

CHAPTER 4 – WEBSITE BEST PRACTICES – A PRACTICAL APPLICATION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 deals with the identification of SAPS website user needs. Overall it is found that for the SAPS website to meet the information needs of its users it cannot only meet the requirements for a website in general – as a police agency website it has other specific requirements. The user needs analysis in Chapter 3 specifically points to what type of content users require. This means that the information architecture and technology and website style must be applied in such a way that it presents the content optimally. It is the task of the website manager/developer and team to do so.

4.1.1 Police agency website best practices

In this chapter, the best practices of a number of police agency websites are evaluated. In this regard Gurton (1998/99:24) states that when implementing processes and systems, it pays to look at what has succeeded – and failed – in the past. This is what constitutes best practices.

An evaluation of online best practices of other police agencies is of substantial value in developing the SAPS website, in terms of both requirements for an effective website in general and also the broad policing purpose, i.e. service delivery. Based on such evaluation a further evaluation framework is subsequently designed to evaluate the SAPS website (see Chapter 5).

To determine best practices of the websites, the evaluation focuses on their content, architecture, technology, style, and service delivery. Service delivery includes the strategy of the website, i.e. whether the website meets its objectives – stated implicitly or explicitly – concerning the target audience.

To set about this, the following is done:

- The list of websites selected for evaluation is given.
- A website evaluation framework (see Tables 17 – 21) is applied to seven police agency websites.
- A questionnaire is compiled for the police agency webmasters (see Table 22: Questionnaire for webmasters).
- The data collection and reporting plan is given in Table 23. Subsequently a descriptive evaluation of each website and its best practices derived from the evaluation and the questionnaire are set out.



4.1.2 Objective of evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to determine best practices for an effective police agency website.

The websites evaluation will provide information in order to design an evaluation framework/instrument to evaluate the SAPS website. The evaluation is summative. Morris, Fitz-Gibbon, Taylor and Freeman (1987:27) describe summative evaluation as “ (nearly always) written and detailed with charts and graphs to deliver a clear, precise message”.

4.1.3 Selection of websites

Four of the seven websites selected for evaluation represent the UK Police Services, namely Essex, the Metropolitan Police (London), Lothian and Borders (Edinburgh) and Strathclyde (Glasgow). The reason for this is the very close working relationship between the UK Police Services and the SAPS. The two police services have numerous co-operation agreements and exchange programmes for police members.

While there are hundreds of police services in the world, from small to very large, the examples selected offer a cross-section of services that have to cope with similar situations as the SAPS. Regarding the UK sites it was possible to have personal discussions with the webmasters of three of those websites, as the researcher visited the United Kingdom in June/July 2002.

The last three, the Australian Federal, the Hong Kong and the Princeton Borough police agency websites were selected because of their locations; being from different continents. Princeton Borough, specifically, was selected because it has received five awards for excellence.

The URLs of the police agency websites selected for evaluation are as follows:

<u>Police Agency</u>	<u>URL</u>
Essex (England)	http://www.essex.police.uk
London Metropolitan (England)	http://www.met.police.uk
Lothian and Borders (headquarters in Edinburgh, Scotland)	http://www.lbp.pnn.police.uk
Strathclyde (headquarters in Glasgow, Scotland)	http://www.strathclyde.pnn.police.uk
Australian Federal Police	http://www.afp.gov.au
Hong Kong Police	http://www.info.gov.hk/police
Princeton Borough, New Jersey, USA	http://www.princetonborough.org

4.1.4 Expert evaluation

Hawkins (1979:216) defines an expert as “a person with great knowledge or skill in a certain thing”. Osterbauer, Köhle and Grechenig (s.a.) explain that expert evaluation of a website comprises of “a short description of a website ... assigning it an overall value”. In some cases the sites are evaluated “using a few criteria rather than assigning them just a single value”.

According to David Norfolk (Norfolk 1998/99:21), experts bring “a breadth of experience and insight”. The researcher has knowledge and experience in the field of website development, which has been gained over the past four years. This includes training in web page design and, as a police officer in the SAPS, the responsibility (assigned in 2002) of researching and developing the SAPS website. However, as Babbie (1999:412) cautions, “We need to realize that social science researchers are going to act like human beings, and we must take this into account into assessing their findings. It does not invalidate their findings; it just needs to be taken into account”.

4.2 Best practices evaluation

Based on the findings of Chapters 1, 2 and 3, and various website evaluation criteria and sources, a websites evaluation framework has been compiled to assist in assessing the best practices of police agency websites.

