

# Argumentative essay on dangerous and negative aspects of the new social media and...

[Business](#), [Company](#)



There are many negative aspects to Internet technology and the new social media like Facebook and Twitter that are not being dealt with very well in the present society and education system, particularly among young people. Social networks and the social media can be a real threat to personal privacy rights when governments and corporations obtain this information without the consent of the individual, which has been going on for quite some time with the National Security Agency (NSA) and other police and intelligence organizations because of the Patriot Act. All kinds of personal information can also be uploaded on the Internet very rapidly, with no concern about privacy rights. Facebook, YouTube and the other social media are having a detrimental effect on the education system, as young people spend far more unsupervised time on the Internet as opposed to doing regular schoolwork (Richtel 2010). Like movies and television, the new social media emphasize visual experiences rather than reading, writing and grammar, and are causing a general 'dumbing down' of the population. Even more than television, the social media and cell phones reward younger minds "not for staying on task, but for jumping to the next thing" (Richtel 2010). To compete with these new developments, teachers have to turn the classroom into a kind of entertainment center with their own websites and iPads, since the students are now "addicted to the virtual world and lost in it" (Richtel 2010).

There are legal and statutory protections against the unauthorized use of this information, such as the First and Fourth Amendments, laws against slander, libel and defamation of character, as well as professional requirements that legal and medical records should be kept confidential

(Camenisch 26). These protections may well be difficult or impossible to enforce with all the new technological developments, when false or negative information can be obtained in a few seconds in a web search and immediately posted on the Internet. Millions of people are will be able to see this information in a short time, regardless of whether it is accurate or not (Solove 7). Under the provisions of the Patriot Act, which the federal government has interpreted very broadly, none of this information is really private any more from the electronic snoopers, including email and phone records. All of these can be monitored and stored by the federal government without the public even being aware of it, given that all these programs are classified Top Secret and Need-to-Know. Even many members of Congress are probably not fully aware of the massive extent of spying that has occurred under the Patriot Act. For the most part, the public only learns about all this through leaks of secret information, such as the ADVISE program of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which mines all electronic data about any targeted group with no concern for privacy rights, or US-VISIT, which does the same with all “ foreign nationals entering and exiting the United States” (Koontz 4).

Some professions are subject to particularly strict laws and regulations about the privacy of client information, because its disclosure could be especially damaging to the individual. Information related to medicine, mental health and social work is supposed to remain confidential except for court orders and the required disclosure of information related to certain crimes, such as child abuse, rape and pedophilia. In the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Congress required that the same privacy

rules applied to all information that could be transmitted by telephone or computer. Over the last thirty years, “ we have become so accustomed to relying on technology that careful thought is not always given to subtle ways that privacy can be violated” (Corey 227). All these relatively new technologies like cell phones and the social media make it far easier for all kinds of confidential information like this to be leaked and publicized on the Internet, or to be obtained by governments, corporations and criminal interests to obtain it for nefarious purposes. Any time confidential information is sent on workplace computers and phones it can easily be leaked in this way because there is no right to privacy in these situations. Employers have the power to monitor all electronic communications in the workplace, and even to use hidden cameras and surveillance technologies, so there really is no privacy in the workplace.

According to some researchers like Nicholas Carr, the new technology and social media is also causing younger people to become dumber and use less of their brainpower than in the past, which might actually be welcome news to the managers of big corporations and the National Security State. Although this has already been occurring due to the influence of television, radio and movies, “ the accelerating rhythm of modern life, the dispersions of attention, and information overload” has greatly increased these negative tendencies (Morozov 2010). All of the Internet and asocial media initially marketed their services as ‘ free’ in order to attract hundreds of millions of young users, which effectively destroyed their competitors among the book, magazine and newspaper publishers. Those companies are all going out of business very quickly, being forced to lay off staff and turn themselves into

purely digital products. This decline in print technology and the rise of the visual has led to a regression to a pre-modern, pre-literate society and the destruction of “ linear narrative, stable truths, and highly-structured, rational discourse” (Morozov 2010). Over the last thirty years, there has been a very noticeable decline in serious thought and criticism aimed at the mass audience, and its replacement by shallow symbols, slogans and images. This was originally derived from mass advertising but now affects the mass media and the political system as well.

Earlier mass media technologies like television and films provided the people with an easy escape from reality, but today anyone with a cell phone, personal computer and Internet access can escape into a completely imaginary or virtual world. They no longer have any need to interact with the real world or real people, or communicate with anyone who does not already share their own views, opinions and interests (Morozov 2010). Because of the new Internet and social media technologies, individuals are becoming more alienated and isolated from the larger society. Young people age 8-18 are particularly likely to spend most of their time on the Internet and interacting through the new social media because parents have been working longer hours in recent decades. At least 50% of all elementary and high school students admit that they are playing on the Internet or watching TV even while doing homework, because adults are no longer present to control this as much as they were in the past (Richtel 2010). In addition to the pictures and text messages on Facebook and Twitter, the new social media also provide music, movies and games, so that in reality youth “ do not socialize through technology—they recede into it” (Richtel 2010).

Physicians have also found that increased use of the new social media led to more anxiety, depression and sleep disorders, and that the more exciting information available on the Internet caused students to lose interest in more ' boring' subjects like math, geography, grammar and foreign languages.

On the positive side, the Internet and new social media can also be tools that empower ordinary citizens and consumers against governments and large corporations. In the past three years, for example, the Arab Spring rebellions were also called Facebook Revolutions, even though these new technologies have only recently become common in the Middle East and governments are also very sophisticated in monitoring and controlling the Internet. For ordinary consumers, the new social media can also be used to criticize certain corporations and brands or defective goods and services. Most private companies also use YouTube, Facebook and Twitter for marketing purposes or to gather information on customers. At the same time, public criticism and complaints can ' go viral' very quickly, gaining the attention of millions of viewers around the world almost overnight, and for this reason business simply cannot afford to ignore this new technology (Milliken 2010). This occurred to United Airlines, when a rock group called Sons of Maxwell made a YouTube video of airline employees losing and destroying their luggage at O'Hare Airport. Over eight million people around the world saw this video and it did more damage to the company's image than any such incident would have in the pre-Internet age. For this reason, United Airlines had to hire employees to monitor the Internet and new social media continually in order to be able to respond at once to similar events in the

future (Milliken 2010). Other companies like Cisco Systems and Abode learned to adopt similar policies after damaging information about their companies was leaked on the Internet by disgruntled employees and dissatisfied customers (Owyang 2010).

Probably the greatest danger and threat from the new technology of the Internet and the new social media is that individuals have made a great deal of electronic information available that can be scooped up by governments, police and intelligence organizations. This can be done 'legally' even in democratic countries under laws like the Patriot Act or just as a matter of routine in dictatorships and authoritarian states. In this respect, the new technology of computers and cell phones can also be used to monitor and control the population as opposed to being employed for democratic and libertarian purposes. Large corporations also regularly collect this information on consumers for marketing and branding purposes, and indeed this happens every day. Of course, this same technology is also used regularly by citizens and consumers to criticize governments and corporations, so from the point of view of privacy and human rights, it is certainly a two-edged sword. Over the long-term, an even broader concern is the overall effect that the Internet and new social media are having on literacy, the education system and young people in general, particularly if they are creating a 'dumbed down' generation of isolated individuals who are no longer able to function in the 'real' world—or perhaps find the imaginary or virtual world far more interesting and engaging than real life. Clearly the old print media and book publishers are all in decline, while the new media are dominated by just a few large corporations.

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