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Read "[Inside the Internet Archive](#)" by Doug Roberts, first published at [Mindjack.com](#) in November, 2002.

Recent article from [Search Engine Showdown](#) explains how to search for archived or deleted web pages.

Once content is posted to the web what can be done to remove it? The answer depends, in part, on where it is posted. As Maria Aspan, a writer for the New York Times, recently published in an article about Facebook, it can be extremely difficult! ([How Sticky is Membership on Facebook? Just try breaking free!](#))

Issue: #10

March 2008

10th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.

ChildrenOnline.org would like to welcome our many new subscribers! It seems that lots of people saw Doug Fodeman's Interview with ABC World News tonight recently concerning cell phone scams targeting children and subscribed to our newsletter. To learn more about this particular problem visit ChildrenOnline.org and click on the link for our Free Newsletter. The [August, 2007 issue](#) was devoted largely to a discussion about cell phone problems targeting children.



We recently returned from a week in New York visiting several Manhattan schools. Some of the anxieties raised by both parents and high school teens concerned how difficult it is to remove content from the Internet once it is posted. We thought this made a very good topic for this month's newsletter.

As always, we welcome your comments and questions.
Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

Deleting Online Content. Can it be done?

Email questions or comments to:
DFodeman@Brookwood.edu

What Can You Do?

So, if I were the student or parent desperately trying to remove an embarrassing photo or other content from the web here are the steps I might take:

1. Note exactly what you want deleted, where and when it was posted and what file names this might include.
 2. First and foremost, delete the content yourself from every location on which it was posted. (This assumes that you have control over that content i.e. you posted it.) For the truly paranoid: Upload a new totally benign photo to the same server, same location and give it the same name in the hope that it will overwrite any hidden version of the previous one that might still be lurking in dark corners.
 3. Contact the web service/site on which the content was posted and ask them how you go about requesting that they remove the content from their archives or backups. (Remember that step #1 you detailed exactly what files or content was offensive including file names, dates posted, etc.) Sites like Facebook actually have customer support resources you can contact. e.g.
 - [Facebook Safety](#)
 - [Facebook Privacy & Security](#)
 - [WayBack Machine Site](#)
- [Removal](#)
[Privacy complaint guidelines at YouTube](#)
[Abuse and Policy Center at YouTube](#)

Two very important points that we make extremely clear to children and parents are the following:

1. There is no privacy online. ANYWHERE. Privacy online is an illusion!

2. Once content is posted on the Internet it is extremely difficult to completely remove it.

Now look at these two simple axioms and think about them in the context of children and teens. Educators and parents know quite well that children/teens do things impulsively, to get attention, and typically without regard for the consequences. (Some behaviorists describe this phenomenon as related to poor frontal lobe development of young brains. Some suggest that a lot of decision-making takes place in the frontal lobe.) This behavior certainly described us when we were teenagers and younger! The authors of ChildrenOnline, like everyone else, have had their share of poor decisions and embarrassing mistakes. However, in "the good old days" these mistakes were not captured on video or in photos and posted on billboards or on television for the world to see. Today children and teen's embarrassing, cruel, hurtful, and even criminal behaviors, are posted all over the Internet and watched by thousands of people. These poor decisions have life-altering consequences. We know of High School seniors who have been denied admission to colleges because of what they posted on their "private" Facebook pages. We know of high school teens who have been expelled from private schools for posting embarrassing videos on YouTube, and we know of 9 - 11 years old children who have been horribly vilified online or contacted by pedophiles because of personal information they have made available on the Internet.

Once content is put ANYWHERE on the Internet, it can be:

- copied and pasted elsewhere
- forwarded to others
- archived by the hosting web service or service provider
- caught and copied by "bots" that crawl the web in an effort to capture data and make it available in other ways e.g. Archive.org, Archive-It.org,
- captured by visitors who can copy text, pictures or take screen shots of web pages
- cached by web browsers. Content is routinely cached from web pages into folders inside computers so that the page will load faster the next time the user visits the page. These cached files can be searched.
- copied when all files are backed up to other drives
- restored by software tools (in certain instances) even after the files have been deleted
- located in other unexpected sources that are routinely backed up such as email servers and file servers.

Once the content is removed, used the web site's search engine and go looking for it again! Try finding it by searching for it in different ways based on the user's account, the content posted or by looking for files from another user's account who is in the same network.

3. Go to every computer from which you know the offensive content was viewed and delete the browser's cached files. For the truly paranoid: Search the computer for copies of any of the offending files, photos, etc.

4. After all efforts to erase the files, ask "friends" if anyone has a copy of the offensive content. You'll have to use your own judgment on how to respond to an affirmative answer. "Friends" in some cases may be hundreds of strangers connected to a teens network!

5. There are many online resources that can help you! Use Google to search words such as delete, account, MySpace etc.... e.g.
[The Parent's Edge: Delete MySpace Accounts](#)
[Wired Safety's MySpace Guidelines](#)

Extreme Resources:

ChildrenOnline has heard from some parents who have hired a lawyer to write intimidating letters to web services to get them to remove content. A good argument from which to approach the web service is if the child is under the age recommended by the web site itself, if the content is in violation of the web service's terms and conditions or if the content violates the law. This tactic has also been employed

- copied while in transit to a location by network administrators, Internet service providers and even the FBI (Look up "FBI Carnivore" in Google).
- copied unscrupulously by the many scam artists who use spyware, key loggers and other malware to get at users personal information
- cached by Google. Conduct a search for information in Google and instead of clicking the link to the page, click the button under the linked called "Cached" to search for older versions of web pages.

YouTube is another website on which we often see children/teens making poor decisions which their parents might want to erase. Like many sites, both Facebook and YouTube say in their "Terms and Services" that THEY FOREVER OWN EVERYTHING THAT IS POSTED ON THEIR SERVERS and HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE AND DISTRIBUTE COPIES AS WELL AS KEEP ARCHIVES.

Keep in mind that you, the consumer, are not powerless...

Facebook bends to user protests, makes it easier to delete accounts By Heather Havenstein (2/13/2008 in Computer World)

Top ways to protect your online reputation
By Michael Cooney (Network World , 05/14/2007)

Unfortunately the final note in this effort is to understand that despite all your best efforts a copy of the offensive material may still be hiding somewhere out there.

Two very good videos to show teens that we have recommended in this newsletter in the past are:

Think Before You Post **Everyone Knows Your Name**

These are posted on YouTube and produced by the National Ad Council, in cooperation with the Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

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Doug Fodeman & Marje Monroe.
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when someone has posted embarrassing or illegal content about someone else and refuses to remove it.

Also, there are now services that you can employ to help you erase Internet content about you as well as protect your reputation on the Internet by searching for things posted about you or your children. One of the original services of this type is [Reputation Defender](#)

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