due by noon on Friday, March 4
200 points

For this report (approximately 4–5 print pages), you will research the impact of the web on your field of study. Researching means scouring academic journals, searching the web itself, and interviewing professionals and/or professors in your field. Constructing a detailed, thoughtful, and analytical report means integrating description and examples that helps you explain how the web has influenced your field of study.

GETTING STARTED & DOING RESEARCH

1. Do some research. Evaluate different sources and collect resources that explain the influence of the web on your field of study. Sources to consult include:

- Interview professors or graduate students in your department; they are professionals in your field, they read publications in your field, and they should be up to date on hot topics in your field. Thus, they should be able to tell you a bit about how the web has influenced your field of study.

- Go to the web sites published and produced by organizations that represent or are related to your field. These sites often include discussion forums, where professionals are debating hot topics. These sites also typically include access to or lists of publications relevant to your field, and may even include online articles for you to access. For example:
  
  Advertising
  www.adage.com or ad council.org

  BizLink --> International Business --> Popular Journals
  www.bizlink.org/category2.asp?cat=5&catID=5&subcat=157

  Society for Technical Communication Member Publications
  www.stc.org/memberPubs.asp

- Review trade magazines or journals published by or for professionals in your field. Every professional field has publications for its members. Take a look at the tables of contents of recent issues of the publications professionals in your field read. See if you can dig up some articles related to your field and the web.

- Go to different libraries on campus. There are 12 branch libraries on campus. You may have to go to your dedicated library to find a good selection of journals in your field, for example: the Business Library (50 Law College Building) or the Engineering Library (1515 Engineering Building).

- Ask reference librarians; all of the libraries on campus are staffed by wonderfully knowledgeable librarians who should be able to help you identify some of the journals written in your field, and perhaps even articles related to how the web has influenced your field of study.
NARROWING YOUR FOCUS

The web has undoubtably affected your field and professionals in your field in many ways. You can’t address all these ways in one 4–5 page report. Thus, you need to narrow your focus. See if—by carefully reviewing the materials you have gathered—you can come up with a main point regarding how the web has influenced your field of study. This will become the core focus of your report. For example:

The World Wide Web has dramatically changed the field of marketing. The popularity of the web and online shopping has forced marketing professionals to rethink traditional approaches to marketing and to create approaches appropriate to online commerce. In this report, I first describe how the web has changed marketing, then I specifically discuss one failed approach (pop-up generators) and one successful approach (integrated banner ads) to online marketing. I end with some suggestions for the future of marketing on the web.

Fundamentals such as reading books, writing five-paragraph essays, and doing basic arithmetic are no longer the only subjects students must be well-schooled in—today’s K–12 educators also have to prepare students to read and write in digital spaces. In this report, I describe the national K–12 information technology standards, and focus specifically on how teachers are expected to help students gain web searching skills. Then I review three syllabi I gathered on the web that reveal the ways in which high school teachers are addressing this expectation in their classrooms.

Professional writers who are specialists in web development have to negotiate a wide range of skills, from programming to coding, to textual analysis and textual context development, to graphic design and information architecture, to usability theory and user-centered approaches. In this report, I review five articles written for working technical communicators to help them navigate the requirements of web writing. I conclude with some predictions about how the job of professional web-content developers will change in the coming years.

WRITING THE REPORT

Next, get a sense of the genre of informational reports, so that you best know how to structure the report, integrate the components of the report, and sculpt the language you use in the report.

Take a look at some example reports, linked from both the “syllabus” and the “schedule” area of our class site:

schedule --> M 1/31 --> “discuss web impact report”
syllabus --> “web impact report”

Write the report so that it articulates, explains, and supports the main point you’ve developed. You have some freedom in how you structure and design your report. Suggested report sections include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER ADDRESSING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview/Summary</td>
<td>What is the overall purpose of this report? What are you doing, arguing, saying, suggesting, demonstrating, etc. in the report? Can you summarize the entire report in one or two paragraphs (or 100 words, maximum)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

What is your field? What do people in your field do? What do people in your field write? How do people in your field use the web? What initially interested you in pursuing your field of study? How do you see the web—and specifically web authoring—as integral or connected to your field of study? What is the key point of this report? What is your purpose? What are you offering? (This should be more detailed than the brief overview you’ve included earlier on.)

Analysis and Results

What are the key findings or main points you have to present? What details, description, and specific examples help you to explain these findings?

Conclusions

What overall conclusions can you draw about how the web has impacted your field of study? How do you think the web might continue to influence your field of study in the future? How should professionals in your field be best equipped to write for, do research on, and communicate via the web?

References

What are the full citations for the articles you’ve summarized and analyzed? What are the full citations of any other work you’ve quoted from or otherwise referenced in the report?

Note that these are just suggestions; you may find it helpful, useful, and/or interesting to include different sections in your report, or to structure your report contents differently.