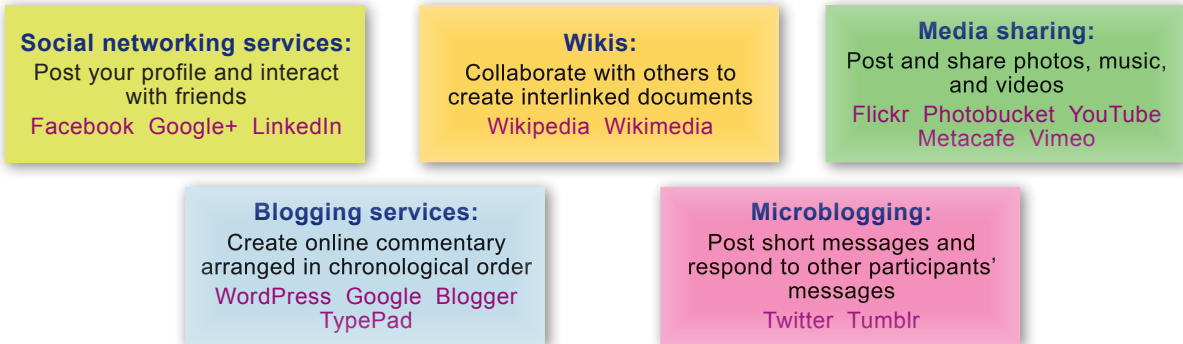


► **What role do social media play?** The fourth phase of the digital revolution turned the worry of social isolation on its head; instead of computers decreasing human interaction, social media encourage interpersonal communications and relationships. **Social media** are cloud-based applications designed for social interaction and consumer-generated content. They include social networking services, wikis, blogging services, photo sharing services, and microblogging sites (Figure 1-9).

FIGURE 1-9

Social media include many popular services.



Myspace, Facebook, and Twitter became some of the first popular social networking services. Myspace lost steam in 2008, but Facebook and Twitter marched ahead by attracting millions of users. Many factors influenced the popularity of these sites, but one important factor is their ease of use. As cloud-based services, there is no software to install and there are no updates to worry about. Getting started is as simple as registering your name and creating a password.

► **How is today's computing different from the past?** Using computers during the fourth phase of the digital revolution, you're likely to have a mobile device that accesses the Internet using a cell phone service provider.

The touchscreen on your mobile device gives you access to apps that play music, show movies, report news and sports scores, help you find the nearest Starbucks, and all kinds of other fun stuff. You occasionally use Google or Wikipedia to access information; and when you need to produce a document, you head over to Google to access its cloud-based word processor. You spend lots of time maintaining your profiles on social networking services and interacting with friends through cloud-based social media.

TRY IT!

Which social media site has more users: Facebook or Twitter? Do a Google search and find out.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter

DIGITAL SOCIETY

► **How does digital technology affect freedom and democracy?** Freedom of speech is the cornerstone of democracy. It can be defined as being able to speak freely without censorship or fear of reprisal. The concept is not limited to speaking, but includes all forms of expression, such as writing, art, and symbolic actions. The more inclusive term *freedom of expression* is sometimes used instead of *freedom of speech*.

Freedom of speech is not an absolute. Most societies prohibit or repress some types of expression, such as hate speech, libel, pornography, and flag burning. Although freedom of expression is guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these documents recognize the necessity for some restrictions, which might vary from one society to the next.

Incidents ranging from the controversy over teaching evolution in schools to the Arab world's fury over cartoons of Mohammed illustrate that societies

draw the freedom of speech line in different places. The types of expression that are allowed or prohibited in a particular country are, in many respects, a reflection of its culture.

Digital technologies and communications networks make it easy to cross cultural and geographic boundaries. News, television shows, music, and art from all over the globe are accessible on the Internet. The Internet has the potential to expand freedom of speech by offering every person on the planet a forum for personal expression using personal Web sites, blogs, chat groups, social media, and collaborative wikis. Anonymous Internet sites such as Freenet and **anonymizer tools** that cloak a person's identity even make it possible to exercise freedom of speech in situations where reprisals might repress it.

Internet information that seems innocuous in some cultures is not acceptable in others. Governments, parents, and organizations sometimes find it necessary to censor the Internet by limiting access and filtering content.

Despite attempts to censor and filter speech on the Internet, it seems clear that digital technology opens the door to freedom of expression in unprecedented ways. Limitations on Internet speech are likely to change, too, as technology evolves and as societies come to grips with the balance between freedom and responsibility.

► **Has digital technology changed the way we view privacy?** Citizens of free societies have an expectation of privacy, which in the words of Supreme Court Justices Warren and Brandeis is “the right to be let alone.” Digital technology use has exerted substantial pressure to diminish privacy by making it possible to easily collect and distribute data about individuals without their knowledge or consent.

Privacy also encompasses confidentiality—the expectation that personal information will not be collected or divulged without permission. Internet marketers have a whole bag of tricks for surreptitiously getting personal information, and hackers are adept at breaking into sensitive databases to obtain confidential information (Figure 1-10).

Surveillance is viewed by many people as an invasion of privacy. Tracking technologies embedded in cars, clothing, passports, and devices such as cell phones make it much too easy to track people without their knowledge.

In the United States, the expectation of privacy is derived from Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable searches and seizures. The Fourth Amendment was formulated long before the digital revolution. Today's lawmakers struggle to strike the right balance between privacy and competing principles, such as free speech or free trade, but the Internet and other digital technologies are slowly being used to chip away at the wall that protects our private lives.

Some individuals dismiss the erosion of privacy saying, “I have nothing to hide, so I don't care.” Many other people don't want stores, hackers, and curious onlookers to have access to data about what they buy, read, and watch; who they call; where they travel; and what they say.

Social media, however, encourage participants to reveal personal details online, and that information is being captured, aggregated, reposted, and distributed publicly. Privacy advocates fear that these digital technologies are fundamentally changing our expectation of what is private and what is not.

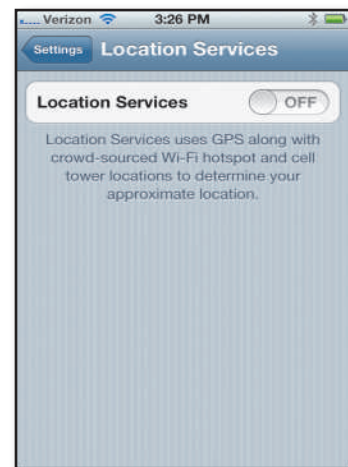
TRY IT!

Which country has the most Draconian Internet censorship? Search the Web to find out.

- ☐ United States
- ☐ Russia
- ☐ Iran
- ☐ Greece

FIGURE 1-10

Is your location private information? Many applications and social media sites want to know your location. Do you want to reveal it? If not, turn location off.



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