

V Internet Literacy

When talking about measures aiming to restrict undesirable content and its influences on the Internet, one has to distinguish between *illegal* content on the one hand and *offensive and harmful* content on the other. While there are laws against illegal content, measures against offensive and harmful content mostly consists of awareness-raising or media literacy methods among Internet users and Internet service and content providers.

Different countries define differently what is illegal. As a rule of thumb, what is illegal in society is also illegal on the Internet. In practice this means that illegal content on the Internet often refers to child pornography, extreme violence, political extremism, incitement to hatred against minority or other groups in society, economic crimes and serious encroachment on privacy, business firms, authorities and the nation.

However, it is important to remember that what is illegal in one country can be protected as free speech in another. Illegal Internet content may also be produced in one country, stored in a second and accessed in a third, complicating law enforcement.

The law enforcement agencies are in charge of handling illegal content. Often the police collaborates in this respect with the Internet Service Providers. Internet users can report illegal content they find on the Internet to these agents. In several countries there are also hotlines to facilitate such reporting (see further on in this section under the heading 'INHOPE').

In contrast to *illegal* content, *harmful* content on the Internet is defined by the European Union as content which parents, teachers or other adults responsible for children consider harmful to them. Definitions consequently vary from one culture – and one person – to the next, EU says (http://europa.eu.int/information_society/doc/factsheets/018-saferinternetplus.pdf).

There is, however, reason to distinguish *harmful* content from *offensive* content. While children and adults mostly can tell themselves which contents have *offended* them, the question of what is *harmful* is not always that obvious. A person might, e.g., be deeply involved in, and find pleasure from, violent games or pornography, although too much involvement in such Internet contents might reinforce and aggravate the person's already tangled living circumstances. In the same vein, stereotyping of, for example, gender and minority groups might not be experienced as immediately offensive, but constant patterns of stereotypes

in the media contents might harmfully contribute to persons' prejudiced views of gender and minority groups in the long run.

Existing research on the influences of use of the Internet and its various contents is mostly limited to direct questions to Internet users about what they themselves find *offensive* (have made them upset, what they fear, and the like), while in-depth research on possible *harmful* influences of the Internet is still in embryo.

Offensive and potentially *harmful* contents on the Internet may be various kinds of portrayals of physical violence, pornography, stereotyping of or expressed hate or racism addressed to societal groups and nations, cyberbullying and harassment, excessive marketing, etc., including consequences in real life (such as destructive personal meetings). Offensive and potentially harmful contents on the Internet are, thus, physical, psychic and structural violence and oppression in a wide sense.

Although we know much more about offensive than about harmful Internet contents, adults do often not know that Internet contents have offended their children. Several research studies with both children and parents show that parents are often not aware of what their children are doing on the Internet. According to, for example, the SAFT project (Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools), supported by the European Union's (EU) Safer Internet Action Plan and conducted in Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden in 2002-2003, many parents did not know that children had come across pornography and sexual material on the Internet (which made some of the children upset), that many children had received unwanted sexual comments on the Internet, or that a great deal of the children had met someone in real life whom they first got to know on-line (persons that in some cases turned out to be adults although they had introduced themselves as a child on the Internet). Relatively many of the children had not told their parents about these happenings (Larsson 2004).

New similar surveys about the Internet (and mobile phones) conducted or commissioned by public and private companies are continually released. For example, a special Eurobarometer report, 'Safer Internet', was published in May, 2006, presenting field work during December 2005-January 2006 in the twenty-five EU Member States (and the four accession and candidate countries) (http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/eurobarometer/index_en.htm).

According to this Eurobarometer survey, half of the parents in the member states say their children (under 18 years of age) use the Internet (ranging from 24% to 85% in the different countries). And on average, just over one third of the parents say that their child owns a mobile phone (ranging from 28% to 57% in the countries in question).

Nearly one parent in five believes their child has come across harmful or illegal content while on-line, and this belief increases with the child's age.

Furthermore, almost half of the respondents say filtering or blocking tools are applied, most likely among parents of younger children. A quarter of the parents regularly sit with their child, which is also most common with younger children. However, close to half of the parents state they never do. Two out of five parents have rules for the use of Internet, mostly when children are aged 10 to 13.

The most usual rule is prohibition to visit certain sites, followed by limited time spent on the Internet. Not to give out personal information is the third most common rule among the group declaring they have set rules. The rules vary with the age of the child.

The survey also found that there is a widespread interest in obtaining more information about safer Internet among the parents. Schools, Internet service providers and the media are the senders that parents and caretakers are most interested in receiving information from.

To take another recent survey example, Common Sense Media – a national organisation in the U.S.A. led by concerned parents and individuals with experience in child advocacy, public policy, education, media and entertainment – published a poll in June 2006. This national poll contained questions to parents with Internet access and who have 11-16 year old children who go online at least once per week. The findings indicate that the number one media concern among these U.S. parents has shifted from television to the Internet, with 85 per cent saying that the Internet poses the greatest risk to their children among all forms of media. (The poll comes in advance of a national public education campaign by Common Sense Media targeting parents) (<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/news>).

All over the world, different kinds of public, private and voluntary organisations and networks are offering advice and help to children, parents, teachers/media educators, librarians and others about how especially children and young people shall behave safely on the Internet, while at the same time getting most out of the medium. There is also advice for and collaboration with the Internet service providers and content providers/webmasters, as well as for and with policy makers.

The target groups are, thus, most of society. And the advice or awareness raising and Internet literacy measures take many forms – such as, for example,

- online/paper booklets/fact sheets for parents, as well as community events, campaigns, and trainings in real life
- online/paper information tool kits, trainings, lesson plans, suggestions of activities, and awards for schools and classes
- educational games, quizzes, story telling competitions, blogs, and ‘contracts to sign’ for children
- offers of filtering and rating systems for all Internet users
- Public Service Announcements on radio and television
- hotlines for users’ reporting of offensive or potentially illegal material
- recommendations to service and content providers on ethics, guidelines, and codes of conduct
- research
- conferences and round tables for relevant agents and groups involved.

Since the medium is the Internet, information about all these awareness raising or Internet literacy methods are most often available on the websites/portals of the organisations and networks engaged.

The websites or portals, in turn, are usually not targeting just one group or offering just one measure but are often sites comprising several subsites with advice for increasing the levels of Internet literacy among different groups. It is, therefore, not feasible or fair to organise the following text after special target groups (such as parents, children, media educators, Internet service providers, etc.) or after special awareness raising measures. Instead, we have selected just a few of hundreds of organisations and networks on Internet safety from different parts of the world to give some illustrating examples of their services.

1. Europe

● **European Union Safer Internet Programme**, <http://europa.eu.int/saferinternet>

In 1998, the EU adopted *The Recommendation on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity in Audiovisual and Information Services* (98/560/EC) that provides national legislative guidelines regarding illegal and harmful content over all electronic media.¹

With this recommendation as a basis, the European Commission launched the *Safer Internet programme* (1999-2004). It covered technologies as diverse as 3G, online games and chat rooms, and dealt with content ranging from child pornography to racism. By the end of the programme, it had financed over 80 projects with the aims to

- create a safer environment via a European network of hot-lines to report illegal content
- encourage self-regulation and codes of conduct
- develop filtering and rating systems
- encourage awareness actions.

The follow-up, also launched by the European Commission, is called *Safer Internet plus programme* (2005-2008). It will support co-operation among the different actors – from mobile operators to child welfare NGOs. The programme aims to promote safer use of the Internet and new online technologies, particularly for children, and to fight against illegal content and content unwanted by the end-user, as part of a coherent approach by the European Union.

There are four action lines:

i) Hotlines: fighting illegal content

Hotlines are set up in order to facilitate for people to report illegal content on the Internet. Since the host website or content provider in many cases is in another country, cross-border networks of hotlines are essential.

¹ Other EU policy documents in this area are:

- The *Directive on Electronic Commerce* (2000/31/EC, June 2000) regulating important aspects of the liability of intermediary service providers for 'mere conduit', caching and hosting.
- The *Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications* (2002/58/EC, October 2003), fighting against spam.
- The *Framework Decision on child pornography* (2004/68/JHA, December 2003), setting out minimum requirements for Member States in the definition of offences and for sanctions.

ii) Raising awareness

Measures are taken in order to raise awareness of safer Internet. In this respect the Commission use multiplier organisations and electronic dissemination channels. It also considers using mass media as well as distributing information to schools and Internet cafés. For example, a European network of '*awareness nodes*' has been set up. Nodes are carrying out awareness actions and programmes in co-operation with concerned parties at national, regional and local levels. The ambition is to extend the network. Another example is the *Safer Internet Day* that took place for the first time on 8 February 2005 in 30 countries.

iii) Unwanted and harmful content

Technologies can be developed to limit the amount of unwanted and harmful content users receive, and help them manage it when they do. Projects will

- assess the effectiveness and support the development of filtering technology – a call for tenders was published in December 2004
- improve information exchanges and best practices on effectively fighting spam
- continue work on content rating, and give opportunities for child welfare specialists and technical experts to develop tools for protecting minors.

iv) Promoting a safer environment

EU emphasises a self-regulatory approach among Internet service providers and allows different codes of conduct. However, these codes should share essential features such as effectiveness, fairness and transparency. To exchange best practices and encourage dialogue, the Safer Internet programme has set up the *Safer Internet Forum*, where the industry, child welfare organisations and policy makers can discuss safer Internet topics. Furthermore, a first *Call for proposals* was published in September 2005.

Here follow a few examples of the Safer Internet plus programme more in detail.

- **Insafe**, <http://www.saferinternet.org/ww/en/pub/insafe/index.htm>



Insafe, mentioned above and funded under the *Safer Internet plus programme*, is meant to be Europe's Internet safety information resource.

