Social Networking Sites

SNSs are a great tool to have on the internet and they can be used as a simple form of entertainment, even though there are certain risks and legal issues involved with the use of them. The reason I say this is because I had a MySpace in 2005, and I kept in touch with friends and family through it. But, along with the normal friends, I had many friend requests from complete strangers; many who were young girls and others were people that thought my page was cool or just wanted to increase their friend count (and nothing else). So instead of dealing with a multitude of requests I cancelled my account. I later regretted that decision because I had lost contact with several friends after high school graduation when my original way of contacting them was through MySpace. The good thing is it’s as easy to cancel an account as it is to set up a new one elsewhere. I now am on Face Book and MySpace because there are specific features I utilize on each and they have improved security (such as “friends only” features). This is why SNSs are a nice tool to have and use on the net, because they allow you to keep in touch with friends that are out of town, state, or even country. Not only do they help keep up communication among friends and family, but many SNSs can help you find old friends or even relatives that you’ve lost contact with or maybe never talked to before. Many current SNSs have a place where you can play games, listen to new music, and watch videos. So there’s always something entertaining a user can find. It’s also nice that many SNSs give you the choice to meet new and unknown people, but that is where many problems can arise; like in my case.

There are many problems with SNSs, one being the ability to create a completely false and/or fictitious profile. Being a member of or having an account with a SNS has its risks. The younger age group (grade school – high school) can be at risk of encountering sexual predators that have set up a profile resembling a student and so on. An individual could create five profiles on an SNS if they really wanted to, and this allows an abundance of false or exaggerated information to accumulate. Along with these risks there is the issue of how public or private a profile on a SNS really is. Depending on the SNS and settings a user/person has chosen, name, date of and place of birth, address, and phone numbers can be on display for anyone to see. This is a problem because it can actually aid criminals in committing identity theft in some cases with “the potential ability to reconstruct users' social security numbers using information often found in profiles”. It also allows for stalking and harassment to occur by unknown persons in some cases. Another issue would be if a person commits a crime and it is directly related to a SNS; would authorized personnel (e.g. police, FBI, CIA) have to obtain a search warrant for content on or within people’s profiles or can they do what they need to without one? The fourth amendment doesn’t really address this issue and according to the article it’s up to the users' expectation of privacy and whether or not a profile is considered public or private. As a user, just like with the internet, you have to be careful what information you allow others to see and you have to have a certain level of trust in which SNSs are being used.