

Toward a Framework
for Internet
Accountability

MARKLE FOUNDATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD FROM ZOË BAIRD, PRESIDENT, MARKLE FOUNDATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... i

INTRODUCTION..... 1

CHAPTER 1: THE PUBLIC’S IMAGES AND VALUES
REGARDING THE INTERNET..... 7

CHAPTER 2: CONCERNS ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY..... 29

CHAPTER 3: TOWARD A PLURALISTIC MODEL OF GOVERNANCE 45

CHAPTER 4: MAKING GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS
MORE ACCOUNTABLE 67

CHAPTER 5: MECHANISMS TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY
FOR PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED ON-LINE..... 75

APPENDIX A: ADVISORY BOARD..... 87

FOREWORD

The Internet has become an increasingly significant part of the lives of Americans. It is giving people unprecedented direct access to information, building new communities of interest, increasing economic productivity, promoting economic and social development in remote areas, and enhancing global understanding. Because the influence of the Internet is broad, the policy choices that affect its growth and operations are increasingly important to us all. The emerging debates center on issues such as privacy and data protection, intellectual property rights, competition, protection of children, taxation, and cybercrime, as well as less discussed matters like domain names and open source code. These debates are challenging business to consider self-regulation and government to consider its role in developing uses and protecting users of the Internet. Just as important are the choices being made about the architecture of the Internet and how the design of the code itself can affect policy choices.

The rapid pace with which policy is being considered and developed will only continue. For this reason, it is critical to broaden the discussion about what role government, business and the non-profit sectors have in policymaking and to include the public itself. Only by so doing will future policies be perceived as legitimate and therefore be sustainable. To contribute to this effort, the Markle Foundation commissioned this study which examines how the public and experts view who should be accountable for governing the Internet, and who should be accountable for protecting users and addressing their needs. We hope to aid the understanding of the many decision-makers who are now faced with new responsibilities, challenges and opportunities that come with the rise of the networked world.

THE NEED FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND INFORMED PUBLIC DEBATE

The far ranging consequences of these decisions require an informed debate. Today, too much of the decision-making takes place far removed from broad public representation or scrutiny, and we are only beginning to understand the full range of affected interests. It is particularly important to open and widen the debate now, at a time when important decisions about policy and business models are being made that will influence the long-term development of the Internet.

As a contribution to the debate about Internet policymaking, the Markle Foundation commissioned Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research to conduct a major public opinion research effort to expand our understanding of the views of both the general public and Internet experts on how the Internet should be governed; what protections they believe they have and should have on-line; whether rules are needed; if so, what those rules should be and who should set them; and the ways in which they believe the Internet's operation might be made more responsive to the public's needs and preferences. The research explores both the similarities and differences in expert and public opinion in order to highlight the values and preconceptions that each group holds as the policy debates get underway.

Because the public's experience with the Internet is fairly recent, its views on many of these issues are still at a formative stage. In fact, as the research shows, the American people themselves

recognize their own limitations in helping make sound decisions in an area that is technically complex and fast changing. But the research also reveals that the public holds quite nuanced views of how decisions about the Internet should be made, and that they want to participate in shaping appropriate solutions.

Of course, public opinion is not the only or even the decisive factor in setting Internet policies for the future. But in a democracy – and especially for a medium that can have such far-ranging consequences for our civic as well as our private lives – the public views take on particular significance. Broad public acceptance is crucial to sustainable and legitimate policies, and therefore we believe the results of this research effort can and should inform the on-going debate.

DESIGNING INTERNET POLICY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: MESSAGES FROM THE RESEARCH

As the findings of the report make clear, the public is enthusiastic about the value of the Internet, particularly as a powerful source of information and ideas. The American people have an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward the medium, and recognize its ability to empower, provide information, and spur economic growth.