Insafe is a network of hitherto (2006) 23 'nodes' in 21 countries (mostly within the European Union but also Australia, Canada, Bulgaria, Russia and Singapore). On Insafe's website we can read that

Insafe is a network of national nodes that coordinate Internet safety awareness in Europe. The mission of the Insafe cooperation network is to empower citizens to use the Internet, as well as other information and communication technologies, safely and effectively.

Insafe promotes positive, ethical use of online information and communication technologies. The network calls for shared responsibility for the protection of the rights and needs of citizens, in particular children and youths, by government, educators, parents, media, industry and all other relevant actors.

Insafe partners work closely together to share best practice, information and resources. The network will interact with industry, schools and families with the aim of empowering people to bridge the digital divide between home and school and between generations.

Insafe partners will monitor and address emerging trends, while seeking to reinforce the image of the Internet as a place to learn. It will raise awareness on reporting harmful or illegal content and services.

Through close cooperation between partners and other actors, Insafe aims to raise Internet safety-awareness standards and support the development of information literacy for all.

Furthermore, Insafe's web site gives information and advice for parents and educators about, for example,

- Blogging
- Chat
- CyberBullying
- Hate speech/Racism
- Instant messaging
- Mobiles
- Online gaming
- Online gambling
- Online shopping
- Phishing/Spoofing
- Privacy
- Spam
- Spyware
- Virus

Insafe recommends these links for further information about *CyberBullying*:

<http://www.cyberbullying.org>

<http://www.cyberbully.org>

Insafe recommends these links for further information about *Online gambling*:

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/alerts/olgamble.htm> (U.S. Federal Trade Commission)

<http://www.gamcare.org.uk> (Gamcare – pages dedicated to young people)

● **INHOPE**, <http://www.inhope.org/en/index.html>

Besides *Insafe* (see above), that carries out awareness actions (events, trainings) and run websites to inform parents, children and teachers on the safe use of Internet, the *Safer Internet programme* is funding *INHOPE* – the International Association of Internet Hotlines. INHOPE was founded in 1999 under the EU Safer Internet Action Plan and represents (in 2006) Internet hotlines in 23 countries over the world, supporting them

in their aim to respond to reports of illegal content from Internet users to make the Internet safer.

According to INHOPE the last number of years has seen an increase in illegal content online.

If the content reported is found illegal, the hotline will refer this onto law enforcement agencies and also to the Internet service provider for removal. INHOPE member hotlines collaborate and have the support of law enforcement agencies, local governments and child welfare organisations.

Once the source is traced hotlines pass reports over to the relevant country. For example a case of illegal content reported in Germany but traced to France, will be passed onto the French hotline for further investigation and action. For countries where there are no hotlines, the report will be passed onto the local law enforcement agency.

INHOPE Members

Country	Membership Status	Organisation Name	Web Address	Membership Date
Australia	Full	ACMA	www.au.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Austria	Full	Stopline	www.at.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Belgium	Full	Child Focus	www.be.inhope.org	2001-01-09
Brazil	Provisional	hotline.br	www.br.inhope.org	2005-10-19
Canada	Provisional	cybertip.ca	www.ca.inhope.org	2005-05-12
Cyprus	Provisional	Safeweb	www.cy.inhope.org	2005-10-19
Denmark	Full	Red Barnet	www.dk.inhope.org	2002-01-05
Finland	Full	STC Finland	www.fi.inhope.org	2002-01-09
France	Full	AFA	www.fr.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Germany	Full	ECO	www.de.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Germany	Full	FSM	www.de.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Germany	Full	jugendschutz.net	www.de.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Greece	Full	SafeNet	www.gr.inhope.org	2004-02-05
Hungary	Provisional	MATISZ	www.hu.inhope.org	2005-05-12
Iceland	Full	Barnaheill	www.is.inhope.org	2001-01-09
Ireland	Full	ISPAI	www.ie.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Italy	Full	STC Italy	www.it.inhope.org	2003-01-23
Lithuania	Provisional	BITE Lietuva	www.lt.inhope.org	2005-10-19
Netherlands	Full	Meldpunt	www.nl.inhope.org	1999-11-01
Poland	Provisional	NASK	www.pl.inhope.org	2005-01-28
South Korea	Full	ICEC	www.kr.inhope.org	2003-10-19
Spain	Full	Protegeles	www.es.inhope.org	2002-01-05
Taiwan	Full	ECPAT Taiwan	www.tw.inhope.org	2005-05-12
United Kingdom	Full	Internet Watch Foundation	www.uk.inhope.org	1999-11-01
United States	Full	CyberTipline	www.us.inhope.org	1999-11-01

Source: <http://www.inhope.org/en/index.html>

- **Safer Internet Forum**, http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/si_forum/forum_june_2006/index_en.htm

Within the Safer Internet programme, there are also conferences and research projects. For example, the *Safer Internet Forum* in Luxembourg in June 2006 is open for all

interested. The meeting will focus on two topics: 'Children's use of new media' and 'Blocking access to illegal content: child sexual abuse images'.

