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Report on the 2013
Canadian Internet Forum Event

Report Title: *Report on the 2013 Canadian Internet Forum Event*

Date Published: June 2013

The Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) is the organization that manages the .CA domain space on behalf of all Canadians.

This report should be cited as follows:
Report on the 2013 Canadian Internet Forum Event. Canadian Internet Registration Authority. June 2013. Ottawa: Author.

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Introduction

On February 28, 2013, the Canadian Internet Registration (CIRA) hosted the third annual Canadian Internet Forum (CIF) national event at the Ottawa Convention Centre in Ottawa, Canada. The all-day event provided an opportunity for domestic and international Internet experts to gather with Canadians to discuss and debate the issues that affect the Canadian Internet landscape.

This year's discussion was varied, with Internet governance, digital literacy and cyber-security covered across panel discussions and presentations.

The 2013 CIF event was well-attended, with 175 in participants in the room, and 66 participants via webcast. Social media was very active during the event, with 364 tweets generated on Twitter. A record of the social media activity from the event is available here: http://storify.com/CIRANews/the-2013/.

Internet Governance

Complex by nature, the question of how to govern the Internet has been a hot topic since its inception. While the multi-stakeholder model has seen the Internet industry through its unprecedented growth, there are still many opinions on how to govern the Internet and who should be running it. As such, the CIF is an ideal environment to explore such a topic.

The first panel of the day provided a prime example of the complexities that surround Internet governance. Tim Denton from the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Steve Anderson from Openmedia.ca and Karen Mulberry from the Internet Society (ISOC), came together to discuss and debate the future of the Internet in Canada.

From a federal perspective, Denton explored the unique regulatory role of the CRTC in relation to the Internet and reaffirmed the position that the CRTC regulates carriers and broadcasters and not the content of the Internet. Broadcasted content within Canada, for example, has certain legal obligations to carry Canadian made content, and those sets of rules cannot be applied to the global Internet, whose content is shared from all over the world.

Denton did state that the CRTC has an obligation to "ensure that the gains allowed by the Internet are not lost," and that the CRTC's recent initiatives in regulating network are an example of this. He chronicled the CRTC's recent experiences in implementing Usage Based Billing (UBB) and Capacity Based Billing (CBB), and the challenges of regulating continuously-evolving industries related to the Internet.

While Denton highlighted the CRTC's role in regulation, Steve Anderson of OpenMedia urged for immediate change within the Canadian network infrastructure landscape. Competition is being stifled by lack of opportunity, argued Anderson, and the Canadian government needs to recognize that more competing Internet Service Providers (ISPs) help makes the Internet more affordable. Anderson said that vertical integration from the small group of network carriers has left Canada with a monopolistic set-up that needs to be refreshed.

Anderson also stressed the importance of new privacy safeguards online. While Bill C-30, the controversial Internet surveillance bill, has been redacted, the fight for privacy online is ongoing. Anderson highlighted two recent Bills, C-12 (Safeguarding Canadians' Personal Information Act and Bill) and C-50 (an Act to Amend the Criminal Code), that would afford authorities warrantless access to personal information and warrantless interception of communications, respectively. According to Anderson, these acts are a clear sign that the fight to maintain a free and open Internet is not won.

While Denton and Anderson spoke about domestic Internet governance and policy, Karen Mulberry of the Internet Society (ISOC) discussed the recent International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12-12) meeting in Dubai in December 2012. Mulberry detailed the difficulties and challenges of gathering national telecommunications companies from around the world to discuss the Internet.

Recognizing the importance of Internet security, Internet Protocol (IP) addressing, network infrastructure and online spam, it had become clear that there are still some learning curves on the global stage to thinking about the Internet as a non-traditional network. Mulberry was hopeful however, that despite these challenges, the Internet will continue to be "innovative, borderless to allow collaboration around the globe."

CIRA President and CEO Byron Holland also touched on this subject through the lens of his recent attendance at WCIT-12 in his Internet governance update presentation. While he acknowledged the historical impact of the ITU in developing the global telecommunications industry, he stressed that governing the Internet within the traditional telecom model, as discussed at the meeting, would stifle innovation and the future gains the Internet can afford.

Holland said the multi-stakeholder model has been the driving force of economic success for the Internet, a success story that has resulted in the Internet economy being responsible for three per cent of Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

"We're standing at the precipice of a paradigm shift," said Holland. He explained the success of the Internet requires a new way of thinking about the global rule set and it should be the people on the front lines of the industry that form the debate and development of the Internet.

He said the Internet will only continue to grow, especially in developing nations, and it is the responsibility of those who currently benefit from the Internet to provide "everyone with the economic benefits we enjoy."

