

Project IDCAP: Improve Digital Competence in Adult People

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**Browsing,
searching and
filtering data,
information and
digital content**



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Introduction

This module covers the basic knowledge of how to use internet to search information, data and materials for both professional and personal use, for work or leisure. We will cover the basic concepts and risks, as well as the needed precaution when processing digital content. After the end of this training pill you will be more confident and will be able to use internet as advantage and help in your everyday life. In this material we use the word internet, web, world wide web alike. The same applies for internet page, website or simply site.

We will cover the basics for how to search information through internet, which is often presented as browsing through internet or simply browsing.

Next will present techniques of how to search specific information and how to specify and narrow your search results.

At the end we will cover the basics of how to process the information you receive from internet and how to process digital content as general.

1. Browsing through internet

The term “Browsing” internet is often described as the act of going fast through information without any particular purpose or aim, while when using internet is refers to world wide web (www) usage for the same purpose. You can browse internet through a number of ways such as using your favorite internet browser like Firefox, Google Chrome, Opera etc., or you can use some of the social media to search for specific information, movie, photos, blogs, statuses, tweets etc. It is important to mention that browsing internet is the conscious act of seeking information in whatever field or area of life you want.

While you are browsing the internet and open various pages, websites, photos, films, etc., a small amount of information is stored at your machine (computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone) which is called cookie. It gives information about your browsing habits, what do you like, which pages are most often visited and so on. It is helpful to both you and the content providers, which often use that information to perform targeted advertising. So for example if you visit often a particular online store, advertisements about it will most probably appear more often on your search results and even on the pages you visit, that have nothing in common with that particular store. The same mechanism applies when you are reading news, books, electronic magazines etc. While you can clean most cookies, some are well hidden and hard to locate on your machine. That is why it is important not to visit sites of doubtful reputation or as a general rule websites or pages that offer a lot for “free” – well, they benefit from your visit and by showing you advertisements, which in many cases you are forced first to watch/read, before the actual content appears. In the social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram and other, the platform “keeps” information about your friends, which video clips you have watched, which



pictures or photos you “like”, which articles you read and respectfully offers you advertisements based on your digital habits and history of use.

In some cases even artificial intelligence or machine learning algorithms are used to “calculate” your preferences, and target you with advertisements that are more closely matching your own preferences on the web. In any area of interests you should use common sense logic and do not necessary trust everything you have seen, read about or watched on the web, as it does not have to be necessarily true, while in some cases information may be deliberately misleading, false or incorrect. Even well-known providers have sometimes fallen victims of false information, fake news or at least not 100% correct materials and messages. Thus, if something is too good to be true, sounds too strange or is simply is from a suspicious source, doubt it and check on other well-known and trustful providers for confirmation and double-check. The social media are particularly susceptible to spreading false or fake news, as people share information, articles, photos and videos very often without checking the validity of what is presented. While big companies are trying hard to limit the spread of such materials it is very hard to do so without sacrificing key freedom of people on the internet or key features of the social platforms too.

2. Searching and filtering data

Searching data on internet is performed using specialized search engines like Google, Yahoo, Ask.com, Bing, DuckDuckGo, CC Search, Wiki.com etc. or using the build in search capabilities of the social platforms. In the case of social platforms often the search is limited on what is available or have been posted on the platform while the search engines provide information of what is available on internet sites across the web.

While Google is the number one search engine in the world it comes at a cost as it is tracking your search of information. On some internet browsers



like Chrome and Firefox you can also open “incognito” tab and search from it. Then the browser does not store information about your search, but it still can be retrieved from your internet provider. As a response to the tactics of Google and the Social platforms new search engines appeared like DuckDuckGo, which does not in any sense keep personal information about you so it is an excellent choice for those who want to protect their personal information. As an answer to copyright violations and law suits CC Search provides searching under Creative Commons standards which often are completely free to use even for commercial purposes. Wiki.com is a search engine for those who prefer user generated content like Wikipedia. Although there is no 100% guarantee in any search engine if you wish to even encrypt your searches you can use searchencrypt.com which encrypts your searches and keeps your privacy safer.

