Degrassi.ca: Building a Fan Community Online

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One of my first experiences of going online in the early 1990s was to search for information on Degrassi. Unfortunately, there were only a few episode guides and a few Web pages here and there. The show had ended in 1992, and I had wondered if there were any newsgroups on the Internet devoted to the show. I was also curious to see if it was shown in reruns in other countries. I remember finding three Web sites about Degrassi and feeling a sense of nostalgia. It was nice to see other fans devoting their time and energy to a television show that meant a great deal to them. Over the previous ten years, I had collected newspaper and magazine articles, episode guides sold by WGBH Boston and news clippings; I felt a strong need to contribute to the online fan community but did not know how to create a Web site.

In the fall of 1995, I decided to learn how. I took out books on HTML and over the next few months, using a variety of online tutorials, I learned basic HTML. I started with a one-page Web site all about myself. It was called “Dr. Doolittle's Rainbow’s Homepage.” That nickname was created because of my love for animals and tie-dye patterns. I downloaded free HTML editors like Coffee Cup, Hippie and HotDog. I practised creating other Web pages and I learned how to upload them to the small space on Concordia University’s Alcor server. Although the “Doolittle” site started out as a brief bio with a list of a few links to my favourite sites, it grew into many pages. By the next year, I gave my site the name “Mosaic” to describe
DEGRASSI.CA

the medley of links to various sites.

Eventually, I got bored with my own Web site and decided to start developing a site for one of my four favourite television programs: Degrassi, Thirtysomething, The Wonder Years and Sisters. Since I had collected so much information about Degrassi over the years, and had written a research paper on it in grade nine, I decided it would be a Degrassi Web site and began to develop it in the summer of 1997. Over the years “Mosaic” was moved to its present location at www.degrassi.ca/mark/ and I have been updating it ever since. In 2001, when I moved to Toronto and ventured off into other Web projects, two of my friends and I started the site www.torontobrunch.com, a searchable database of restaurant reviews in the Greater Toronto Area.

This chapter discusses how I developed the Degrassi site from scratch and how it grew to be one of the largest and most comprehensive of all Degrassi fan sites. It also discusses how I initiated the first-ever Degrassi electronic mailing list and co-organized the first-ever Degrassi convention in Toronto.

GOING ONLINE

I first went online in the summer of 1994 while attending Marianopolis CEGEP (a post-secondary college) in Montreal and working at the circulation desk of the Georges P. Vanier Library at Concordia University. I checked out material, checked in material, served library patrons and did some shelving in the stacks. During our Saturday shift, the security guard, Jeff, sat and talked to us about a new phenomenon called the Internet. He claimed that the Internet was a network of computers sharing information, which was mostly used by universities across the United States and Canada. He also mentioned that it was used by the U.S. military.

I expressed no interest since I was not in university yet and I was not in the military. How could the Internet benefit me? Why would I want to check it out? He told us we could access the Internet on our “dummy terminals” that contained the circulation software and the library catalogue. He also showed us LYNX, a text browser for the Web. He told us that the World Wide Web was like one big library catalogue that could search through many topics quickly. For fun, I searched for the song lyrics of an old Annie Lennox album. I was so excited when I found what I was looking for. Jeff talked about downloading and uploading and I was ignorant to this new jargon. I began taking out books about the Internet, big thick,
guides from the *For Dummies* series. Their covers were always illustrated by a spinning globe with consumer goods attached to it, like books, clothing and other goods. I was also introduced to a system called Pine, a textual e-mail editing program.

