

THE FACTS ABOUT CRAIGSLIST

Most of us can read the writing on the wall; we just assume it's addressed to someone else. ~Ivern Ball

1. Craigslist site exhibits local classifieds and forums for 450 cities worldwide, in all 50 US states and over 50 countries.
2. Craigslist gets more than 8 billion page views per month.
3. More than 25 million people each month use craigslist.
4. Craigslist users self-publish more than 20 million new classified ads each month.
5. Within the craigslist classified "Service" section is the "Erotic Services" site.

TRUTH: There have been numerous accounts of child prostitution on craigslist's "erotic services" site.

6. Every 10 days there are 25,000 new ads posted in the erotic services section.

TRUTH: The frequency in which pimps and child sex traffickers post on this site make it a common resource for police investigating potential child traffickers.

7. Craigslist has a "prohibited or restricted items" section which contains a partial list of items the sale of which is not permitted on craigslist. First on the list of these items is "obscene material or child pornography."

TRUTH: In November 2005 a California woman attempted to pimp her 4 year old daughter by posting an ad in the "Erotic Services" section of craigslist. This ad went unnoticed by craigslist personnel until they were contacted by police investigating the case.

8. No registration is required to post on the craigslist "Erotic Service" site, therefore users may post ads anonymously.

TRUTH: While there are other classified advertising sites on the Internet, Craigslist is one of the most commonly used to solicit prostitution because it's free, anonymous and the Web site's operators say they depend on viewers to police content.

9. Under the "Limitations of Liability" section it states in relevant part that: "under no circumstances shall craigslist be liable for direct, indirect, incidental, special, consequential or exemplary damages (even if craigslist has been advised of the possibility of such damages), resulting from any aspect of your use of the craigslist site or the service, whether the damages arise from use or misuse of the craigslist site or the service, or the interruption, suspension, modification, alteration or termination of the craigslist site or the service."

TRUTH: The Communications Decency Act of 1996, designed to promote free speech, protects Craigslist from liability for the content of its visitors. However, despite the protections of current law, Craigslist has still went out of its way to establish clear guidelines to protect itself. The same efforts should be made to protect its users.

10. Under its "Violation of Terms and Liquidated Damages" section, craigslist explains the minimal mechanisms it has in place for regulating postings. It states as follows: "please report any violations of the TOU, by flagging the posting(s) for review, or by emailing to: abuse@craigslist.org. Our failure to act with respect to a breach by you or others does not waive our right to act with respect to subsequent or similar breaches.... If you post Content in violation of the TOU...you agree to pay craigslist one hundred dollars (\$100) for each Item of Content posted. In its sole discretion, craigslist may elect to issue a warning before assessing damages.

TRUTH: Craigslist president Jim Buckmaster has stated that its 24-person staff could not possibly monitor the listings at all times, and that he relies on viewers to flag such ads for inspection. Perhaps if craigslist enforced its policy and imposed the \$100 fines on violators it could use the money collected to hire additional staff to monitor the site.

11. Craigslist explains on the "Flags and Community Moderation" section of its website, that the "flagging system allows craigslist users to identify inappropriate postings for speedy removal, while preserving everyone's ability to express themselves." It states that "by using the flagging feature located at the upper right corner of each post, you can take action if you feel a posting is inappropriate, by clicking on ...prohibited -violates craigslist Terms of Use or other posted guidelines.

TRUTH: Accounts of attempts to flag "inappropriate" postings has mixed results with many users encountering "system error" when pressing the flag button indicating that craigslist's sole means of policing these sex traffickers is often defective.

12. Additionally, “if a post receives enough negative flags it will automatically be removed (only one flag per person per post is counted).”

TRUTH: While craigslist states that it regulates its website through user flagging, its chosen method is vague, ambiguous and unreliable. There is no way for a user to keep track of their own flagging efforts, as Craigslist does not state how many “flags” qualify for removal and how many simply qualify for review.

13. It also explains that “posters whose posting are repeatedly flagged are subject to staff review and additional remedial measures.”

TRUTH: Craigslist states that posts that are repeatedly flagged are subject to staff review, however, it fails to set forth the methods or standards of review.

14. Craigslist states via its feedback forum that it welcomes ideas for improvement.

TRUTH: Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta recently issued a letter to the owners of Craigslist – an internet network that features ads for lonely hearts and erotic services – stating that Craigslist is a prime source of human trafficking and exploitation of children. The letter requested the cooperation of Craigslist founder Craig Newmark and president James Buckmaster to institute reforms of the website that would deter sex crimes against children. In response, a Craigslist spokeswoman told the Atlanta newspaper in an email that she and CEO Jim Buckmaster are in Europe and "neither of us are aware of such a letter so it would not be possible to comment about this." Company founder Craig Newmark, who also was mailed Franklin's letter, no longer is involved in company's daily affairs and is traveling, the spokeswoman said.

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