At the same time, the public and the experts we surveyed also believe policies are needed and they perceive real risks. They express a range of concerns about on-line interactions; concerns that stem to a significant degree from the more impersonal and intangible character of the Internet and the unmediated access to information it provides. The result is a low level of trust. The public and the experts are looking for more reliable and predictable means of preventing and solving problems on-line – and they want to know who and where to go when problems occur. They also want real enforcement muscle for protection.

It is striking, though, that the public does not point to any single solution, but rather has a more textured view about the various roles that different actors might play in both creating rules and solving problems. They appreciate that the choices to be made are not necessarily as black-and-white as self-regulation or government regulation. For instance, while the desire for enforcement of rules on-line draws many people toward government, the public repeatedly cites a model from the commercial sector that is responsive to problems and has the enforcement “teeth” they are looking for – the ability of credit card companies to investigate on-line problems and stop payment. And, perhaps most important, the public suggests the need for inclusive, pluralistic models of governance where policy is set with the involvement of industry, government, and also non-profit organizations.

These messages point to a framework, or a set of “design criteria,” which can help shape policy solutions that meet the public’s expectations and hopes for the Internet. The research suggests that, while the public is open to a variety of different approaches to Internet issues, they are most likely to support outcomes that meet these guiding principles:

- ***Decision-making processes should permit the participation of a broad range of interests.*** The research makes clear that Americans value the role that industry, government and non-profit organizations each bring to policymaking and therefore are more likely to

accept decisions that are the product of the involvement and shared responsibility of each of these stakeholders.

- ***Decision-making must be open to public participation.*** Regardless of whether the decision-making processes are in the private or public sectors, the American people have a clear expectation that they have a role to play – and that transparency and capacity-building for public advocacy are important requirements for meaningful participation.
- ***Solutions must be enforceable and must be enforced.*** Although the public is open to a variety of approaches to addressing its concerns, from government to self-regulation to the use of private intermediaries in the model of a credit card company, there is a clear need for mechanisms to ensure that once the rules are made, they will be enforced.
- ***The locus of responsibility must be clearly identified – and should provide a feedback mechanism.*** Decentralization has been the hallmark of the Internet's development, and an important element of its strength. Yet Americans want someone to call when something goes wrong or when they have a question. Whether it is a company ombudsman, or a trade association web site when a company's privacy policy is confusing, or a government hotline when fraud has occurred – the public seeks new mechanisms to make the Internet more responsive to its needs and its worries.
- ***Public education is essential.*** The public's concerns about its own lack of control on the Internet may be influenced by lack of awareness as well as existing deficiencies. The research shows a gap between experts and the public on their understanding of the public's rights and recourses available on the Internet. Mechanisms to promote responsiveness will be of little value if the public does not know about them.
- ***Policies should be sensitive to the need to protect the free flow of information.*** The public appreciates the many contributions the Internet makes to our lives, particularly as a source of information. It wants what it sees as the abuses and risks to be addressed and recognizes that trade-offs may be necessary – but in a way that minimizes the harm to what the public values in the Internet.

IMPLEMENTING LESSONS LEARNED

We hope that an understanding of the public's views on these questions will be helpful to policy makers and public officials as they consider where government policy or legislation may be needed; to non-profit organizations that engage in monitoring, advocacy or policy development; to business or technical self-regulatory organizations as they develop their roles; to the media as they cover the debates surrounding these issues; to companies and professionals who are designing infrastructure, hardware and software, or using the Internet for their businesses; and to members of the public themselves, as they seek to understand how their fellow citizens view this new medium.

This report furthers the Markle Foundation's commitment to fostering an environment where many voices can be heard and sound policies can be made. Recently, Markle has sponsored a number of

initiatives that reflect this perspective. Through our Internet Governance Project, for example, we have worked with members of the business, technical and public interest communities to enhance the public participation, transparency and accountability of newly formed Internet governance bodies such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). As part of this effort, Markle supported the first-ever global Internet election for ICANN Board members representing the public at large, and a follow-up global study to review that election process. Additionally, working with non-profit organizations, governments and businesses in the United States and abroad, Markle helped create another non-traditional venue for policy discussions, the Digital Opportunity Task Force, a unique public-private forum established by the G8 Heads of State to address the challenges of harnessing information and communication technology as a tool for development in poor countries of the world.

