

As technology improved and Internet connections became faster, video and music became a crucial component of Internet exchanges. Web logs (or "blogs") have made Internet publishing possible for any user. These shifts further foster the possibilities for Internet activism, entertainment, and interaction.

[See also *Computers and Information Technology*.]

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INTERPOL. Interpol is a nongovernmental international organization that aims to provide and promote mutual assistance among nations' criminal police authorities within the limits of their respective national laws and in the spirit of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Representing police agencies from 186 nations in 2006, Interpol enables information exchange among participating police via so-called National Central Bureaus that are linked to the organization's central headquarters in Lyon, France. Founded in 1923, the organization has remained virtually unchanged in terms of its objectives of criminal law enforcement and its structure as a collaborative international police network.

History. Interpol was established as the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) in 1923 in Vienna. The commission was set up in response to growing concerns over the internationalization of crime, especially in the turbulent aftermath of World War I. The organization was conceived as a collaborative network to facilitate communication and enhance cooperation among the world's police. To facilitate cooperation, a central

headquarters was established in Vienna through which information could be routed to the participating agencies. Printed publications, a radio and telegraph system, and regularly held meetings of police representatives provided additional means of information exchange. The membership of the organization steadily grew, although for a long time it remained a primarily European organization. U.S. membership was secured in 1938 when Congress approved the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to join the ICPC on behalf of the U.S. attorney general.

The establishment of the ICPC did not involve the creation of a supranational police force with executive powers of investigation and arrest. Instead, the international organization was set up—and Interpol today still operates—as a collaborative network of police agencies from different nations. The organization was created without the signing of a formal intergovernmental treaty. Formal provisions of international law were explicitly evaded because they were seen as hindering efficient international police cooperation, such as in the case of formal extradition procedures.

In the years before and during World War II, the ICPC fell prey to the Nazi regime. When Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938, control of the ICPC headquarters went to the Nazi-appointed president of the Viennese police. A few years later the ICPC was incorporated into the SS security system and the headquarters were moved to Berlin. Dormant throughout World War II, the organization was revived in 1946 in Brussels. Renamed the International Criminal Police Organization, the organization's headquarters was relocated to Paris. The statutes of the organization were left unchanged from those adopted in 1923, except that the nonpolitical character of the organization was made explicit by incorporating in the statutes the exclusion of all political, racial, and religious matters. The political turmoil brought about by the beginning of the Cold War era, however, would soon have consequences for the international police organization. With the Soviet control over the nations of Eastern Europe that participated in the organization, the FBI became suspicious of the organization and formally terminated its participation in 1950. U.S. membership was from then on secured on an informal basis by an office in the Treasury Department. Having later reestablished formal ties, U.S. participation in Interpol came to be managed jointly by the Departments of Justice and the Treasury.

Modernization and Contemporary Focus. The name change to include the acronym Interpol occurred in 1956. Interpol's membership steadily expanded, but the organization would not play a leading role in international

police work. Revelations surrounding the Nazi past of the organization as well as the Nazi connections of some of its postwar leaders led to strong accusations against it. Also, while international policing activities expanded considerably during the latter half of the twentieth century, police institutions continued to engage predominantly in unilaterally conceived international activities, primarily by stationing agents abroad, or to work on a bilateral or otherwise limited cooperative basis rather than in a permanent multilateral organization. From the 1970s onward, Interpol made headway in organizing police cooperation in matters concerning international terrorism, but the organization was nonetheless often regarded as an ineffective organization and not widely trusted.

In 1989 the Interpol headquarters were moved to a new building in Lyon. With increased vigor since the 1980s and especially after several highly visible terrorist attacks in the 1990s, such as the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, Interpol stepped up its activities against international terrorism. In 1984 a new Interpol resolution encouraged the member agencies to cooperate on matters of terrorism, and by the late 1990s the fight against international terrorism was adopted as a central aim of Interpol. The events of 11 September 2001 led to a strengthening of Interpol's focus on terrorism and a strengthening of its infrastructure. A new global communications system was set up on the basis of a private Internet-based network of encrypted information.

Impact and Results. Reviewing the impact of Interpol, the organization has a distinct but limited function in maintaining an international information network among police that is wholly dependent on the participation of the various member agencies. Technologically advanced systems of information exchange were set up and participating police agencies linked via the Interpol headquarters, which functions as a central clearinghouse, yet sensitive police information, such as in the area of terrorism, is not always readily shared. Also, the police agencies of some nations are not technically equipped to participate in international communications, as the necessary computerized infrastructure, personnel, and finances are not always available.

A central advantage of Interpol is its broad multilateral reach across the world, including police from countries that are ideologically diverse and politically not always on the best of the terms. Interpol ensures cooperation in criminal matters over which concerns are shared internationally. Interpol has also given priority to certain international crimes, rather than seeking to accomplish many tasks for which it is not equipped. Specifically, Interpol

places a premium on cases involving drugs and organized crime, public security and terrorism, financial and high-tech crimes, fugitives from justice, and the trafficking of human beings. Inasmuch as the police agencies from different nations across the world can reach a common understanding about the nature of these crimes and the means to combat them, Interpol can aid in instituting effective ways to combat international crime through mutual cooperation.

[See also Police.]

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INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE. In his 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article "The Clash of Civilizations?" Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University argued that different civilizations are defined by "common objective elements." Through such "objective elements" as language, history, and religion, members of a civilization are imbued with a civilizational consciousness that encompasses their particular views on a range of subjects—a consciousness that they hold in common with fellow members of their civilization. The article identifies distinct Western, Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist, and Orthodox civilizations. Of particular importance for Huntington are the "objective" differences between the Western and Islamic civilizations, which have, according to the argument, driven conflict between Westerners and Muslims from the time of the Arab conquest, through the Crusades, the rise of the Ottoman Empire, and the colonial era, all the way to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A vigorous critique of Huntington's article emerged swiftly in academic circles, focusing on how the clash theory characterizes (or mischaracterizes) civilizations as monolithic entities. This critique rejects the notion of Muslim-Christian conflict as inevitable and suggests that sectarian violence is far from endemic. Central to this critique is the idea of the individual's diverse social identities. Stepping beyond the language of intractability embedded in religious texts, the critics of Huntington