The justification for consulting the specific evaluation criteria and sources is their clarity and the comprehensiveness of their evaluation scope. The limitation of these criteria for this study is that they were designed to evaluate websites in general – they were not tailor-made to evaluate police agency websites. In an attempt to overcome this shortcoming, additional elements (among others, police-specific elements) that seem to have become apparent in practice are addressed in the evaluation framework. Some of these elements have been identified in the findings of Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this study. Others, again, are based on what may be described as common sense observations, by visiting various police agency websites and working on the SAPS website.

Authoritative sources consulted are Nielsen (2000), Rhodes (1999), Sammons (1999), and GCIS (2001), as well as website evaluation criteria compiled by various universities and other institutions (cf. Webpage evaluation sources consulted under Bibliography). Guidelines were also gathered from work on website evaluation done by the Giga Information Group (<http://www.gigaweb.com/mktg/wssc/default.asp>) – an acknowledged international IT

consultant, and the Urban Development Forum

(<http://www.urbandevelopmentforum.org/WebsiteEvaluation/KeyResearchActivities.html>).

The website evaluation framework is set out in Tables 17 – 21 on the pages that follow. It gives checkpoints to establish standards, key qualities and effective procedures.

The application of the evaluation framework to each of the seven websites evaluated appears in the annexures (Annexures A: 1, A: 3, A: 5, A: 7, A: 9, A: 11, and A: 13) to this study. The interpreted summaries of the evaluations of each website are given below (see 4.5 – 4.11).

4.2.1 Evaluation of website content

Table 17 Evaluation of website content

Website content refers to the meaning conveyed by the text and graphics.

GENERAL CONTENT	
Home page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it immediately engage user in contents of website?
Clarity of purpose (goals and objective)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is purpose of site clear?
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the mission of site been clearly stated?
Evaluation of main purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide text information? To make contact and get feedback from intended audience? Value-added services – self-service, on-line access to resources, etc.?
Press releases/ role player speeches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furnished and up to date?
Organisation structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organigram presented? Leadership presented, with photographs, if possible?
Calendar of events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furnished and updated?
Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigns and launches published?
User support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of user support on the site – help documentation, e-mail help, and fax-back service, etc.?
Authorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there links to authors of content and website team?
Content quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site content current, credible and relevant?
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language such that layperson can understand? Terminology clearly defined? Abbreviations defined?



General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject focus: broad context or narrow focus? • Comprehensive, timely coverage? • Intended audience clearly defined? • Breadth of coverage: Are all aspects of subject covered? • Depth of coverage: To what level of detail does it go?
Glossary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glossary for terms used on website? Glossary link on menu bar?
Where to find us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address given? • Physical location given? • Map given? • E-mail links?
Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the date/update on the home page, every page? • Date format consistent throughout site?
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content relevant to target audience?
Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is content new or old? Does content reflect topics of interest to the assumed target?
Clear and concise wording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and simple sentences, or characterised by dense, complex writing? Paragraphs short and to the point?
Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there references to other sources (print and Internet sources)? • Where information is derived from a print version, is it clear which edition it is derived from?
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are headings and subheadings clear? Easy to understand how information is organised on the site?
Quality control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence that information is checked and verified?
What's New?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the site include a 'What's New' section or highlight recent changes?
FAQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensively dealt with? • Updated?
Web strategy/policy/ aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available online?
Content of website in line with web strategy/purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/No?
POLICE-SPECIFIC CONTENT	
Police agency strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available online?
Hints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any given on safety precautions, etc?
Reporting crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic guidelines for reporting crime in emergency and non-emergency situations given?
Emergency situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice in case of emergency given?
Contacting the police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact details for the following: Reporting crime, other circumstances, local police stations, to join the police, e-mail contacts and site feedback?

URL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the site clearly identified – police service, country?
Vision and mission of police agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available online?
Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest crime figures provided?
Successes reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated information?
Community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of projects involving community?

4.2.2 Evaluation of website architecture

Table 18 Evaluation of website architecture

Website architecture refers to the effectiveness of the overall design, structure, and navigation within the site.

WEBSITE ARCHITECTURE	
Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home page layout simple, uncomplicated, uncluttered? • Neat? • Consistent look and feel throughout? • Is it easy to use?
Site organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site organised in logical fashion?
Information structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information chunked in digestible blocks. Coherent presentation of information – not too long or too short?
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can user easily find way backward and forward? Is structure apparent and logical? Navigation functions consistent across all pages? Move about without returning to home page?
Tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website clearly identified? • Available on search engines?
URL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives clear indication of police service? • Does each page have a unique URL?
Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External and internal links adequate? • Not too many or too few links? • Links back to home page from each page? Are links relevant/appropriate? • Each page ends with link to home page? • Linked information correctly linked? • External links well selected?
Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages follow on logically? Does each page begin with a clear transition?
Top menu bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does top menu bar provide links to frequently used pages/functions?



Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a background image, where present, overwhelm the page? Does it affect site's readability? • Do background and text work well together?
Site Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a map that provides a hierarchical structure of all the main pages on the website?

4.2.3 Evaluation of website technology

Table 19 Evaluation of website technology

Website technology refers to the use of specific technology elements, features and facilities.

WEBSITE TECHNOLOGY	
Scrolling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do pages require vertical and horizontal scrolling? Where pages are long, are there adequate navigation aids within the page leading to the top/end of document?
Search facility available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On home page? • On every page?
Lack of script errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all pages error-free in the most widely used web browsers?
Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does use of thumbnail images speed page download and give viewer choice as to whether or not to download full-size image? • Images have captions or identified in text?
Multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied?
Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an "A to Z index" available?
Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to understand and complete? • Privacy and security guidelines followed? • Alternative to form provided?
Downloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed information provided about downloadable material? • Alternative formats provided?

4.2.4 Evaluation of website style

Table 20 Evaluation of website style

Website style refers to the aesthetics – the appearance and visual appeal of the site.

WEBSITE STYLE	
Overall presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is site interesting and appealing? Is first impression enticing? Consistent look?

Readability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of reading? • Readable fonts throughout? • Optimum paragraph and sentence length? • Text not too big or small? • Not too much bold, italics, capitals? • Not too many font types?
Visual appeal overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do visual aspects add to page without distracting the user?
Legibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrast between text and background, font size. Limited mix of type styles?
General impression in keeping with purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the site project an appropriate image? • Efficient? • Home page designed attractively?
Use of graphics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the quality of the graphical images? • Do images enhance or distract from the content?
Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Font type and size clear and easy to read?
Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent look and feel throughout the web site – page colour, fonts used, font size, logos used, etc.?
Writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acronyms, jargon, and complex words? • Clear and simple style? • Content free of material that could be generally considered offensive? • Correct punctuation and spelling?

4.2.5 Evaluation of website service delivery

Table 21 Evaluation of website service delivery

WEBSITE SERVICE DELIVERY	
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are objectives concerning target audience stated? • Is it clear who the target audience is? Does website contain definition of target audience?
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is statement of purpose given?
Ways for user to make contact or ask details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furnished?
Interactive feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explained?
E-mail links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate?
Comment/feedback/input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged?
Relevant Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published?



Relevant publications /documents/procedures, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published?
FAQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate and updated?
Community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraged – e.g. to report crime?
Digital democracy (discussion forums, public opinions, online forms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this present?
Surveys on user needs (results available online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions on navigation. Purpose of visits, site aesthetics. Also type of people who visit the sites. Is it stated that aim of survey is to improve the site?
Usability testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this undertaken? Are results published online?
User-matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the website appear sensitive to the different user types?
Confidentiality/ privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this ensured?
Customisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is site customisable? Is it possible to uniquely define topics of interest?
Interactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does site offer users information customised to specific needs? Can users submit content to website? Can users subscribe to a newsletter? Are useful links given?
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any incentive for feedback?
Topical issues, e.g. danger of drug abuse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do they receive special attention?
Does website promote understanding of the police agency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes/No?
Contacting the police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact details for the following: Reporting crime, other circumstances, local police stations, to join the police, e-mail contacts and site feedback?
Contacting the police for reasons other than reporting crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it include contact details for general enquiries, data protection, joining the police, firearms and shotguns, help for crime victims and website feedback?
Reporting crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic guidelines for reporting crime in emergency situations and non-emergency situations?
Emergency service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are emergency users advised to contact a certain telephone number?
Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latest crime figures given?
Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigns and launches given?
Organisation structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is organigram presented, where applicable? Is leadership introduced, with photographs?

4.3 Questionnaire for webmasters

The questionnaire for webmasters was based on the following two considerations:

- Whether the website meets the requirements generally regarded to be important for an effective website.
- Whether the website is aligned with the strategy of the police service agency concerned, i.e. that there is evidence that it strives to meet the aims of the agency.

The literature survey and the analysis of user needs in earlier chapters of this study were used as point of departure in compiling the questionnaire.

Table 22 Questionnaire for webmasters

	Topic	Question
1	Strategy alignment	Has the website been designed and populated in accordance with the police service's strategic plan?
2	Policy	Did you develop a specific website policy? Is it aligned with your government's policy?
3	Guidelines	Do you have guidelines documents for your website?
4	Structure	Was the initial structure formally planned and do you still keep to that structure? What has changed?
5	Content guidelines	How was the initial content planned? Where is the content generated? What has changed?
6	Target audience	Was it developed with a specific target audience in mind? Who was that?
7	Usability	Have any usability studies been undertaken? If yes, what have the studies revealed? Do you cater for the disabled reader?
8	Survey (subjective experience)	Have you done any surveys among your website users on the impact of the on-line services, and what were the key results and changes effected?
9	Measurement (quantitative measurement)	Do you quantitatively measure the effectiveness of your on-line service delivery and what changes did that bring about?
10	Needs analysis	Are there unique requirements for an effective police agency website?
11	Ongoing development	What do you do in terms of ongoing development of your website?
12	Transformation	Are there efforts to stimulate growth from a static web presence to dynamic service approach? Please elaborate.
13	Promotion	How do you promote your website to the target audience? Do you have a measurement of the way it improves the image of the police service?
14	Publications	Do you distribute e-newsletters or off-line publications through the website?
15	e-Government efforts	In what way do you support the e-Government efforts of your government?
16	Service delivery	Can you name a few instances where the website directly supports

		policing service delivery?
17	Enabling the citizen	Can you name a few examples how the website enables the citizen to participate and support police objectives?
18	Investment	Does your agency have a strategy of investing in the appropriate technologies (supported by the budget), for continued improvement in service delivery?
19	Website team	Does your agency have a dedicated team for developing and maintaining the on-line services?
20	Content management process	Is there a well-defined process for generating, maintaining and improving website content?
21	The digital divide	Does your agency have a strategy for bridging the digital divide and how is that implemented? E.g., how do you assist people in remote and undeveloped areas?
22	Legislation	Are there any applicable laws and policies and in what way do you abide by these legal frameworks?
	Other	If there are any other examples or information that will support the above topics mentioned, please feel free to add this below.

4.4 Website evaluation

Evaluation, data collection and reporting plan

The objectives of the evaluation, the websites evaluated, the collection method and period are given in Table 23. The evaluation was done online, with the sites accessed from Pretoria, South Africa. Apart from the questionnaire for webmasters, no feedback was requested from actual users in the various countries. It is assumed that the experience of the website will be similar to that of the target audience, that is, users in the country or region that service delivery is aimed at.

The sites were evaluated in the time period stated in Table 23.

Table 23 Evaluation data collection and reporting plan

Objectives	Websites evaluated	How data is collected	Collection period
To obtain data on contents of each website	London Metropolitan, Strathclyde, Lothian and Borders, Essex, Australian Federal Police, Hong Kong, Princeton	Evaluation and personal and/or e-mail interviews	Jul – Oct 2002
To obtain data on architecture, technology and style of each website	London Metropolitan, Strathclyde, Lothian and Borders, Essex, Australian Federal Police, Hong Kong, Princeton	Evaluation and personal and/or e-mail interviews	July – Oct 2002
To obtain data on service delivery aspects of each website	London Metropolitan, Strathclyde, Lothian and Borders, Essex, Australian Federal Police, Hong Kong, Princeton	Evaluation and personal and/or e-mail interviews	July – Oct 2002

4.5 Website: Essex Police Service

4.5.1 Evaluation: Essex Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 1 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The home page is attractive and immediately engages the user in the content of the website. The logo for the Essex Police Service, as is stated on the home page, is *Taking the lead in making Essex safer*. The content of the website supports the efforts of the Essex police in doing so.

Overall, the content is neatly and attractively presented. The content reflects topics of interest to the assumed target audience. It is current, credible and relevant. The home page gives the date of update of the site (which is almost daily). One slip-up is apparent in the section “Unsolved crime” (which was last updated in June 2001).

Police-specific content includes guidelines for reporting crime, safety hints, information on mobile safety, community action and the Essex police authority. Press releases and the annual report are published online. There are details on how to join the Essex police. There is a special section for the youth.

(b) Site architecture

The location of the Essex Police Service website is easy to find and the URL is logical. The information is written and presented clearly. The site is intuitively designed in that the search for information follows an easy-to-understand pattern. The home page layout is simple and uncomplicated.

The website is clearly identified. It is available on search engines.

The website is not static. New information is published regularly and press releases are put on the site as soon as they are released.

The content is logically organised, with the home page giving clear pointers. The information is presented coherently – and it is neither too long nor too short.

Various information channels are offered, namely telephone numbers and physical addresses, although e-mail details are omitted. The webmaster’s e-mail address is given, but not those of other police staff. Interaction is therefore limited.

Navigation is good. The user can easily find the way backward and forwards. The structure is apparent and logical.

