Information Overload
Classroom Video Issues 1

2008
17 minutes

Program Synopsis

Every generation of young people uses more sophisticated levels of technology than the generation before them. Online information is readily available, and far easier to access than at any other time, this means that what people learn and the way in which they learn is constantly changing. Because so much more information and knowledge is available to us, the focus now is on knowing how to source information, and how to assess the quality of information. Although people's technology-based skills are more advanced than ever before, and technology itself is increasingly complex, many skills that were essential to previous generations have fallen by the wayside. Many teachers, in particular, argue that young people today cannot spell properly and often prefer to use SMS versions of words. Other areas commonly considered to be on the way out because of the prevalence of technology include: reading, numerical skills (kids can't do maths without a calculator these days), verbal communication and meaningful interpersonal interaction (kids don't interact with each other these days, they interact with technology). The impact of the rapid increases in technology and its consequences in our lives is explored and discussed in this program.

Teacher Notes:
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Introduction

This program looks at the growth of Information and Communication Technology, from the 1960s to the present, and raises questions about our adaptation to these new technologies. From discussions with education experts to interviews with students, the program asks us to consider the effects that ICT is having on our modern day society.

In Australia, it is now uncommon for a household not to have a computer. While ICT has contributed to profound advancements in education, is it possible for ICT to have a destructive influence?
- Is Information and Communication Technology making us smarter or lazier?
- How can we tell if online information is accurate?
- Is the increasing use of the internet, spell checks and SMS causing a decline in English language skills?

Program Support Notes offer a choice of student activities, including:
- Discussion, research, debate and essay writing topics.
- "While Viewing" Short Answer Questions

Program Timeline

00:00:00	Introduction
00:03:03	History and Statistics
00:06:20	Interviews
00:10:41	Vox Pops
00:13:42	Conclusion
00:15:47	Credits
00:16:50	End Program

Useful Resources

- The Spike: How Our Lives Are Being Transformed By Rapidly Advancing Technologies
  Author: Damien Broderick. New York: Tom Doherty, 2001
  ISBN: 978-0-312-87782-8 (031287782X)

- What Just Happened: A Chronicle From The Information Frontier
  Author: James Gleick. London: Abacus, 2002
  ISBN: 978-0-349-11538-2 (0349115389)

Internet Resources:

- http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter10002008
- http://www.csiro.au/science/ps4f.html
- www.acms.org.au/

Program Worksheet

Before the Program

1. What does ICT stand for?

2. Name at least five different ICT products.

3. Work through the list of five ICT products that you have identified and highlight how many of the products you use, at least once a week

4. Identify three ways that ICT assists us in our daily routines.

5. Do you think that the increasing use of ICT may cause any problems for people? If so, identify two of these problems.

6. Before the surge of ICT, the world experienced the Industrial Revolution. When was it? What happened? How did it change the way people lived?

During the Program

1. What popular ICT word had yet to be created in 1962?

   _____

2. Approximately how many people had computers in 1962?

   _____

3. In 1964, which American industry first used online transactions?

   _____

4. What pre-existing technology was used in 1964 by American airlines to support their new reservations system?

   _____

5. What ICT device did John van Geen radically modify in 1965?

   _____

6. Which American government department sent the first email in 1971?

   _____

7. When did computers start emerging in the classroom?

   _____

8. When were HTML, (Hyper Text Markup Language) and the WWW, (World Wide Web) born?

   _____

9. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, by 2007, how many internet subscriptions were there in Australia?

   _____

10. What percentage of Australians own or lease a computer?

   _____

After the Program

1. What type of ICT products do you use and how often?

    _____

    _____

2. Do you use SMS versions of words in the classroom? If you do, why?

    _____

    _____

3. Overall, what do you use most to work out mathematical equations, a calculator or your head?

    _____

4. Do you think ICT is making people smarter or dumber?

    _____

5. Do you check the accuracy of internet information before using it in your work? If you do, what methods do you use to ensure that the information is reliable?

    _____

    _____

Suggested Student Activities

DISCUSSION
1. What is it about sites like www.wikepedia.com that makes some of their information unreliable?

2. Why do you think that teachers discourage the use of SMS style English in their students' work?

3. What online resources would you tend to trust and what sites might provide inaccurate information?

4. What online tips can you suggest to help internet users avoid privacy, credibility and security problems?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
To be done once you have completed the five "After the Program" questions.

Divide the class into five groups and give each group one of the five "After the Program" questions. Each group is responsible for gathering and collating the answers from the rest of the class on their particular question.

Once the groups have tallied the results and completed the task, they report their findings back to the whole class. Groups can use the whiteboard or a graph to show the class how they responded to their group's question. Ask the class if they expected the results that you have presented, or if they are surprised by the results. Discuss what these results say about ICT usage in your class.

DEBATE TOPICS
1. Is ICT making us lazier?

2. Is ICT helping to make the world's affluent people richer and keeping those less fortunate poorer?

3. Has the increasing use of the internet, word processing, the use of spell checks and SMS led to a decline in the standard of writing and spelling for today's students?

WRITING TOPICS
1. ICT doesn't teach our young people to think creatively, it only teaches them how to copy and plagiarise the work of other people. Discuss.

2. Has the introduction of SMS, online chat rooms and other internet based technology had a significant influence on the way students are communicating today? Give details.

3. Should we limit students' access to various internet sites? Give reasons for your response.

4. ICT has had a negative effect on skills such as writing, numeracy, verbal communication and interpersonal interaction. Do you agree? Give reasons for your views.

5. Discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the increase in ICT usage.

6. Albert Einstein said, "_It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity._" Discuss.

7. ICT is a tool we use to acquire knowledge and understanding; simply using it does not make us smarter. Do you agree? Give reasons for your response.

8. Not all communities have access to ICT. Are world communities that do not have ICT disadvantaged? Discuss.

9. Identify and explain some of the health issues associated with the increased use of ICT.

10. What type of ICT products can we expect to be using in the next decade or two?

Suggested Student Responses
During the Program

1. What popular ICT word had yet to be created in 1962?
   Internet

2. Approximately how many people had computers in 1962?
   As few as 10,000 people

3. In 1964, which American industry first used online transactions?
   American airlines

4. What pre-existing technology was used in 1964 by American airlines to support their new reservations system?
   Telephone lines

5. What ICT device did John van Geen radically modify in 1965?
   The modem

6. Which American government department used APRANET to send the first email in 1971?
   Department of Defence, United States of America

7. When did computers start emerging in the classroom?
   The early 1980s

8. When were HTML, (Hyper Text Markup Language) and the WWW, (World Wide Web) born?
   1990

9. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistic, by 2007, how many internet subscriptions were there in Australia?
   7.1 million

10. According to the program, what percentage of Australians own or lease a computer?
    Around seventy per cent