

## Epreuve écrite

**Examen de fin d'études secondaires 2011**

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### **Web makes 15 minutes fame a lifetime of shame**

[...] In the early days, the Web resembled a virtual, parallel world, where anything went. Now it is not only perhaps less private than the real world - but far less forgiving.

"The microscope is coming to a theatre near you and everyone is going to live under a microscope," says Michael Fertik, CEO of Reputation.com, which helps people worried about their online presence. That "microscope" is astonishing in power, drawing on everything from blog entries and Facebook postings to food orders and search histories. Fertik rattled off data a typical person reveals online: "Your musical preferences, who your friends are, what you buy, where you live, where you travel, where you surf on the Internet, what your health hazards are, what you eat, what exercise, what size clothes you wear, what the names of all your family members are, your political affiliations." And that's without the drunken photos, sexual boasts, online rants, or other lapses in judgment that Internet tools like Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and the like encourage. [...]

The growing reality is that far from being able to hide behind avatars, pseudonyms and privacy settings, going online more resembles going into a public street and shouting. That off-the-record chat once confined to around the office water cooler - it's gone global.

- Forget about forgetting -

Even scarier, web watchers say, is that in Web world, with its vast and constantly expanding archive, your past becomes permanent. "Right now, there is no delete button for the Internet," Fertik said. For advertisers, that sea of Web data is a goldmine allowing them to target millions of people with ads tailored to their online profiles. For bosses and the simply curious, it's also a giant keyhole to peep through. Hiring managers routinely Google applicants - it's dubbed the "Google Handshake" - and a Microsoft survey found that 70 percent of company representatives had turned down candidates after finding something they didn't like. Meanwhile, if you're on a first date, an iPhone app called Date Check will even let you search criminal records and property ownership of the potential lover sitting across the table. A big weapon of the future is likely to be facial-recognition technology, allowing you to search an individual online by photo, not name.

The impossibility of escaping your past heralds a disturbing new era, says Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger, a cyber specialist at the Oxford Internet Institute. "I think it's an existential crisis," he said, "because in order to forgive, we also need to forget." And for all those Internet-addicted youths out there now, the revenge of the Web has barely begun. Wait till they apply for sensitive jobs or political posts in a decade [ . . . ] "We are underestimating the problem, because the problem manifests itself usually much later than when we shared the information," Mayer-Schoenberger warned.