In addition to being introduced to the Internet, I was also introduced to newsgroups, often referred to as USENET. These were modelled after online bulletin board systems (BBS) developed in the 1980s, which allowed people to enter subject-specific online forums where they could post messages to one another on a particular topic. I hadn’t known that electronic mail went back to the mid-1970s and the Internet back to the late 1960s, and that the Web had been created in the late 1980s. My Internet searches for *Degrassi* lead me to a newsgroup called alt.tv.degrassi, which does not exist anymore. (The current *Degrassi* newsgroup is at rec.arts.tv.) The first newsgroup was created and initiated by a Concordia student I used to serve in the library. Her name is Jennifer Hollett, and she is now a popular personality with MuchMusic in Toronto. Below are her two postings to the *Degrassi* newsgroup. The second one announces the successful creation of the newsgroup alt.tv.degrassi. (Please note that Jennifer Hollett’s e-mail address is no longer valid.)

From: oneofthose (j_holle@alcor.concordia.ca)  
Subject: PROPOSAL alt.tv.degrassi  
Newsgroups:alt.config  
Date: 1996/05/16  
alt.tv.degrassi gee, i gotta go to school  

The newsgroup alt.tv.degrassi will provide the opportunity for discussion, analysis, and reflection on the Canadian *Degrassi* series millions around the world have come to know and love. Discussion and postings can pertain to: *The Kids of Degrassi Street, Degrassi Junior High, Degrassi High, School’s Out and Degrassi Talks*.

Related WWW sites:  
http://www.fl.net.au/~parasail/degrassi.htm  
http://www.tcc.co.uk/inside/highlights/degrassi.html  
http://gaus.technion.ac.il/~nashtir/degrassi.html  
http://www.libertyst.com
and an FAQ is already in progress.

I welcome all comments and suggestions.  
Jennifer Hollett  
j_holle@alcor.concordia.ca

*  

From j_holle@alcor.concordia.ca Mon Jul 15 23:08:53 1996  
Date: Fri, 12 Jul 1996 10:58:51 -0400 (EDT)  
From: one of those <j_holle@alcor.concordia.ca>  
Subject: alt.tv.degrassi now exists

Good news Degrassi Fans. My Degrassi newsgroup proposal has now gone through, and is in full effect. It can be reached at alt.tv.degrassi.

The charter: The newsgroup alt.tv.degrassi will provide the opportunity for discussion, analysis, and reflection on the Canadian Degrassi series millions around the world have come to know and love. Discussion and postings can pertain to The Kids of Degrassi Street, Degrassi Junior High, Degrassi High, School's Out and Degrassi Talks. Not all sites will carry this at first ... but here is some friendly advice from Anne Bennet of Concordia University's Computer Services. "You'll find that a lot of sites ignore alt hierarchy control messages, or implement them only by request of a local user. You might ask the Web sites you mention to put up a note that the group now exists, and say that users should request it from their local newsadmin." So if your school or server doesn't carry it, e-mail them and request it. Pass this info on to Degrassi Fan Alumni everywhere.

Playing With Time,  
Jenn

THE DEGRASSI WEB SITE AND MAILING LIST

After looking through the newsgroups, I decided to check out Degrassi on the World Wide Web. In 1995, I found very little material. At the time there was only one Degrassi site, David Nashtir's from Israel. Oren Shay
(Israel) and Kim Gilmour (Australia) developed their sites in early 1996, but Nashtir's site was the most extensive. He received much help from fans around the world. He had sections for photos, video captures, sounds, an episode guide and interviews. Kim Gilmour was interviewed in 1999 about the history of her Web site. She claims to have started it in 1995 as a one-pager and quickly added more images and other information.

I interviewed Oren Shay on October 27, 1999, and he explained how he and his friend Guy Meiroz developed the *Degrassi* Fan Club site, a collection of character profiles, *Degrassi* images and wallpaper, screensavers and fan contributions. In an interview with Sharon Mulholland, she explained that she created her site in the fall of 1996. Mulholland, a student at the time in York University's student residence, wanted to document all the *Degrassi* stories, sightings and updates that she was finding out about the former *Degrassi* cast members. It seemed like a fun idea for *Degrassi* fans to trade this type of information. At the time, she claimed all of this information was posted in her dorm room (on the door) but when she kept getting more information, she decided to put up a Web site. When I interviewed her, Mulholland claimed that she updated her site three to four times a year and that hers was the oldest Web site. Angela Ferguson, from Australia, recalls that she put up her first *Degrassi* site in 1994 or 1995, at the end of high school or start of university.

