resulting in the same ailments that afflict the youth. Similarly, people have also become vulnerable to cyber crimes as hackers are breaking into their accounts and accessing crucial information like bank account details etc. to con them.

4.4.4 Impact on Politics

The evolving role of social and cyber media in elections and in the functioning of world democracies cannot be denied. The networking sites are being creatively used for political campaigning around the world. During the 2016 Presidential elections in the USA Social networking sites, were used extensively by the leading presidential candidates, Trump and Clinton. These played a decisive role in the final outcome. Twitter was used aggressively by Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, to run down his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, and also to strike a one-to-one rapport with the American people, even if sometimes his tweets were offensive and violated the standard campaigning norms. Former USA President Barack Obama, took the help of Facebook to raise funds for his elections and to send messages to the American public while campaigning for the Presidential elections in 2008 which he eventually won. Social media also played a major role in the 2014 Indian elections, won by Narender Modi, whom the citizens on Facebook voted as the second most "liked" politician in the world after Obama. Like Obama did during his presidency, Modi as Prime Minister is making extensive use of the Social and Cyber media to reach out to the Indian masses to promote his cherished goals of development and innovation.

The social sites also play an indispensable role in the proper functioning and strengthening of democracy. They act like a "watch dog" to oversee the election processes. By using text messages, they gather and relay information on irregularities that political parties and contesting candidates commit during elections, thereby bringing transparency in the election processes.

Social and Cyber media also educates the voters on how to exercise their democratic rights. They provide a platform both to the political parties and candidates for communicating their manifestos to the electorate; and to the people to air their views and needs, and interact with leaders to debate key election issues.

Social media has also been instrumental in bringing about political change in world governments. The **Arab Spring** uprisings, since 2011, are an example of how digital media enabled communities to unite around shared grievances and mobilize against dictatorial rules in their respective countries. Social protests against unjust rulers in the Arab world spread from country to country because social sites carried documented evidence of the tragedies being suffered by people at the hands of dictators in the Arab countries. The new information technologies and social media networks, not easily controlled by the States, helped the activists, to come together

and rise against dictators resulting in holding of democratic elections in their countries after the Arab Spring revolutions.

But social media can also play a negative role in the election processes. Dissemination of misinformation, relayed easily and very fast by the cyber media, can at times lead to civil unrest and rioting etc. and at other times endanger the freedoms of speech and the press. Sometimes, social media poses risks for the contesting candidates when their comments posted on social sites backfire. At other times, the predictions on social sites, regarding election results, can go terribly wrong as the number of twitter mentions received by a candidate may not translate into electoral success.

4.4.5 Imapct on Business

Business establishements and organizations are turning to social and cyber media to advertise their goods, to increase their performance in various ways to accomplish business objectives and to increase their annual sales. Marketing is one of the most important and common use of social media that businesses make. Today, every brand has a target section of online audience. Professional networking sites are also being used by businesses to connect with their clients. Businesses and organizations reach millions of users by creating pages and offering promotions and discounts to them. These users, in turn, reach out to their friends and so on. Networks also help businesses to acquaint them with the likes and dislikes of their prospective customers. They also help businesses to increase their market insight to get ahead of their rivals.

Networks can, at times, play spoilsports for some business ventures. An online user may post a negative comment about a business organization which can snowball into adverse publicity for it, leading to its shut down. Hackers are known to have diverted companies of their investment and profits by entering into their personal accounts on social sites. Sometimes a wrong online brand strategy can also destroy a company.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) List some benefits of cyber media in the field of education.

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ii) What impact has cyber media had on the youth?

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iii) How is world politics impacted by the use of cyber media?

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iv) List some negative impacts of cyber media on people.

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4.5 CYBER CRIME AND ITS PREVENTION

As mentioned in Section 4.4 of this unit, the impact of cyber revolution, in the field of education, society, business and politics, has also given rise to corresponding cyber crimes that are increasing at an alarming rate. We mentioned online financial frauds, violation of privacy of net users, cyber bullying, identity thefts, sex crimes like trafficking in child pornography, rise in cases of violence, murders, burglaries etc. and also the menace of plagiarism. A large number of criminals, who are exploiting the ease and speed of the internet, are indulging in nefarious cyber crimes, taking advantage of the anonymity offered them by the Internet. Listed below are some preventive measures that can minimize the threats posed by cyber attacks on web-users.

- One should be very careful what personal details one posts on the Net because these will permanently remain there. While making online purchases, one should see that details like one's name, age, address, mobile number, bank details etc. are given only after making sure the websites are secure otherwise hackers can easily hack into the information provided.

- The safety of one's personal computer should be ensured by putting in a strong password and by using an anti-virus software. Also, one should always activate one's computer firewall. These measures will prevent any virus from infecting one's computer and corrupting files and data.

- One needs to be careful while downloading material and applications because these are the channels from where viruses may enter one's accounts.

- One's social networking sites and profiles should have security settings.

- One should never click on, or open a file of an unknown origin. Neither should one open emails from strangers. One's e-mail password should be protected strongly otherwise email accounts can be easily hacked.

- Incidents like cyber bullying, threats or harassment over the Internet, hacking and financial frauds, sex crimes, theft of identity etc. should at once be reported to the site administrator or to the police.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What preventive measures can one take to keep one safe from cyber crimes?

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we learnt about the basic characteristics of social-cyber media as well as its impact on our society. We also spoke about the positive and negative effects of cyber media on our lives. The concept of cyber security is a major concern in our times because of massive online financial transactions that are taking place these days. Therefore, we also cautioned against the use of posting personal information on open sites. Lastly we have provided some crucial ways by which to prevent cyber crime.

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) Some networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram and You Tube.

ii) At a personal level, networking sites help people to interact with family and friends, learn new things, develop their interests, share information and be entertained. Professionally, these sites provide knowledge to people and help them to connect to other professionals.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Wikipedia and Google have helped students to work out their assignments etc by providing them with unlimited material which they can use in a judicious manner.

ii) Helps the youth to stay connected with each other Provides common platforms to pursue their interests. Can help them to gain confidence by posting their stories/poems and getting feedback.

iii) Cyber media can impact politics by acting as a watch-dog for various political activities. They can influence public opinion and thus change the opinion of voters. Can galvanize support against dictatorial leaders etc.

iv) If not used judiciously—can curb creativity in children. Can lead to cyber addiction which in turn leads to lack of physical exercise and related problems. Can fall prey to cyber bullying. Misinformation can also be relayed via this media.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   One should be very careful about the personal details one posts on cyber media. All these should have strong security settings. Cyber staling and cyber bullying should be reported immediately.

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