



*Media Awareness Network
Réseau Éducation-Médias*

1999-2000
Annual Report

May 3, 2000

Table of Contents

Letter from the Chair

Report from the Co-Directors

1999 - 2000 Board of Directors

Sponsors

Auditors' Report

Financial Statements

Mission

The mission of the *Media Awareness Network* is to promote and support media education in Canadian schools, homes and communities through an Internet site. Our aim is to encourage critical thinking about media information, media entertainment and new communications technologies, and to stimulate public debate about the power of the media in the lives of children and young people.

Profile

The *Media Awareness Network* is a non-profit Canadian organization that incorporated in 1996. It received charitable status in January 1999.

MNet's bilingual Web site provides information, teaching resources, community programs and discussion forums on a wide range of media topics – from a uniquely Canadian perspective. The site covers news reporting, media ownership, advertising, the media's influences on behaviour and choices, protection of personal privacy, online marketing directed at children, authentication of online information, and more.

MNet is a world leader in providing educational approaches to emerging new technology issues, and is committed to maximizing the positive aspects of all media for the benefit of children and youth.

Letter from the Chair

An organization's start-up years are sometimes referred to as the "entrepreneurial phase." This term aptly describes the exciting but volatile early years of the *Media Awareness Network*. Now, as *MNet* begins its fifth year of operation, we are entering a more stable building period. It's a good time to pause for reflection – to look back at why *MNet* was formed and what it has accomplished, and to look forward to where it may be headed in the next five years.

The *Media Awareness Network* was originally established in the mid-1990s under the auspices of the National Film Board of Canada. It was created in response to a call from leading Canadian education and parent organizations. Then, as now, many Canadians had concerns about the influences of the mass media on young people.

MNet was incorporated as a non-profit organization in August 1996, and the Founding Board was convened in November 1996 by its first chair, Government Film Commissioner Sandra Macdonald. The mission of the *Media Awareness Network* was, and still is, to support and encourage media literacy in schools, homes and communities across Canada.

In its first four years, the *Media Awareness Network* has developed three key strengths that will help it to move with confidence into the future: a world-class Web site; a strong niche in the education and community sectors; and a unique capacity to build innovative partnerships.

A world-class Web site: *MNet's* site offers depth and breadth of content unmatched by most educational Web sites. Its programs are designed to fit, in a practical way, the current *and emerging* needs of teachers, parents, and community leaders working with young Canadians. Its innovative Internet literacy program – produced in 1999 – will serve as a springboard for future programming that will help young Canadians learn how to navigate safely and wisely through the evermore complex media environment.

A strong niche in the education and community sectors: In the past four years, as media education has been integrated into core curricula in Canadian schools, our Web site has become recognized by teachers, principals, school boards, and education ministries as a trusted source of classroom resources. Increasingly, librarians, parents and community leaders are also logging on to the *MNet* site to find tools that will help them teach children to be media literate.

MNet's appeal reaches far beyond Canadian borders. I saw this first hand, when *MNet's* *Web Awareness* program was presented in Paris last winter at an international conference of telecommunications regulators. The tremendous response the program received there augurs well for *MNet's* future.

Innovative partnerships: *MNet's* third great strength has been its approach to partnership building. Working with like-minded organizations and individuals that share a common interest in the well-being of young people, the *Media Awareness Network* is inspiring a growing number of Canadians to help young people learn how to "read" the messages that are informing, educating, entertaining, and selling to them daily.

MNet's new *Web Awareness* program, for example, is bringing together the collective powers of organizations representing parents, teachers and librarians, to help young Canadians become safe, wise and responsible Internet users.

Since its inception, *MNet's* struggle for survival has been an uphill battle. The challenge, for the Board and the staff, has been to build both an organization and a media education program, with no secure funding in place.

Establishing stable funding for the *Media Awareness Network* has been a central goal of the Board of Directors. During the past year, we have presented this case to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the Department of Canadian Heritage, Industry Canada, Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, and a great many media and telecommunications industry players. We've had moderate success, but we

still have a long way to go. I sincerely hope that the year 2000 will see the establishment of an endowment fund that will, at long last, provide the ongoing core funding the *Media Awareness Network* needs.

Media Awareness Network has proven its worth, and created an enormous public demand for its programs. I believe that this new Canadian institution will serve an increasingly valuable role as Canada moves into the new converged media environment.

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the *Media Awareness Network* Board of Directors for the past two years. I wish the incoming Chair and Board of Directors success as they guide the *Media Awareness Network* into its promising future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fil Fraser', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Fil Fraser, C.M.
Chair, *Media Awareness Network*
President & CEO, Vision TV

Report from the Co-Directors

My fellow Commissioners and I agree that media awareness is an essential tool in dealing with offensive and illegal (Internet) content, and the role of the Media Awareness Network will no doubt be ever-increasing and more important for educators, parents and children.

Françoise Bertrand
Chairperson
CRTC

If Canadian schools are going to be connected to the Internet, we need to help students develop the critical thinking skills to deal with online content.

Marilies Rettig
President
Canadian Teachers' Federation

With MNet as a key partner this Web Awareness program will give our library substantial resources to make the next generation of library clients knowledgeable Internet users.