In our efforts to bring new voices into the policy debate, we sponsor the Markle Fellows at the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy at Oxford University, United Kingdom, which fosters international understanding of Internet policy issues and aims to create geographical inclusiveness in the policy dialogue, and the Internet Clinical Advocacy Project, which is creating clinics at major U.S. law schools to encourage law students and advocates to develop new models for public-interest legal practice related to the Internet. The Markle-Ford Foundation ICANN Travel Fund, administered by the Salzburg Seminar, enables representatives from non-profit organizations and academic institutions to attend ICANN meetings and more meaningfully participate in these policymaking sessions.

We are also working with the Center for Democracy and Technology and other non-profit organizations and academics to enhance the ability to represent the public interest in Internet policy, including in traditional governmental venues, business self-regulatory organizations, and the private and quasi-public bodies that set technical standards for the Internet.

In the coming months, we will continue to expand these efforts. Through our Information Technologies for Better Health program, Markle will undertake initiatives with a broad range of interested parties that can lead to greater consumer confidence in on-line health information and services. We also intend to work with other foundations and non-profit organizations, international agencies, Members of Congress, the Executive Branch, state and local governments, industry, and academic experts to translate the principles identified in this survey into concrete actions in a range of policy areas.

The Markle Foundation is committed to enhancing the voices of the many stakeholders impacted by the Internet policies of today and tomorrow. It is critical that we all look for ways to broaden and strengthen this dialogue and the decisions made. We hope that this study is a useful resource in that process.



Zoë Baird
President
Markle Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNET ACCOUNTABILITY

TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNET ACCOUNTABILITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- One of the most extensive studies of its kind ever conducted finds that Americans are extremely enthusiastic about the Internet, particularly as a powerful new source of information. They express a desire for new forms of public, private, and non-profit governance of the Internet in order to give them more protection and control when they go on-line. The study, conducted over more than a year, was based on a combination of telephone and on-line surveys with the public; a telephone survey and one-on-one interviews with Internet experts; traditional focus groups with various segments of the public; and on-line focus groups with teens and rural Americans.

THE INTERNET: POPULAR, AND MORE ABOUT INFORMATION THAN COMMERCE

- The Internet is extraordinarily popular with the American public, with 63 percent giving it favorable ratings, including fully 83 percent of the nearly two thirds who now go on-line. There are major differences in the views of the Internet between the 63 percent of the public that has gone on-line and the 37 percent that has not gone on-line.
- Interestingly, once one controls for Internet use, there is almost no change in favorability ratings for the Internet according to age. Indeed, the rating among Internet users age 65 and older is the same as for those ages 18-29, a high 80 degrees. This finding suggests that, when it comes to the Internet, familiarity breeds contentment – even for older Internet users who are going on-line for the first time much later in life. Thus, the notion that the Internet is a medium for the young is wrong; it is a medium that appeals to the vast majority of those who use it – no matter what their age.
- The public likes the Internet, in large part, because they view it as useful. Over three fourths of public Internet users (79 percent) and more than nine tenths of Internet experts (92 percent) say “the Internet makes my life easier,” rather than “the Internet does not help me much.” Significantly, the vast majority of both public and expert respondents who say the Internet makes their lives easier agrees with this statement strongly.
- By far, the leading metaphor for the Internet, in the public’s mind, is not “a shopping mall” or “banking and investment office,” but rather “a library.” Despite the popular depiction of the Internet as a channel for commerce, the public mostly views it as a source of information, and these uses appear to explain its popularity much more than its utility as a way to shop, bank, or invest.
- Although the downturn in the dot-com economy has somewhat reduced the public’s view of the Internet as “an engine of growth,” it has not reduced the overall popularity of the Internet or altered its dominant image for the public as a source of information. A re-testing of key

questions regarding the Internet's popularity and images in June 2001 found no significant change in the favorability rating of the Internet relative to the previous year, and no change in the dominant view of the Internet as being more like a library than other possible metaphors.

CONCERNS ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

- Despite the Internet's popularity, the public, along with Internet experts, believes current governance institutions could do more to reflect the public interest, ensure accountability, and address on-line problems – from privacy concerns, to worries about pornography and violence, to questions about the quality and cost of Internet connections. Nearly half of the public, 47 percent, sees the Internet as a “source of worry.” Nearly half of all Internet experts, 47 percent, say that existing institutions that make rules regarding the Internet are doing a just fair or poor job of reflecting the public's interest.
- People are also concerned about the accuracy of information on the Internet. By a strong 70-23 percent margin, most respondents say, “you have to question the truthfulness of most things you read on the Internet” (as opposed to, “you can trust most things you read on the Internet”). While many participants in our focus groups note that they bring a similar skepticism to bear on information they find in the off-line world, the need for means to filter out unwanted on-line content and verify on-line information comes up repeatedly in the groups.
- Americans have doubts about whether they are able to hold other people accountable for their actions and words on-line, or to hold accountable those who make the rules that govern the Internet. The public is split on whether they see the Internet as “accountable to the public.” Many of the groups with the most favorable views of the Internet, and who go on-line the most, also are least likely to view it as a medium that allows them to hold others on-line accountable. Moreover, while the overall popularity of the Internet has not changed over the past year, there has been a decline in the share of the public that views the Internet as a medium that permits accountability, from a 46-46 percent split a year ago, to a 42-47 percent minority now believing that the Internet is “accountable to the public.”
- The public is concerned about accountability on-line, in part, because they believe they have fewer rights and protections when they use the Internet than in comparable off-line activities. A 54-36 percent majority disagrees with the notion that they have the same rights and protections on-line as when they are not on the Internet. For example, by margins of greater than 2-to-1, the public is more worried about both government and private companies collecting information about them when they are on-line, compared to when they are engaged in off-line activity.
- This is one of the areas where there is a notable difference between the public and Internet experts. The experts we surveyed say by a 51-44 percent majority that people *do* have the same rights and protections on-line. In our in-depth interviews with Internet experts, however, a more subtle set of views emerges. Many of the experts say the reason the public feels it has fewer rights or protections on-line has less to do with the formal legal and procedural rights people have, and more to do with the limitations that the Internet places on people's abilities

to protect themselves. For example, some of them note, if a consumer goes into a local store, they can look at the neighborhood, the interior of the shop, and the store owners to get a sense of whether they trust the proprietors. It is harder to get such cues on-line. Other experts state that while rights and protections are basically the same on- and off-line, the sheer size and scope of the Internet increases the chances for mischief.

- The public seems baffled about who to turn to if they encounter problems on the Internet. Well over half, 59 percent, say they do not know who they would turn to if they had a problem on-line.
- Much of the public is also concerned about accountability on-line because they see the Internet as “impossible to govern.” A 49 percent plurality of the public, and a 53 percent majority of those who go on-line, say this phrase describes the Internet well. In the focus groups, most participants say they know of few if any formal rules that govern the Internet. Even more, they see the Internet as an “intangible” space, which makes it difficult to subject it to rules that might ensure accountability to the public.
- Despite the strong sense among many Americans that the Internet is currently ungovernable, a large share of the public is looking for ways to have more protection and control. Nearly half, 48 percent, agree that “the Internet will always be a risky place where people have to watch out for their own interests”; but about the same share, 49 percent, chooses the alternative statement, “people have to watch out for themselves, but with additional laws and protections the Internet could be a much safer place.”