Both the external and internal links are adequate.

A search facility is provided on the home page.

(c) Site technology

Links are well selected. A user can easily return to the originating location. Once a user is searching for information it will not take long to find it. Most of the information can be found in three or fewer mouse clicks.

Downloadable documents are given on the website, i.e. the 2001/2002 Performance Plan and the 2001/2002 Annual Report.

Scrolling is limited – except for the Offbeat section the pages are not too long.

No thumbnail images are used. Very few images are used throughout the website and they do not distract from the content.

(d) Style

The language usage is good. Few errors could be traced, such as inconsistencies in spelling. The overall presentation is neat and interesting. There is a consistent look and feel throughout the site.

The visual appeal is satisfactory. The font size and type are clear.

The content is both readable and legible. Copy is well written. Paragraphs are short and to the point. In short, an appropriate website writing style has been adopted and this is maintained throughout the website. The subject focus is broad, but topics are not covered in great depth.

(e) Service delivery

The site offers community benefits (service delivery). It is easy for the user to find a broad spectrum of information on policing in the Essex county, including its structure and strategy. The latest crime statistics are given. There is a special section on community action and one dedicated to the youth with an online youth journal, known as *The episode*. There are also pages for younger children.

There are channels for reporting crime. Information on all the police divisions and units are given. There is a section on job recruitment.

The section on community action indicates how to make complaints about the police. There is a facility to make comments on the website as well. FAQs – specifically about firearms – are published. Users are informed how and where to lodge complaints. Further, the section “Essex police in the community” deals with domestic violence, victim support schemes and drugs. There is a page on “your concerns”. A stolen goods catalogue is published. These are all aspects indicating police involvement in the community.

Community participation in combating non-emergency crime is encouraged through the PITO initiative. PITO, the Police Information Technology Organisation in the UK, aims to support the UK police by providing information and communication technology solutions. It has provided a non-emergency minor crime notification system for use by all UK police service websites. This Internet-reporting portal is run by PITO on behalf of the UK police services. The system automatically forwards information to the relevant police service (see <http://www.pito.org.uk>).

The website also has a link to the Crimestoppers website. The Crimestoppers Trust works in partnership with the UK police. Users are requested to call Crimestoppers (telephone number given) should they have information on a crime. Callers may remain anonymous.

Feedback is not encouraged – except for giving comments about the website.

The website does not have printable online forms. Electronic transactions are therefore not yet possible.

4.5.2 Interview/questionnaire: Essex Police Service webmaster

(a) Personal interview

A personal interview was conducted with David White, webmaster of the Essex Police Service website in June 2002 (White 2002). White indicated that an outside web design company had offered to help plan initial content as a sponsorship deal. Three members of the media and public relations department had worked together to supply content. Deciding on sections within which to place content was the basis for the initial structure. Extra sections had been added since the launch. The target audience had been defined as the public of Essex with emphasis on young people. The site supported initiatives that follow the long-term and annual policing plans.

No website policy had been adopted but a style guide and procedural guide had been provided by the design company. According to White, development of the site has been “ad hoc”. Very few ideas are proposed from within the police service. He chooses key area based on service objectives that are fairly easy to achieve at low cost.

White further indicated that in June 2002 the Society of IT Management judged the site to be one of the top five UK police service websites.

(b) Questionnaire response

(See Annexure A: 2 for questionnaire returned from Essex Police Service webmaster.)

Webmaster David White submitted the following responses:

The Essex Police Service website has not been designed in accordance with the service's strategic plan. A website policy is in progress.

The built-in design of the pages provides the design guidelines but there are no formal guidelines. Initially PR staff planned the content; later on key staff members around the force started contributing. Responsibility for review and accuracy is with the content originators. Two full-time staff members maintain the website.

The website was developed with a specific target audience in mind: The citizens of Essex. Specific social groups are catered for within specialist sections.

Two usability studies have been undertaken. Both merited the site's simple, colour-coded navigation systems. No surveys have been conducted among users although much has been learned by the analysis of user activity via log files. The log files have shown a steady increase in visits to the site.

The need to present a united design among all UK police services website has emerged as a unique requirement for effectiveness.

To bridge the digital divide all essential publications and information continue to be published in the traditional manner. There are very few 'web only' services.

All content is monitored as it goes onto the site.

In terms of ongoing development of the site, the webmaster strives to improve the quality and quantity of content and the ease with which it can be accessed. The website team is making efforts to stimulate growth from a static web presence to a dynamic service approach.

The website is promoted by means of promotional material such as writing paper, posters and pens. The website team links with the PR department to actively promote the website on all promotional posters, leaflets and corporate documents.

