Department of Media and Communications public lecture

Children's Rights in the Digital Age

Professor Sonia Livingstone
Professor of Social Psychology, Department of Media and Communications, LSE
Project Director, EU Kids Online

Professor Nick Couldry
Chair, LSE

Professor Robin Mansell
Professor of New Media and the Internet
LSE

John Carr
Member, Executive Board of the UK Council on Child Internet Safety

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSEchildrights
EU Kids Online
Findings · methods · recommendations
Tim Berners-Lee calls for internet bill of rights to ensure greater privacy

The inventor of the world wide web has warned that the freedom of the internet must be protected and respected.

The internet can only be a tool to empower people, he said, if the rights within this Charter are protected and respected.

A pioneering bill protecting individual rights and freedom of the internet has been approved by Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies, being seen as a significant step towards becoming law.

Known as the Marco Civil - or Bill of Rights - it will ensure expression, the right to privacy and the principle of net neutrality must still be approved in the Brazilian Senate before signed into law, the Latin Post news website reports.

Internet ‘bills of rights’
What about children’s experiences?
Key questions

- Conditions of access and use in daily life?
- Greater opportunities for information, education, participation?
- Compounds or adds new risks of harm?
- Effective initiatives, policies and practices?
Ladder of online opportunities

Daily online activities of European 9-16 year olds
Net Children Go Mobile 2014

8% spent time in a virtual world
14% read/watched the news online
15% posted a message on a website
17% posted content to share with others
29% used the internet for school work
31% checked information out of curiosity
53% watched video clips, 53% visited a social network
Diverse risks bother children online

- When strangers message me on the internet, sex sites that open without me clicking on them. (boy, 10, Austria)
- Violence against women and children and perverted humiliations and cruelty. (girl, 14, Germany)
- Showing images of physical violence, torture and suicide images. (girl, 12, Slovenia)
- Propositions to meet from people whom I do not know. (boy, 12, Poland)
- Animal cruelty, adults hitting kids. (girl, 9, Denmark)
- A mate showed me once a video about an execution. It was not fun, but insane. I get scared. (boy, 15, Sweden)
- Those things that show other people's suffering or torment as a funny thing. (boy, 14, Hungary)
- See people having sex or naked people. (boy, 10, Portugal)
- Scary things - I saw something at my friend's house and I can't get it out of my head. (boy, 11, Ireland)
- Facebook shows scary things even if you click on something that does not look or sound scary. (girl, 9, UK)
- To take a photo of me without my knowledge and upload it to an inappropriate website. (girl, 10, Bulgaria)
- I was shocked seeing a starving African child who was going to die and a condor waiting to eat him. (girl, 13, Turkey)
Media anxieties

---

**Generation Xbox**

Health  Half of Britain’s seven-year-olds do not do enough exercise, according to new research. The study, by University College London, of 6,500 primary pupils found the number playing sport has dropped to its lowest level for five years despite last year’s Olympic Games.

---

**Fears for children’s safety on Facebook**

Social network giant opens profiles to strangers

---

**Cyber-bullying now just a part of life, believe most children**

---

**Schools chief urges iBan for the under-11s**

---

**Thousands of British children caught in web of online blackmail**

Overseas paedophiles target UK teenagers in fast-growing trend combining extortion, cyber-bullying and sex abuse
“On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog.”
What differences does the digital make?

- Networked
- Interactive
- Persistent
- Ubiquitous
When children’s social environment is no longer only physical but also digital, then that’s got to have an impact on almost every aspect of their lives...

If there were a CRC for the Digital Age and a series of policy recommendations that we could put in place to governments that say these are [what] you need to do to ensure that young people’s engagement is constructive rather than destructive or worrying, then that would be a hell of a good start.

(UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office)

Protection from any kind of discrimination (Art. 2), all forms of abuse and neglect (Art. 19), including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Art. 34), and other forms of exploitation prejudicial to the child’s welfare (Art. 36), from ‘information and material injurious to the child’s well-being’ (Art. 17e), ‘arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, or correspondence [and] unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation’ (Art. 16)

Provision to support children’s rights to life and development (Art. 6), to preserve his or her identity (Art. 8), to an education to support the development of their full potential (Art. 28) and prepare them ‘for responsible life in a free society’ (Art. 29), to recreation and leisure appropriate to their age (Art. 31), to diverse material of social and cultural benefit to the child (including minorities) to promote children’s well-being (Art. 17) and all appropriate measures for recovery from neglect, exploitation or abuse (Art. 39)

Participation: ‘In all actions concerning children... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration’ (Art. 3), including the right of children to be consulted in all matters affecting them (Art. 12), to freedom of expression (Art. 13), freedom of thought (Art. 14), of association and assembly (Art. 15), to information (Art. 17) and to participate fully in cultural life (Art. 31)
### CRC

**Protection** from any kind of discrimination (Art. 2), all forms of abuse and neglect (Art. 19), including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Art. 34), and other forms of exploitation prejudicial to the child’s welfare (Art. 36), from ‘information and material injurious to the child’s well-being’ (Art. 17e), ‘arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, or correspondence [and] unlawful attacks on his/her honour and reputation’ (Art. 16)

**Provision** to support children’s rights to life and development (Art. 6), to preserve his or her identity (Art. 8), to an education to support the development of their full potential (Art. 28) and prepare them ‘for responsible life in a free society’ (Art. 29), to recreation and leisure appropriate to their age (Art. 31), to diverse material of social and cultural benefit to the child (incl. minorities) to promote children’s well-being (Art. 17) and measures for recovery from neglect, exploitation or abuse (Art. 39)

**Participation:** ‘In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration’ (Art. 3), incl. the right of children to be consulted in all matters affecting them (Art. 12), to freedom of expression (Art. 13), freedom of thought (Art. 14), of association and assembly (Art. 15), to information (Art. 17) and to participate fully in cultural life (Art. 31)

---

### Issues arising in the digital age

- Sexual grooming and sexual exploitation
- Creation and distribution of child abuse images
- Online dimensions of child trafficking
- New threats to privacy, identity and reputation
- Availability of (diverse, extreme) pornography
- Personal data exploitation, misuse, tracking
- Hostility, hate and bullying content and conduct
- Persuasion re: self-harm, suicide, pro-anorexia, drugs

- Formal and informal learning resources and curricula
- Wealth of accessible and specialised information
- Opportunities for creativity, exploration, expression
- Digital and information skills and literacies
- Ways to counter traditional inequalities or problems
- Expanded array of entertainment and leisure choices
- Access to/representation in own culture and heritage

- Enhanced connections and networking opportunities
- Scalable ways of consulting children about governance
- User-friendly fora for child/youth voice and expression
- Child-led initiatives for local and global change
- Peer-2-peer connections for sharing and collaboration
- Recognition of child rights and responsibilities
Percentage of individuals using the Internet,
Individuals using the Internet, total and percentage

- Developing (in millions)
- Developed (in millions)
- World (%)


Millions:
- 2007: 200
- 2008: 230
- 2009: 280
- 2010: 340
- 2011: 400
- 2012: 450
- 2013: 500
- 2014*: 550

