BRIEF HISTORY OF COMPUTERS & INTERNET

Appropriate grade level: 5th – 7th

NOTE TO TEACHER:

Not all students have strong reading skills, and some have trouble alphabetizing – help them work with the dictionaries in a subtle way and take note for future lessons or collaborations with reading specialists and language arts teachers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
- To introduce ENIAC, one of the first super-computers, and its size and power in comparison to today's computers.
- To understand that the computer as accessible technology has become popular only in the last 50 years.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES:
- To understand that the WWW has only been a used in its current definition since the mid-90s.
- How to find a book's publication date.

RESOURCES:
- Various dictionaries and encyclopedias ranging from 1960 to present.
- Tape measure or measured string/rope.
- An introduction to ENIAC: HTTP://WWW.SEAS.UPENN.EDU/ABOUT-SEAS/ENIAC/

THE PLAN:

Hand out books and have the students order themselves according to publication date.

Look up 'internet': Find out what decade the word first appears and discuss its relatively recent introduction to the general public.

Look up 'computer': Find out what decade the word first appears and discuss its relatively recent introduction to the general public.

Discuss ENIAC

- built in 1943 at UPenn
- first reprogrammable digital computer
- 100' long x 50' wide
- if pushed all together, 40'x40'
- One of ENIAC's first projects was to design a hydrogen bomb

Head to a park, gym or outdoor space to figure out how big ENIAC was: It is hard to conceptualize how large ENIAC was.

Start with 40'x40'. Send the students out with rope to understand the idea. *Mention not to freak out with the ropes before handing them out. Post students every 10 ft or so around the computer – how difficult would it be to share programming instructions with others when working with such a big computer?

When discussion is over, mention that this is the size of the computer BOXED UP and then expand to 100'x50' to show them the actual working size.

If time allows, head back to the classroom for a brain stretcher:

Explain that a Nintendo DS is has more memory than ENIAC did. Ask them to reflect on the size and power of computers 65 years from today. Provide art materials or computing stations for students to sketch their ideas.