

The Role of the Internet in Modern-Day Revolutions

**Yogeshwar Velingker
Junior Division
Individual Website**

Selecting the “right” topic for History Day was a process marked by study of various historical personalities, their lives, and their contributions to the world in bringing about change. While contemplating choices for my topic, it suddenly occurred to me that Internet was clearly a major contributor to modern day reform by connecting people around and allowing them instant access to news. Second generation websites allowed people to write blogs and solicit comments from readers. With hand-held smart devices, connectivity stretched to lesser developed parts of the world that were lacking in traditional wired communications networks. While studying current events, I learned that the Internet enabled the birth of the Arab Spring, where disgruntled citizens in dictatorial regimes such as Egypt and Tunisia could organize and peacefully demonstrate to oust despotic rulers. Even in democracies such as the UK and the US, people could stage protests against injustices and growing disparity between the rich and the poor. Before I realized it, the Internet and its role in modern revolutions had already become my topic for the project.

I conducted my research primarily through sources such as newspapers, magazine articles, and documentary television news. Many of the news articles were available on Internet and the Parkland and Allentown libraries have also been instrumental in providing access to research material. I also visited Temple and Lehigh University libraries to look at archives of old revolutions. I also searched over the Internet for images and photographs of the events happening in the world. I also visited the National Museum of American History for some pictures as well as documents. For primary resources I interviewed people who were directly involved with the revolution. I feel that the lively animated images that I got online created the most impact on my project.

I selected the individual category as opposed to working in a group, primarily because of time flexibility. Creating a website was an easy decision for me, as my topic itself relates to the impact of the Internet in revolutions and a website is an access point through which information as well as

graphic and multimedia content can be disseminated across the net. Also, a website is more dynamic than other categories and allows easy incorporation of the latest available information. Creating a website gave me an opportunity to learn some new technology tools.

The Internet plays a major role in the current wave of revolutions sweeping the world. Mass revolts in the Arab World are inspiring people in across the globe. During Iranian protests of 2009, social media helped a large number of people to network and gather together in a short amount of time. Furthermore, ordinary Iranian citizens could capture the atrocities of police toward protesters on their cell phones and transmit them around the world. Social media facilitated communication within and between oppressed nations and helped collective struggle of people against injustices leading to governmental reforms.