Most corporate documents are reproduced online.

e-Government efforts are supported by attending national meetings of police web managers and by contributing to the communication group responsible for e-policing in the UK.

Policing service delivery is supported through the online crime notifications and also applications for jobs and subject access requests.

The police service agency supports investment in the appropriate technologies for continued improvement in service delivery.

4.5.3 Comments: Essex Police Service website best practices

The site is appealing and well organised. The content gives a user a comprehensive overview of the police service. There are special sections dedicated to community safety and the youth. Involvement of the community in combating crime is highlighted – through the PITO initiative and Crimestoppers. Users are also told how they can lodge complaints. Feedback on the website is invited. The site is user friendly in that it is easy for a user to navigate backwards and forwards. The search facility makes it easy for the user to find what s/he is looking for. The site offers limited interaction, but electronic transactions are not possible. Content is updated regularly and the date of update is given on the home page.

Specific social groups are catered for.

The website has a style guide and a website policy is being devised. The site supports initiatives that follow the long-term and annual policing plans.

The website indicates an awareness of development in the field of e-Government. It is regarded as being in phase 1 of development in this field – in terms of the Gartner Group's model for e-Government (see Chapter 2) as online transactions do not feature prominently and there is little opportunity for interaction.

It is possible to download annual reports in totality, or certain required sections only.

It is clear that the police agency is using the website to meet its objective, namely to make Essex safer.

Two usability studies have been undertaken.

The website is promoted by means of promotional material, which is distributed.

4.6 Website: London Metropolitan Police Service

4.6.1 Evaluation: London Metropolitan Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 3 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The logo for the London Metropolitan Police Service, stated on the home page, *Working for a safer London*, is supported by the content of the website.

The home page is attractive and energetic – creating the impression of a busy and dynamic police service – and immediately engages the user in the content of the website.

The intended audience is implicitly defined through the content that is offered. The content is relevant to the target audience. It is current, credible and relevant. However, no dates of updates are given.

The subject focus is broad, while the depth of coverage is adequate.

The text is excellently written and it is brief and to the point. No spelling or grammar errors are to be found.

References to other sources are limited. Details of authors of content are not given either. There is no evidence that the content is checked and verified.

The content is in line with the mission of the police agency (which is given on the website).

The site offers a wide range of information. The latest news is available. It tells about the structure, leadership and history of the police. Press bulletins, details of conferences and the latest crime figures are given. Various publications are available, for example annual reports and excerpts from *The Job*, which is the official newspaper of the London Mets.

Police-specific content includes the following: Safety hints, advice in the case of emergency, basic guidelines for reporting crimes, extensive contact number of police departments, stations and members, information on successes and community participation.

From the content provided, it is evident that the website aims to provide text information.

However, it also endeavours to establish contact and get feedback from its audience. It offers limited value-added services.

(b) Site architecture

The overall layout is simple, uncomplicated and uncluttered. The home page is neat and attractive.

The site is organised in a logical fashion. The look and feel is consistent throughout the website.

The site location is easy to find. The URL is logical. The information is written and presented clearly. It is easy for the user to find the information. The site is developed in such a way that the search for information follows an easy-to-understand pattern, in other words the search is intuitive.

The information is chunked together coherently and in digestible blocks.

An alphabetical index is available.

The external and internal links are adequate and appropriate. The pages follow logically.

(c) Site technology

Pages require vertical and horizontal scrolling. Where pages are long, navigation aids within the page leading to the top/end of the document are adequate.

The user can easily navigate backwards and forwards. The structure is apparent and logical. The navigation functions are consistent across all pages – it is possible to move about without returning to the home page.

There are a number of downloadable forms.

Quick answers are to be found. It does not take a user long to search for information – probably in less than four clicks.

(d) Style

The website is presented in an interesting and appealing manner. The content is both readable and legible. Visual aspects/graphics add to the website without distracting the user.

The style of writing is clear and simple. Spelling and punctuation are correct.

(e) Service delivery

Physical addresses and telephone and fax numbers are given. E-mail addresses are given for a wide variety of sections and units. The site further states that personal visits to police headquarters (Scotland Yard) could be arranged. It goes even further and encourages the community to impart information by offering a prize (a visit to Scotland Yard).

The site offers a number of community benefits. It informs the community about the latest policing news (including successes). It announces campaigns and launches. It offers hints for crime prevention and furnishes contact numbers to report crime. Topical issues receive attention. Statistics (crime) are given.

Community participation in combating crime is – as in the case of the Essex Police Service – encouraged through the PITO initiative. A London Crimestoppers telephone number is given on the site, and makes it possible for people to phone and give information on crime.