TOWARD A PLURALISTIC MODEL OF GOVERNANCE

- The public, which is just starting to develop an understanding of how the Internet is or can be governed, believes a wide range of sectors, institutions, and individuals should all have a role. *In this sense, the public appears to be looking for a pluralistic model of Internet governance; they see specific strengths, but also drawbacks, to the involvement of the government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations.*
- The public feels that the average person should have some kind of a voice in crafting rules for the Internet, yet most also feel that they do not know enough to make a meaningful contribution. A 55 percent majority gives positive ratings to the notion that the public at large should have a voice in setting rules for the governance of the Internet. Yet a 53 percent majority – including 53 percent of Internet users – also says that most people do not know enough to play a part in development of such rules.
- In addition to wanting a role for itself, the public thinks a wide range of viewpoints and competencies need to be brought to bear in governing the Internet. When asked to suggest the members of a hypothetical national commission that would make rules for the Internet, focus group participants suggest an extraordinarily broad scope of names and groups, including Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, the Federal Trade Commission, and Interpol.

- In many ways, the public is wary of government getting involved in setting rules for the Internet. When the public is asked who they prefer to make rules for governing the Internet – private corporations and non-profit groups on one hand, or the government on the other – they express a clear preference for the former. By a 60-37 percent margin, the public says that “rules for governing the Internet should mostly be developed and enforced by organizations other than the government, such as Internet-related companies and non-profit groups” (as opposed to, “rules for governing the Internet should be mostly developed and enforced by the government”).
- Despite these reservations about government involvement, however, the public ultimately believes that government can give them the on-line protection and control they seek. By a 2-to-1 margin, 64-32 percent, the public says that “government should develop rules to protect people when they are on the Internet, even if it requires some regulation of the Internet.” This figure has only slightly changed over the past year. When internet experts are asked who should play the leading role in addressing a range of on-line problems, on all but one of the areas (“improving Internet connections and ease of downloading”), they say that the government, rather than the private sector or non-profit groups, should play the leading role.
- The public’s openness to government involvement also extends to taxation of on-line commerce – an area in which one might expect some of the greatest resistance to a government role. By a strong 60-34 percent margin, the public rejects the idea that on-line commerce should be exempt from taxation. Even many of those who might be expected to resist such taxation actually favor it, including 56 percent of all Internet users, 53 percent of all Republican Internet users and 60 percent of all Internet users with incomes of \$100,000 or more. The downturn in the dot-com economy in recent months has not significantly changed the balance of public opinion on this question.
- The public is eager to see Internet-related elements of the private sector involved in formulating rules for the Internet – especially the industry’s “technology experts.” Yet the public wants others involved as well because it has strong doubts about the ability of Internet-related businesses and individuals to regulate themselves. By a 58-35 percent majority, the public says it does not trust businesses and individuals on-line to regulate their own behavior – surprisingly, a slightly *stronger* level of doubt than the public holds about self-regulation for industries in general.
- The public responds very favorably to the idea of non-profit organizations having a role in developing rules for the governance of the Internet. *Fully 70 percent of the public assigns a positive score to this idea – a stronger rating than it gives to the idea of private or public sector groups or individuals having such a role.* The public believes that such groups are more efficient than the government, but also less self-interested than private companies. They worry, however, that such groups do not seem to answer to anyone, and may therefore lack accountability.
- The area of privacy provides an important illustration of the public’s views on the roles they want government, industry, and non-profits to play. Concern about privacy is high among both the public and Internet experts. They tend to favor a role for government that empowers

individuals to make their own choices – such as “opt-in” requirements for websites. The public is skeptical of the ability of websites to regulate their own behavior through privacy policy statements, yet they respond favorably to the involvement of non-profits, such as by acting as a “trust agent” to vouch for the accuracy, reliability, or safety of website practices or offerings.