The half-day devoted to children's use of new media will analyse the results of the Eurobarometer survey (see the introduction to this section 'Internet Literacy' and the Mediappro project (Applied research for media education) (http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/projects/awareness/mediappro/index_en.htm). Discussion will focus on awareness-raising tools and ideas on how to exploit research results for practical awareness-raising work. During the other half-day, the problematic of notice and take-down of illegal content blocking access to child sexual abuse images and server-level filtering of illegal content will be addressed.

The purpose of the *Safer Internet Forum 2006* is to contribute to improve the common understanding of these issues at European level. As was the case in 2005, participants will include representatives of industry, law enforcement authorities, child welfare organisations and policy makers.

- **Call for proposals**, http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/call/proposals_2006/index_en.htm

Call for proposals are launched under the *Safer Internet plus programme* (as they were under the *Safer Internet programme*). Date for publication of a new one is end of June 2006.

● Safer Internet Day

The first *Safer Internet Day* took place in 2005. Sixty-five organisations from 30 countries took part. This event included the launch of a storytelling competition for children.

In 2006, *Safer Internet Day* took place on 7 February with around 100 organisations in 37 countries across the world. Among the events, *Insafe*, the EU network for Internet safety awareness (see above), supported by MSN, organised a global 'blogathon' for safer Internet. This meant that a range of organisations active in promoting Internet safety and special guests posted entries on a blog and invited comments from visitors, children, schools and parents. The blog, with content in several languages, had a geographical focus that moved west through the global time zones, from New Zealand to Argentina, during the day.

The press release announcing the 'blogathon' said that

according to blog tracking site Technorati, 70,000 new blogs are created every day, many by young people. A Guardian/ICM poll in the U.K. found a third of young people published content online on a personal blog or website. Blogs offer exciting possibilities for education and self-expression. However many young people are unaware of important ethical, legal and safety issues. Posting of personal information and publishing of copyright material are among the online practices that have caused concern. (<http://www.saferinternet.org/ww/en/pub/insafe/news/insafe20060118.htm>)

The aim of the blogathon was to raise awareness about such issues and enable parents, teachers and young people in particular to share experiences and cultural attitudes about their use of new technologies.

Other events ranged from interactive activities such as quizzes, online games, storytelling competitions, and round table discussions. In Belgium, the Netherlands and Lithuania, children reversed roles by giving their teachers, parents and grandparents lessons in how to use Internet and surf safely. In Norway and Malta results of recent surveys were launched (http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/news_events/events/si_day/index_en.htm).

● **Council of Europe**, <http://www.coe.int>

The advice to parents, teachers, other media educators, young people, etc., is – as mentioned – often available in the form of booklets and fact sheets on the organisations' websites and sometimes in paper versions. One example of such a booklet is produced by the Council of Europe:²



The Internet Literacy Handbook – A guide for parents, teachers and young people issued by Council of Europe (Media Division, Directorate General II – Human Rights & Good Governance in the Information Society Project, Directorate General of Political Affairs).

The second edition of this booklet, updated in January 2006, is available in English and French (http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Media/hbk_en.html). In early 2006, it consists of 21 fact sheets but is an ongoing project, in that the fact sheets will continuously be updated and new ones added, and in that users are welcome to participate in the project by sending feedback or ideas on classroom activities, best practices or pertinent

links to Council of Europe at: media.IS@coe.int

The booklet offers technical know-how and highlights ethical issues, provides ideas for creative activities and best practices on the Internet, not least classroom activities, and points out certain dangers in combination with giving recommendations of how to avoid these dangers. There are also several links to other Internet resources.

At present the fact sheets deals with the following aspects:

- Getting connected
- Setting up websites
- Searching for information
- Games
- Distance learning
- Labelling and filtering

² The Council of Europe is the continent's oldest political organisation, founded in 1949. It:

- groups together 46 countries, including 21 countries from Central and Eastern Europe,
- has application from 1 more country (Belarus),
- has granted observer status to 5 more countries (the Holy See, the United States, Canada, Japan and Mexico),
- is distinct from the 25-nation European Union, but no country has ever joined the Union without first belonging to the Council of Europe,
- has its headquarters in Strasbourg, in north-eastern France.

- Portals
- E-mail
- Spam
- Chat
- Newsgroups
- World-wide libraries
- Music and images on the Internet
- Creativity
- Privacy
- Security
- Bullying and harassment
- Shopping online
- Becoming an active e-citizen
- Mobile technology
- Blogs

To take but one example, the Council of Europe's fact sheet about labelling and filtering says, among other things:

Labelling

Labelling refers to a quality-assurance tag or label displayed on software and websites, or integrated into the content of websites. It ensures that the product meets the criteria and standards designated by rating agencies such as Platform for Internet Content Selection (PICS) and the Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA).

Sites are labelled in order to protect minors, increase public trust and use of online transactions, and also to comply with legal standards. When labelling website content, a code is written into the webpage html, thereby detailing its contents so that the page can be rated. This rating – which is invisible on the page itself, details the nature of the content and is detected by filtering mechanisms, which will subsequently either block or load the page.

