Internet Society (ISOC) Chapters create networks that connect Internet technologists, developers, educators, and policy makers and involve them in locally organized programmes and events that promote the core values of the Internet Society.

The Internet Society’s more than 85 Chapters bring together people who reside in a particular geographic region, such as a city or a country. On occasion, a Chapter may bring together those who share interests in Internet-related topics, such as the concerns of those with disabilities or those who have an interest in Internet development or public policy.

Chapters, which are organized on a volunteer basis by Individual Members, infuse ISOC with local and regional perspectives on developments and issues that affect the evolution of the Internet. That means a Chapter’s relationship to the Internet Society is, by definition, mutually supportive and interdependent. Chapters serve as local and regional ambassadors by promoting the mission and goals of the Internet Society; at the same time, Chapters provide the Internet Society with information, a regional context, and connections to local business, government, and civil society representatives.

Two thousand eight was an especially productive year for the Internet Society’s Chapter programme. In 2007, a high-level, multiyear, strategic plan was devised to help Chapters become more robust and active in their local communities as well as better able to defend the principles of the Internet Society. The result was a Chapter Development Plan, which outlined four key areas of strategic development: revising Chapter operational policies and procedures; enhancing and strengthening stakeholder relationships; providing tools, communications, and support; and funding support.

Integral to the plan is the strengthening of stakeholder relationships, which lie at the heart of any team’s effort to work more effectively. In 2008, the vehicle for that effort was the Sphere project. Named for its similarity to the geodesic dome—the only man-made structure that becomes proportionately stronger as it increases in size—the sphere concept has become a symbol for the Internet Society.

During 2008, the Sphere project supported five groups covering a range of topics, such as processes for consultation between Chapters and the Internet Society, mechanisms for creating benchmarks...
The peer-to-peer, highly connected, and interdependent fabric of the Internet infrastructure is a key characteristic of the Sphere project and an important benefit to Chapters: relationships are mutually supportive and without boundaries.

Progress was steady throughout the year and will continue in 2009 and beyond. Peer-to-peer interaction among Chapters increased measurably, and an increase in Chapter activity was noted.

The Sphere project reflects a philosophy that draws on the skills and talents of individuals and encourages a collaborative and multistakeholder approach to development, growth, and problem solving. A similar approach to collaboration and innovation—often referred to as the Internet model—is important to the Internet Society because it is at the core of how the Internet became today’s single most successful platform for innovation.

In December 2008, the Internet Society conducted a needs survey of its Chapters. The outcomes indicate that Chapter priorities lie in the areas of funding support, strategies for building trust and for improving two-way communication and collaboration, and enhancing support of the Internet Society’s activities in the areas of public policy, education, standards, and strategic initiatives. The results of the survey helped set the course for Chapter development for 2009.

We are pleased to report that in 2008, the Internet Society Chapter programme made significant progress in rejuvenating and revitalizing Chapter activity as well as in empowering Chapters to become vital members of the Internet community in their regions. Highlights from 2008 include:

**GROWING THE CHAPTER NETWORK**

Seven new Chapters were recognized in 2008, including ones in Chad, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Belgrade (Serbia), Togo, Colorado (U.S.), and Philadelphia (U.S.). The ISOC Delhi India Chapter was fully rejuvenated, and 12 other Chapters started the process of rejuvenation. See page 5 for a list of Chapters and locations.

**LEVERAGING CHAPTER WISDOM**

In 2008, work began on a Chapter handbook, a comprehensive resource and guide designed to capture and share the collective knowledge and wisdom of successful Chapters. The handbook will assist Chapters in their efforts to promote the mission and goals of the Internet Society, and it will offer guidance for Chapters as they continue to grow and become self-sustaining.
ACCESSING HIGH-QUALITY RESOURCES AND SUPPORT
In 2008, the Internet Society invested substantial resources to identify a product that would support both the Chapters in their work and the Internet Society in meeting its business needs. In December, the organization selected an association management system (AMS) that offers a single software platform designed to meet membership administration and Chapter organization needs. A Chapter Steering Committee led by Hans Peter Dittler of the ISOC Germany Chapter, worked with the AMS project team to define requirements for the AMS.

REINVIGORATING CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP
A growing and active membership is vital to all Chapters. In an effort to support growth within each Chapter’s membership, in 2008 the Internet Society began conceptualizing an events funding programme. The programme, which will be launched in 2009, will provide USD 2,000 for each Chapter to help Chapters connect—and in some cases, reconnect—with their members and recruit new members.

HELPING CHAPTERS SEE AND BE SEEN
As activities and relationships among Chapters and between Chapters and the Internet Society become increasingly supportive and interdependent, the financial pressures associated with Chapter delegates’ travelling to important meetings and conferences have built up. In 2008, the Internet Society began discussing ways to support travel funding for Chapter delegates on a competitive basis. The programme will be launched in 2009 and will include travel support to attend regional INET meetings.

Throughout the world, Internet Society Chapters are using their influence to increase access to the Internet in rural regions and throughout the developing world. More recently, Chapter leaders and members have been leveraging their expertise to educate business leaders, government officials, and stakeholders in support of policies that promote an Internet that is open, unencumbered, and available to everyone, everywhere.

Many Chapters work with government agencies and civil society organizations in their regions to leverage the Internet in order to grow their local economies and improve education. Some serve as watchdog organizations, working to protect the rights of Internet users and developers. Others are committed to building Internet capacity, particularly in underserved regions. With more than 85 Chapters worldwide in 2008, the Internet Society’s Chapter programme is more than a professional development tool; it is a powerful network of professionals and experts working toward a shared set of technological and public policy goals.

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INTERNET SOCIETY REGIONAL BUREAUS
When you join an Internet Society Chapter, you join a global community. In 2006, the Internet Society began forming Regional Bureaus as focal points for local activities, including education, capacity building, and policy initiatives. The Regional Bureaus work with Chapters, Individual Members, and local communities to understand and address local issues related to development of the Internet.

In 2008, the Internet Society announced the formation of the Regional Bureau for South and Southeast Asia, which joins the Regional Bureau for Africa and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

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Latin America and the Caribbean Bureau
Buenos Aires, Argentina
http://www.isoc.org/regions/lac

For more information about the Internet Society Regional Bureaus, see http://www.isoc.org/regions