IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO ASSIGN A SINGLE PHRASE FOR DESCRIBING THE INTERNET Society in 2009, it would be globally visible and regionally relevant. Achievement of those higher levels of visibility and relevance, both internationally and locally, speaks directly to the ongoing commitment and determination on the part of an organization that for nearly 20 years has dedicated itself to the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of people throughout the world. It also speaks to the extent to which the Internet and its associated applications and technologies are shaping—and reshaping—the world.

With nearly 2 billion users and growing, the Internet may be more deeply rooted in our lives than ever before, but its success has led to increasingly complex technology, policy, and governance challenges. The Internet Society’s mission is to ensure that those challenges get tackled in ways that safeguard the Internet model of openness and transparency and that preserve the Internet as a platform for innovation, social progress, and economic development.

In 2009, the Internet community took a much harder look at several issues that are at the core of the Internet’s continued success. Many organizations around the world began—in earnest and with considerable influence from the Internet Society community—to address the issue of a diminishing pool of IPv4 addresses by embracing the adoption and deployment of IPv6, the next generation of Internet protocol. With the use of social media exploding, with Internet-based financial transactions multiplying, and with electronic storage of personal information expanding, the Internet community found itself wrestling with a wide range of issues regarding online identity and trust—areas that the Internet Society has focused on and involved itself in for years.

The Internet’s success over the past 35 years has increased the need for users, governments, business enterprises, and other stakeholders to take a more careful and thoughtful look at the policy, governance, and regulatory issues that naturally follow technological innovation. Then they need to get better prepared to anticipate the impact those innovations have and will have on the lives and livelihoods of users worldwide. In 2009, the Internet Society engaged in meaningful discussions with many of the organizations that influence public policy in this regard, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Those efforts were complemented by increased visibility at conferences and meetings of the ITU and the Internet Governance Forum.

Through our continued support of the Internet Engineering Task Force, the Internet Society has recognized more than ever the need to ensure ongoing interoperability and technological innovation. Similarly, our decision in 2009 to provide financial support for the World Wide Web Consortium acknowledged the need to think more broadly about the Internet’s technological drivers and the need to embrace standards organizations whose missions dovetail with ours. And throughout the year, we made greater efforts to integrate our Organization Members, Individual Members, and Chapters into the work of the Internet Society, which has the benefit of expanding our perspective while increasing our influence.

Just as the history of the Internet is being written by the billions of Internet users and developers who are online today, the future of the Internet will be written by the billions more who have yet to join the vast network of Internet users, developers, and innovators. Their future—and ours—will depend on the work we do as a community to ensure the Internet truly is for everyone.

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HERE AT THE INTERNET SOCIETY WE OFTEN USE THE TERM INTERNET COMMUNITY to describe the countless individuals, enterprises, and nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations that contribute to the smooth operation and overall functionality of the Internet. As I look back on the past year, it is clear that our achievements are truly the results of a steadfast and dedicated community of Organization Members, Individual Members, Chapters, and partners coming together around shared values and principles to support the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet.

By any measure, the Internet Society ended the year stronger and better prepared for future challenges than at any time in our history. Among our strategic objectives, two of the primary goals in 2009 were to increase the understanding of the nature and importance of the Internet model and to bring additional visibility to and engender support for the organizations, stakeholders, services, and values that constitute the Internet ecosystem (see page 15). Clearly our efforts paid off. Time and again, our contributions were noted by policy makers and referenced so often in the private and public sectors that there can be no doubt we had a significant impact on many policy discussions and decisions.

Our achievements in 2009 took many forms. We worked more closely with Chapters, Members, and other local and regional partners to build capacity in developing economies. We also engaged in global activities that strengthened our reputation as a trusted and authoritative voice on critical Internet policy and technology issues. We expanded our activities dedicated to grooming new Internet leaders, increased engagement with all Members, promoted intelligent approaches to increased security on and confidence in the Internet, took the next step in our regionalization efforts, and—through policy, advocacy, and outreach to traditional and new communities alike—advocated an open, transparent, and unencumbered Internet.

Additions to the Internet Society staff enabled us to provide greater support for international, regional, and local activities wherein technology developers, policy makers, business enterprises, and other stakeholders came together to shape the future of the Internet. A new series of panel discussions, the writing of briefing papers, and other activities dedicated to improving the Internet through, for example, advocating for the adoption and deployment of IPv6, informing the debate on managing bandwidth (also known as Net neutrality), and advancing an understanding of developments in the Trust and Identity arenas were launched in 2009. Those efforts helped us bring into sharper focus certain issues that are critical to the future of the Internet. The return on that investment has been significant. Today, more business enterprises, organizations, users, and other stakeholders are embracing ISOC’s mission, values, and vision than ever before.

Finally, on behalf of the Internet Society staff and Board of Trustees, I want to express our appreciation and gratitude to our Organization Members, Individual Members, other funders, Chapters, and the Public Interest Registry. Their contributions made it possible for us to support not only the aforementioned activities but also the technical standards work of the Internet Engineering Task Force and the World Wide Web Consortium in those entities’ efforts to build the next-generation Internet leaders programme and to organize regional meetings that helped build technical skills and capacity locally throughout the world.

Without a doubt, 2009 was an extraordinary year. We thank you for your continued support and partnership and look forward to working together even more closely in the years to come.

Foreword | Lynn St.Amour | President and CEO