LOOKING FOR NEW MECHANISMS, INSTITUTIONS, AND ACTION

- In addition to wanting a wide range of actors and sectors involved in the governance of the Internet, the public is looking for mechanisms that can enable them to have greater accountability from people and businesses on-line. In particular, the public is looking for mechanisms that will enable them to reach a real person, at a real place, with real powers to solve their on-line problems.
- In addition, our in-depth interviews with Internet experts point to a series of deficits that these experts believe undercut the effectiveness of many existing institutions involved in the governance of the Internet. Their comments suggest the need to remedy a “triple deficit” – a “democracy deficit,” because many industry consortia and non-profit groups are not sufficiently accountable to the public; an “expertise deficit,” because government and non-profit groups often lack the technical prowess to go toe-to-toe with the private sector’s technology experts; and an “agility deficit,” because government, in particular, tends to move at such a slow pace that it runs far behind the dizzying changes that characterize the Internet’s actual operation.
- The public and Internet experts both point to the need for efforts that try to give Internet users – especially young people – more of a sense of on-line individual responsibility. They argue that rules alone cannot provide the sense of accountability on the Internet that many people seek.
- Ultimately, much of the public and the expert community doubts the ability of the nation’s leaders in government and industry to develop rules and systems for ensuring more on-line accountability in the absence of some disaster that focuses public attention on these problems. They point to an “oil spill” model, in which action only occurs after a major problem. The challenge for public and private leaders is to develop better ways to give the public a sense of accountability *before* a major on-line disaster occurs that could imperil the substantial benefits the Internet now provides.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This report explores the views of the American public and experts about the Internet, with a particular focus on its governance and accountability. It examines how Americans view the Internet, how they believe it is governed, what rules they think should govern it, what protections they believe they have and should have on-line, and the ways in which they believe the Internet's operation might be made more responsive to their needs and preferences.

Some may argue that the public's views about the Internet, especially its governance, are too vague and ill-informed to be useful. As public opinion researchers, we disagree. To be sure, most people are not Internet experts, and the various debates regarding the Internet's governance – full of new words and phrases like “Carnivore,” “opt-in,” and “ICANN” – are just beginning to reach the newspapers, the floors of Congress, and dinner table discussions. That means that most people's views are still at a formative stage. Yet that is precisely why Markle decided to conduct this research now. They wanted to describe the values, preconceptions, and initial reactions that the public brings to these debates as they develop.

We recognize that many of the views we are measuring here are not yet deeply informed or strongly held, and we expect many of them may change over time. Yet policy makers and practitioners must bring the public along as they develop new technologies and consider new rules for the Internet. To do that they must understand what the public believes at the outset. So we are, in effect, providing a baseline for future research. We also suggest which of these views is likely to change in response to external events, such as the downturn in technology stocks, dot-com companies, and the American economy in general.

Our study finds that the Internet is tremendously popular – and this is one of its great strengths as a medium – but it also shows that the public has real concerns about being able to hold other people on-line accountable for their words and actions, and about being able to hold accountable those who shape the governance of the Internet. Addressing those concerns is important to preserving the popularity of this powerful medium.

This report is based on one of the broadest programs ever undertaken to explore American public opinion regarding the Internet. The research effort, which spanned more than a year, aimed to examine questions about Internet governance and accountability from a wide variety of perspectives. It therefore used a variety of research techniques:

- A national telephone survey of 2,393 randomly-selected adults, conducted from October 2-23, 2000. This general population survey is subject to a sampling error margin of +/-2.0 percentage points (at a confidence level of 95 in 100).
- A re-testing of several of the key questions from this first survey, as part of a June 11-13, 2001 survey, based on 1,000 telephone interviews of likely voters*. This re-testing is subject to a sampling margin of +/- 3.1 percentage points (at a confidence level of 95 in 100).

* The data from these likely voters were weighted to conform to the same demographic profile of the general population tested in the earlier survey, in order to ensure comparability.