Websites can also be branded with 'Quality Labels' and 'Trustmarks', labels which signify that specific regulations have been met. These regulations often include prescriptions about secure transactions. Two well-known quality labels include Verisign, <http://www.verisign.com> and Trust-e, <http://www.truste.org>

Filtering

Filtering is the process of detecting and blocking inappropriate content on the Internet. It can be done within browsers and proxies, or by installing software censors.

An alternative to filtering is 'white listing', whereby access is allowed only to certain pre-approved sites.

Education

Filters can be valuable in reducing the risk of students accessing inappropriate or harmful material.

The issues raised by labelling and filtering practices are rich in material for citizenship and/or social studies themes. Start a debate on the subject of online filtering. Is it an acceptable and necessary form of censorship?

Issues

The labelling and rating of websites remains a largely voluntary practice, except where countries have laws to enforce certain standards.

Currently only a small percentage of pages are labelled by the authors.

Filtering software-services label pages according to their value systems and social agendas.

Filters may block useful sites relating to contraception or sex education due to certain key words they contain.

Some countries block sites of opposing political parties or ideologies.

Some people consider filtering as a form of censorship and therefore against the spirit of the Internet. Others claim that if filter software did not exist, governments would be under pressure to regulate online content.

How to

To label content you have created on a site of your own, follow instructions on a rating site such as ICRA at <http://www.icra.org>

You will be asked to classify the material according to a number of set criteria.

Most browsers can be set to filter out specific sites. For example, in Microsoft Explorer, this option can be found under 'security options'.

Very few computers are sold with filter software pre-installed. You will need to purchase a dedicated filter program for a more sophisticated approach to filtering sites. A number of products are available on the market.

Most filter programs will allow you to specify what types of content you wish to filter or allow.

Best practice

Have a close look at how a filter works before you install it. Does it make any ideological or cultural decisions in its filtering that you do not agree with?

Use electronic aids with discrimination, and do not believe the hype. Test product claims against personal experience.

Talk to students, parents and staff about their usage and needs, and do so regularly. Creating an open discussion environment will do more to add value to your learners' Internet experience than censorship or witch-hunts.

Consider 'white listing' options – allowing access only to approved sites – for the youngest Internet users.

Experts recommend that parents should take an interest in their children's online activities and spend time online together.

Children and young people should be encouraged to talk about inappropriate material they find on the Internet. Report potentially illegal content to a hotline: <http://www.inhope.org>

2. Asia-Pacific

● **NetAlert, Australia**, <http://www.netalert.net.au>

NetAlert is Australia's Internet safety advisory body, a not-for-profit community organisation established in late 1999 by the Australian government to provide independent advice and education on managing access to online content. The organisation works with authorities, the Internet industry and community organisations. NetAlert's vision is a safer Internet experience, particularly for young people and their families.

NetAlert's services are comprehensive and include, among other things:

- *advice to parents, schools, libraries, children and the industry.* The website can be accessed in seven languages (English, Italian, Chinese, Arabic, Greek, Vietnamese and Japanese).
- services for *reporting offensive material.*
- *research* on filtering and technologies for Internet Service Providers, Internet content hosts and their clients.
- *awareness and education campaigns.* From August 2005 to June 2007, 'NetAlert Expo' travels around Australia promoting Internet safety, visiting every state and territory and holding events in local communities. The events are tailored to suit each different audience and take different formats (a presentation or workshop for example) and are run in various venues (such as community centres, libraries or schools).
- *different subsites for different audiences* (parents, children, schools, libraries and the industry). For children, for example, there are two different sites with fun, games and adventures surrounding the advice – Netty's world for young children and CyberQuoll for older kids.



- *a helpline* answering e-mails or telephone calls about advice on Internet safety.
- *free information kits* on Internet safety and free resources and materials to schools, community organisations, libraries and other interested organisations and individuals. For example, NetAlert has sent Internet safety information materials to every school in Australia.

- '*awards for excellence*' for which schools and classes might apply if they have innovative ideas about Internet safety.
- *community service announcements* for television and radio during 2005, announcements that highlighted the dangers that children face in chat rooms and some of the words and terms that children may be exposed to when they are online.
- *conferences*, for example, an international conference in 2002 designed to provide a forum for policy makers, governments, the IT industry, community groups and the broader Australian community to participate together in 'growing Australia online'.

● **PAGi, Singapore, <http://www.pagi.org.sg> – in 2006 forming into CAC**

Singapore is a country with one of the world's highest computer take-up, Internet usage and Internet household penetration rate.³ While many Singaporean parents perceive the Internet as an essential educational tool, there are concerns about problems and potential dangers on the Internet such as pornographic web sites, cyber predators and Internet addiction.