Some forms that users may require are available online.

FAQs are adequate and updated regularly.

The confidentiality/privacy of the user is ensured.

4.6.2 Interview/questionnaire: London Metropolitan Police Service web team

(a) E-mail interview

An e-mail interview was conducted with Sam Farrow, a web team member of the London Metropolitan Police website in August 2002 (Farrow 2002).

The site was established to make the workings of the metropolitan police accessible to the public, to inform the public of changes and development in policing in the city and to provide an opportunity for the community to help in the task of tackling crime.

The webmaster explained that the police service was committed to ensuring that the services were as accessible as possible to the whole of the community it served. It particularly recognised the need to take reasonable steps to enable access to the website for those with impaired sight or other disabilities. Farrow added that they were facing the challenge “that the website has a large amount of legacy content dating from the time when accessibility was not so well recognised as a design issue”. Further, they were also working with finite resources. Upgrading the site was therefore a gradual and staged process that would take a considerable time to complete. It was, however, evolving.

(b) Questionnaire response

(See Annexure A: 4 for questionnaire returned from London Metropolitan Police Service web team member.)

Web team member Sam Farrow submitted the following responses:

The website has been designed as a method for disseminating key information and an increasingly important first contact point for members of the public to access information about the Metropolitan Police Service.

The material on the website is dictated by strict guidelines, as published in a guidelines document.

The website was formally planned initially and recently re-planned to take into consideration local divisional requirements. The content depends on the subject but typically the public affairs department processes it.

It was originally planned as a web presence and medium for general information but increasingly focuses on divisional information.

The webmaster is not sure whether usability studies have been undertaken. No surveys have been undertaken and the effectiveness of the website has not been quantitatively measured.

The unique requirements for an effective police agency website depend on the initial goals and resources available.

Regarding ongoing development of the website, the web team is looking at using the site as a means of appealing to the public for information in specific geographic areas. There are no efforts to stimulate growth from a static web presence to a dynamic service approach.

According to the webmaster, the website is not promoted to the target audience. No e-newsletters or off-line publications are published through the website.

e-Government efforts are not supported. Citizens are enabled to participate in and support police objectives by means of the appeals for information made via the website.

The police agency does not have a strategy for investing in appropriate technology, although it should.

Three team members are responsible for maintaining and developing the online services.

There is no well-defined process for generating, maintaining and improving website content.

The agency does not have a strategy for bridging the digital divide. The website is bound by legal frameworks.

4.6.3 Comments: London Metropolitan Police Service website best practices

There are extensive possibilities for users to interact with the police service and the website. There are contact numbers for non-crime situations. This includes general enquiries, local police, joining the police, firearms and shotguns, help for victims of crime and site feedback. There are also contact details for individuals to obtain copies of certain information that may be held about them by the police. E-mail contact points are given for general enquiries, the commissioner, community safety units, diversity strategy, drugs directorate, police dogs training, the racial and violent crimes unit, rape and sexual offences unit, the traffic division and wildlife crime. There is an e-mail address for the website team. There are also e-mail addresses for other specific divisions. Various e-mail addresses are given for reporting crime in emergency situations and non-emergency situations, through the PITO initiative and Crimestoppers. Specific situations can also be reported by e-mail, for example, computer or Internet-related crime, domestic violence, frauds and scams, homophobic crime, paedophile pornography, racial crime, rape and sexual assault and terrorism. Addresses and contact details are also furnished for London's 33 borough operational command units.

Comment and feedback are encouraged. A website feedback form is furnished. This measures visitors' views of the site and also enables the website staff to gather basic information on the type of people who visit the site.

Digital democracy is present in that feedback is requested and some forms are available online for users. Surveys on user needs are undertaken. Usability tests have not been done.

Provision is being made for access to the website for those with impaired sight or other disabilities.

The website strategy is set out in a section on the website. It is in line with the overall vision and mission. The concept of partnership policing is underlined throughout.

In terms of the Gartner Group's e-Government model (see Chapter 2), this website is fairly advanced into the second phase, that is, it enables the public to access critical information online and receive forms that may have previously required a visit to a police station.

The heading of the website is titled *The Metropolitan Police on the Net*. This immediately adds a new dimension – right at entry point to the website. It tells the user that this is an encounter with police on the Internet. The website is introducing the user to *e-policing*, much along the lines of *e-Government*, advocated by GCIS in Chapter 2 (GCIS 2001). By e-Government is meant

delivering service electronically. In the case of e-policing the same would apply: The police agency is offering service via the Internet.

A definite value-adding feature appears next on the left-hand side navigation bar: Website info. Its subheadings are *General info*, *Accessibility*, *Content* and *Feedback*. This offers information and invites dialogue with users by means of the feedback facility.