Percentage:
- 2005: 5%
- 2006: 10%
- 2007: 15%
- 2008: 20%
- 2009: 25%
- 2010: 30%
- 2011: 35%
- 2012: 40%
- 2013: 45%
- 2014*: 50%
The nature of internet use is changing
A wider evidence base
25 year anniversaries in 2014
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CRC</strong></th>
<th><strong>Evidence</strong></th>
<th><strong>Internet Rights &amp; Principles Coalition stresses...</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Protection** from any kind of discrimination (Art.2), all forms of abuse and neglect (Art. 19), including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Art. 34), and other forms of exploitation prejudicial to the child’s welfare (Art. 36), from ‘information and material injurious to the child’s well-being’ (Art. 17e), ‘arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, or correspondence [and] unlawful attacks on his/ her honour and reputation’ (Art. 16) | • Sexual exploitation  
• Child abuse images  
• Child trafficking  
• Threats to privacy  
• Pornography  
• Personal data exploitation  
• Hostility, hate, bullying  
• Self-harm, suicide, pro-anorexia | • Dignity must be respected, protected, fulfilled online  
• Privacy, freedom from surveillance & censorship and the right to online anonymity  
• Control over personal data collection, retention, processing, disposal and disclosure  
• Protection against harassment, crime, defamation, hate (& for children, sexual exploitation)  
• Children must be free to use the internet and be protected from its dangers, depending on capabilities |
| **Provision** to support children’s rights to life and development (Art.6), his or her identity (Art. 8), an education to support the development of their full potential (Art. 28) and prepare them ‘for responsible life in a free society’ (Art. 29), to recreation and leisure appropriate to their age (Art. 31), to diverse material of social and cultural benefit to the child to promote children's well-being (Art. 17) and measures for recovery from neglect, exploitation or abuse (Art.39) | • Learning resources  
• Wealth of information  
• Creativity & expression  
• Digital literacies  
• Ways to counter inequalities  
• Expanded entertainment  
• Access to own culture | • Life, liberty and security  
• Access and use of a secure and open internet, incl. addressing specific needs of disadvantaged groups  
• Cultural and linguistic diversity on the internet must be promoted and innovation should be encouraged to facilitate plurality of expression  
• Education through the internet, to culture and knowledge online |
| **Participation**: ‘In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration’ (Art. 3), incl. the right of children to be consulted in all matters affecting them (Art. 12), to freedom of expression (Art. 13), freedom of thought (Art.14), of association and assembly (Art. 15), to information (Art.17) and to participate in cultural life (Art.31) | • Enhanced networking  
• Ways of consulting children  
• Fora for child voice  
• Child-led initiatives  
• P2p sharing  
• Recognition of rights | • The internet is a space for promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights & advancing social justice  
• Seek, receive and impart information freely, and to associate freely with others for social, political and cultural purposes |
“On Facebook, 273 people know I’m a dog. The rest can only see my limited profile.”
Questioning rights

“There is no way to move from announcing formal entitlements to securing real conditions for their enjoyment without acknowledging different possible paths and controversial political choices.”
(Samuel Moyn, 2011)

“We must critically examine “the intended and unintended consequences of developing legislation, policies and programmes in the name of children’s rights.”
(Karl Hanson, 2014)

“Child protection arguments are part of a new pattern in which children are increasingly used to justify restrictions not only on their access to information, but also on the rights of adults.”
(Frank La Rue, 2014)

“States parties are no longer just given the option to pursue policies and practices that are beneficial to children – they are required to do so as a legal obligation.”
Yet “Governments around the world continue to violate the rights of children on a widespread and systematic basis, and they do so with impunity.”
(UNICEF’s 25 year review of UNCRC)
How the hell does Facebook know I’m a dog?
Children’s views

- Access to digital media is a fundamental right and lack of access is often children’s main problem.

- Children’s digital media uses are generally positive and have much in common worldwide.

- The offline/online binary has been transcended by a diversity of communicative modes & contexts.

- ICT are the means by which children exercise rights to information, education and participation.

- Literacy (digital, media, social) is fundamental to using digital media and so to exercising rights in a digital age.

- Children understand that with rights come responsibilities; they want adults to support and trust them in using digital media wisely.

- Children wish to be involved in policy deliberations to offer their expertise and engage with processes that affect them.
Thank you
ICTs for ‘development’ in Practice

Top Down

- Academic Research at a distance
- Imagined Citizen (child)

Contextual Situated

- Citizen (children) as participants

Technology-Centric Content-effects

- ICTs as tools – Video, Internet, TV
  Mobiles - Transformative Positive Social Change

Bottom Up

Mediation is multivalent

- Citizen (child) as homogeneous Audience/user
- ICT effects/impacts - Transformative Positive Social Change
1. Disparities in access *between* and *within* the global North and South

1. Social norms and value systems that discriminate against certain groups (e.g. girls) inhibit access

1. Internet as a vehicle for social inclusion

1. Need to acknowledge political and civil risks

1. Internet as a protective tool

www.unicef-irc.org

http://www.itu.int/en/cop/Pages/guidelines.aspx
Children's Rights in the Digital Age

Professor Sonia Livingstone
Professor of Social Psychology, Department of Media and Communications, LSE
Project Director, EU Kids Online

Professor Nick Couldry
Chair, LSE

Professor Robin Mansell
Professor of New Media and the Internet, LSE

John Carr
Member, Executive Board of the UK Council on Child Internet Safety

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSEchildrights