

e-Safety Newsletter

SCHOOLS' EDITION NO. 22

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Digital Natives

Dispel the myth

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Alan now works for himself, in partnership and collaboration with many others, across the country helping and advising schools, charities and other organizations with a particular focus on e-safety.

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A message from **Alan Mackenzie**

Welcome to the March edition of the e-safety newsletter written for staff.

Have you heard the term 'digital natives' before? I cringe every time I hear it, particularly when it is used to justify the excuse that children nowadays know more about using technology than adults.

As well as dispelling this myth, I also want to take a brief look at the use of social media.

Given the fact that we read and hear so many horror stories regarding social media, many people will think that it is the root of all evil, that people only use it to tell others what they've had for lunch, or to bully and troll others.

But you rarely hear about the potential for good, particularly from an educational or professional perspective.

I hope you enjoy this issue, please let me know what you think and also if you would like anything in particular to be included in future issues.

Digital Natives

Digital Immigrants

The terms digital natives and digital immigrants were coined way back in 2001 by Marc Prensky, who is an international speaker and writer in the field of communication.

I don't want to go into details of the paper that Prensky wrote (the link to his paper is at the end of this newsletter) but suffice to say that much of what Prensky wrote made sense, particularly from a neurological perspective (and more recent research is starting to show this), but some of it has also been disputed. That in itself isn't unusual, research in this area is going on all the time and 2001 was a long time ago, but my beef isn't about Prensky or his paper, it's about the way in which some are interpreting his words, it has become a little like Chinese whispers..

How often do you hear something along the lines of, "kids today know far more about technology than we do, they're born with it." Whilst that may be partially true, children these days have far more access to technology at a much earlier age, 'using' technology and 'knowing how to use' or the 'appropriate use' of technology are very different. Similarly, knowing how to drive a car doesn't mean that you're a good driver.



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Since 2001 things have moved on considerably, with various people building on what Prensky originally wrote, and so we have new categories such as:

Digital recluse - refuses to use technology.

Digital refugee - uses unwillingly.

Digital immigrant - unfamiliar, but can see potential of using technology.

Digital native - uses technology in a wide variety of tasks and adapts to change.

Digital explorer - pushes tech to the limit.

Digital innovator - builds new tools or adapts old tools to new purposes.

Digital addict - highly dependent upon tech.

Although these aren't widely used, they do give a greater range of categories and could be quite useful, particularly if you were to poll your staff and find that many of them are digital recluses or refugees, which would then allow you to dig a little deeper and find out why this is the case.

For some, the reasons may be along the lines of:

Poor understanding, **lack of appropriate CPD** so low confidence.

Concern they may be **shown up by the students** (digital natives).

One thing Prensky was absolutely right about was what is known in the neuro world as 'plasticity', or shaping of the brain. In other (non-scientific) words, as individuals carry out tasks repeatedly the brain shapes or re-shapes itself.

This is a fascinating area and one that I will come back to in a later newsletter, but the point I'm trying to make here is that the whole interpretation of the digital native/immigrant theory is completely wrong and is simply being used as an excuse, and this is very obvious particularly when talking to some parents.

As we know, technology is being used more and more across the curriculum, and as long as it is used to enhance learning then that's a good thing. But we have to move past digital natives and immigrants. For all of us without exception, technology is a fundamental part of our professional lives, and for some of us our personal lives too.

How we use technology may differ in some way, for example children and young people may well use it for their game-playing, connecting with friends, being creative and hopefully for homework and research. For adults, professional use comes first and perhaps some personal use if we've got the time.

Many children will be digital explorers, but in this regard it's akin to a keen hillwalker who goes out walking, has got all the kit, but has no idea how to use it appropriately such as reading a map, watching the weather etc.

They are not digital natives without our help.

Social Media

Empowering Staff

One of the problems of social media is that you only tend to hear the bad things, but it can be used for an extraordinary amount of good. Take a personal example: my father is in his 70's. He never knew his father, has never even seen a photograph of him. I've dabbled here and there in genealogy and yet his side of the family has always alluded me simply because there is no family on his side, or so we thought. To cut a long story short, a snippet of information completely out of the blue and within minutes and a quick search on Facebook we had found members of his family, and within hours my father was to witness a collection of photographs of a father he had never known or seen. And it turns out he has quite a history, being the person that introduced fibreglass boats to Scotland, a passion that unfortunately led to an early death in his late 40's.

