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# UNIT 3 INTERNET AND IMPACT ON JOURNALISM

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- 3.7 Blogs
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## 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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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

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## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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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.

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## 3.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTERNET

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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 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionized newsgathering. Electronic mail (e-mail) is doing the same thing in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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. Browsers 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

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## 3.8 LET US SUM UP

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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 *avatar* 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.

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## 3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### 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.