

South of the Border: Focus on South America

Moderator: Armando Novoa, Alianza por la Seguridad en Internet

Panelists:

Caroline Humer, Senior Program Manager, International Center for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC)

María José Cantarino de Frias, Corporate Social Responsibility, Telefonica

Alvaro Puig, Consumer Education and Hispanic Outreach Specialist, Federal Trade Commission

Marcela Czarny, President, Chicos.net

Dr Luis Alejandro Nagy, Psychoanalytic Society of Mexico

Armando Novoa introduced the panelists and the topic, after which they each spoke about the responsibilities of their organizations and their roles within them. Novoa mentioned some of the issues that are occurring in Latin American countries, which, for the purposes of this short session, we had had to throw into one pot, and although many issues are similar in these countries, there are different ones too. Novoa mentioned that there was often a lack of government interest in online safety, because many of these countries had health and poverty as priorities, so resources for internet safety initiatives were limited, if they were even discussed. He said that NGOs, such as his organization, Alianza por la Seguridad en Internet, had very little funding and needed to work closely with industry and government agencies to bring online safety and digital citizenship into schools.

Caroline Humer discussed ICMEC's goal to identify and coordinate all the organizations fighting child-sexual exploitation and abduction around the world. She talked about ICMEC's commitment to provide policy training to law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and legal professionals, to encourage all countries to subscribe to laws, treaties, and systems to protect children worldwide. She shared that only 93 out of 184 countries surveyed by ICMEC in 2006 had legislation in place that criminalized child pornography, so ICMEC was working with a number of governments to make them meet five criteria to meet a minimum standard as suggested by ICMEC. She said that the criteria included criminalizing computer crimes, criminalizing child pornography, making possession of child pornography illegal and providing a definition of child pornography. She said that Colombia was the first Latin American country to have all the five criteria in its legislation. Humer said that in next year's report there would be another seven countries added to the list of those who had worked with ICMEC to ensure that they adhered to all five criteria, to help their countries protect the rights of children, offline and online. She said that ICMEC would be continuing to work with governments all over the world, especially as being online was becoming ubiquitous.

Maria Jose Cantarino de Frias then spoke about some of the work that Telefonica has been doing in Latin American countries, including a survey of safe ICT use and emerging technologies on a grand scale, and the impact of those results on the company's work. Cantarino de Frias pointed out that although Latin American countries were considered developing countries, and online safety was not a priority for many of their inhabitants, internet use was as prevalent as in many European countries, at 43% and 54% of school-aged children surveyed admitted that they kept their mobile on in the classroom. Cantarino de

Frias said that children and ICT use was not on the agenda of the Latin American countries' agendas but that it should be, and that Telefonica, and others including Telmex, were working to encourage governments to make online safety and digital citizenship a priority. She encouraged people in the audience to look at Telefonica's work in this area at www.generacionesinteractivas.org.

Alvaro Puig, a Consumer Education and Hispanic Outreach Specialist at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) talked about the education outreach work the FTC did for US-based Hispanic consumers on a variety of issues, including through the FTC's online safety initiative, www.OnGuardOnline.gov, which has English and Spanish versions. He shared that the website provided practical tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help consumers be on guard against Internet fraud, how to best secure one's computer, and protect personal information.

Puig made some key observations about the hits to the English and Spanish sites, namely that the Spanish pages that provided information about increasing one's online security were four times as likely to be viewed as the English sites on the same issue. Puig noted that the English-speaking pages that addressed online safety advice for parents and educators concerning teens and tweens, had double the amount of traffic when compared to the pages written in Spanish. Puig speculated that due to these two observations, for which he said it was difficult to find a link, it seemed that Hispanics who were more proficient in English and chose the English pages over the Spanish ones, seemed to be more aware of the need to be cautious as their families went online. In contrast he pointed out that it looked like the Hispanic consumers who chose to go to the Spanish site were increasingly concerned about security issues, asking if maybe they were more nervous of what could happen online. Puig also pointed out that hits to the Spanish shopping pages were three times as high as the English ones, and that traffic to the Spanish games pages was also 50% higher than the English ones. Puig again pointed out that the Spanish-speaking Hispanic community was highly concerned with online safety and that they were early adopters of keeping themselves and their families safe online.

Marcela Czarny, President of chicos.net, an NGO based in Argentina, encourages online safety through working in schools, cyber-cafes and through games and tips on their website, that encourage responsible citizenship and safe online use. The organization has four main areas of work, that include investigation into the physical safety of young people as they go online, that addresses where they physically access the Internet; quantitative and qualitative research into connecting kids with safety and responsibility in mind on the part of the school; and how to social network safely. Czarny shared that the overall objective of chicos.net was to provide young people with the means for a safer internet experience, through their responsible use of ICTs.

Cantarino de Frias commented that people in Latin American countries were increasingly demanding of their governments, who are doing little in the area of online safety to ensure that parents understand that there are risks involved with being online. She said that those risks could be reputational, physical or psychological but that parents of the generation that is 'growing up online' today in Latin American countries, are even more unaware of these dangers than the parents and grandparents in Western countries. Cantarino de Frias said that high-level government officials, policy and law-makers need to be brought into the discussion, which she said needs to take place at the highest level as well as in the

libraries, cyber-cafes, schools, and in the home, making sure that parents maintain open communication with their children, so that they can better understand what they're doing and thereby help protect them.