Technology Changes at a Breakneck Pace

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It was a strange juxtaposition for me this week. I teach engineering, cyber security, and app development. In my classroom and around campus, I am the one teaching everyone else about the latest developments in the world of technology. I am not always the most up to date on the latest social media that teens are using. At the same time, the dangers, the reasons, and the implementations are very similar. This week, I got the opportunity to be the learner.

The information presented was not new to me. These are all daily conversations for me in class. The information presented was technically correct, but behind in its applicability. But that should all be taken with a grain of salt. The concept of a digital footprint is as relevant today as it was in 2008. I was talking with my classes about digital footprints when I started teaching in 2003. The thing that is new is that the arguments and discussions are more nuanced, complicated, and widespread.

Most everything in this week's materials related to "net neutrality" and the Federal Communications Commission are all accurate. The missing piece is that none of them were created after the FCC changed the "net neutrality" rules in 2017. The most recent artifact is from June 2015. Upon further review, the FCC posting from 2015 has since been updated in June 2018. This single piece of information needs to be balanced because the administration is admittedly partisan in their approach. Chairman Pai was legal counsel for Verizon prior to being appointed an FCC commissioner by Congress (Velazco, 2017). That situation itself requires an opposing viewpoint in order to have an open debate on the current FCC rules.

In the four years since 2015, a number of things have happened to make the landscape more complicated and difficult for teachers to discuss in class. For example, about the time that the FCC changed its rules in 2017, Comcast removed part of its net-neutrality pledge from its

website (Brodkin, March 2018). The reasoning and impact are unknown, but the timing raises questions. This is complicated by a report showing the market share of Comcast (Brodkin, July 2018). This report shows that Comcast is the only broadband choice for 30 million US households. Charter is the only choice for 38 million households. These situations further complicate the discussions for teachers and students. More importantly to my original realization is that while all of this is central to my curriculum it is hard to keep up with. I can only imagine how difficult it is for teachers in other content areas. The readings and videos more than illustrate my point.

I could go on for hours about all of the nuanced and complicated advancements that have come into existence in the last couple of years. Digital fingerprints from browsers (Briz, 2018), ad tracking safety, the incomplete effect of GDPR on the US, and much more. It is changing at a breakneck pace. My realization is that if we are going to hope to prepare ourselves and students for what is coming down the road, we have to help them be always learning about the digital world, looking for problems in the dark, and being acutely aware of how the world is viewing them and their activities. No one can afford to be reactive.

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