Internet and the Classroom

The Internet provides many quality experiences and resources for the classroom. However, many teachers and school boards are hesitant to allow the Internet into classroom because of the dangers that lurk in its shadows. These issues are real and should not be taken lightly, but with care and planning they can be easily addressed and your students can be safe.

Where do I start?

First, be sure that all the computers that will access the Internet in your school are using filtering software. The filtering can be done in several ways (listed in order of technical difficulty):

1. (*Lowest*) Sign up with a service provider that filters the web before it gets to you. This is the easiest, because they take responsibility for keeping the filtering current and there is nothing extra to install on your computer. Sometimes local public school systems can provide this service for you if you don't have an ISP (Internet Service Provider) in your area that does.

2. (*Medium*) Purchase filtering software and install it on each computer

   a. CyberCitter (http://www.cybersitter.com/) One of the best.
   b. CyberPatrol (http://www.cyberpatrol.com/)
   c. SurfWatch (http://www1.surfwatch.com/)
   d. NetNanny (http://www.netnanny.com/)

3. (*Highest*) Filter your Internet locally in a proxy server. This has an advantage because you have one filtering system to maintain and all your computers can go though the one system to access the Internet, however they require a slightly higher technical expertise than other filtering methods. Examples of proxy servers are listed below in order of technical difficulty to install and operate:

   a. (*Medium*) WinProxy (http://www.winproxy.com)

   b. (*High*) Microsoft ISA Server (http://www.microsoft.com/ISAServer) Note: This is a highly configurable server, but requires advanced skills to setup and maintain.

IMPORTANT: The most important thing to remember about filtering software is that **it doesn't work!!!** "OK," you ask, "why should I use it?"

Filtering software is an important first line of defense that no school should be without, however with the dynamic and extensive nature of the Internet there is absolutely no possible way that any filtering service could find all the offensive sites to block them. Even the best filtering systems only block about 60% of the offensive sites on the Internet. While this is a important safety feature for your computer system and clearly indicates your priorities for Internet safety, it doesn't cover all the bases.

Second. Remember that NOTHING replaces an adult in the room that is aware of what is happening on each computer. One easy way to help this happen is to position your computers against the wall in your classroom so you can easily scan the computers.

Third. Have this simple rule: "Computers and the Internet are for academic (schoolwork) use only." You can then tell your students that there is nothing wrong with checking the sports scores, but you ask that they do it at home. Now, when you are scanning the room to check computer use, you easily look to see if the students are on task with their assignment or not.

Fourth. Use directed Internet use. Give your students specific task on the internet. These can include WebQuests, scavenger hunts, and worksheets. Examples of each of these are included in Appendix A.

Fifth. Create your own Home Page. The Home Page is the web page that comes up when ever the browser is started. By default, Internet Explorer uses MSN as its home page, which often presents material that is not appropriate in a Christian classroom. You can create your own home page and publish it on your school's home page, or you can use a free automated service like Classroom AdventLinx (http://classroom.adventlinx.com). Appendix B includes step by step instructions on how to change your home page.

Sixth. Use child focused search engines.
     Yahooligans: http://www.yahooligans.com
     Ask Jevees for Kids: http://www.ajkids.com

Seventh. Turn on your tracking logs. WinProxy, other servers, and filtering software can create log files that record all websites that students visit. Be sure they are turned on and tactfully let the students know that the sites they visit will be logged by the system and that you can review those logs. Then be sure to review the logs occasionally. In addition, each browser has a history file that can be reviewed, however it is possible for students to delete items in the history files.

Eighth. Have an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). An AUP is a written agreement outlining the proper use of the computer and the Internet. Every school with Internet access should have an AUP. An example AUP is included at the end of this document.

What about Chat and Email?

Don't allow chats (ICQ, IRQ, or Instant Messenger) or newsgroups. These are too difficult to monitor for safety.
If you choose to send email, do it only from one central classroom account that the entire class can use and is open for your review.
Do not use an Internet service provider that has chat as part of their service (example: AOL).

