Study Group on Countermeasures against
Illegal/Harmful Information on the Internet—2nd Meeting
Summary of Minutes (Draft)

1. Date and Time

  Thursday, December 27, 2007; 14:00–16:00

2. Location

  Conference Room 1, 1st floor, MIC

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

  Study Group Members: Yoshio Igarashi, Hisamichi Okamura, Takamasa Kishihara, Tamayo Kimura, Hiroyuki Kuwako, Akio Kokubu, Yoko Kobayashi, Makoto Saito, Shinichiro Sakata, Satoshi Seki, Nobuyuki Takahashi, Tsuyoshi Takenouchi, Toshiaki Tateishi, Hiroshi Tano, Miki Nagata, Yasuo Hasebe, Makoto Haruta, Hiroki Hirasawa, Naoya Bessho, Masao Horibe, Toru Maruhashi, Seiji Yoshikawa

  Absent: Yasuo Nakayama, Takashi Matsuyama, Suguru Yamaguchi

  Observers:

  Counselor (IT Office), Cabinet Secretariat; Director to Director General (for Policy of Youth Affairs); Director, Cybercrime Division, National Police Agency; Director, Information Economy Division, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; Director, Youth Division, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

  MIC:

  Terasaki (Director-General, Telecommunications Bureau), Takeuchi (Director-General, Telecommunications Business Department), Ando (Director, General Affairs Division, Telecommunications Bureau), Taniwaki (Director, Telecommunications Policy Division), Kurose (Director, Computer Communications Division), Sato (Director, Telecommunications Consumer Policy Division), Yoshida (Senior Planning Officer, Telecommunications Consumer Policy Division), Naito (Assistant Director, Telecommunications Consumer Policy Division), Ishii (Assistant Director, Telecommunications Consumer Policy Division)

4. Agenda

  (1) Opening address

  (2) Agenda

(i) Request for mobile phone operators and such to expedite the introduction of filtering services on mobile phones and PHS used by minors

Secretariat

(ii) Future initiatives on services to control access to harmful Web sites (filtering services)

Shinichiro Sakata, Managing Director, Telecommunications Carriers Association

(iii) Filtering providers' initiatives

- Mechanisms of and issues regarding filtering

Mr. Taiyo Takahashi, Manager, Public Relations Dept, Sales and Marketing Division, NetSTAR Inc.

- Countermeasures against harmful information on the Internet: Filtering software

Mr. Kiyoto Inomata, Manager, Corporate Planning Dept, Digital Arts, Inc.

(iv) PTA's initiatives against illegal/harmful information

Mr. Shuji Kato, Vice President, National Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations of Japan

Mr. Masao Takahashi, President, National Congress of High School Parents and Teachers Associations

(v) Content providers' initiatives against illegal/harmful information

- Outline of "Mobage town" (mobile game town) service

Ms. Tomoko Namba, CEO, DeNA Co., Ltd.

- Measures to protect minors from illegal/harmful information: Use of filtering and education of all players

Takamasa Kishihara, Secretary-General, Mobile Content Forum

(vi) Establishment of an information and support center for service providers to promote action against illegal/harmful information

Hiroyuki Kuwako, Chair, Internet Service Providers' Ethics Committee, Telecom Services Association

(3) Closing

5. Proceedings

(1) Opening address

(2) Agenda

(i) Request for mobile phone operators and such to expedite the introduction of filtering services on mobile phones and PHS used by minors

(ii) Future initiatives on services to control access to harmful Web sites (filtering services)

Following the secretariat's explanation based on Reference 2, Sakata gave a presentation based on Reference 3. Subsequently, the following comments were made:

Q: You said that the number of users of filtering services as of the end of September totaled 2.1 million. Do we have a breakdown of those figures by age bracket? The characteristics of users may vary widely, even among those users in the under-18 age group. We need a detailed analysis.

A: It's impossible to get data on the actual ages of users. Accurate figures are not available. But we are asking if it is possible to get an estimate.

Q: It may be necessary to provide users with a written explanation of the possible effects of filtering on Web sites that contain audio. Also, what format will be used to get confirmation of the user's intentions? These things must be reported at the next meeting.

A: The format will include a description of the importance of filtering services, as well as space where parents can say that they do not want any filtering service. I am not sure if we can present a specific format at the next meeting, but we would be happy to show it at a later one.

Q: While the target of filtering services is defined as "minors" for new contractors, the corresponding target for existing contractors is defined as "under 18 years old." Why are these different expressions used?

A: (Regarding existing contractors, the request to include filtering services was made in light of incidents that occurred with relation to children under the age of 18 accessing dating Web sites and such. As for new contractors,) each provider confirms that parental approval is given by way of the parental consent form, which became a prerequisite for a minor to conclude a contract following the request of the Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications of last year (November 2006).

Q: That is not a reasonable explanation for the difference in target age for new contractors and existing contractors.

Q: What is the expected method of determining if the user is under the age of 18?

A: We are assuming the use of an application format with a box, which service providers will ask users to fill in.

Q: With regard to educational activities targeting existing contractors, we should in future discussions refer to the argument that was made about how to fully inform users of the number display service when NTT was planning to launch the service.

