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In English 101C we learned about social responsibility and once I learned that I'd be writing an essay focused on social responsibility I wanted to choose a topic that related to my life. As a journalism major, I'm always looking for ways to gain more knowledge about the industry and expand my horizons for possible career paths. Social media is an interest of mine and it is closely related to the rapidly changing field of journalism. While I was thinking of research topics, my Journalism 200 professor was talking about the proper and improper uses of social media as a journalist. Social media provides a new medium for news outlets to share their news and a quick way for consumers to read the news. I found the variety of uses for social media extremely interesting and decided to research it further. Through school and good parenting I have been taught that the Internet is a public forum and anything you post online no longer belongs to you. I decided to narrow my search on social media to information regarding user privacy. I focused on Twitter and Facebook, which I feel are the two social media sites most commonly used by my generation.

I mainly discovered my sources by starting with the UMD Library databases. I learned on Library Day in English 101C how to properly navigate the library provided resources. For example, prior to that presentation I did not know that using words like "or" or "and" would refine my search. My main searches were for "social media" or "Internet privacy policies." Since I was specifically targeting Twitter and Facebook, I looked through those websites in depth and read through the outlined privacy policies. During the time that I was conducting research Twitter became a publicly traded company, so there were many relevant articles from various news sources.

When looking for scholarly sources not through the library databases, I used Google Scholar and found articles from peer reviewed journals, all relating to social media or Internet privacy. I tried to read as many articles as possible so I could draw my own conclusions later and make connections between the articles. Social media is a fairly new phenomenon, so I only read articles published within the last 10 years, most within the last 5 years, to ensure that my information was as up-to-date as possible.

All of the assistance I received on my research essay was from my English101C Professor, Susan Pramschufer. She helped me through the entire research process, helping me refine my ideas from my first essay to my fourth and final essay. Social media is such a broad topic and I was feeling overwhelmed and lost in information, so I asked Professor Pramschufer for advice on how to narrow my findings. She helped me angle my essay toward the user's point of view, which enabled me to include personal experiences. I sought Professor Pramschufer's editing skills many times throughout the

semester and she helped find errors that I failed to notice, like switching between past tense and present tense.

When selecting my sources I first checked that they were from peer-reviewed journals. Professor Pramschufel required a set amount of scholarly sources, but once I started finding sources I realized that the highest quality information was found from scholarly sources. The currency of the source was important to me, so I checked publication dates before I read most articles. As I began reading the sources to find relevant information I scanned for words like “social media,” “privacy policy,” and “responsibility.” Several sources had a summary or overview in the beginning, so I read that to get a sense of whether the article was useable or not.

My in-depth research on social media, with focuses on Twitter and Facebook, has provided me with valuable knowledge for my future career. I learned that the concept of privacy on the Internet covers less than many people believe. The main concept that I learned through my research is that if I want something to be kept private, then I should not post it online. Reading Twitter and Facebook’s privacy policies gave me a comprehensive understanding of what websites do and do not own and that they have the rights to almost all the information that is provided to them. Social media sites like Twitter and Facebook are free to the users, so the users voluntarily release their information. Technology will continue to advance, so there will only be less privacy in the future. After this research paper I have a much better idea of how social media can hurt me in my internship and career searches. I am aware of social media’s power in today’s technological era and I plan to use it to my advantage-- to further my career, not to damage it.

Reflecting on my research experience, I am very pleased with my final product. I might request that the library offer a special service to help new students properly comb through reliable resources. I think I’m capable of telling what is a good resource and what not, but more help on how to scan for important information, especially with lengthy documents, would be beneficial.