A.J. Taylor recalls putting up his Web site in February 1997. "I uploaded the *Degrassi* page ... and received many e-mails from people who 'remembered that show' and found my site funny, on the other hand I also got e-mail from people who couldn't take a joke and said I was a bad seed. Both sides of the e-mails are great however." A.J.'s site was seen as a bad seed because his character profiles were slightly mean, sarcastic and sometimes cruel. Some people were offended when they read his politically incorrect comments.

In July 1997, the first phase of my *Degrassi* site was posted on the server of my ISP (Internet service provider), a teeny little place called aardvark.au. Soon after I discovered Alphalink, which is where the current pages reside. Posting the page was not a big decision. I enjoyed learning HTML (we didn't have WYSIWYG HTML apps back then, it was all in text), and I enjoyed the research. My *Degrassi* site went through two evolutions: the first site was a single long page, with very few graphics. It was basically a cast list and a patchy episode guide, with a preamble around what I thought
of the show. The second site branched into multiple pages, there were more graphics and some comments on the *Degrassi* movie *School’s Out*.

Here is the e-mail I sent out in late 1997 announcing my *Degrassi* mailing list, Web ring and my upcoming Web site (note that these e-mail addresses are no longer valid):

From: Mark Aaron Polger (ma_polg@alcor.concordia.ca)
Subject: Degrassi Mailing List, everyone is invited, SUBSCRIBE!!
Newsgroups: alt.tv.degrassi
Date: 1997/12/24

Hello Degrassi Fans,

My name is Mark Polger and I am a fellow member of the *Degrassi* Fan Club. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members to a new *Degrassi* mailing list. The list will be all about the *Degrassi* television series. The *Degrassi* mailing list will come out in digest format once per week, with postings about the series, the fan club members and about trading *Degrassi* articles.

If you want to subscribe, please send an e-mail with the message “subscribe” in it to Degrassi_Digest@yahoo.com. There is no deadline, and the more the merrier. If the digest gets very busy, I will have to send out a digest twice a week, instead of once a week.

Any questions or comments about the *Degrassi* mailing list can be sent to me at ma_polg@alcor.concordia.ca.

Postings to the list are sent to Degrassi_Digest@yahoo.com. Any questions about the list or anything you want to know can go to my school address.

Thank you for taking the time in reading this e-mail.

Hope to hear from you soon,
Mark Polger
ma_polg@alcor.concordia.ca
Degrassi_Digest@yahoo.com
http://alcor.concordia.ca/~ma_polg

*
From: Mark Aaron Polger (ma_polg@alcor.concordia.ca)  
Subject: Interested in joining a Degrassi Web ring?  
Newsgroups: alt.tv.degrassi  
Date: 1997/12/24

Hello Everyone!  
I am in the process of making a Degrassi Web site, and so I thought it would be appropriate if all Degrassi Web sites united. I have created a Degrassi Web ring, and any Degrassi related Web sites are welcomed to join.

If you are interested in joining the Degrassi Web ring please let me know by e-mailing me with your name, URL and e-mail address. I will send you the html coding to put on your page to link us together.

Thank you,  
Mark Polger  
ma_polg@alcor.concordia.ca  
Degrassi_Digest@yahoo.com

I contacted Oren Shay and Guy Meiroz of the Degrassi Fan Club in Israel and they sent me a list of their members' e-mail addresses. Shay and Meiroz were supposed to develop a mailing list but the project never materialized. I took this opportunity to create a digest format mailing list that could be distributed via electronic mail. I called it the Degrassi Digest and the first issue was sent on December 12, 1997. Over the years, the number of subscribers grew from 2,000 to 3,000, but currently there are fewer than 1,500. Degrassi Digest turned seven years old in December 2004 and continues to be a monthly compilation of postings made by subscribers that are sent to my e-mail addresses.

