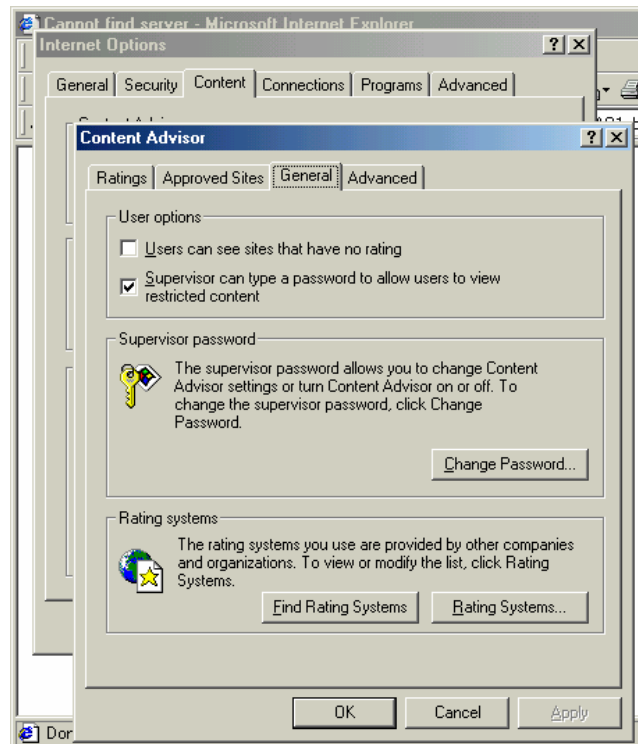


Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Electronic Systems

In today's world where technology is constantly developing and changing there are bound to be flaws in what we create, or people who disagree with carrying out what our technology is capable of doing.

Such as CCTV, this provides a great services for capturing criminals and monitoring our safety but can also be taken to the extreme and can violate someone's privacy such as in the 1999 film Eye of the Beholder starring Ewan McGregor and Ashley Judd, or in an everyday instance where a security guard sets his cameras on you in a shop. Now that we have cameras that can zoom in so close, work in the dark and are tiny we have no way of detecting their presence or escaping their lens, this may be exactly what we need for vandals or thieves but is this really the price we have to pay to be safe? We have to trust whoever is in charge of these surveillance devices and more often than not we won't know who that is or where their cameras are.

The Internet, however, has no way of keeping its users safe. While providing a great source of knowledge and insight, merely typing in a url wrong can lead to a whole lot of unpleasant and unexpected material. Some internet service providers have added 'Internet Grannies' to their wide range of software to keep children safe. These 'grannies' do their best to filter out sites with adult content, however most people with websites do not bother getting the appropriate ratings to say that their site contains offensive things – or does not contain offensive things as the case may be.



As this screen dump shows, users can decide whether sites with no rating can be seen or not. This means perfectly harmless sites with no rating can be blocked or the user can access grotesque acts of vulgarity by allowing sites with no rating to be shown, and with new sites popping up all the times it would be impossible to try and keep up

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with them. There are features to deter people from looking at such filth, History stores all the websites that have been visited and most of them are cached in the 'Temporary Internet Files' folder and there are spyware programs that allow businesses to monitor what people using their software are doing. There is some spyware in the new Windows XP and, much to downloaders' annoyance; a lot of spyware has been put into KaZaA, peer-to-peer file sharing software. These devious files often crash the software if removed so have to remain part of the package. Spyware, much like CCTV can keep us safe but also be a huge invasion of privacy. Most people would say that the only reason to dislike these files is that you are doing something wrong, such as downloading movies, games or explicit pictures but most spyware disguises itself in order to access what you are doing – and this is deceitful and dishonest. These programs include Gatorware that promises to remember all your passwords for you, Bonzi Buddy, which says it will making surfing the net 'easier, faster and a lot more fun!' and Common Name which adds itself onto your tool bar in Internet Explorer and searches using keywords only. Personally I think it is outrageous to get information in such a cunning manor but there is one time when I accept it: KaZaA uses its spyware to count how many times a particular word has been searched, so someone one who is searching for pornographic images of children and such can be easily tracked down. There are some seedy websites (I often wonder how host sites such as Geocities give good reason for allowing these sites to remain on the web), which offer blocks that stop spyware sending information. They also have new programs such as 'Track Eraser' and 'Internet Eraser Pro' that provide an effective way of efficiently covering up what someone may be doing. There must come a time when host sites realise the difference between privacy and concealing a much bigger issue.

The big problem with the Internet is anonymity. It is too easy to pretend to be someone you aren't, as highlighted in a lot of teen magazines. This is a threat for everybody and especially when using an Internet chat room or instant messaging. Anonymity can also be a problem when buying things online, someone conning you to get credit card details is not a challenge for an experienced hacker or site builder. The Internet is all about trust and there will always be someone prepared to breach that trust in order to make a 'quick buck' and in an environment of complete anonymity, innocent users and new software constantly coming out to top what another software is doing it is completely possible for them to do it.

Mobile phones present a whole different danger, one that most people would rather ignore because it's so far in the future. The waves emitted by mobile phones can cause cancer and other such ailments but because this is not an immediate problem most people pay no attention to it. For most people mobiles are an easy way to keep in touch with their bosses or families whilst somewhere that would otherwise not permit this and it is all too easy to get caught up in 'the now' and how important it is that whoever you are phoning gets the information you are about to tell them and with new features being added all the time mobiles seem very tempting – almost essential some might say. Another reason people persist to use mobile phones is that the damage that mobiles can cause is not widely known like that of drink driving or smoking.

There is always the ability for people with the required equipment may be able to tap in and listen to your conversations. Obviously this is an invasion of privacy and is

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unnecessary for the general public but very handy for those in the FBI and other such secret services.