Searching is usually performed using “keywords” describe what you are searching for. For example if you search for a cake recipe you should place in the search field or the address bar on most internet browsers the words “cake” and “recipe”. You can also specify which key words must necessarily appear in the search results by adding hyphen around your keyword. For example if you search for Chocolate cake recipe, the search engine will search for any of the words regardless of the order they appear. If you put your keywords in hyphens then the search engine will return only results that appear with exactly the same phrase and order. Sometimes keywords may lead to ambiguous results. For example if you search escort it will provide you with results for escort (usually girls escort around your place of search) or results for the cars Ford Escort. Using a hyphen like escort –car the search engine will ignore results having the word “car” in their description or text. Other ways to specify where to search is using colon which will limit the search results to a particular website. For example if you type Ali :nba.com the search will provide you with results only from the website NBA.com that mention “Ali”. Using asterisk in front of a word will tell the search engine to add any word that matches your keyword and will



fill in the asterisk with automated words. This is particularly useful if you search for song lyrics but do not remember all of them. It will come time that search engines do not provide you with the results you are expecting. Try then adding more words and use words that most likely will be used by the websites. For example if the “job interview” does not provide the results you are searching for try adding “how to prepare for job interview” and put the search in hyphens. It is important to use the right keywords when searching. For example instead of “my leg hurts” use “leg cramp” as this is the medical term which will be used in medical conditions. The same applies to headache instead of my head hurts. Other methods for searching are using voice commands (works well in English language and may be not so good in other languages), or searching of a particular image. To search for image go to the tab “Images” bellow the Google search field and click on it. On the search filed now there is an icon of a camera which you can use to provide URL link to a specific image or upload image you have taken. Currently on Google search engine you can choose to search in the following areas: All, Images, Videos, News, Maps, Books, Flights, Finance. You can also go to search settings and specify even more how to perform your search – by region, country, language, number of results per page, using safe search filter – it will remove from your searches most inappropriate or explicit adult or violent results. Other search engines provide similar capabilities and usually group the search results into various categories like culture, leisure, travel, entertainment, news etc.

Using the settings of you browser is other way to specify which search engine you want to be used when searching. Open the browser settings and search for the area where you can specify which search engine to be used by default. This is useful when searching directly from the address bar of the browser. You can always go to specific search engine by typing its web address on the address bar of the browser (for example bing.com) and perform your search at the search field provide after you enter the site.



At the social platforms like Facebook, Youtube, Instagram or Twitter there is a dedicated search field at the top of the application depicted by an icon of magnifying glass. After you enter the search term you can further on specify if you are searching for people, photos, posts, videos, events, groups, places, links or in some cases hashtags.

3. Processing information and digital content

In a broader sense digital content is any content provided in digital form, stored in digital form and distributed in digital form. It can include video, image, text, weather forecast, maps, computer files, various media types, software etc. Digital content has increased rapidly as more and more people have access to internet, be it through land lines or mobile internet through their smart phones. Today is extremely easy to capture a photo, short video (or video clip) and share them on whatever digital platform, media, site you wish just using your smart phone and without the burden to pre-process it in digital format. Thus with the increase of digital content there has been also increase of data which not necessarily true or has been manipulated in one way or other. In that light is highly advisable that users of digital content possess basic knowledge of processing (in terms of consuming) digital information, as well as knowledge of how to create, process and publish digital content on internet.

As a general rule of a thumb any unknown source of information on internet should be accessed with the presumption that digital content presented there might be suspicious or manipulated. As a matter of truth, any digital content presented on internet is by default manipulated in one form or other which comes from the very nature of internet – thus is what you see on your device's screen is in fact a local copy of content hosted on some other machine. Manipulation of content is not always a bad thing – it may be to create a humorous material, a form of art, information for others etc. but it has to be clear and misleading for the general public. Today there are fears that the so called “deep fake” may influence people's decisions and believes and in reality in some occasions deep fake is so convincing it has triggered investigation by official government bodies. Deep fake take an