As I mention above, I started work on my Degrassi Web site in July 1997. By then I was in university and this was a school project for a computer course. I went to the professor and decided to work on it before the fall term started. I learned Microsoft Front Page, a Web page editor, because I needed to use it at my place of work (Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives). We were also encouraged to learn HTML code from scratch.
I wanted to transfer all of the information I had collected over the years into this project. As I mentioned earlier, since I was a teenager, I had been collecting magazine and newspaper articles, episode guides and news clippings. I had also done extensive library research to collect news articles to familiarize myself with the background and technical aspects of the show, its producers, the production company and the history of the show, all of which I wanted to share online.

My first version of the site was called “The Unofficial Degrassi Web Site,” and was launched in January 1998. The following month I acquired the domain www.degrassi.org and in 2000 I acquired www.degrassi.ca.6 The Web site began as a one-pager, containing an introduction, an episode guide to all seasons of The Kids of Degrassi Street, Degrassi Junior High and Degrassi High. I had scanned some photos and kept an archive page of all the Degrassi Digests. I also collected electronic news clippings, which I scanned and organized by date so that they were readily available for users to read and download.

In April 1998, Natalie Earl, a Degrassi fan from California, contacted me. She expressed an interest in helping me with my Web site and had initiated Degrassi World Fan Fiction, a fan fiction series that would accompany the Web site. From April 1998 to April 2000, Earl wrote most of the stories. As of October 2003, there were sixty-one “episodes” of Degrassi Fan Fiction. When Earl began to pursue other interests in late 2000, other writers began to contribute pieces.

There were various stories in the Degrassi Fan Fiction series. Some revolved around background characters, while other stories took place in the future. Some focused on Degrassi couples, while others continued storylines that began on The Kids of Degrassi Street. One set of stories was called “Degrassi: The Next Generation,” which revolved around the character of Emma Nelson who attended Degrassi Junior High. Emma is the daughter of Spike, one of the characters from the original series. As well, there was a character named Paige, named after one of the Degrassi Web site owners with the same name. It is interesting to note that the new Degrassi television series, Degrassi: The Next Generation, focuses on Emma. Some Degrassi fans were angered and shocked to learn that their stories and characters were allegedly “lifted” from the Fan Fiction archive and made into episodes for the new show. To this day, Epitome Pictures has never acknowledged or given credit to Degrassi fans for their contribution to promoting a Degrassi
community online and they have never given credit to any of the Fan Fiction authors who developed characters and stories similar to those of the new *Degrassi* series.

**CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY ONLINE**

I wanted to create a sense of community in an online environment. The literature on community gives several definitions of the term. Some argue that community is restricted to people who live in a common physical location who share common beliefs, goals and values. The concept of the online or virtual community centres around people who share common interests and ideologies, values, goals and similar likes and dislikes, regardless of their physical location. A virtual community can be a bulletin board service that caters to *Star Trek* fans or stay-at-home mothers who share information about their caregiving techniques for their children, or a cancer support group in the form of a mailing list, newsgroup or Web site.

In his book *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Howard Rheingold chronicles his experiences in the mid-1980s with the WELL — the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (www.well.com). The WELL was one of the first online message boards on the Web where users could interact with one another in an online environment. Rheingold explains that to connect to his online community, he would plug his telephone into his computer and instantly be connected to thousands of people. He argues that independent communities took shape as people kept bumping into each other on the BBS (bulletin board systems, now referred to as USENET or newsgroups), and that community has nothing to do with physical vicinity or geographical location. He thinks that the sense of a virtual community has to do with common interests. Rheingold states that the development of virtual communities is "in part a response to the hunger for community that has followed the disintegration of traditional communities around the world."

These virtual communities are based in chat rooms and conferencing systems. Rheingold goes on to say that members of virtual communities join together to do everything that others do in the physical world. The obvious difference is that members of online communities interact exclusively via text on computer screens. He describes it as going into the same pub or coffee shop with the same group of people each time. He actually gets
to meet his virtual friends in real life (i.e., offline) and attends weddings, parties and funerals. The virtual community, for Rheingold, has become an extension of his offline life.

