Study Group on Countermeasures against
Illegal/Harmful Information on the Internet—3rd Meeting
Summary of Minutes

1. Date and Time

Tuesday, January 29, 2008; 16:00–18:00

2. Location

Special Common Conference Room 1, 13th floor, 7th Bldg. of the Central Common Government Office

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

Study Group Members: Shigeo Nishino (proxy for Igarashi), Hisamichi Okamura, Shuji Kato, Takamasa Kishihara, Tamayo Kimura, Hiroyuki Kuwako, Akio Kokubu, Yoko Kobayashi, Makoto Saito, Shinichiro Sakata, Satoshi Seki, Nobuyuki Takahashi, Masao Takahashi, Tsuyoshi Takenouchi, Toshiaki Tateishi, Hiroshi Tano, Miki Nagata, Atsumi Tabata (proxy for Yasuo Nakayama), Yasuo Hasebe, Makoto Haruta, Hirofumi Hosono (proxy for Hirasawa), Naoya Bessho, Masao Horibe, Takashi Matsuyama, Toru Maruhashi, Suguru Yamaguchi, Seiji Yoshikawa

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), Okamura (Assistant Director, 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) New study group members

   Secretariat

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

   Shinichiro Sakata, Managing Director, Telecommunications Carriers Association

  (iii) Filtering services as countermeasures against illegal/harmful information

   Naoya Bessho, Chief Compliance Officer & VP Legal Department, Yahoo Japan Corporation

  (iv) Establishing a requirement to provide filtering services as a basic rule

   Satoshi Seki, Manager of External Office, Rakuten, Inc.

  (v) Outline of social networking site "mixi": Outline of the site and the operator's initiatives

   - Kenji Kasahara, President, mixi, Inc.

  (vi) Schedule for compiling an interim report

   Secretariat

 (3) Closing

5. Proceedings

 (1) Opening address

 (2) Agenda

  (i) New study group members

   The study group approved the proposal that 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 join the study group as new members.

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

   Sakata gave a presentation based on Reference 3. Subsequently, the following questions and answers were asked and given.

   Q: On page 8 of Reference 3, it is stated that "(when you use a filtering service, your) access to bulletin boards and such may be blocked." Does it mean access will be allowed depending on the carrier? If no access at all is permitted, wouldn't it better to put it in the affirmative, that is, that "(access) will be blocked"?

A: I suppose the more ambiguous expression was used rather than a positive expression because the filtering services of different carriers differ in their details. I assume each carrier will use appropriate phrasing when publicizing the launch of its own filtering service.

Q: Filtering services that are currently being introduced are neither easy-to-use nor perfect. Please improve them. At the same time, considering that the basic rule that filtering services must be introduced has already been established, please make concerted efforts to publicize it.

A: In light of the frequent occurrence of incidents involving children, we needed to take immediate action and, therefore, prioritized the introduction of filtering services. We thought that we would not be able to facilitate the introduction if we waited for fine-tunable filtering functions to become available. With regard to public education, we will make various efforts to educate the public about filtering services so that people can decide for themselves whether or not to use such services based on their own understanding of how they work.

Q: The three carriers adopt almost the same filtering policy: blocking access to bulletin boards and community sites, in principle. If there are cases where it is possible to access such sites, it is only because the filtering provider has overlooked them. Meanwhile, is it possible to standardize consent forms and other formats used by providers to ensure that providers will appropriately confirm the user's intention to use filtering services? Lastly, I would like to remind you that, as a representative of MCF, I commented on the expression in question on page 8 in Reference 3.

Q: Is it possible to check at the place of purchase if specific sites are blocked by a filtering service?

A: SoftBank Mobile is planning to display at its stores a list of typical sites that will be blocked by the filtering service.

Q: Is it possible to try a demonstration terminal at a store to see if access is possible? If not, people will frequently disable the filtering function immediately after setting it when they discover that access to some sites is unexpectedly blocked. It is also imperative to ensure that people understand filtering services properly. Otherwise, minors will get confused. Meanwhile, targets of filtering services are not uniform. Some sites are blocked entirely while only some of the pages of others are. Generally speaking, if the publicity about the introduction is ineffectual, people will end up not using filtering services at all. This

concerns me.

A: At this time, we are not planning in-store demonstrations, but we will consider it internally.

Q: Sites subject to be blocked under the blacklist system change every day. Paid sites may become targeted. When the targets change, the filtering provider should notify the communication carriers of the change so that they can notify the content providers.

Q: When access is suddenly blocked by a filtering service, will it be impossible to cancel a subscription to the site? How will billing for paid sites be handled? If you fail to explain these issues in detail, you may get into trouble.