image or video of an existing person and replace them with someone else. It has been famous a deep fake video clip (which is by the way very, very convincing for untrained eye) of president Barack Obama speaking, just it is not him, but an actor who is speaking and the video has been so well manipulated that it appears like the president is speaking. So be alerted and do not automatically believe everything you see, read or hear on internet, even if it is famous persons presenting it. First check the source. One of the easiest steps is to look at the address bar and detect if the source is well known media or is something you have never heard of. Second, search on internet if there are other sources confirming or denying the story. Be aware that some fakes mask the source in a matter that is very convincing and is not so easily detected. For example **canon.com** is the domain of the famous Japanese imaging and optical product corporation, but if in the address bar is listed caNNon.com it has nothing to do with the real company.

In processing information like news, weather forecast etc. one should use reliable sources. There are plenty of tools too, to help you optimize the news flow, like automated news readers, where you specify the sources you want information from. The same is valid for almost any other digital content you find on internet. You can subscribe to news channels to receive updates for news, new videos, new stories etc. Most of the social networks do provide groups where people sharing the same interests can participate and receive automatic updates, once something new is shared with the others. These can be as diverse as possible, from arts to cooking, from humor pages/groups to mastering skills in various areas. Once you subscribe or in some social medias “like” certain group you will start receiving notifications as soon as something new is published or shared. In some social medias you have to “follow” a person, group, page and then the same mechanism is automatically working.



Creating digital content like photos, posts, videos, paintings, video clips, etc. is easy with today's technology, most notably with the smart phones. Many of them come with already installed tools one can use to create and share on social media sites and services. While video editing is not so straightforward, there are plenty of online and free tools one can use to manipulate and create video messages, video clip or even short documentaries on topics of your concern. Having said that, it is important to remember that whatever you share/publish on internet will stay there almost forever, even if you delete it. So be careful and do not share/post things that might be embarrassing for you, or others. Try to avoid entering endless chats under some topics, especially if you see "people" posting inappropriate, vulgar or embarrassing comments. Be aware that sometimes those "people" might just be software specifically created to annoy other users and its main aim is to create more comments. Internet bullying and harassment has increased as well as trolling. Trolling on internet means that there are real people, who's sometimes full time job is to post negative comments (especially under political statements) just to bias ordinary viewers opinion or to shift it in certain direction. It can also be used to discredit particular person or official account.

Remember that everything you see on internet bears copyrights so do not post somebody's materials as yours. In some cases on social media you can share a post (for example newspaper article) but it clearly shows who the original author is. Read carefully the terms and conditions of every site, social media etc. to know what is allowed and what is not. For example on most social media sites nudity is not permitted and the same is valid for some vulgar keywords, which might be automatically detected. Always post your original photos, materials, posts, status, opinion and video. When sharing it is also important to choose to whom you share – to the general public or just to your friends or family. Do not share materials from your family life to the general public unless you want that post to be visible. You



can always specify and restrict who can see your posts and in some cases how long you want those to be available.

To process your digital content there are numerous editors for both photo and video, while usually social media provide spell checking capabilities for written text in English language too. On digital photos (and videos) you can add different filters, change saturation, contrast etc.. You can use the ones provided with your device or install the one you like most. Keep in mind that most of the online free editors usually have some limitations and you have to buy one to unlock all features. Those software services often add to your photo or video written sign that the material has been created using this software, which you may not like. Experiment and check till you find the one that satisfies your needs.



Summary

In our days it is almost impossible to go without using internet. It can be for work, for pleasure or simply for searching information online. More and more activities are being done online: from news to banking, from paying your bills to reserving tickets (or buying them) for theater.

From the other hand the vast information available on internet is not always trustable or in some cases is misleading and one should be cautious and careful when browsing and processing the information received. There are specific techniques on how to narrow your search results and how to obtain what you are exactly searching for and they have been shown herein.

In processing digital content and information there are numerous tools available for free which can simplify the task. On the other hand the wide use of such tools does not always comes as free as we think it is and might expose some users to unwanted consequences. It is always a good step to check and find trustworthy websites, sources of information and sources of tools and applications one is using.



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