(iii) Filtering providers' initiatives

Public Relations Manager Takahashi of Sales and Marketing Division, NetSTAR Inc. and Corporate Planning Manager Inomata from Digital Arts, Inc. gave presentations, based on References 4 and 5, respectively.

(iv) PTA's initiatives against illegal/harmful information

Vice President Kato from the National Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations of Japan and President Takahashi from the National Congress of High School Parents and Teachers Associations gave presentations as outlined below.

Mr. Kato:

- Last year (2006), we, in the name of the president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations of Japan, requested three major mobile phone operators to improve their filtering services, but they replied that parents should take responsibility for this issue. Accordingly, no progress has been made.

- Parents do not even understand what's going on with mobile phones. That is the reality. Therefore, rather than discussing parents' responsibilities, providers should include a filtering function to establish an environment where access to certain kinds of content is blocked. Households should take responsibility if and when they disable the filtering function.

- We should not treat children the same as general users. In an incident that occurred in Hachinohe-shi in Aomori Prefecture, a 16-year-old girl met a man in his 30s and was killed.

- The Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications request dated December 10 was reassuring.

- The PTA would welcome the opportunity to contribute to discussions such as this and to work together to make sure our young people grow up happy and healthy.

- We may need to expand the definition of "illegal content."

Mr. Takahashi:

- Underground student Web sites have existed for seven to eight years, but schools have been slow to take action against them.

- I agree on the use of filtering services, but parents find it difficult to obtain information so they do not know the details. Parents do not understand what filtering is. They will not be ready even if they are told that filtering services will be provided starting next year. I would be pleased to be invited to meetings like this to obtain information as early as

possible. I also hope that information will be put into the public arena and be accessible so that parents can obtain it faster.

- This fiscal year, we conducted a survey on the sound development of children in the digital media society that targeted 6,000 high school students and their parents. The survey revealed that 60% of parents think that their children are more familiar with mobile phones than they are, while 60% of children think otherwise. Actually, parents are not keeping up with technological advancements.

- Parents should definitely learn more. But they do not know where to begin.

- High school students may need to determine by themselves whether they need a filter. Rather than making filtering mandatory, they should discuss the matter with their family and decide. It may be necessary, if possible, to the settings to be changed according to the age of the user. Also, please consider the growth in the number of users accessing content when you discuss how to disable the filters.

- Systems for the appropriate administration of bulletin boards and blogs where defamation is a common occurrence should be established.

In relation to these presentations, the following questions and answers were asked and given.

Q: Does the PTA have any requests or comments regarding filtering?

A: Nothing in particular. Please promote the use of filtering in line with the current direction.

Q: You said that an environment whereby access can be blocked should be established. Are you referring to blocking access only to malicious content or to all content, including appropriate content?

A: We do not demand that access to all content be blocked, but we assume that blocks can be included to a degree that somewhat constrains providers.

Q: About what percentage of parents in the PTA do think that parents should have control over young people's Internet access via their mobile phones?

A: I'm not aware that there is such an opinion. Basically, we want content targeted at children to be differentiated.

Q: As a provider, we would like to use occasions such as this to discuss how responsibilities should be divided among the parties concerned. If we do not clarify the scope of responsibilities, we may end up with inconsistencies in future policies, or providers may

be asked to impose tighter restrictions every time an incident occurs.

Q: As a result of the research and development on mobile filtering technology—which MIC conducted in fiscal 2005—it has become technically possible to set filtering functions fine-tuned to the user's specifications. But you cannot immediately translate such technologies into practice. We hope you will continue to conduct further research on the issue.

Q: What is the PTA's position on who should determine the standards for filtering services and how?

A1: It seems appropriate to take the protection of children as the fundamental starting point.

A2: As a high school PTA, we do not have a particular position on that. Children of primary and junior high school age must be fully protected. Above these ages, the standards should accord with social norms.

(v) Content providers' initiatives against illegal/harmful information

CEO Namba from DeNA Co., Ltd. and Mobile Content Forum Secretary-General Kishihara gave presentations, based on References 6 and 7, respectively. Subsequently, the following questions and answers were asked and given.

Q: Promotion of countermeasures against illegal and harmful information is our company's priority also. With regard to filtering services, we still have many issues to solve, and we understand that we need to solve them before we launch such services. Rather than desperate exhortations, comprehensive efforts, including education are needed. Specific programs should be presented following in-depth discussions by this study group. The measure implemented on December 10 may excessively restrict young people's freedom of expression. It may also affect the development of communication skills and skills relating to content generation. It is therefore essential to take measures that limit the target of filtering to Web sites that are obviously problematic. If parents are to have the responsibility as to whether or not to enable filtering, they must be provided with full information, including the disadvantages of filtering. In addition, at the moment it is basically left to carriers to decide what to filter. To ensure fair competition, that must be reconsidered, in particular from various legal perspectives.

A: We will work on education in cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies. Meanwhile, a sufficient period should be set aside for public education.

(vi) Establishment of an information and support center for service providers to promote

action against illegal/harmful information

Chair Kuwako from the Telecom Services Association's Internet Service Providers' Ethics Committee explained the issue, based on Reference 8.

(3) Closing