The Safer Internet Forum

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6/20/2007	Workshop 3 Report : The Impact & Consequences of Convergence of Online Technologies

Kenneth Bone B.Sc. IT (Hons)

Seasus Ltd

100/102 Eucharistic Congress Road

Mosta, MALTA

Telephone: 00356 21415490

Fax: 00356 21413495

Mobile: 00356 99474027

Email: kbone@seasus.com

The Presentations

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT FLOOR DISCUSSIONS

(1) NEW TECHNOLOGIES – NEW USES?

Status and emerging trends and technological developments

Pekka Heikkinen   Nokia (pekka_heikkinen.ppt)

Presentation

The speaker discussed various issues concerning mobile device technologies with respect to their advancements, content available through them and the risks they pose.

Mobiles devices have evolved into technological 'Swiss knives' providing access to all sorts of audio-visual content and functionality.

Content has also evolved into standardized formats, providing a digital convergence of content being available for consumption through various delivery methods such as TV, PC and mobile devices.

The main threat for children identified by the speaker is the difficulty to track access to non-advisable content without infringing privacy.

In order to counteract this situation, the speakers suggest a combination of hardware methods, software methods and awareness (education).

He also highlighted the importance to learn from previous experiences accumulated from the evolution of the Internet and applying this knowledge to the mobile field. For instance, now that video cameras are widely available on mobile devices, it is suggested to reference how the use of web cams evolved in the Internet field.

These experiences can be used to help operators and manufacturers in limiting or moderating access to and the publishing of inappropriate content.

Floor Discussion

1. Floor questions enquired about the possibility of device manufacturers, such as **Nokia**, to start providing mobiles specifically for children, that would include limited functionality or easy-to-use monitoring and/or 'blocking' features for use by parents

   o Device manufacturers need to target a generic market for their products. It is also a legally complex issue since current legislation does not allow the 'interception' of data. A hardware methodology for this is not in place and is suggested as a research area for manufacturers.

2. **Telefonica** (Spain) discussed the deployment of technology on their network of specific devices for children that can be controlled by parents, together with the technology to filter content. They commented that although the technology was very well received, most of the devices purchased were not set up by parents for specific use by children. So and 'technical' efforts are rather useless unless parents take an active role, highlighting the need for awareness and education

   o **CoreBioID** expressed their agreement with the approach and discussed the marketing approaches to promote this technology.

3. Paul Durrant **(Irish Hotline)** stressed the fact that most child abuse happens in any case through the most basic functions of the phone. So specific devices may be useless and the focus should be on education and content filtering

   o In response, **Vodafone** discussed their four year programme to start offering a wide range of tools to parents, enabling them to protect their children, both through technology and education. They will be providing high level awareness campaigns, driven by customer demands.

   o **Save the Children** (Denmark) discussed when to infringe privacy in order to protect and how to control or stream on the fly from the device.

   o The **Online Safety Institute** discussed how existing technologies are being used to do new things and the convergence between mobile and desktop, such as through the of AJAX. Trade-off (balance) between identity and privacy is key. In order to personalize features, a user needs to give away personal information. The more information you give away, the more you can personalise your content and device, but endangering your privacy.

4. A general discussion continued regarding how social web sites, such as **MySpace**, are being used by abusers. Such sites allow anyone to register as 13 year old, without disclaimers or information that available content may be potentially dangerous.

   o Further discussion followed regarding the importance to differentiate between children age groups, and also how young abusers abuse their peers.

(2) NEW TECHNOLOGIES – NEW RISKS TO CHILDREN?

Bullying and Harassment, Grooming, Harmful Content, Unlawful Behaviour

Zoe Hilton   NSPCC (zoe hilton LUX.ppt)

Chris Vleugels Free university Brussels

(Chris Vleugels Presentation_SaferInternet07.ppt)

Presentation

The speaker discussed the increased accessibility to the internet from various devices, with a substantial rise in the use of social networking. These trends also imply that users are more often supplying their personal profiles to public areas.

With 96% having access to a mobile phone in UK, this may be reason for concern.

New technologies have created ways of 'round the clock bullying'. Whereas previously bullying was confined to times and places where children are in groups, such as at school, technology provides 24 hour communication access.

Charities and NGOs find it hard to keep up with priorities, considering their limited financial and human resources.

One critical point is that in general, children tend to be more technically skilled than parents, finding workarounds to get access to inappropriate content.

Considering that children are being vulnerable through more access points, a key counteraction will be to provide as many similar access points and methods where they can find support and help.

From this point of view, the convergence of technologies should be seen as a positive and effective way of providing multiple, easy and accessible support to children.

A remark was also made on the advent of social networking and Web 2.0 technology, whereby consumers of content are also becoming providers of content themselves.

This environment poses great difficulty in monitoring the content uploaded in such areas. The sheer size of the material available makes it almost impossible to monitor manually, and automated tools have to be deployed.

Floor Discussion

1. A question from industry representatives inquired on how industry can effectively provide help to Charities and NGOs

    ☞ Non-profit organizations are in most need of technology support and training, apart from obviously financial contributions.

2. BBC asked the speaker on how successful the participation of NGOs in social networking sites is?

    ☞ NGOs are active in the field with successful results

3. The Confederation of Family Representatives (UK) asked whether NSPCC have any programmes, or curricula available?

    ☞ NSPCC do not provide these, but there a variety of online resources

4. A question was placed regarding the dangers of the existing information and knowledge gap between parents and children, and the role of the European Commission in this aspect

    ☞ The Commission representative responded that the Eurobarometer information was to be published regarding how children use online technologies and how they perceive and deal with risks. A lot of research has been conducted by the Commission in this field.

    ☞ More information should be collected regarding incident rate data in order to resolve the current gap in research in the field.

5. A floor question on who is to blame for the existing information gap. There is good availability of information online, but parents are not taking active interest in the issue, mostly since they believe that they already know what they need to know.

    ☞ Parents do not necessarily perceive this environment as risky and think that "kids in their bedroom are safe". The task may also be beyond most parents' knowledge.

    ☞ Children may be initially exposed to the internet from a safe and monitored environment, such as at school. But subsequently at home, they may access it through a non-secured environment.

6. A floor contribution discussed the need to focus on reaching parents, using as an example the new Microsoft Vista Operating System. This provides excellent tools for parents to control child access, but many are unaware of their existence or are not capable of using them. Another example provided was regarding the safe filters provided by search engines such as Google that are underused for the same reasons.

    ☞ The Commission's new call for proposals should be focused on this issue.

☞ Safe the Children (Denmark) commented on the problem of localization, in that focus of technology is on English language technology and content, which may be difficult to use for non-English speakers.

7. The German Regulatory Body discussed the requirement of joint measures and efforts to reach all concerned en mass effectively, rather than with sporadic, localized efforts

☞ The Digital Opportunities Foundation (Germany) shared their experiences in round table approach from various EU countries, but more effort is required in the field.

8. A point was raised regarding Second Life (3-D virtual world environment), and how it should be considered as a virtual world, not a game. Age verification methods are being implemented to enforce adult only environments.

9. A general comment was made on the fact that technology is not the problem, but its illicit use is. There is a growing need for a way to brand (digitally sign) 'good' content and segregating 'bad' content.

(3) AHEAD OF THE FUTURE

Possibilities for reducing and dealing with the risks

Anne Clarke ETSI   (Anne Clarke ETSI-SIF.ppt)

Presentation

The speaker initiated by outlining the benefits gained by children using digital media, with great advantages to their education.

It is extremely important to distinguish between types of child audience, as Young Children, aged 4 to 12 years and Teenagers, aged 13 to 18. Different approaches are required to target these different audiences.

Stress was made regarding the need for more research data, such as for incident types, methods and rates.

A problem is identified with the carriers, being immune from responsibility and prosecution. Due to this, they may not be putting enough effort into tackling the problem.

Another main problem identified is that responsibility still mostly falls on parents, who in general have neither the technical skills nor the necessary knowledge and awareness to handle the task.

The speaker commented how the **European Commission** has been very active in the area of safeguarding children, but that immediate action is required by all stakeholders, in a coordinated effort.

The speaker invited industry to join into the **ChildAware** initiative by **ETSI**.

This approach suggests that each ICT product and services supplier ensure that the environment they operate is secured for young children.

Floor Discussion

1. **Vodafone** expressed their skepticism of the **Childaware** approach by **ETSI**, suggesting that an effort should be more targeted towards specific problems in specific areas by different stakeholders.