Since 1996, the Media Development Authority of Singapore (<http://www.mda.gov.sg>) has established an Internet regulatory framework to meet these concerns. The authority has adopted a three-pronged approach involving collaboration between government, industry and the public – (a) instituting a light-touch regulatory framework; (b) encouraging industry self-regulation; and (c) promoting on-line safety awareness through public education.

The Parents Advisory Group for the Internet (PAGi), a volunteer group formed in 1999, has been active in implementing Internet public education initiatives. PAGi partnered the Internet industry and government agencies to

- promote safe surfing, and educate parents about online safety
- advise and give feedback to the industry, on tools for online safety
- recommend safe and fun sites for children
- help familiarise parents with the Internet so that they can supervise their children better
- keep up with developments in child online protection
- educate children on safety in the Internet.

PAGi embarked on research in 2001 and 2003 in order to study the level of awareness Singaporean parents and children have of Internet problems and potential dangers, as well as their concerns for these problems and potential dangers. The studies also examined children's and parents' perceptions of measures or strategies to safeguard children from these problems and dangers.

³ The text about PAGi is partly from PAGi's web site, partly from Khoo, Cheong and Liao (2004)

The findings of the first study had three implications for PAGi. Firstly, the organisation had to double its efforts in reaching non-English speaking parents who were less aware of the importance of Internet safety. Secondly, as the results indicated that teenagers, especially those between 13 and 15 are more resistant to parental advice, PAGi could play an important role in encouraging parents of pre-teen children to take advantage of pre-teen years to inculcate healthy surfing. Thirdly, a deeper understanding of the 13 to 15 year-olds was required in order for public education efforts reaching teenagers to be more effective.

In response to the findings, PAGi embarked on a series of initiatives to aggressively reach out to the non-English speaking parents. Some of these initiatives included:

- *Participation in community events* – to create greater awareness of the importance of Internet safety especially among heartlanders. PAGi's volunteers were mobilised to speak to participants about Internet safety and, at the same time, multi-lingual brochures were distributed to reinforce the Internet safety messages.
- *'Making the Internet Journey Safe' multi-lingual training* – PAGi co-developed training materials with Childnet International, United Kingdom, to empower parents, and these materials were translated into Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Training sessions were conducted through schools and companies.
- *'Caught in the Web' VCD* – PAGi produced a multi-lingual educational video in VCD format, a medium that is easily accessible for non-English speaking parents. The production marked the birth of SPEEDi, PAGi's mascot and everybody's cyber buddy. SPEEDi starred as a guide for the family that encountered various Internet pitfalls.
- *PAGi Families Week '03* – The culmination of PAGi's efforts to create awareness and educate the heartlander parents was PAGi Families Week '03, comprising a series of events aimed to highlight the positive and safe use of the Internet. Some of these included: story-telling sessions at libraries; road shows at the heartland shopping malls; Cyber Families Race, a virtual and on-line treasure hunt for families; and Cool Kidz Search '03, a pageant in search for Singapore's most Internet-savvy teenagers. PAGi also invited international speakers from Canada and U.K. to share their knowledge and expertise on Internet safety.

Although PAGi reached out to almost 60,000 parents, the second study showed that there had been no significant changes over time in teenagers' Internet behaviour and parents' understanding of their children's on-line activities. And still, the teenagers at most risk would be those aged 13 to 15. At the same time, the findings showed that parental involvement plays a significant role in their children's safety on the Internet. These findings were in accordance with other international research.

One of several conclusions was, however, that Internet public education initiatives cannot be shouldered by one agency alone but rather requires that of a multi-prong approach involving inter-agency and international collaboration.

In 2006, a new committee, Community Advisory Committee (CAC), will be formed. The CAC brings together the Parents Advisory Group for the internet (PAGi), Cyber Wellness Task Force (CWTF) and the Public Education Sub-Committee (PESC) under

one committee. The CAC will advise the Media Development Authority on ways to cultivate greater media appreciation amongst the public as well as promote positive use of new media such as High-Definition TV. Specifically, the CAC will provide feedback, input and champion projects that will help the MDA achieve its community objective of cultivating a media literate population – particularly in the light of emerging new media technologies.

3. North America

● **The Media Awareness Network, Canada,** <http://www.media-awareness.ca>

The Media Awareness Network (Mnet) is a Canadian non-profit organization that has developed media literacy programs since 1996. Members of Mnet's team have backgrounds in education, journalism, mass communications, and cultural policy. The network promotes media and Internet education by producing online programs and resources, working in partnership with Canadian and international organizations, and speaking to audiences across Canada and around the world. MNet's programs are funded primarily through the contributions of private sector sponsors and the Government of Canada, with additional support from the annual memberships of individuals, non-profit organizations and small businesses.

Hitherto MNet has focused its efforts on equipping *adults* (parents, teachers, librarians) with information and tools to help young people to understand how the media work, how the media may affect their lifestyle choices and the extent to which they, as consumers and citizens, are being well informed. MNet also provides reference materials for use by adults and youth alike in examining media issues from a variety of perspectives.

However, the Internet literacy section – Web Awareness Canada – will expand to include Internet literacy resources designed for use by *young people*.

Already now, there are *educational games* about Internet safety for children and young people. For younger children of school age there are stories about the CyberPigs – how they learn about online marketing, and about protecting their privacy as they surf the Internet, and when they explore the world of chat rooms and learn to distinguish between fact and fiction and to detect bias and harmful stereotyping in online content.

An interactive online game takes older students through a series of mock sites that test their savvy surfing skills. The game ends with an online quiz, that gives students an even more in-depth level of information. Another animated module takes students on a mission from Planet Earth to assess the varying degrees of prejudice, misinformation, and hate propoganda on the 'Galactic Web'.



There is also a *Media toolkit for youth* designed to help young people understand what drives the news industry, why youth stereotyping happens and how they can access the news media – including the Internet to make their voices and issues heard.

In sum, MNet has developed the following core programs offered on its web site:

Media education

- *The Parents section* offers tips for talking to kids about the media, and advice on managing media use in the home.
- *The Educators section* includes teaching units and supporting materials designed to Canadian provincial media education outcomes for grades K-12. (There are more than 300 lesson plans for educators to use in classrooms.)
- *The Media Issues section* examines media-related topics such as stereotyping, violence, privacy, marketing to children, the portrayal of diversity in the media, and online hate.

Web Awareness Canada

- This program uses a delivery model based on partnerships with public libraries, the education sector, parent groups, and community organizations. Its primary focus has been to help bring *teachers* and *librarians* up to speed on the issues emerging as young people go online. Mnet has done this by licensing workshop tools that can be purchased for professional development. The workshop topics include online safety, protecting personal privacy, authenticating information, and marketing to young people.
- As mentioned, this Internet literacy section will expand to include resources designed for use by *young people*.

Research

- In the beginning of the 2000s MNet developed its *Young Canadians In A Wired World* (YCWW) research program in order to build an extensive database about the role of the Internet in the lives of young people. The second stage of the research project is (2006) under planning.

● **The Federal Trade Commission, U.S.A.,** <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec13.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission, the United States consumer protection agency, urges parents to talk to their tweens and teens about social networking sites, and elaborates in a parents' guide these issues for using such sites safely:

- In some circumstances, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and Rule require social networking sites to get parental consent before they collect, maintain, or use personal information from children under age 13.
- Keep the computer in an open area.
- Use the Internet with your kids.

- Talk to your kids about their online habits. If they use social networking sites, tell them why it's important to keep information like their name, Social Security number, address, phone number, and family financial information — like bank or credit card account numbers — to themselves. Remind them that they should not share that information about other people in the family or about their friends, either.
- Your children should be cautious about sharing other information too.
- Make sure your kids' screen names don't say too much about them.
- Use privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child's website.
- Your kids should post only information that you – and they – are comfortable with others seeing – and knowing.
- Remind your kids that once they post information online, they can't take it back.
- Warn your kids about the dangers of flirting with strangers online.
- Tell your children to trust their gut if they have suspicions.
- If you're concerned that your child is engaging in risky online behavior, you can search the blog sites they visit
- Check site privacy policies.

For full advice, see <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec13.htm>

● **American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S.A.**, <http://www.aap.org>

The American Academy of Pediatrics gives the following Internet advice to parents:

Setting Rules for Internet Use

Just like you have rules for how your children should deal with strangers and which TV shows, movies, and videos they are allowed to watch, it is important to have a set of rules when they use the Internet. Be wary of people on the Net who can be mean, rude, or even criminal. To keep your child's time on the Internet safe, productive, and fun, follow these guidelines:

- Set limits on the amount of time your child can spend on-line each day or week. Consider using an alarm clock or timer in case you or your child loses track of time.
- Do not let surfing the Net take the place of homework, playing outside or with friends, and pursuing other interests.
- Make sure your child knows that people on-line are not always who they say they are and that on-line information is not necessarily private.

Teach your child the following:

- NEVER give out personal information (including name, address, phone number, age, race, school name or location, or friends' names) without your permission.

- NEVER use a credit card on-line without your permission.
- NEVER share passwords, even with friends.
- NEVER arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone she meets on-line, unless you approve of the meeting and go with your child to a public place. Teenagers in particular need to be aware of the risks.
- NEVER respond to messages that make her feel confused or uncomfortable. Your child should ignore the sender, end the communication, and tell you or another trusted adult right away.
- NEVER use bad language or send mean messages on-line.

Source: http://www.aap.org/pubed/ZZZQJ9C0B7C.htm?&sub_cat=17

● **CyberAngels. U.S.A., <http://www.cyberangels.org>**

CyberAngels says it might be the oldest association fighting for Internet safety since it was formed in 1995 in the U.S., a mere year and a-half after the World Wide Web was launched. The volunteers of CyberAngels are comprised mainly of law enforcement officers, information technology specialists, and educators from all over the world, as well as parents, librarians, technical writers and legal professionals. The association is especially focused on online criminal activity.

