Magna Carta: My Digital Rights
www.bl.uk/my-digital-rights

TEACHERS' NOTES

Theme: Access Online

Topic: Prisoners' access to the Web
Debate: Should all prisoners have the right to access the internet?

Project outline
Read the *Magna Carta: My Digital Rights* Project Guide for Teachers to find out more about how to use this document.

Step 1: Setting the scene
Begin by asking the group to watch the video clip.
This film has been developed in partnership with WebWeWant.org.

In the UK, Category A status prisoners have no access to the internet at all, because it is considered too high a security risk. The Ministry of Justice defines a Category A prisoner as someone "whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public, or the police or the security of the State, and for whom the aim must be to make escape impossible."

Some prisoners who are in lower category prisons sometimes have a unique internal internet that provides them with restricted access, but that is the exception rather than the rule. Some prisoners can also receive emails through a special website. The email is printed off and delivered to the prisoner, but they are not able to reply by email.

Step 2: The big debate
Should all prisoners have the right to access the internet?

Step 3: Make it memorable
This is the moment for you to make the process and outcome of your debate memorable. Here are some suggestions of activities to consolidate and extend the learning gained by the students during their debate:
- Students write their own individual clause for a collaborative whole-class Magna Carta for the digital age. The clause should best reflect their argument, and can

be an opportunity to practise skills in summarising and synthesising ideas. Have a look at the British Library's own [Magna Carta for the digital age](#) to read the many different clauses submitted by young people around the world.

- Create a campaign poster that reflects their arguments and opinions on digital rights. This can be done as individual or small group work.
- Develop a school Magna Carta for teachers to sign.
- Use the knowledge gained to campaign for change in school or in their community. Activities could include writing to a local MP, approaching the local media or producing an article for a school newspaper.
- Use the insight and understanding gained to become involved in campaigns across the UK and internationally, with organisations such as [Amnesty International](#).

Useful Resources

Films and articles
Our [website](#) features a selection of resources which may help you and your students prepare for your debate. This includes:

- A [short film](#) introducing the issues around access to the web.
- An [article](#) on why we need a *Magna Carta* for the digital age.

Prompt questions
You may want to help direct your students' research and argument development with the following questions:

- What are the dangers if all criminals had access to the internet?
- What would the benefit be of allowing Category A prisoners online access?
- Would supervised internet access be the answer?
- Is internet access a luxury or human right?
- Would internet access help a prisoner to build skills and bring down re-conviction rates?
- Do prisoners in other parts of the world have internet access?

External links

Below are some useful articles on the topic:
- http://theinformed.org.uk/2014/01/should-access-to-the-internet-be-a-fundamental-right-for-everyone/
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24706851
- https://www.gov.uk/staying-in-touch-with-someone-in-prison/the-internet-and-social-media
- http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/vw/1/ItemID/197

- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/10/28/prisoner-rights-computer-internet_n_4169739.html

The law

- Rules regarding the running of UK prisons can be found here: https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos