The Internet faced a number of new challenges during 2004. Among them were calls to revisit how Internet resources are managed. The debate on Internet governance—as it came to be known—started during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva at the end of 2003 and continued throughout 2004 in a new forum—the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG)—set up by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to prepare the groundwork for the second phase of WSIS in 2005.

The Internet Society (ISOC) found itself at the centre of many of these discussions, and its close connections with the organisations behind the development and administration of the Internet enabled it to bring together many of the key players to cooperate on the important task of explaining how the Internet works and who makes it work. The Internet governance debate meant that proposals that could affect the future stability of the Internet were being discussed at the highest possible levels in national governments. ISOC welcomed the increased interest and participation of government representatives and at the same time realised how much more needed to be accomplished in order to foster a common understanding of how the Internet works and how relevant organisations have contributed to make the Internet so successful.

During 2004 ISOC placed significant focus not only on active participation in such forums as WSIS and WGIG but also on related educational activities, many of them held with ISOC partners and specifically targeting decision makers. While ISOC has achieved a considerable degree of success, much remains to be done, and the continued support of all members, Chapters, and partners is critical.

These public policy activities further strengthened ISOC’s long-standing cooperation with such organisations as the Regional Internet Registries, the root server operators, and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and we were pleased to see that our combined messages were being heard, reflected on, and repeated by many individuals and organisations responsible for policy decisions in their regions.

Together with the Internet community, ISOC has developed and delivered educational programmes that support significant outreach and capacity-building efforts.
The year 2004 also saw a continuation of ISOC’s long-standing initiatives related to the development of a sustainable Internet capability in developing countries. Together with the Internet community, ISOC has developed and delivered educational programmes that support significant outreach and capacity-building efforts. An important goal of the programmes is that they become self-sustaining by means of a train-the-trainer approach that enables local communities to maintain, deliver, and further develop education programmes in their regions. Events such as the African Network Operators’ Group (AFNOG) in the Africa region and Workshop para América Latina y el Caribe (Internet Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean, or WALC) in the Latin America region are good examples of how this can work.

In June, ISOC held the first in a series of new workshops for country-code Top-Level-Domain (ccTLD) operators. The workshops, which continue ISOC’s long tradition of delivering network training to developing countries, were held in response to numerous requests for technical education as well as for help with best practices relevant to running exemplary registry services. ISOC’s ccTLD workshops represent just one of the initiatives made possible by contributions from the Public Interest Registry (PIR), managers of the .ORG gTLD. PIR supports and enhances ISOC’s mission and programmes by contributing to ISOC-managed programmes.

As the organisational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), ISOC is uniquely positioned to help policy makers not only understand the implications of Internet technologies but also build fair and effective Internet coordination policies that encourage the development of the Internet for the benefit of the people in their countries and regions.

During 2004, ISOC actively supported the IETF’s administrative restructuring process. By the end of the year, the IETF community had committed to the establishment of an IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA) within ISOC. An IASA transition team was formed to start work on the detailed implementation of the new activity, including the recruitment of an IETF Administrative Director.

Many of ISOC’s initiatives and programmes are made possible by member support. Organisations that realise the importance of a stable, accessible Internet help resource ISOC activities, and Chapters and Individual Members work to develop and implement ISOC-supported programmes in regional and local communities. Members are very important to ISOC, and ISOC thanks every one for their valued support.

There is still much to be done, and I look forward to working with all our members and partners worldwide in 2005 to build upon ISOC’s many successful efforts to date and to work toward a future in which the benefits of the Internet are enjoyed extensively by everyone, everywhere.