

WAN-IFRA publishes kids' online safety guide

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) has published a guide for parents to help and protect their children when they use the internet. The guide will be made available without charge to newspapers worldwide to offer to their readers.



The guide, run as an insert or series, is designed to help the newspaper become a media literacy ally of teachers and parents. The guide can also attract non-traditional partners to help with the finances to produce it.

The author of the guide, Roxana Morduchowicz, said a study in Argentina found that 80 percent of children used the internet without a parent present, 95 percent believed there were no risks involved, 75 percent believed everything they read, 60 percent believed only friends could read their blogs, and 90 percent their parents did not know how they used the web.

A similar study in the United Kingdom found that that 60 percent of 12- to 15-year olds and one-third of eight- to 11-year olds use the internet mostly on their own. And in the United States, a majority of parents in a recent study claimed they enforced time limits on surfing and checked sites their children had visited, but most teens said they had no time limits, and one-third said their parents never checked where they had been online.

"The guide provides a general orientation for parents on how to keep their children safe without demonising the web," said Dr Morduchowicz, director of Media Education with the Argentinean Education Ministry.

"Internet in the Family: A guide to helping children when they go online" covers some of the risks associated with using new technologies and offers strategies for reducing those risks.

The guide offers advice to parents about how to help children learn to search the Internet, how to determine the credibility of information, why students shouldn't 'copy and paste' Internet material into their own schoolwork, how to avoid the dangers posed by undesirable sites offering pornography and worse, and how to conduct themselves on social networks and blogs.

Most importantly, the guide includes a model "Family Code" of behaviour for using the Internet, and offers recommendations for adults:

- Spend time with children online.
- Create an Internet family code together that encourages discussion with children about Internet rules.
- Encourage children to discuss with adults the bothersome sites they may find on the Internet.
- Keep computers in a shared area of the house, not in children's bedrooms.
- Explain to children the importance of not giving out personal data.
- Use more than a single web page as a source when doing homework.
- Ask about chat room activity.
- Collaborate with an Internet service provider to learn about the tools available to protect young children on the Internet.
- Filter Internet use.

Some newspapers have already begun offering the guide to readers. *Clarín* in Argentina produced an insert, with help from the Education Ministry and support from Microsoft, a local bank and a local telecommunications company.

The Post in Zambia ran it as a weekly feature, with support from UNICEF. A special forum where newspaper executives can discuss use of the guide has been created on the WAN-IFRA World Young Reader Network at <http://worldyoungreadernetwork.ning.com/>.

The development of the guide is supported by the paper manufacturer Norske Skog and is part of WAN-IFRA's World News Media Literacy Project. The guide will be followed in late 2010 with Internet in the Family II, which will focus on adolescent use of chats, blogs and social networks.

Full details, including text and art downloads, are available at <http://www.wan-press.org/nie/articles.php?id=2300>.

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