A1: In cases where access to paid sites is blocked, we are planning to provide a page dedicated to applications to cancel subscriptions. When paid sites are to be added to the list of blocked sites, we will fully notify the relevant parties in advance.

A2: At KDDI, your registration with a paid site will be automatically cancelled if the site is blocked.

A3: NTT DOCOMO is planning to provide a dedicated page for cancellations.

(iii) Filtering services as countermeasures against illegal/harmful information

CCO & Legal Department VP Bessho from Yahoo Japan Corporation gave a presentation based on Reference 4. (Q&A on his presentation took place after the presentation by mixi.)

(iv) Establishing a requirement to provide filtering services as a basic rule

CEO & External Office Manager Seki from Rakuten, Inc. gave a presentation based on Reference 5. (Q&A on his presentation took place after the presentation by mixi.)

(v) Outline of social networking site "mixi": Outline of the site and the operator's initiatives

President Kasahara of mixi, Inc. gave an outline based on Reference 6. Subsequent questions, answers and comments were as follows:

Q: We think proper administration by administrators is necessary when distributing user-created content. I have heard that in other countries a considerable amount is spent on content administration. If possible, may I ask the respective content providers approximately how many personnel they have to administer the Web sites they operate?

A1: We are providing a wide range of services, so it is difficult to give you a number right now.

A2: We allocate about 60 members of our own staff and outsource certain tasks.

A3: Like Yahoo, we are providing a wide range of services and cannot give you a simple answer.

Q: Because of user participation, content is constantly changing. If you fail to administer it properly, the site can become sinister all of a sudden. In light of the fact that some sites are not properly administered, some people may call for across-the-board filtering for all user-participation sites.

Q: Currently, we have about 100 monitors and are expanding the workforce to 300. In addition to human monitoring, we are establishing monitoring systems. We, as a content provider operating sites of a certain scale, are fully aware of our responsibility and are acting accordingly. We would prefer not to be treated the same way as site operators who do not take any measures.

Q: You said that you would provide a page for cancellations when paid sites are included in the list of sites to be blocked. Is this limited to official sites?

A: That's correct.

Comments:

- You cannot cancel subscriptions to paid sites if they are unofficial sites. As for free sites, content that users have created over time will be affected. If the necessary information related to these issues is fully communicated in advance, it is likely to cause a lot of trouble or sudden disadvantages to users.

- There are few sites that have disclaimers in case they become the target of filtering. We may need to discuss who will take responsibility when a site operator is requested to bear damages resulting from its site being blocked.

- We would like to consider measures for this internally.

- New contractors are unlikely to have problems because they do not have existing subscription contracts. As for content that users have accessed via their PCs, the problem in question will not arise even if their mobile phone access is blocked. Even in the case of existing contractors, filtering is enabled only after their intentions are confirmed and certain procedures are taken. So, you can prevent the problem by fully communicating the necessary information during the forthcoming publicity period.

- For carriers, it is impossible to keep track of all the details and business models of unofficial sites. The only thing we can do is to make the issues known.

- In response to last December's request from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications to carriers, carriers are now preparing for the introduction of filtering services. So, for the time being, we would like to reach a consensus to the extent possible by discussing the issues. The means by which public education is to be provided should be

determined by considering the responses given by consumers. Appropriate measures should be taken in particular for agencies. Also to be noted is the issue of ensuring fair competition, as earlier pointed out. Filtering is definitely an effective tool for protecting young people, but user education is also important. I would like to hear the secretariat's opinion on the future direction to be taken in the compilation of the report.

- We would like to compile an interim report by organizing, to the greatest extent possible, the comments that members voiced from their diverse perspectives. We think ensuring fair competition is a very important issue and hope that you will discuss it in regard to the interim report.

(vi) Schedule for compiling an interim report

The secretariat explained the schedule, based on Reference 7. Subsequently, the following comments were made:

- As the comments contributed here will be compiled into an interim report created by this study group, I hope carriers will take action in line with the report. I am concerned about the fact that carriers are themselves selecting those to go on the white list.

- I propose an additional item for the agenda, which is to study measures other than filtering that may be effective, such as encouraging parents and children to go over the children's access history together and talk about it. We may also need to discuss whether the currently envisaged system for filtering contracts has any problems from the legal perspective.

- Few parents understand filtering in detail. If we are allowed to provide the documents or information available at PTA general meetings and so on, we may be able to reach parents right across the country through local PTA groups. Please consider that option. We would also like to put together a collection of comments made by parents, which we may receive during such a process, and present them at future meeting of this study group. Would that be possible?

A: We think educational activities are crucial. The secretariat will give some thought as to how your proposal can be realized.

(3) Closing