Digital Literacy

Following a broad and far-reaching discussion of Internet governance was a panel on digital literacy with Matthew Johnson, Director of Education at MediaSmarts, a not-for-profit dedicated to developing digital literacy skill, and Kerry Augustine from the Canadian Cyber Defense Challenge. Johnson and Augustine provided some domestic insight into the state and importance of digital literacy and the immediate need to develop digital skills for success in the Canadian digital age.

In his presentation, Johnson said digital literacy is the key to "participatory citizenship" and that "shortages in citizens who are fully digitally literate means losses in innovation." Supporting the development of a digitally literate nation has not always been at the forefront of government initiative, however, and Johnson called on the CRTC to play a role in implementing a national strategy for digital literacy.

Federal initiatives traditionally centre on online etiquette and security, leaving provincial educational programs to teach digital skills, which Johnson said are scattered at best. Digital literacy means innovation, and a cohesive national digital literacy strategy would take the "magic" out of the term by creating tangible and consistent language behind it. This would help add literacy to the digital fluency already pervasive in Canada's citizenship, Johnson contended.

With regards to digital literacy, Augustine spoke of his involvement with Canadian Cyber Defense Challenge (CDC), a grassroots program from Manitoba modelled after an American project called CyberPatiot. The CDC aims to empower users at home, work and school with the information they need to keep themselves, their organizations, their systems, and their sensitive information safe and secure online.

In the CDC, high school students work together in teams to protect a virtual network. Throughout the exercise the students are given the tools and training necessary to harness their innate digital abilities in order protect themselves online. While cyber defense is infrastructure based, digital literacy is content driven and helps students navigate and understand the technical web. With the CDC, the aim is to fuse these two knowledge bases. The importance of this distinction is not lost on Augustine, who said digital literacy can protect our nation and that "we are our last line of defence."

The topic of digital literacy continued into the keynote of the day where Privacy Commissioner Jennifer Stoddart spoke about online privacy in Canada:

> *"Individuals need the skills to engage in the online world without compromising their own or others information . . . I'm hoping Canadians will become increasingly active on these privacy issues."*[1]

Stoddart stressed the role of education in assisting Canadians to make sound decisions on how they share their information online. She did not put the onus entirely on the user for protecting their privacy online, and called on the government and private industries to be vigilant in making sure processes and infrastructure are in place to help protect Canadians' identity online.

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[1] Quote taken from "Canadians' cyber illiteracy puts us at risk of being scammed: privacy commissioner" http://o.canada.com/2013/02/28/canadians-cyber-illiteracy-puts-us-at-risk-of-being-scammed-privacy-commissioner/

Cyber-Security

Bill Woodcock is Research Director of Packet Clearing House, a not-for-profit research institute dedicated to understanding and supporting Internet traffic exchange technology, policy, and economics. With his experience at Packet Clearing House and supporting the development of Internet Exchange Points (IXP) around the world, Woodcock was able to provide a firsthand account of the challenges and complexities surrounding cyber-security and global politics.

Detailing recent cyber-security breaches in the nation of Georgia and cyber espionage activities in China, Woodcock portrayed a world where cyber-security is increasingly becoming a concern for nation states. Stressing diplomatic rather than militaristic responses to cyber-security attacks, Woodcock spoke of the importance of a nation having a 'cyber offence.' He said IXPs are an example of a cyber-offence that can be effective in mitigating cyber-security attacks.

Woodcock explained through the development of national infrastructure designed to keep data within country lines, IXPs "can be a major building block to a secure national Internet." He said IXPs help address an important facet of cyber-security – know where your information is and where it is coming from. "Security is the ability to maintain and control your privacy."

Following Woodcock's presentation was an interactive session designed to gather Canadians views on cyber-security. As part of a cyber-security workshop, each CIF attendee was presented with three scenarios in which cyber-security was breached. Ranging from spam attacks to stolen information on insecure networks, CIRA challenged each participant to identify the impact of the security breach and what steps needed to be taken to increase cyber-security in the future. Attendees were asked to take home the challenge and email their answers to CIRA following the event.

These answers will be compiled for inclusion in a CIRA-curated white paper which will be distributed internationally this fall.

Looking Forward

The CIF national event may be a one-day event, but the topics that surround the Canadian Internet landscape are ever-evolving. CIRA developed the online CIF to ensure Canadians have a destination to discuss the latest Internet-related news and topics. This online forum, as presented by Holland at the national event, is located at cif.cira.ca and will be a permanent fixture for discussions and debates about the Internet in Canada.

With the national and online CIF, CIRA's goal is to facilitate a dialogue that will not only educate the Canadian Internet user, but prompt them to get involved in the deployment and development of the Internet in Canada.