

IEC 2005 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

**INTERNATIONAL INTERNET EVANGELISM, THE POTENTIAL OF NEW TECHNOLOGY,
UNDERSTANDING LEGAL ISSUES AND A CHALLENGE TO LIVE WHAT WE BELIEVE**
www.webevangelism.com

(Chicago, IL) "God is behind Internet evangelism in a very real and powerful way," according to John Edmiston, Chairman of the Asian Internet Bible Institute and www.CyberMissions.org. Edmiston adds, "People do their secret thinking on the Internet," and because of that people explore things on the web – such as who Jesus Christ is – that they can't or won't explore in public.

Edmiston, one of the speakers at the September 2005 Internet Evangelism Coalition (IEC) Annual Meeting, said the Internet also offers enormous potential for ministry across cultural barriers, and that in many countries the Internet "is a more secure way to share the gospel than is the presence of a Western missionary." While the "truths of the Gospel are universal," Edmiston emphasized, "we need to be prepared for people who ask different questions based on their culture." The power of the Word of God on the Internet "has a 24/7 impact," but he cautioned Christians who share their faith online to effectively address cultural differences and not just present a "westernized" Gospel translated into another language. "The gospel," he concluded, "needs to be incarnated into each culture."

SENSE OF URGENCY

Walt Wilson, Founder and Chairman of Global Media Outreach (GMO) (www.globalmediaoutreach.com), challenged IEC participants to redouble the "sense of urgency" about their mission because, "You and I are the first generation to hold the technology to reach every person with the Gospel and to accomplish the task of the Great Commission." Wilson said ministries need to establish rules of productivity and measurements of deliverables because the rules and measurements are important to track what is happening and how people are responding to the gospel. For example, Wilson reported that through their ministries the gospel is presented online once every five seconds and a decision for Christ is made every 120 seconds. "What is our strategy to tell people about Jesus?," he challenged, "Will we act on what we believe?"

In the future, Wilson said the need will be for shorter content online with 60 second audio and 60 second video cuts being the norm. In addition he said while ministries should stay current on technology, Christians need to do a better job leveraging the technology that is already available because, "we haven't really even started using the full potential of the Internet for effective Gospel presentation." Wilson made the following recommendations for ministries interested in evangelism online:

1. Focus on things that think such as cell phones, etc.
2. Become an expert on search and search engines for search engine optimization.
3. Become very familiar with convergence among different forms of technology and communication.
4. Stay in the mainstream. Ministry can't lag behind technologically like it has in the past.
5. Learn how to tell the story of Christ in 60 seconds.
6. Become an expert in podcasting.

GMO is a coalition of Campus Crusade for Christ ministries that focus on evangelism over the Internet. Members of GMO include WorldLINC; Truth Media; Impact XXI; and Everystudent.com.

INTERNATIONAL INTERNET EVANGELISM NETWORK

A new collaborative project between the IEC and visionSynergy was announced at the meeting. The new effort establishes an international network of Internet evangelism pioneers who are creating websites focused on the non-English speaking world. David Hackett, Associate Director of visionSynergy, says the purpose of the new International Internet Evangelism Network (IIEN) is to create a networked community of Internet evangelism practitioners "who can share what they are learning, avoid duplication of effort, and give encouragement to each other." Hackett added that visionSynergy believes the IIEN will significantly increase the growth and effectiveness of existing and new online evangelism efforts.

visionSynergy has extensive experience in creating mission networks and mission partnerships between churches, agencies and organizations to advance global evangelization, especially among unreached people groups. The ministry hosts a networking resource site – www.powerofconnecting.net.

INTERNET LEGAL ISSUES

Tom McThenia, Jr., calls himself a "missionary lawyer" and encouraged the IEC to actively use the Internet for evangelism, but to navigate the legal waters of the Internet cautiously. McThenia, Legal Counsel for Campus Crusade for Christ, said creators, users and distributors of Internet content and media have intellectual property rights that must be considered. Internet ministries also need to be aware of compliance with regulations such as data privacy laws, he said, and that the very nature of the Internet means legal regulations from multiple countries must be taken into account. "When in doubt, ask," is one of the major guidelines McThenia says Internet ministries must now adopt in order to address many of the legal aspects of conducting ministry online.