CyberAngels has:

- ***Programs for Schools:*** Internet safety information for educators through online classes and published materials and speakers for schools and public libraries.
- ***Programs for Families:*** assistance to children and parents on a wide range of concerns relating to Internet use.
- ***Victim Assistance:*** assistance to victims of the Internet and computer crimes such as stalking, harrassment, identity theft and fraud
- ***Internet 101:*** a wide variety of materials related to general Internet knowledge, online security, safety and privacy.

4. International

● **Internet Content Rating Association**, <http://www.icra.org>



The Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA), registered since 1999 in the U.K. and U.S.A, is an international, non-profit organization of Internet leaders working to develop a safer internet through self-regulation. ICRA addresses mainly webmasters and parents.

Content providers (webmasters) can label their websites by using 'the ICRA questionnaire', that is, they check which of the elements in the questionnaire are present or absent from their web sites (such as details of violent representations, sexual content, etc.). This generates a small file containing the labels that is linked to the content on one or more domains. The ICRA questionnaire can be completed in several different languages; however, the labels themselves are expressed as computer code.

Users, especially parents of young children, can then use free filtering software to allow or disallow access to web sites based on the information declared in the label. Parents can create their own block or allow lists, set up different filtering profiles for different family members and easily override a blocked site that they deem appropriate for their child.

In order to create a comprehensive filtering system that will block or allow access to websites, including unlabelled sites, ICRA also allows users to install additional modules that can use other methods to filter Internet access.

On its website ICRA also turns to children. For example, there is a list of advice to children such as keeping personal details (name, address, password) private, asking for parents' permission if wanting to meet someone in real life that one has met online, and telling a parent or teacher if coming across anything that makes the child uncomfortable.

Furthermore children are encouraged to print *The Children's Bill of Rights for the Internet*, produced by Childnet International (see below).

There is also *The Family Online Internet Safety Contract* to be printed and signed by Child and Parent on how they should behave towards each other as regards the Internet.

● **Childnet International**, <http://www.childnet-int.org>



Childnet International, established in 1996, is a non-profit organisation based in the U.K. working with others to 'help make the Internet a great and safe place for children'. Childnet works in three main areas of access, awareness, and protection & policy. This web site is another portal offering information and advice in many different forms to, above all, children, parents and educators.

To single out only a few of Childnet International's activities, there is the well-known *Childnet Academy*, a unique competition for young people around the world who are developing Internet projects or exciting online ideas to benefit other children. This international project has been run for eight years with yearly international awards.

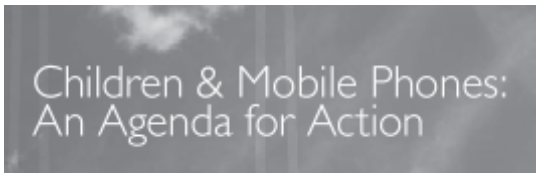
Kidsmart is a practical Internet safety programme subsite for schools, young people, parents, and agencies. Resources include lesson plans, leaflets, posters, activity days and interactive games

Chatdanger is a site about the potential dangers on interactive services online, such as chat, instant messaging, online games, e-mail and online mobiles

Peer2Peer, file-sharing and downloading on the Internet is a site and leaflet that gives advice when downloading and sharing music and films. There are also useful links to other organisations and resources.

Mobile phones – the mobile Internet

Childnet International is one of very few organisations that hitherto has given explicit attention to mobile phones – the mobile Internet. On Childnet's website its booklet *Children & Mobile Phones: An Agenda for Action* was published in 2004.



The booklet says: Mobile phones offer access to a diverse mix of broadcast and entertainment media, including photography, video, radio and music, games, Internet browsing and personal software applications, including SMS, MMS and video messaging, chat, contact, dating and adult subscription services. Mobile payment mechanisms are also in use. Therefore mobile phones are also a mobile Internet which can be much more attractive, not least for children and young people, than the traditional fixed Internet.

This means that mobile phone technology also is a further possible medium for abuse and may potentially be more difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace.

Concern for children's safety extends beyond pornography and gambling to race hate content, and information on tools for violence, cults, drugs, and eating disorders, etc.

Contacts of different kinds are also a serious area of concern. In Japan, for example, many young people are using 3G phones to access online dating sites leading in some cases to sexual abuse and other crime.

Among young people themselves, bullying can be perpetrated and potentially intensified using mobile phones, and there are also many new and intimate forms of marketing through these phones.

And it is important to remember the privacy that mobile phones afford their users, in particular children, who can now communicate with anyone far from parental supervision.

Future implications of the development of mobile phone technology are as a payment mechanism and as a repository of detailed or even sensitive personal data, extending potentially to include biometric information. Given the high incidence of mobile phone theft, this presents huge challenges in terms of ensuring that personal identifying data does not fall into the wrong hands even if the phone itself does.

Childnet International offers different lists of advice in the booklet to all these target groups:

- children and young people
- parents and carers
- educators and schools
- government and law enforcement
- mobile network operators
- product developers
- content providers
- retailers