Barbara Clubb
Chief Librarian
Ottawa Public Library

Our fourth year of operation has been one of rapid growth in program development and partnership building.

Web site development

This year has seen an increase of our monthly hits from 900,000 to 2 million in March 2000, with over 70,000 individual users logging on each month. The site action plan for the coming year includes a site redesign, the databasing of site contents and the introduction of an MNet-hosted intranet for our users.

Web Awareness Canada

The highlight of the past year has been the development and launch of a new flagship program, *Web Awareness: Knowing the Issues/La toile et les jeunes : connaître les enjeux*.

The *Web Awareness (WA)* program was developed to help parents, teachers and librarians better understand the issues that children and young people face when they go online. The end goal of the program is to help young Canadians become safe, wise, and responsible Internet users.

Following extensive work with the WA Steering Committee of 23 national and Ontario library, education and government members, the *Web Awareness: Knowing the Issues* program was researched and produced during the spring and summer of 1999. The Ontario pilot was launched in October by Canada's new National Librarian, Roch Carrier.

The program has five components: a campaign of "heads up" speaking engagements on Web-related issues; three PowerPoint modules for professional development on the topics of online safety and privacy issues, online marketing to children, and verifying online information; partnership building with key organizations representing teachers, parents and librarians; a program to train master trainers from partner organizations; and a new Web site <www.webawareness.org>.

From the October launch of the *Web Awareness* pilot in Ontario, to the rollout across Canada from January

I am impressed by the strategic management of this (Web Awareness) initiative, the bringing together of all stakeholders to leverage their combined influence, resources and networks.

Emile-J. Therien
President
Canada Safety Council

Les renseignements que je lis m'aident afin de guider mon enfant sur Internet ou la télé... Je donnerai votre adresse à d'autres parents comme moi.

Carole Cloutier
secrétaire
Lac Mégantic, Québec, QC

Last year I discovered your site and "rebuilt" my media unit so that it would include some of the excellent lesson plans that I found on your site... Great job!

Kelly Hiltz
Teacher
Dartmouth, NS

En fait, le type de questionnement que vous encouragez chez les jeunes ne forme pas seulement des consommateurs avertis sachant déceler les messages et les intentions qui se retrouvent dans les médias, mais des futurs citoyens responsables.

Sophie Frenette
étudiante
Ottawa, ON

to April 2000, the *MNet* team and two librarian master trainers gave 88 information sessions, workshops and keynote presentations to over 3,000 teachers, librarians and parents. Thousands more have been introduced to the program through word of mouth, promotion and publicity generated through the press and radio interviews.

In the same period we received 77 requests for the *Web Awareness* modules from educators and librarians who expressed interest in delivering Web awareness workshops in their regions.

The response to the *Web Awareness* program has been consistent and unequivocal: Canadians have a high level of concern for children's safety and privacy online; and they are frustrated that there has been so little support, or sustaining information, to help them manage the interactive environment that has so rapidly been wired into schools and libraries. Our *Web Awareness* program hit a real chord with parents, teachers and librarians; responding to the immediate and widespread interest from across the country has stretched our small organization to the limit.

French Program Projects

The francophone team has been actively engaged in a number of projects, in addition to the new *La Toile et les jeunes* Web site and the production of two PowerPoint workshop modules. It is currently bringing to completion the first phase of the InterAgence Jeune Press (IJP) project with its partners. The new IJP site, comprised of materials on the Web sites of *le Réso*, CLEMI and Cyberscol, will soon be online, and young people from Quebec and France are already producing the first issue of their online newspaper *Enquêtes de l'IJP*, which focuses on the cultural diversity of young people in the Western world. This will be online before the end of the school year.

The exploratory project, *Actualité en classe*, which offers up-to-the-minute teaching units on the news, continues to develop with active participation from Quebec teachers. This project paves the way for the integration of media education across the curriculum, which has been sanctioned by the Education Reform taking place in Quebec. The project will be officially launched in autumn 2000.

L'orientation des activités de votre organisme semble complémentaire à nos projets. Nous gardons contact.
 Madeleine Coderre
 Association Canadienne des Professeurs d'Immersion

We have young children just learning about computers and the Web. I believe this will be an excellent site to help us to help our children. Thank you.
 Charles Sove
 Mechanic
 Windsor, ON

OTF has been consistently impressed by the work of your organization. In our opinion, both the MNet and Web Awareness Web sites serve as excellent resources for teachers, especially in this time of decreased professional supports.
 Liz Barkley
 President
 Ontario Teachers' Federation

We are grateful to the Media Awareness Network for undertaking this initiative.
 Maureen Kaukinen
 Superintendent
 Toronto District School Board

With financial support from the Multiculturalism and Official Languages programs of the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Montreal team produced *Faire face à la haine sur Internet*, a new section of *Enjeux des médias* that demystifies and explains the phenomenon of online hate.

This year the Coordinator of *le Réso* visited departments of education and school board officials in New Brunswick, Manitoba and Ontario, to promote our francophone programs and resources as well as the new *MNet/Réso* intranet.