With careful planning a safe environment for Internet use can be provided and our students can explore the vast resources available to us on the web with confidence.
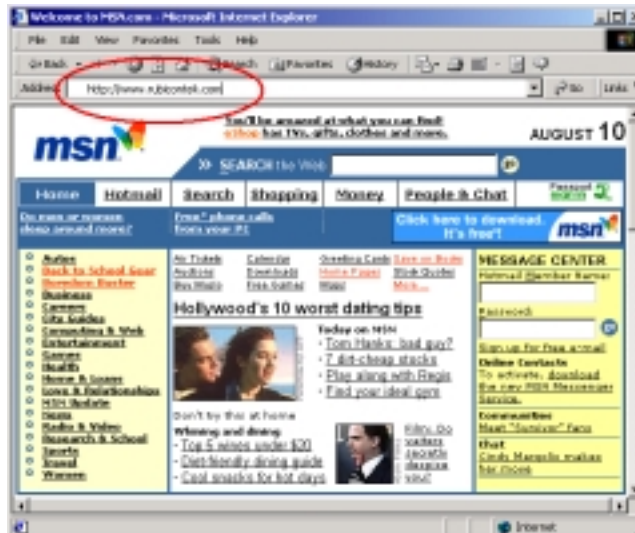
Appendix A – WebQuests
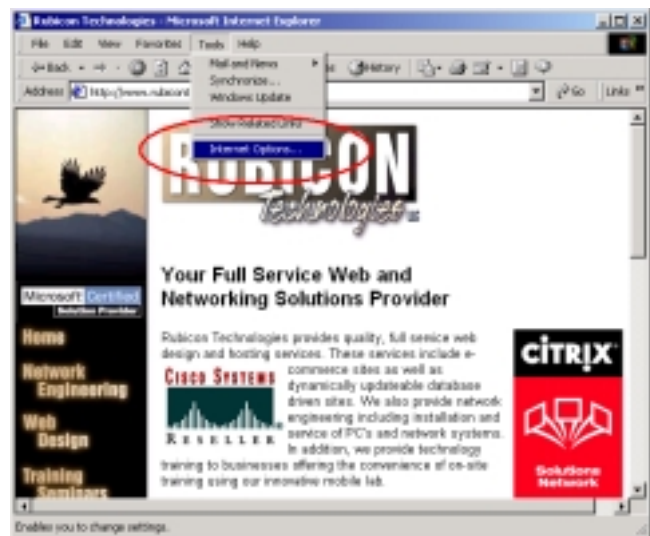http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/
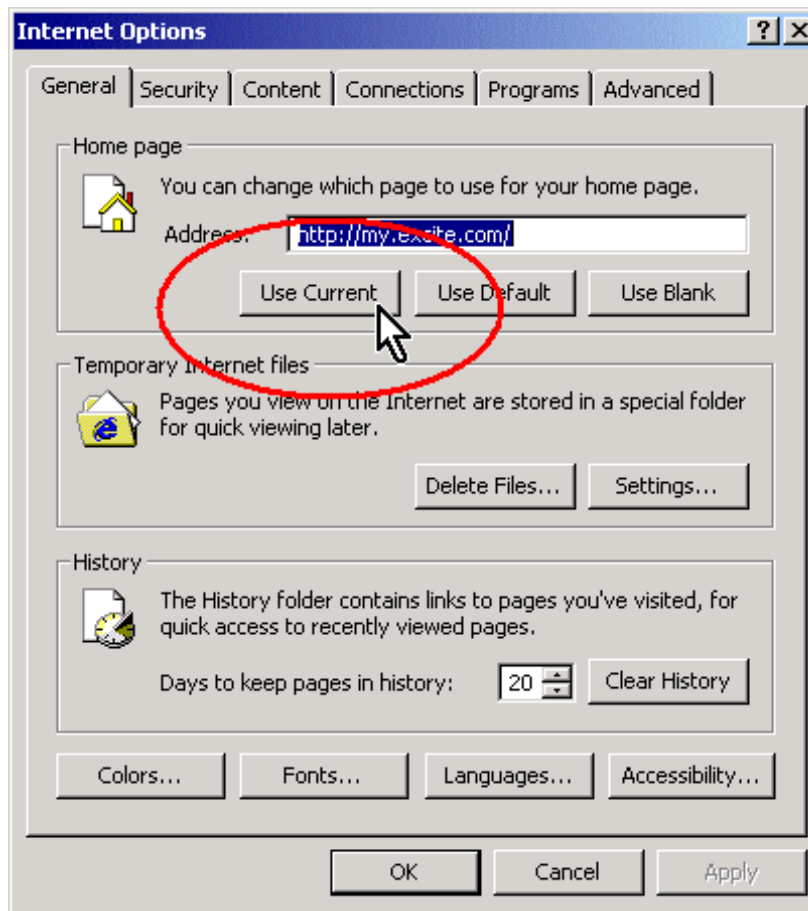
Appendix B – How to change your home page

Begin by typing the address of the web site you want to be your homepage in the Address bar. Then press <ENTER>.