2. A contributor stressed the importance to bring stakeholders together, to fill in gaps in knowledge and disseminate what is good practice.

   o A participant outlined an upcoming cross-industry group initiative to agree on a standard set of principles and values. This will result in the development of a common 'trust mark' for content.

3. The **Commission** representative asked whether the industry stakeholders have methods to process and act on research data

   o Floor contribution responded that it is probably more important to identify the exact risks and not wait until there is research available to find solutions to risks.

   o Various stakeholders argued on who should take remedial actions to reduce incidents.

   o The **Commission** commented on **Vodafone's** new deal to provide access to highlights of social networks and how they would secure such access

   o The need was identified for ISPs to know when a child user is accessing their services, but it is clarified that this is far more difficult for internet providers through computers than for mobile operators.

4. A comment was made to mobile operators that they should change from Opt-Out to Opt-In policy. Also, ensuring critical Age verification systems and the existing lack of efficient methodology to support this.

   o Operators responded that it is nearly impossible to control certain technologies.

   o An analogy was drawn with the approach by the music industry to try to stop downloading of copyrighted material.

   o Generally speaking, the technology to protect children exists, but there is a growing requirement to ensure that adult material is sold to adults through effective age verification systems

5. The **Commission** asked as to who should take responsibility of abuse of technology.

     o **Telefonica** responded that operators should not be left alone with all the effort and that it should be a shared effort by all stakeholders

6. A participant discussed the social responsibility of geeks who provide knowledge to their peers and provide them with technical workarounds to filters and security features

7. A contributor highlighted the absence of children in the discussion

     o The **Commission** responded that this is being considered for next year's event, but children are already being directly consulted in some initiatives.

     o **Telefonica** explained in detail the functions of their under 8 and 8 to 14 phones

(4) EUKIDSONLINE.NET

European Research on Cultural, Contextual & Risk Issues in Children's Safe Use of the Internet

Sonia Livingstone Eukidsonline.net

Presentation

The speaker presented an overview of the operations of Eukidsonline.net, a public online resource for identifying existing research.

She requested participants to contribute with any research material they have available to be provided in order to try to fill research gaps. There is an important lack of available research on various areas; particularly that research is only available on so called fixed internet, not on access through mobile devices.

She also outlined the differences in research results for different countries and the various trends that are visible from the available research, such as how parents in most countries impose strict control on the use of television and video games by their children, but very few countries show the same commitment toward control of the internet.

Research is also essential on how children react to regulations (filtering) and what methods they use to get around these restrictions.

Other fields of research where more work is necessary is when and how risk evolves into actual harm to the children, tracking of online incidents and how these impact or complement incidents through traditional methods.

The speaker suggests research to be structured into:

Content:	Child as recipient
Contact:	Child as participant
Conduct:	Child as actor

Floor Discussion

No floor discussion was held after this presentation.

(5) SOCIAL NETWORKING

The Bebo Approach

Rachel O'Connell   Bebo.com

Presentation

The speaker outlined how online social networks tend to mimic real world activities in social environments.

Social Networks came into existence with the advent of Web 2.0 environment, where users are no longer just exposed to inappropriate content, but can also become producers of such.

This creates the necessity for new methods to filter and monitor content online.

Bebo.com applies both manual and automated methods to monitor content in Web 2.0 environment.

Advanced automated filtering algorithms are used to monitor text, images, audio and video content.

Bebo.com also manually moderates content and provides extensive reporting mechanisms to enable users to point out inappropriate content.

Bullying is also considerably problematic phenomenon in social networks, as in real life, and one of the major challenges is to effectively identify vulnerable users.

Floor Discussion

1. The **Commission** representative enquired whether other social networking sites, such as **MySpace** also take the same approach?

   o   Different providers have various levels of compliance to the guidelines and there seems to be no recognized enforcement policy.

2. **CoreBioID** inquired on the number of abuse reports received?

   o   50% of reports are about bullying. Bebo's Service Level Agreement ensures that if inappropriate content is reported, taken off within 24 hours.

3. **Anne Clarke** (ETSI) enquired on what is done to track registered users being under age

- o Bebo.com uses technologies such as cookies for tracking users. Automated searches are done for specific content such as "I am 11", but the system not infallible. A reliable Age Verification System is again mentioned as an urgent requirement.