Launch of Second CyberPigs Game

On April 6, 2000, Dr. Hedy Fry, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, launched *CyberSense and Nonsense: The Second Adventure of the Three CyberPigs*. Our newest game, designed for 9 to 11 year olds, helps children understand online hate and the importance of distinguishing between fact and opinion on the Internet.

Survey on parents' views of the Internet

With support from Industry Canada, Health Canada and HRDC, the *Media Awareness Network* contracted Environics Research Group to conduct a survey on how parents feel about their children's activities on the Internet. The survey, entitled *Canada's Children In A Wired World: The Parents' View*, was released at the British Columbia Internet Association conference on May 2nd in Whistler, B.C. and it is garnering a great deal of public and institutional interest. The survey was the first of its kind in Canada. A summary of its findings was immediately made available online.

Growing memberships

This past year, we welcomed a wonderful group of new members to our organization including the Canadian Association of Deans of Education, the College of Education of the University of Saskatchewan and four large school boards. The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) voted to become a corporate member of the *Media Awareness Network*, and ten of the CTF's provincial associations are now members as well. We've been pleased to welcome the Canadian Library Association, the Canadian School Libraries Association, the Canadian

I am also on the Faculty of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island and I would like to lead a push here to get the Media Awareness Network fully integrated into our programming.

Ray Doiron
President
Canadian School Library Association

This site is very comprehensive. I wish more teachers, public health nurses and community workers knew about it. I will list it as a resource in my manual and on my Web page.

Sandra Friedman
Educator
Vancouver, BC

Very impressed with the site...an excellent resource area for beginning teachers, as well as more experienced ones.

Farida Tavares
Teacher
Kanata, ON

Site très intéressant et plein de bonnes idées. Bravo pour votre initiative peu courante chez nous.

Stephanie Tancrez
étudiante en pédagogie
maternelle
Belgique

Association of Public Libraries and the Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia as new members. This demonstration of support for our work is an important part of our organization building.

Fundraising

The annual sponsorships we receive from Bell Canada, Shaw Children's Programming Initiative, Rogers @ Home, CTV and the CBC continue to provide us with an essential base of funding.

This past year, we've benefited from the efforts of an active Fundraising Committee chaired by Board member Linda Gervais. The committee has revised our sponsorship benefits, and renewed efforts to find additional corporate sponsors.

We were delighted to welcome Rogers @ Home as a Gold Sponsor of *MNet* in August of 1999 and we're confident that several more private sector sponsors will soon be supporting our organization.

In its May 1999 *Report on New Media*, the CRTC referred to the *Media Awareness Network* as an exemplary media education organization. Responding to this vote of confidence, a committee of our Board made a presentation to the CRTC Commissioners in the fall of 1999. This was followed by meetings at the Deputy and Assistant Deputy Minister levels in Canadian Heritage and Industry Canada. The results have been heartening.

We have now signed a multi-year funding agreement with Industry Canada, and are in an active negotiation process for multi-year agreements with Canadian Heritage and HRDC.

These multi-year agreements, along with our corporate sponsorships, allow us to begin to make the case to provincial governments for funding, and to start to build an endowment fund for the *Media Awareness Network*.

Only when our core monthly operating costs are covered will we be able to properly address the systemic challenges that we've faced since our incorporation. We need to institute long-term

*Excellent and comprehensive stuff
– clearly labelled and accessible.*

*Great background to inspire
thinking. Thank you.*

Janie Grace
Managing Director,
Nickelodeon UK
London, England

*Thanks to committed people like
you we teachers find useful
resources via the Internet.*

Peter Niederberger
Teacher
Berlin, Germany

*Premier contact très sympa, site
riche, nous reviendrons*

Françoise Lidove
professeur
Le Bourget, France

*Professor André Caron suggested
I browse and I am very glad I did.
You Canadians set the pace!*

Ruth Zanker
Teacher/Researcher
Christchurch, New Zealand

planning, increase staffing levels to respond to the growing demand for our services, improve our internal management structures, and invest in much needed office equipment.

International recognition

During the past year, we have received visiting delegations to our office from Vietnam, Japan, Belgium and France.

In September 1999, two members of the *Media Awareness Network* team joined a Canadian delegation to make presentations to the Eighteenth Pan American Child Congress. The same month, the *Media Awareness Network* was invited to participate in an international conference in Munich on Internet content and children, hosted by the Bertelsmann Foundation. In December 1999, *MNet's* new *Web Awareness* program was presented to a world summit of telecommunications regulators, in Paris.

Future directions

Before we move into our next phase of organizational growth and change, its essential that we take time to reflect on some fundamental questions about our organization, and to map out a solid strategy to manage the changes we are facing.

At our upcoming board meeting in May 2000, our staff and board will be engaging in a "visioning" process for *MNet*. What will be our role five years from now? Who will we be serving? In what directions should we take our program? How will our organization be funded? What management structure should we adopt?

The path we've traveled to get this far has not been an easy one. But as we contemplate the potential for growth, and the impact that our organization can have, we think it's been worth it.

Jan D'Arcy

Anne Taylor

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Best of the Web, NAWeb '99, October 1999

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