- A telephone survey of 200 randomly-selected Internet experts, conducted from October 2-23, 2000. The sample was drawn from “The Complete Marquis Who’s Who on CD-ROM,” by compiling a list of individuals provided under the occupational categories of Internet, computer, and technology. These categories included, but were not limited to: computer engineers, computer programmers, software developers, computer educators, computer scientists, computer consultants, Internet specialists, Internet executives, Internet publishers, computer analysts, Internet service providers, computer security professionals, web designers, and software engineers residing in the United States*. The experts’ survey is subject to a sampling error margin of +/-6.9 percentage points (at a confidence level of 95 in 100).
- A national on-line survey of 1,049 adults, plus an oversample of 315 teenagers (ages 15-17), conducted from October 28-November 3, 2000. The survey of adults is subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.0 percentage points (at a confidence level of 95 in 100), and the survey of teenagers is subject to a sampling error of +/- 5.5 percentage points (at a confidence level of 95 in 100). The survey was conducted through Knowledge Networks, a surveying company that maintains a statistically valid sample of the American public and surveys them using Web-TV technology that it provides to participants in the sample. This sampling approach eliminates sources of bias (such as non-random distribution of people on-line, and self-selection by those who choose to answer the survey) usually found in on-line surveys.
- Ten two-hour focus groups, conducted from May 30-June 6, 2000. The composition of the groups, outlined below, was designed to reflect a range of demographic groups, as well as a mix of Internet users and non-users. Excerpts from these groups quoted in this report were drawn from transcripts based on tape recordings of the groups.
- Omaha, Nebraska:
 - Group 1: Women, Internet users, ages 40-55.
 - Group 2: Mixed gender, Internet non-users, ages 18-24.
- Atlanta, Georgia:
 - Group 1: Mixed gender, Internet users, ages 65-75.
 - Group 2: Mixed gender, Internet non-users, ages 18-24.
 - Group 3: Men, Internet users, ages 40-55.
- Scottsdale, Arizona:
 - Group 1: Mixed gender, Internet users, ages 65-75.
 - Group 2: Mixed gender, Internet non-users, ages 40-55.
 - Group 3: Men, Internet users, ages 35-45.
- Syosset, New York:
 - Group 1: Women, Internet users, 25-35.
 - Group 2: Mixed gender, Internet non-users, ages 25-35.
- Two one-hour, on-line focus groups, conducted on June 15, 2000. One group consisted of teenagers (ages 15-17), and the other group consisted of mixed gender adults residing in rural areas in the United States.

* There are other ways that one might define the universe of “Internet experts” from which to draw a sample, and it will be useful for other research efforts in the future to try other approaches.

- Fifteen, 45-minute, confidential, in-depth, one-on-one interviews, conducted between May 30-June 6, 2000 with a variety of prominent individuals who are actively involved with the Internet. These experts included Internet and computer entrepreneurs, academics, non-profit policy advocates, technology experts, regulators, and computer security specialists. The participants were recruited from a list compiled out of discussions with a broad range of experts on the computer industry, the Internet, privacy, and communications law. Excerpts from these interviews quoted in this report were based on transcripts of tape recordings of the interviews. In order to honor our pledge to protect the confidentiality of the participants, we have limited information that might suggest their identity.

In addition, the project has benefited greatly from the on-going input of a circle of Internet policy experts who commented on the design at various stages of this project. A subset of this circle became an Advisory Board to the project (see list of members in Appendix A), and reviewed the research instruments and research findings. As we express our gratitude to all of them, we want to underscore that participation in no way represents an endorsement of the research design or conclusions of this study.