4. A comment from the floor highlighted how cultural differences of users can complicate filtering content and behavior as content can be considered as inappropriate or on not based on the users location and culture.

5. A floor question to Bebo was made regarding the steps taken by them as to their social responsibilities

   - o Bebo have strategic alignment with providers

6. **Vodafone** enquired regarding the generic alignment between the social responsibilities and commercial targets of Social Networks.

   - o Bebo agreed that this is an important factor

7. The **Commission** representative asked whether everyone who should be involved in creating a safer environment is in fact involved?

   - o Response from the floor was that stakeholders should be given more clear and enforced guidelines about what exactly needs to be done.

8. A general discussion followed regarding the enforcement of self regulation

   - o Stakeholders cannot be forced to self-regulate themselves. It is essential to draw clear guidelines and standards and give specific incentives for stakeholders to participate.

   - o **Sandra James** (Orange) commented that when they joined into the self-regulation field, others followed suit, which shows the effectiveness of leading by example.

   - o The **Internet Watch Foundation** (UK) commented that self-regulation only works where there is leadership.

   - o Comments from the floor are in agreement that there needs to be sharing of responsibility and that there is no single blame.

   - o Basic filtering technology is available and effective to an acceptable degree of accuracy.

   - o The importance to further recognise those organisations that follow rules of conduct and guildelines

9. The **Commission** representative inquired whether risks are the same in different countries

    o   Figures suggest there are considerable differences between new adopters of the technology, such as Poland and Bulgaria, and countries where internet is embedded in daily life

10. The **Commission** representative inquired what kind of support the Commission can provide.

    o   Help sharing information and promote policies.

    o   Provide co-ordination between all those making notable contributions.

    o   Help in dissemination of available information.

    o   Provide political leadership with a focus.

    o   Providing further support in existing fields where the **Commission** is active, with further support for hotlines, umbrella organisations etc

    o   Comments that call for proposals and items supported are extremely narrow, but the **Commission** explains that this is not the case

11. The **Commission** representative asked what areas research should also focus on?

    o   Pin point which children are vulnerable (social workers, psychologists, specialists)

    o   Awareness raising

FINAL REMARKS

Commission Representatives

Technology convergence will keep happening with very quick changes in technological developments.

This enforces stakeholders' need to quickly respond to these changes.

Relevant stakeholders need to discuss together and cope with the fast deployment speed of new technologies.

Conclusion from discussion is that it is also essential to involve children directly regarding how they are using convergent technologies

Whilst it is impossible to keep ahead of future technology, it is important to work in parallel to the technical developments and react to it.

WORKSHOP CONCLUSIONS

Rapporteur

1. The discussion was less technical than the title of workshop would imply, with the subject mostly revolving about stakeholder responsibilities and awareness

2. This confirms that although the technology is available, such as for automated filtering & monitoring technologies exist with acceptable efficiency, awareness and education are extremely important and the key to an effective online security

3. The discussion about technology should be more focused regarding disseminating knowledge and awareness about the existence of technologies and it's effective deployment

4. Technology itself is neither the source of all evil nor the 'magic wand' solution to risk problems

5. Parents are 'burdened' with the responsibility to enforce security through technology is many cases, but most are not up to the task. A easier application methodology for security features is required.

6. There is an obvious and urgent requirement for standardised, efficient age verification methodologies. The stakeholders should look at other fields, such as online gaming, where Age Verification is strictly enforced though a variety of technologies

7. It is essential to be able to react to new and convergent technologies; to work in parallel with technology developments and to adapt new security options.

FEEDBACK FROM CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

An Overview of Salient Points from Participant Feedback Forms

Generally speaking, the response from participants was very positive, with many comments mentioning that the workshop was very useful providing a healthy discussion between stakeholders.

The need to generate more awareness, education and the importance of parents' role is a common comment throughout the forms.

Many comments showed their agreement with this year's structure of the Workshop, with less presentations and more time dedicated to discussions and sharing of ideas from the floor.

Several requests mention the need for a common agreement on an effective application of age verification methods that can be easily adopted by service providers.

Some participants mentioned that translation services during the workshop would have helped them as non-native English speakers.

A few comments mentioned that the actual discussion topics during the workshop were not technical at all, but revolved around topics such as awareness and education, which were discussed in other workshops. These participants requested that technical workshops should focus purely on technical discussions.