

Making the Connection

Blogging on the Net



Without a doubt, you have been to the internet within the past few days. What sites did you visit? Did you check your email? Did you instant message someone? Did you Google search an easy way to get past doing all that homework?

Or did you check your MySpace for any new friend comments? Have you checked to see if any new friends have browsed your FaceBook?

People these days seem to have a lot on their mind that they are willing to share with the world. With the creation of the internet, this process of expressing yourself has become as simple as leaving an entry for a whole network of friends to see. Ten years ago, you would have to either tell your friends verbally, or write it in your

diary and keep it under the bed, hoping one day someone would eventually read it and be compassionate towards you.

With MySpace and FaceBook being two of the more popular sites, an internet-savvy society has decided to take a dive into the world of blogging, taking a look at the not-so-popular pages of the internet blogging phenomenon.

Friendster

Okay, so this one might be popular with over "20 Million Users" according to it's info page, but the site gets relatively no limelight when it comes to teenage browsing. Friendster allows you to fill out a questionnaire in which it tries to match you up with people of similar interests. Friendster also allows you to upload pictures to your site, making it much easier to browse and search for long lost relatives or high school classmates. Even

celebrities are getting in on the act of blogging on Friendster, boasting a Pamela Anderson and Tara Reid blog. Friendster has many of the same qualities that the other, more popular sites have, but it lacks items of interest to teenagers.

LiveJournal

LiveJournal is another site that has some underground following with about "Nine Million users" according to it's own webpage. LiveJournal again features mostly basic "blogging" features such as mood and text icons, automatic polls and small pictures that may represent the way you are feeling. Some things unique to LiveJournal are the fully integrated photo storage and basic photo editing tools. This allows users to do image resizing inside of LiveJournal instead of having to resize the photo with Microsoft Paint. Another unique quality of LiveJournal is the abil-

ity to have a paid account for one, two, six or even twelvemonths. With a paid account, users can post from cell phones, post with voice from a cell phone, add more pictures and have up to one Gigabyte (1,000,000,000 bytes) of storage for their blog. LiveJournal would be a great site if they would allow these features for the regular members and it would be much more appealing to the teenage demographic.

Xanga

This site is directed towards the more elementary aspect of web posting, with simple HTML format and the ability to change the look and feel of your site with relatively simple steps. Xanga also provides both a free account and a premium account in which members pay for more advanced usage. The advanced users who pay for their blogging fix get up

to two Gigabytes of storage, up to 99 pictures which you can rotate automatically and ad-free blogging. One huge feature that Xanga lacks is the ability to see friends on the page. In order to see a friend of a friend's site, you must guess which username that person currently is using and hope that you spell it right. Xanga allows users to put streaming songs on their sites, mimicking the MySpace ability to feature a player on the left side of the page. Xanga is a decent blogging site, featuring many of the same qualities of other sites, but it lacks the close-knit friend circles of sites such as Friendster and Facebook.

If you want to check out these sites, visit www.friendster.com, www.livejournal.com, and www.xanga.com for more info about how to get started

Blogging becomes everyday routine

In the past two years online blogging has become very popular among teens all across the world.

One of the most popular websites to blog on is MySpace. According to USA Today since MySpace's start up two years ago it has gained 47.3 million users, with the majority of the users being teens and young adults in their twenties.

So what is it that attracts over 40 million people to this online blogging website?

Antioch Community High School senior Michael Donovan admits that at first he didn't get it.

"Just a month ago a bunch of my friends were telling me that I should get a MySpace and I told them that I had better things to do with my time than to sit at home on my computer all day," said Donovan.

Donovan says that one day he was bored so he created a profile on MySpace, and than now he really likes it.

"I go online to check my online profile every day and to see what people have posted comments on my page or sent me messages," said Donovan.

MySpace has become popular for two main reasons: one reason is that it's free to users and space is paid for through on-

line advertisements, and the other is that the website makes it easy for friends who don't get to see each other often to keep in touch. Max Thain a junior at Carmel High School loves MySpace.

MySpace helps Thain keep in touch with his friends from the town that he lives in (Antioch) and his friends from Carmel where he goes to school.

"Because I go to a private school I don't get to see all of my friends everyday, and until I get to hang out with them on the weekend I just talk to them on MySpace," said Thain.

ACHS sophomore Ashley Davis recently opened a profile on MySpace and she enjoys it because it helps her keep in touch with her sister while she is away at college.

"My older sister just went away to college this year and we stay in touch with each other by sending messages back and forth on MySpace," said Davis.

MySpace appeals to the young computer savvy generation of teens. Because it is accessible to anyone with an internet connection and a pc, and the fact that it costs members nothing to sign up it continues to grow by an astonishing 5 million members a month, according to the site.

Blog Users Worldwide

- Facebook-over 20 million
- Livejournal-over 8.7 million
- Xanga- over 31 million
- MySpace- over 47.3 million
- Friendster- over 5 million

Student Poll

100 ACHS students surveyed

- 61 have a blog website
- 39 do not have a blog website



Are you safe?

High school students are using blogging sites all over the country, but many don't know the risk and safety precautions that should be taken.

According to blogsafety.com, websites such as MySpace, Xanga or Facebook can be traced back, even after you are done using it.

"Even if you delete a blog entry or your host's archives expire, that doesn't mean your writing isn't still available. The Internet Wayback Machine (www.archive.org) keeps free archives of millions of Web pages, including many blog entries, dating back to 1995."

According to Officer Rick Moritz of the Antioch Police Department, many crimes can be traced back to things people say on their blog sites.

"The crime is harassment by electronic means," said Moritz.

Things that were posted that were never intended to be inflammatory can also find their way into courtrooms, to be settled by a judge.

"Sometimes words can get you sued: If you blog that 'Suzi does drugs' and she doesn't, Suzi or her parents can sue for defamation," said blogsafety.com.

Some members of faculty at Antioch Community High School like Gregg Henning, director of technology at ACHS warn that these websites aren't as private as students think.

"MySpace is everyone's space," said Henning.

Kathleen Stewart ACHS Media Center Assistant agrees with Henning.

"You have no idea who is reading this information," said Stewart.

While blogging sites at ACHS such as MySpace, Xanga and Facebook have been blocked from District 117's

computer's access. Moritz gives advice to students that are still using these sites out of school.

"Don't post pictures, birthdays, where you live, or that you want to meet people alone," said Moritz. "Ask yourself, would you give that information out at the mall?"

Blogsafety.com also gives advice to people who choose to use the sites.

"Choose a blog host that doesn't permit [unwanted comments], or blocks postings by anyone but friends," said blogsafety.com. "Better to take the offensive about what you allow than to be defensive (or worse, a defendant) afterwards."

Henning and Moritz have indicated that there have already been cases and unsafe blogging at ACHS. The school district has had some first-hand experience of the unsafe aspects of

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