ONE CLICK FROM THE GOSPEL

Karen Schenk, Managing Director of TruthMedia Internet Group (www.truthmedia.com), says their goal is to help everyone on the Internet have a chance to hear about Jesus. While their websites receiving thousands of emails each month, nearly 3,500 of them are spiritually-related. Online articles through TruthMedia sites address felt needs and always provide people with the Gospel just one click. Schenk says website visitors are engaged in the following ways:

- Mentoring, training volunteers to share the gospel.
- Prayer mentoring, sending prayers in emails.
- Discussion (message) boards, moderated boards where people can share thoughts and hear the gospel.
- Follow-up strategy, online follow-up for offline events.
- Online courses, topical and Bible study courses.
- Chatrooms, Bible-based evangelism in a safe environment.

Schenk says the anonymity of the Internet promises open doors to incredibly personal ministry – allowing Christians to talk with anyone, anywhere in the world as if they were sitting right beside you.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Allan Beeber, Director of WorldLINC for Campus Crusade for Christ explained the potential of a new Ministry Response Center called ARC/ASSIST and the opportunities it offers for evangelism. Beeber also emphasized the importance of each ministry online developing a Privacy Policy and a Terms and Conditions of Use policy, and gave examples of what they are currently using.

Debra Brown, President and CEO of Brown Governance challenged participants to use the IEC Online Training for Online Evangelists (OTOE) to grow an active Internet evangelism outreach in each local church. Brown shared how her church has used the OTOE to engage Christians in web evangelism, and the lessons learned along the way. She also reported on the success of the first-ever Internet Evangelism Day (IED) (www.internetevangelismday.com) designed to encourage and equip more Christians in online evangelism. May 7, 2006 has been chosen as the next Internet Evangelism Day. The effort is led by Tony Whittaker (www.web-evangelism.com) and endorsed by the IEC.

In reflecting on the 2005 IEC Annual Meeting, Dr. Sterling Huston, Chair of the IEC, says, "This sixth IEC conference was particularly notable for its international emphasis with Australia, India, Peru and the United Kingdom represented in addition to our close neighbor, Canada. Overall, the annual meeting again provided rich networking opportunities along with interesting and encouraging reports from ministries effectively using the Internet." PowerPoint Presentations and handouts from the speakers at the 2005 IEC Annual Meeting will soon be posted online at www.webevangelism.com.

2006

The 2006 Annual Meeting of the Internet Evangelism Coalition will be held in Chicago September 2006 (dates being determined). Meeting details will be posted online at www.webevangelism.com as soon as they are available.

Questions? Please email info@webevangelism.com.

INTERNET & CULTURE TRENDS, NEWS & LINKS

Report on August 20 Web Evangelism Seminar in Paraguay

<http://www.fancyber.org/evangeweb/seminarweb1.htm> Website in Spanish.

MISSION NETWORK NEWS: Internet in rural West Africa A Christian school brings the Internet to a rural city in West Africa. <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/7792>

COMICS AND THE GOSPEL: Cartooning for Evangelism and Discipleship
<http://comix35.gospelcom.net/>

BARNA GROUP: Technology use is rapidly growing in Churches

<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=199>

BRITISH LIBRARY: Turn the Pages An interesting way to protect priceless books while making them available to more people. You'll need Macromedia Shockwave to view the documents. And, be prepared for a slower connection. The pages also have audio and text explanation of what is being viewed.
<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html>

INFORMATION MAPPING: How important is a well-written email? According to Information Mapping, it's vital to job effectiveness.
http://www.informationmapping.com/im_aboutus/news/pressreleases/aboutus_pr080205.htm

CLICKZ STATS: According to America Online, nearly half of bloggers post personal accounts and journals rather than news, politics and gossip.

http://www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/traffic_patterns/article.php/3549576

BBC: So-called "e-democracy" efforts are springing up all over the UK.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4243110.stm>

BBC: The future of the Internet in China. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4237122.stm>