My dad's journey continues, but the point I'm trying to make is that the power of social media makes worldwide connections an extraordinary opportunity personally, professionally and potentially as an educational tool.

Social media, love it or loathe it, it's here to stay. It can bring out the best and the worst in people, it provides a medium for people to adopt a different personality, or someone they can't be, or don't want to be, in the real world.

I'm going to look at the educational aspects in the next edition, but for now I want to look at the personal and professional aspects, and as this is an e-safety newsletter we need to give this due consideration.



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When talking about personal use, the context here is staff using social media to connect with friends and family, or for connecting with other professionals. Personally I'm a fan of Twitter, some of the people I speak to have really changed the way in which I think about certain things, from parents to professors, psychologists to researchers and others that I consider to be experts in their own right.

A couple of the concerns related to front-line professionals using social media is what they can expose themselves to or what they can expose the school to. A couple of years ago the NAHT conducted a survey of teachers in relation to the extent of negative comments that were being directed at teachers, and some of these were extraordinary. To voice an opinion is one thing, to vent, rant, harass, slander and defame are other things entirely.

There needs to be balance and consideration,, for example:

- How do you engage staff that have no interest in social media?
- How do you ensure staff are protected as much as possible?
- How do you ensure the school is protected as much as possible?

Understandably many staff will have no interest whatsoever in social media. But as I alluded to in the digital native article above, we do need

to have an understanding, call it professional curiosity. There's a fair chance that there is already somebody in your school that has a real interest in social media, so use their experience in a training session. Even better, use the students. Clearly you can't use primary students (most social networks have a minimum age) but if you are in primary, ask your local secondary school. There are bound to be some students (student council?) who would be more than happy to come and show your staff what social media they use, why they use it, how they maintain privacy, how they manage risk etc. The point isn't to get staff using social media, but just give them a better understanding.

From the perspective of being protected as much as possible, you can only advise staff, it is up to them at the end of the day. All social networks have various privacy and security settings at varying degrees of complexity so give them advice what/how to use these. At the same time, ensure that you explain the processes in place (if any) where you will support them should there be any bullying/harassment from parents or students. Ensure they are all aware of the [Professionals Online Safety Helpline](#).

Protecting the school in this context is a matter of policy. You first of all need to decide, and then make explicitly clear in your e-safety policy (or code of conduct) your expectations of staff when using social media personally, for example no naming children, no talking about school business, do not bring the school into disrepute etc. In the rare cases where there has been an investigation, your policy is a key part of the process, it's about managing expectations.

Social Media Apps and Risks

A regular look at apps that may be commonly used, may be causing a concern, could be useful, a little diverse or just plain weird.

Tumblr

Age: 13+

What is it? It's a cross between a blog and Twitter; it's a stream of data such as images, videos, text clips etc.



What's the concern? Inappropriate content is exceptionally easy to find, even if you're not looking for it. This would include pornography, pro-suicide and pro-self harm. Users find other accounts to follow so that information is streamed and they usually find other users with search terms (sometimes hashtags - #).

ooVoo

Age: 13+

What is it? It's a voice, video and messaging app where users can have chats with up to 12 people. It seems to be becoming more popular with younger children.



What's the concern? There aren't significant concerns with this one as, with many apps, it's down to who the user is following. Users can only communicate with those on their approved contact list, so the advice 'do you know them in the real world' is appropriate here.

Useful Resources



A new guide written by yours truly.

Considering how we can effect long term change when it comes to educating and empowering e-safety.

[http://www.esafety-adviser.com/
behaviour/](http://www.esafety-adviser.com/behaviour/)



Another new guide written by yours truly, it has been a busy month!

As promised last month, this is a comprehensive guide to establishing your e-safety group

[http://www.esafety-adviser.com/
esafetygroup/](http://www.esafety-adviser.com/esafetygroup/)

Bits n Bytes



Facebook Checklist

A fantastic, up-to-date Facebook checklist that will be useful for students, staff and parents.

http://dwn5wtkv5mp2x.cloudfront.net/ufiles/Facebook_check_Feb_15.pdf



Facebook and Suicide Prevention

FB have released a new suicide prevention initiative. Although US only at the moment, I doubt it will be long before we see it in the UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>

Photos for Class

Search for and download properly attributed, Creative Commons photos for school.

<http://www.photosforclass.com>



ICO - Social Media Privacy and Security Settings

Good advice from the Information Commissioner's Office for staff

<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/online/social-networking/>



Marc Prensky - Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants

The original paper written by Prensky in 2001.

<http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives.%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf>



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