Robin Hamman, a scholar in the field of cyber communities, has written a great deal about the virtual community and online relationships. He has teamed up with Rheingold to debate virtual communities on Electric Minds (www.minds.com), a Web site founded by Rheingold. In his article, “Introduction to Virtual Communities Research and Cybersociology Magazine” (which appeared in the first issue of CyberSociology, an online magazine dedicated to virtual communication on the Internet), Hamman illustrates that there are ninety-four sociological definitions of the term “community,” which include the following elements: a group of people, sharing a social interaction, sharing common ties between themselves and other members of the group, and sharing a physical or virtual space for a specific time period.8

Based on Hamman’s analysis, I have made the following observations about the Degrassi community:

• Members come from all walks of life, all socio-economic groups, all races and ethnicities

• Members are between the ages of thirteen and thirty

• Members have connected with the show because of high-school trauma—bullying, peer pressure, feeling oppressed, being left out, feeling alienated

• Members identify with one or more characters of the show

In his book, The Great Good Place, Ray Oldenburg illustrates how the demise of community can be blamed on the loss of what he refers to as the “great good place,” which is the third place that is important to us in our everyday lives after home and work. In this third place, we meet members of our community on neutral ground, leaving possible divisions such as class or industrial rank at the door in the spirit of inclusion rather than exclusion. Oldenburg describes these third places—coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons—as “the core settings of informal public life” that are necessary for a community to survive. These are places where members of a community interact with others and come to know the ties that they have in common.9

I would argue that for teenagers the “great good place” could be televi-
sion, going out with friends to the movies, playing video games or, within the last seven to ten years, going online and interacting with others. Virtual communities allow users (teenagers and adults) to enter a new realm, escape their own realities and chat with someone from across the world. Over the last seven years more kids have been going online at a younger age. With the advent of online communities like degrassi.ca, mailing lists, chatrooms and message boards, there is more opportunity to develop online relationships and community.

TAKING COMMUNITY OFFLINE:

HOSTING THE FIRST DEGRASSI CONVENTION

In early 1999, Natalie Earl and I decided to host the first-ever Degrassi convention in Toronto, Ontario. Living only five hours away in Montreal, I thought it would be an excellent idea, and Natalie and her husband Scott decided to make the trip from California. I did not have that much money, as I was an undergraduate student still living at home with my parents, so Natalie and Scott funded the convention. We promoted the convention through my Web site www.degrassi.ca, through word of mouth and by sending out periodic announcements in the Degrassi Digest. Natalie and I e-mailed some of the cast via electronic mail. Natalie contacted Linda Schuyler of Epitome Pictures and asked if she could send out official invitations to all of the Degrassi cast and crew. Natalie also asked Linda for financial help and for the loan of some memorabilia like Degrassi posters. (To this day, we do not know if those invitations were ever sent out. In a June 2000 conversation with Ms. Schuyler, she mentioned that she was not comfortable promoting the convention to the cast because two of the actresses from Degrassi had been stalked for several years and she didn’t want to further endanger them.) We set up a Web page where people could register online to get a sense of how many people we could expect. I gave a deadline of one week before the convention but I kept checking my e-mail to see if anybody else registered.

Although we had invited all of the cast members, only seven came to the convention, along with forty fans from the Toronto area. It was held at the location where Degrassi High was filmed for two years, the Bell Centre for Creative Communications, which is part of the Centennial College campus at Carlaw and Mortimer Streets and is now called the Centre for Creative Communications.
From left to right: Michelle Goodeve (Ms. Avery), Cathy Keenan (Liz) and Anna Keenan (Rainbow), August 21, 1999.

