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Key Issues
Community and Partnerships
Internet Governance
IGF Ambassadors Program
User Centric Internet
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Topics
Internet Governance Forum
ISOC's Blog on IGF 2009
World Summit on the Information Society
Community and Partnerships
Resources

Address by Lynn St Amour, to European Internet Foundation, Brussels, Belgium

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Dear Commissioner Reding, Members of the European Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be here in Brussels to address you today, particularly in such distinguished company. I would like to thank our hosts, the European Internet Foundation (EIF), and the European Parliament for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

A word or two about the organisation I represent. The Internet Society is an independent, international, nonprofit cause-based organisation established in 1992 by two of the fathers of the Internet - Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn. We are dedicated to the stability, continuity, and advancement of the Internet for the benefit of all people. We accomplish this through providing the organisational home for the groups responsible for Internet standards, including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the Internet Architecture Board (IAB). We work to advance critical Internet technologies and best practices, provide information, advice, and training programs, and promote national and international policies that support the growth and improvement of the Internet throughout the world. The Society has more than 80 organisational and more than 28,000 individual members with over 90 chapters around the world. We are located in Washington, DC, and Geneva, Switzerland, with a distributed workforce in 12 countries including Regional Bureaus in Africa, Latin America and Asia, and a Chapter Coordination Council here in Europe.

Over the past five years, the Internet Society has become increasingly involved in the discussion around the future of the Internet, both in terms of its governance and its economic and societal importance. In the governance space, the Internet Society was a key player throughout the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and is centrally involved in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The Internet Society also participated in and coordinated the inputs of a number of members of the technical community for the recent OECD Ministerial on the Future of the Internet Economy.

The questions put to the panelists are challenging in a number of ways, not least because they ask us to predict something that is forever evolving and, I should add, at a pace that has exceeded virtually all expectations, and defied most predictions, including those traditionally thought of as in the realm of science fiction. The Internet continues to amaze us, in terms of the technology and what it allows users to do and to create, but also, importantly, in terms of the empowerment that the Internet has brought to users and communities around the globe.

So, in light of the Internet's and users' proven ability to greatly exceed expectations, I'd like to look at this question in a slightly different way and talk about how we continue to support this "platform" and avoid future limitations, by asking, for example, what we need to do to ensure that in 2025 the Internet continues to evolve in a way that allows future users across the world to build on, and benefit from this open, global, interoperable platform of connected networks.

Let us go back in time ten years and imagine ourselves in 1998:

- E-commerce was nascent and not uniformly embraced
- Consumer broadband was just beginning to penetrate markets
- "Convergence" of voice and data networks was still a theory

At that time, which of the following economically impactful Internet application and service developments would you have predicted?

- That you could walk into an Internet café on the other side of the world and use a computer to call home, reliably and cheaply.

- That one of the most successful companies in the world was based on a search engine and that most of its public services were completely free.
- That private individuals would be able to establish their voice with as much reach and impact as established news agencies.
- That private individuals in developed and developing countries alike would be able to establish their own micro-boutiques, selling goods to a global market
- That out-sourcing, off-shoring, and round-the-clock development shops would become a business reality.

Even if they were predicted, the scope, impact and importance were merely postulations at the time. How, then, did Skype, Google, blogs, eBay, and others come about? What was it about the Internet that supported their development? Was it a commitment to an open Internet technology platform? Or the organic, competitive development of Internet service provision models? Or perhaps the collaborative development and responsibility for the well being of the global Internet? And most importantly, how do we ensure that in 2025, the Internet continues to support and enable such creativity?

My answer to this question is "all of the above". The success and value of the Internet unequivocally lies in the unique development and management model, what we call the Internet Model.

The Internet Model is defined by a set of unique and all-important characteristics, among them:

- development based on open standards (and those standards being openly developed), giving a common global platform for product and service development, in contrast to a centralised model
- key principles such as the end-to-end architecture
- collaborative engagement models, allowing "ecological" growth and development
- freely accessible public processes for technology and policy development, and
- shared global responsibility, which is both a hallmark of the Internet's development and a result of open publicly developed standards.

And the Internet model itself lies in an Internet ecosystem. It relies on collaboration and processes that are local, bottom-up, and accessible to individuals around the world, whether they be from academia, research, governments, business, or civil society. In many ways, all this is quite revolutionary and gives some people and some institutions pause. But then, think again about eBay, Google, Skype, and their services and how central they have become to billions of people around the world, improving their lives in ways unimagined only a few years ago.

The openness and transparency of the Internet's technical development, and its associated policy development processes, are intrinsic to the success of the Internet itself, and to maintaining this single, interoperable system of networks - the global Internet. This openness and accessibility drives much of the value of, and on, the Internet.

Equally, the Internet's development has always depended upon and involved broad and diverse inputs, what today is called "multistakeholderism". This is essential as the Internet is a platform on which individuals, organisations, and consumers themselves actually build the infrastructure and develop and deploy services that are globally accessible.

As a tool, however, the Internet is only successful if the user has the ability to benefit from the Internet to the fullest extent. The very nature and success of the Internet can only be sustained if it remains global, open, and accessible to all. Its user-centric focus must be ensured and protected. ISOC has long argued that the Internet's success and its contribution to society is dependent upon a user's ability:

- to connect
- to communicate
- to innovate
- to share
- to choose, and
- to trust.

The networking technology breakthrough that sparked the Internet phenomenon was the breaking down of physical barriers between networks and establishing common protocols to share information across diverse local network computing environments. This end-to-end architecture is essential to the Internet's utility as a global platform for connecting people and, thus, for education, innovation, creativity, and economic opportunity for the benefit of mankind.

In enabling an unprecedented scale of human communications, the Internet has revolutionised how we express ourselves and collaborate, which has, in turn spurred its remarkable growth in applications and services. Its utility as a tool for human development is, however, only determined by the degree to which

people have unfettered, affordable access to the network and its services, and the degree to which the services and applications are trusted, reliable, and stable and the user's identity sacrosanct. We can see that the Internet has thrived in environments unencumbered by excessive governmental or private controls on technologies, infrastructure, or content, and in environments that have promoted competition and diversity in telecommunications, Internet services, products, and applications. Yet, at the same time, the Internet's importance to our economies, today and in the future, will only increase as we successfully incorporate advances for security, trust, and identity, and it is critical that these are consistent with the overall principles of the Internet model.

Ensuring the continuity, stability, accessibility, and openness of this incredible tool is fundamental to its continued role as an unprecedented and limitless platform for innovation and opportunity.

So what do we need to do to ensure that the Internet is unfettered in 2025, such that it is limited only by our imagination and creativity?

First and foremost, embrace and support the Internet model. This and complementary public policies will fuel creativity, build confidence, and create maximum benefit. At the end of the day this is what is important.

Let us imagine that in 2025 there will be a similar event and that the question is asked "The Internet in 2050: What are the limits?" And let us hope on that day the panelists see no limits for the future Internet and that they celebrate the innovators and policymakers of the early 21st century for their stewardship, and for having the vision to support all the points of genius that make up the Internet model and gave us the Internet.

In closing, and as it seems to be de rigueur these days, I'd like to encourage all of us to say "yes, we can" to supporting the continued development of the Internet within the Internet Model framework. It has, after all, brought us very far in an extremely short period of time.

Ladies and gentlemen it has been a great pleasure. Thank you for inviting me here today.