Social Media & Presidential Election Exploration

Motivation

> Flash forward to 30 years from now and envision a presidential race in which both candidates have actively participated in social networking throughout their entire lives. Imagine that they not only have Facebook accounts, but also have used other services, such as MySpace, Flickr, Tumblr, Pinterest, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Orkut, blogging, or even other services yet to be invented. The digital footprints amassed by such candidates will undoubtedly be substantial, and if history is a reliable indicator, every wall post, blog entry, picture, and tweet will be examined under the finest microscope – likely needing to be explained, apologized for, or defended.
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> Jacobson, D. & Idziorek, J. *Computer Security Literacy: Staying Safe in a Digital World.* New York: CRC Press, 2013. 213. Print.

Imagine thirty years from now, presidential candidates will have most likely participated in social networking throughout their entire lives. This will create a very long standing and sizeable digital footprint for each candidate – the content of which will undeniably affect their campaign trail. You probably don't remember life without social networking as it has been around for a while now so this may not seem like a big deal to you. Think about the most recent elections: Prior to the 2012 election, candidate Sarah Palin had her email account hacked into and prior to this election, candidate Hilary Clinton was a target for hacking attacks when she used a personal email account and server for official communications.

Still, how can social media and social networking affect a candidate? It is worth taking a moment to look back in history at the 1960 election between candidates Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. This election is memorable because it not only held the first presidential debates, but the debates were televised. Why was it so memorable and important? Let's find out.

Video
Show students the video "The Kennedy-Nixon Debates" on History.com. Need to brush up on some of the history behind the event? History.com provides a brief background on the election directly following the video on the webpage below.

> History.com Staff. "The Kennedy-Nixon Debates." History.com. A&E Television Networks, 2010. Web. 30 Oct. 2016. http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/kennedy-nixon-debates

Discussion
The video pointed out that the people listening to the debate on the radio thought Nixon had won while the people watching the debate on television thought Kennedy had won. Why did this happen?

These debates displayed how powerful a person's image can be when broadcasted: Even though Nixon had already been in office as vice-president and had more experience, his sickly and dodgy appearance on television casted him in a negative light. Candidates today are undoubtedly aware of how their appearance on television can impact their campaigns. How will this play out in the future when candidates have had their entire lives documented digitally? How might this affect their campaigns?

How might social networking help or hurt the candidate's images with the public?
How might cyber criminals take advantage of these candidates having such a large digital footprint?
How might cyber criminals take advantage of social media during election times?

Writing Assignment and/or Group Discussion:
Imagine you are around 45-years-old and there is a presidential election right around the corner. Remember, in the United States, presidential candidates must be at least 35-years-old. Now imagine both of these candidates have been using social networks their entire lives. Use your imagination and your current knowledge of presidential campaigns to imagine a few different scenarios that could happen as a result of these candidates having their entire lives documented within social networks.