

INTERNET PRIVACY

As a Web designer you need to consider the privacy of your users and others when you create your site.

For example, if you are going to include information about others on your site you should think about how and why you are posting the information. If your site collects personal information from its users you need to take steps to protect the information.

QUESTIONS FOR WEB DESIGNERS

As a Web designer you need to consider the following questions:

Collecting Information

- Do you collect personal information? (Personal information includes any of the following: full name, address, telephone number, email address, etc.)
- Why do you collect the information?
- Is it necessary to collect this information, or could users remain anonymous?

If you collect information:

- What are you going to do with this information?
- How are you going to protect this information (from hackers, governmental inquiries, etc)?

Posting Personal Information

- Do you post other people's personal information online (for example, full name, pictures, etc)?
- Is the person aware that you posted his or her information online?
- Do you have permission to post the information? (For example, do you have permission to post a member's directory on the Internet?)
- Can a person "opt-out," or request his or her information to be removed?

PRIVACY LAWS TO CONSIDER

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - restricts the collection of personal information from children under the age of 13 by commercial Web sites. To learn more about this law visit: www.ftc.gov/privacy/privacyinitiatives/childrens.html

California's Online Privacy Act of 2003 - requires Web sites that collect personal information from residents of California to post privacy policies.

WRITING A PRIVACY POLICY

As a Web designer you should post a privacy policy on your Web site. The privacy policy explains to users what type of personal information you collect, what you plan to do with the information, and how you plan to protect the personal information.

When writing a privacy policy you should include the following:

- A detailed list of the information you collect (Name, address, email, phone number, etc).
- The way the information is used. (For example, “we collect your email address to reply to your inquiry.)
- Whether or not the personal information is provided to third parties. (For example, are email addresses sold to spammers or will someone else have access to the information?)
- How you plan to protect the personal information. (For example, is it kept on secure, password protected servers, or maybe the information is deleted.)
- A statement about children’s privacy - the safest thing is do is to not collect information from children under the age of 13.
- How an individual can access and/or correct his or her personal information.
- Contact information for the Web designer or company.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Sample Privacy Policy - A sample privacy policy provided by Better Business Bureau (www.bbbonline.org/privacy/sample_privacy.asp)

Online Privacy for Nonprofits - The Privacy Rights Clearinghouse provides a great fact sheet on privacy issues faced by non-profits. The sheet can help you think about how an organization collects information and what they do with it. (<http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs28-nonprofits.htm>)

Checklist for Information Gathering - The Privacy Clearinghouse provides a good check list for assessing information collection and use. The checklist goes beyond just the Internet to include other information collection practices. (<http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs12-ih2.htm>)

Protecting Your Own Privacy - Want to know more about how to protect your own privacy? Check out: www.consumerprivacyguide.org/