From left to right: Michelle Goodeve (Ms. Avery), Darrin Brown (Dwayne) and Cathy Keenan (Liz), August 21, 1999.
From left to right: Michelle Goodeve (Ms. Avery), Daniel Woods (Mr. Raditch) and Roger Montgomery (Mr. Garcia) talking about their experiences playing teachers on the show, August 21, 1999.

From left to right on bottom row: Byrd Dickens (Scott), Darrin Brown (Dwayne), Cathy Keenan (Liz) and Michelle Goodeve (Ms. Avery), August 21, 1999.
The convention was held on Saturday, August 21, 1999, from 6:00 p.m. to midnight. I arrived in Toronto at 5:00 a.m. Saturday, had breakfast at a coffee shop near the bus station and checked my e-mail for last minute convention registrations. I met Natalie and her husband Scott at 10:00 a.m., and we got to work: we bought party supplies (helium balloons, chips, soda, cookies) and hired a security guard for most of the evening. We were given a PA system and we decorated the front area of the Centre with balloons, streamers, the framed posters of Degrassi shows that Kit Hood had lent us from his personal collection and other paraphernalia. When done, the entranceway resembled the set of "One Last Dance," the final episode of Degrassi High.

People started arriving at 6:00 p.m. and we greeted them at the front door. The surprise of the evening was an appearance by Corey and Laurie Mistyşyn, mother and brother of Stacie Mistysyn (who played Caitlin). Another surprise was the appearance of Chris Nuttall-Smith, a reporter from the Toronto Star who arrived with a photographer. He interviewed several people, asked them where they were from and why they loved Degrassi. It was exciting to have a journalist and photographer stop by and they told us we might get front page news in the Monday issue. The cast in attendance were Cathy Keenan (Liz, Spike's best friend), Anna Keenan (an extra named Rainbow), Byrd Dickens (Scott, Kathleen's abusive boyfriend), Darrin Brown (Dwayne), Michelle Goodeve (Ms. Avery), Roger Montgomery (Mr. Garcia) and Dan Woods (Mr. Raditch). A highlight of the evening came when Darrin took everyone on a tour of the building and explained where everything took place. The building had been renovated in 1993, but most of the interior still looked the same. The exterior also still looked the same: the famous ramp had not changed and the outdoor courtyard (known as the quad on Degrassi High) remained intact.

This was an important event for Natalie and me because we wanted to meet many of the fans that we interacted with online and we wanted to share our experiences about how important Degrassi was to us when we were teenagers. This convention was a way of connecting, of being nostalgic and of meeting our fellow fans. Throughout the evening I had this permanent "high" feeling. I could not believe Natalie and I had pulled this off. Having the cast there was a way for fans to thank them for their work and having the fans there allowed other fans to connect and form new friendships.

Natalie Earl recounted her experiences on her Web site "Degrassi Legacy":
That night, August 21, 1999, Degrassi High came back to life. Weaving through the room in a dreamy daze of pastel balloons and crepe paper streamers, fans finally interfaced with some of their favorite Degrassi faces. Michelle “Ms. Avery” Goodeve, escorted by her partner Glenn Norman, arrived in her satin blue Degrassi Junior High jacket and looked as young and beautiful as she did on the series. We were charmed by the appearance of Darrin “Dwayne” Brown. We rubbed elbows with Dan “Mr. Raditch” Woods who was accompanied by his wife Megan and two children. Roger “Mr. Garcia” Montgomery was escorted by his wife Lisa. Byrd “Scott the Bully” Dickens was escorted by his girlfriend Heather. A nice surprise was the appearance of Laurie and Corey Mistysyn (Stacie Mistysyn’s mother and brother). Cathy “Liz” Keenan arrived with her sister Anna “Rainbow” Keenan and their mother. Darrin Brown became our impromptu tour guide, pointing out the condom machine battle, the principal’s office and the resource center (the glorified euphemism for library). Everybody made a big deal about climbing the famous ramp where so many significant scenes happened and seeing “Liz,” “Dwayne” and “Scott” together at arm’s distance. Dan Woods delighted us with some obscure Degrassi trivia and some funny Mr. Raditch impersonations. His cute kids amused us by popping balloons and skipping about gleefully from their sugar highs. Glenn brought a rare Degrassi bloopers tape (oooh, the grungy little Degrassi secrets revealed) and the pilot movie of Flights With Mom, which co-stars Stacie Mistysyn (as Dana) and Michelle Goodeve (as Kate) as a mother-daughter flight adventure team.10

That Monday (August 23), I was pleasantly surprised to find an article about the conference featured on the bottom half of the Toronto Star’s front page. Natalie and I were happy that we had such a successful evening. Of course we would have liked to have more cast and crew come but it was not widely advertised and there was not enough promotion. Nonetheless, we were very happy with the turnout. I was very nervous about meeting Natalie and Scott for the first time. I must admit it was awkward since we’d only corresponded via e-mail and phone and suddenly we were thrown together for an entire day and evening. Over the course of the day we did become more comfortable with each other. I would definitely organize another Degrassi convention if I had the time, extra money and the support of other Degrassi fans.

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At the time of this writing, Degrassi: The Next Generation just ended its fourth season (February 2005) and a new generation of fans has emerged,
with many old fans tuning into the show. Many original Degrassi fans have e-mailed me several times asking me to organize another Degrassi convention, but it isn't possible. I work full time and have little time to devote to the mailing list let alone the planning of a convention, although I do update my Web site several times per week by adding new content, mostly news items to the news database. Along with the new generation of fans, there are now close to fifty Web sites devoted to the Degrassi: The Next Generation. Some are very comprehensive, while others are merely photo galleries. The new generation of fans are more Web savvy and more comfortable with technology, thus their sites appear more professional. As of July 2003, Sharon Mulholland's site and mine were the longest-running Web sites devoted to the original series. The original Degrassi will always be a memory in the minds of the original fans, but it is clear that the new series has a life of its own.

NOTES

All photos by Mark Aaron Polger.

* I would like to acknowledge the following people who are pioneers in their contributions to the development of an online Degrassi community: David Nashtir from Israel, Sharon Mulholland from Toronto, Angela Ferguson from Australia, Kim Gilmour from Australia, Oren Shay and Guy Meiroz from Israel, A.J. Taylor from Canada, and Jennifer Hollett from Canada. I would lastly like to thank Natalie Earl from California who co-organized the Degrassi convention with me in 1999. Lastly I would like to thank my family, friends and colleagues for listening to me talk about Degrassi all these years.

1. A dummy terminal is a workstation in a networked environment. Generally these terminals will have a monitor, network card, keyboard and mouse and are used in a corporate environment where there are several hundred computers to help save costs.


6. In February 2000, I was contacted by Epitome Pictures about a future meeting to discuss the development of an official Degrassi Web site. I was excited as I thought I would be involved in the development of the site. Playing With Time, the production company responsible for Degrassi, was renamed Epitome Pictures in late 1992–early 1993 when Linda Schuyler parted with life partner and co-owner Kit Hood. In June 2000, I went to Epitome Pictures to meet Linda Schuyler and Stephen Stohn at which time I was asked to give my domain names www.degrassi.ca and www.degrassi.org (and others) to Epitome Pictures. The company wanted to use them for the official Degrassi Web site that would accompany the new program in development, Degrassi: The Next Generation. I refused. Following several months of discussion, I was served with a draft statement of claim in December 2000, which claimed that I was using my Web site in bad faith, that I had sold goods and services and that I was confusing the public with my Web site. I felt harassed, so I contacted the local, provincial and federal media, faxing them a press release (that can be found at www.degrassi.ca/index2.html). After much support from Degrassi fans online, Epitome Pictures/Playing With Time withdrew their allegations and registered their own domain as www.degrassi.tv. For additional information about this legal altercation, please see www.degrassi.ca/index2.html.


11. In May 2005, Sharon Mulholland’s site was taken down. It had not been updated since July 2003.