As we interpret the results of this broad research program, we offer several caveats. First, we deliberately limited the scope of the research, with an emphasis on questions that focus on Internet governance and accountability. Some of the research focuses on privacy, because many privacy issues, such as cookies or identity theft, lie at the center of current debates about Internet governance. Yet a great deal of research already has been done regarding on-line privacy issues, and we did not want to replicate that work. Rather we focused most of our inquiry on some questions that mostly have not been asked before, regarding how people view the Internet, and how they believe the public interest should be taken into account in the Internet's operation.

Second, we limited the scope of the research to the United States. When we talk about "people" in this report, it should be read as shorthand for "people in the United States." We and Markle appreciate that the issues we explore here are, of course, global in nature, and we expect that views on these questions may differ in significant and important ways across countries and cultures. Markle chose to focus on the United States, not because it is the only body of public opinion that counts, but rather as a starting point for this inquiry. We and Markle hope that other researchers will join us in applying these kinds of questions to publics in other countries as well.

Third, we would stress that the qualitative elements of this research are inherently subjective. For instance, we cannot make great claims that the list of "Internet experts" with whom we conducted in-depth interviews is genuinely representative, although we selected what we believe is a good cross-section of vantage points. Similarly, our twelve focus groups were recruited to represent a variety of interesting and important groupings, from young professionals who regularly go on-line, to older Americans who do not. Yet the profiles we selected are hardly random or exhaustive. Qualitative research ultimately relies on making interpretations about what people said, and highlighting a small number of quotations from hundreds of pages of transcripts. For those who want to draw their own conclusions, we have posted all our focus group and interview transcripts, as well as the complete survey instruments and responses on-line at www.markle.org. The

only editing we have done on the transcripts is to omit some information from some of the expert interviews, in order to protect the anonymity of our respondents, as we promised them.

Fourth, as with any body of opinion research, this study reflects a series of snapshots taken at particular points in time. Some of the views we measure and report in this study may well be changing, and we hope others will join us in tracking the evolution of opinion on many of these questions. Our June 2001 re-testing of some key questions is intended to assess the impact of the downturn of technology and dot-com companies over the past year. But there will undoubtedly be other events that shape and change opinion regarding the Internet, and we look forward to future research that assesses their impact on the kinds of questions we explore in this report.

Finally, we have consciously not spent much space trying to define many of the key terms in this study, since – as in much opinion research – the definitions that matter most are the ones in the minds of our survey and focus group participants as they answer our questions. That is, we often asked their views about such concepts as “privacy,” “Internet governance,” or “accountability” without providing a definition – just as one often asks survey respondents whether, say, the President is doing a good job on the economy, without defining what one means by “the economy.” When respondents answer, some will think of jobs while others think of the stock market, but it does not diminish the value of the question. Our research – especially the qualitative research – gives important insights into what the public has in mind when they discuss many of the key concepts related to the Internet, as we discuss throughout the report, but in some cases we will need to leave these definitional questions to future research efforts.

In setting out our conclusions, we want to express our deep appreciation to a large number of people who helped to frame and refine our inquiry. In addition to our Advisory Board members, a number of people made invaluable contributions to this project. At Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research: President Alan J. Quinlan and Vice President Anna Greenberg provided methodological guidance; Senior Analysts Pamela Hunter and Meredith Gilfeather helped frame the inquiry; and Analysts Molly Levinson and Michael Olander shepherded the management of project from start to finish, making contributions along the way to the analysis, writing, and graphic presentation. We would also like to thank Michael Young, Anna Rubio and their team at Edelman Public Relations Worldwide for the graphics and production of the final report.

Finally, we are also grateful to the Markle Foundation and its President, Zoë Baird, for their leadership in commissioning this study, and for helping to shape the inquiry and to deepen our thinking throughout the project. We want to acknowledge the particular contributions at Markle from Jim Steinberg, Julia Moffett, Andrew Shapiro, Stefaan Verhulst, Linda Ricci, Nancy Green, and Karen Kornbluh.

Stanley Greenberg, Chairman
Jeremy Rosner, Senior Vice President
Robert Boorstin, Vice President
June 2001