Now select Tools/Internet Options… from the menu bar
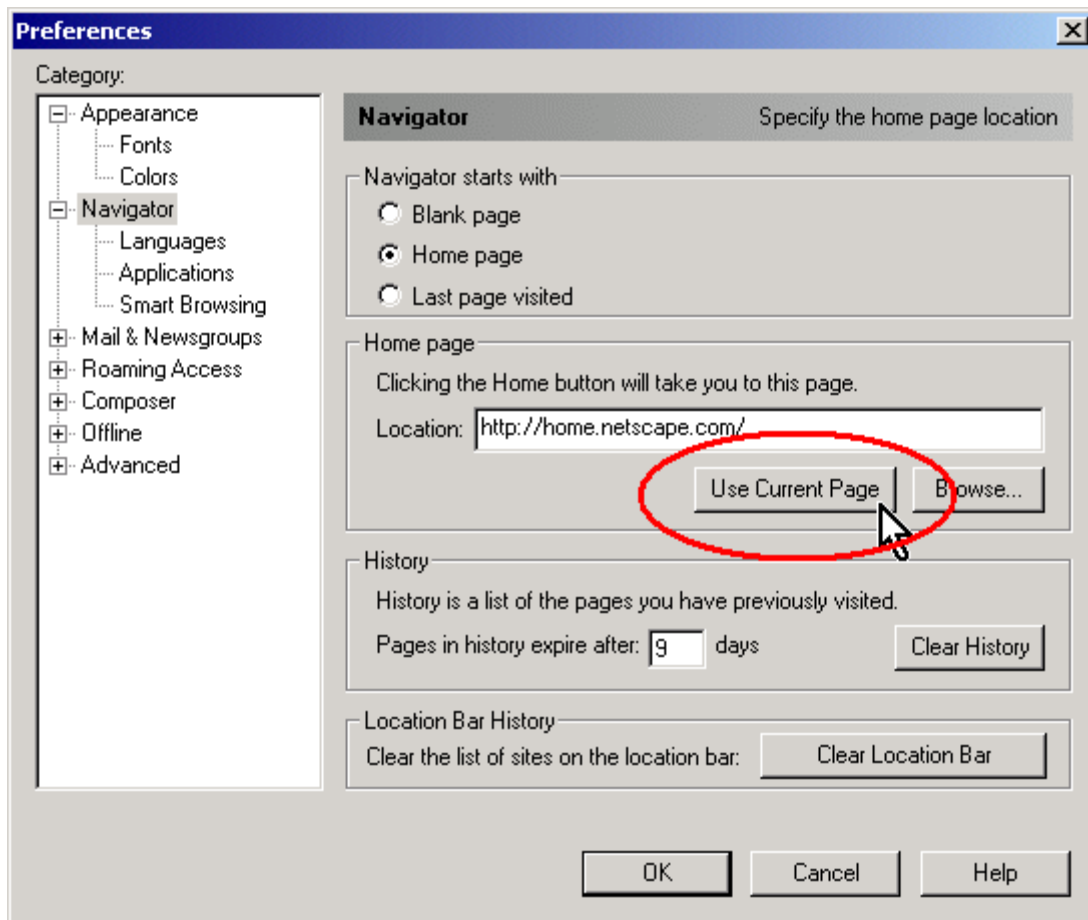
Click on "Use Current."

In Netscape, follow the same procedure, except select Edit/Preferences from the menu then click "Use Current Page."

Michigan Conference
Acceptable Use Policy

The schools of the Seventh-day Adventists education system are pleased to offer their students access to a computer network for electronic mail and the Internet. To gain access to E-mail and the Internet, the legal parent and student sign and return this form to the school.

The Internet is a powerful resource for expanding the educational experience of each student. Access to E-mail and the Internet will enable students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, and bulletin boards while exchanging messages with Internet users throughout the world. Unfortunately it is true that some materials accessible via the Internet may contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate or offensive. We believe, however, that the benefits to students in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration exceed any disadvantages and therefore support the school's choosing to make the Internet available to our students. But because ultimately, parents and guardians are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources, we respect each family's right to decide whether or not to apply for access.

School computers are for educational purposes only. Since the network is provided for students to conduct research and communicate with others, access is given to students who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Parental permission is required. Access is a privilege—not a right. Access entails responsibility. School staff may review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly.

Students will adhere to Christian principles and will:

> be responsible and courteous in all communications
> be responsible with all computer hardware and software
> keep their passwords to themselves
> respect the confidentiality of folders, work and files of others
> learn about and observe copyright laws
> comply with the Michigan Acceptable use policy
> students will not attempt to access or alter unauthorized areas of a computer system

Any activity not in compliance with these rules may result in a loss of access as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

Additional regulations may be applied at the local level.

Internet access agreement

Student

I understand that the Internet can connect me to much useful information stored on computers around the world.

While I have access to the Internet:

> I will use it only for education purposes.
> I will not look or participate in anything that is illegal, dangerous, offensive or opposed to the Adventist values of this school.

If I accidentally come across something that is illegal, dangerous or offensive, I will:

> clear any offensive pictures or information from my screen; and
> immediately, quietly, inform my teacher.

I will not reveal home addresses or phone numbers - mine or anyone else's.

I will not use the Internet to annoy or offend anyone else.

I understand that if the school decides I have broken these rules, appropriate action will be taken. Any activity not in compliance with these rules may result in a loss of access as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

Student's Name _____   School Name _____

Student's Signature _____   Date _____

Parent or guardian

I understand that the Internet can provide students with valuable learning experiences.

I also understand that it gives access to information on computers around the world; that the school cannot control what is on those computers; and that a very small part of that information can be illegal, dangerous or offensive.

I accept that, while teachers will always exercise their duty of care, protection against exposure to harmful information must depend finally upon responsible use by students.

I believe _____ (Name of student) understands this responsibility, and I hereby give my permission for him/her to access the Internet under the school rules. I understand that students breaking these rules will be subject to appropriate action by the school. Any activity not in compliance with these rules may result in a loss of access as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

Parent or guardian's name _____

Parent or guardian's signature _____   Date _____