Offering the possibility of winning a trip to New Scotland Yard (where the Metropolitan Police Service is situated) further encourages interactivity with users. Titled *Consulting London*, the paragraph states: “We want to know what you think about our policing priorities”. Links are then provided to further information.

The website makes reports available on its plans and performance, and crime statistics, as well as its annual reports in PDF format. It is stated that such availability is in keeping with “the desire for openness and accountability” (<http://www.met.police.uk/about/plans.htm>).

It has a section on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Interestingly, most of these questions are about contact details. This is in line with the Internet query analysis for the SAPS website (see Chapter 3).

4.7 Website: Lothian and Borders Police Service

4.7.1 Evaluation: Lothian and Borders (Edinburgh) Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 5 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The logo for the Lothian and Borders Police Service does not appear on the home page. The home page gives a list of topics and publications – all underlined. The page could be more imaginative.

The impression is gained that the website merely aims at imparting information. It states that it aims “to provide information on the service” and “to bring the latest news”.

The website does not publish press releases, there is no calendar of events, and no organigram is presented. No website strategy is available. However, the website does pay attention to the youth and racial minorities and information for and about these groups is available.

There is no indication of updates. It is therefore not possible to determine whether the content is fresh.

The text is well written. The language is clear and to the point. The subject focus is broad, while not dealt with in depth.

Regarding police-specific content, basic guidelines are given for reporting crime in emergency and non-emergency situations. Contact details are limited to physical addresses and telephone numbers. E-mail addresses are not furnished. Advice in case of an emergency is given, as are hints on crime prevention.

Community participation involves a web page dealing with community safety and community relations. It announces that the police service has a 24-hour telephone interpreting service.

(b) Site architecture

The location is easy to find using search engines. However, the URL could be unclear. Lothian and Borders Police is abbreviated to “lbp” and for most users beyond the Edinburgh borders this would most probably be confusing.

The information on the site is written and presented clearly. The site is designed in such a way that it is easy to search for information. It is also easy to navigate within the site.

The website is organised in a logical fashion. The pages also follow on logically. Information is coherently chunked together.

Both external and internal links are adequate and appropriate.

A site map is given.

(c) Site technology

Users will not take long to find what they want on the site, owing to the limited coverage and clear linking.

There is no search facility. Thumbnail images are not used.

(d) Style

The style is consistent throughout the website.

The site is satisfactory both in terms of legibility and readability.

Images, where present, enhance the content. The writing style is clear and simple.

(e) Service delivery

Contact details are limited to telephone numbers. No e-mail contacts are given.

The site conveys the benefits the police service offers to the community. The section “Community Safety” emphasises assistance given when sought by members of minority ethnic communities. In addition it has a register of official interpreters whom the public can approach at any time of the day or night. It also has a language line – a 24-hour telephone facility available to all personnel when dealing with non-English speaking people.

The website serves the community through the information it provides and by indicating how the community benefits from the police service. The PITO online crime notification system is also used on this website.

The website is anticipating a makeover and current information availability is limited in scope. There is information on the service management and the information centre. Personal safety advice is offered to the community. A youth strategy is spelt out. A number of documents, including the annual reports, are available and can be downloaded. The website also deals with road safety.

There is no interactivity at this stage. No e-mail links are given. No online transactions are available. No user surveys have been undertaken. The site is still in the phase of imparting information (in terms of the Gartner Group’s e-Government model [see Chapter 2]).

4.7.2 Interview/questionnaire: Lothian and Borders Police Service web team

(a) Personal interview

A personal interview was conducted with web team member Hannah Boland in June 2002 (Boland 2002). Boland indicated that the site was to undergo a major rebuild in the near future. The aims were to improve the look and feel of the site to bring it in line with or improve upon current commercial practice and to enhance the available features. It was envisaged that the site would provide many interactive features, such as the recently introduced online reporting of minor crime using the PITO portal. The initial planning meeting had come to the conclusion that none of the other 61 police websites in the UK was suitable as a template for a new site. According to the meeting, all of the sites studied were built around promoting the police from within, with the emphasis on structure, location, etc. They specifically required a site with a customer-centric approach, providing information and services based on public expectations. This was in line with current government guidelines. Where possible the new site will make use of the PITO portal for applications rather than developing them in-house. PITO is to increase the

range of applications a new site would require. These include things such as online applications for firearms and “what to do if” scenarios.

The website communication strategy, according to Boland, is to improve relationships with the public and other stakeholders by involving them through consultation and participation.

(b) Questionnaire response

(See Annexure A: 6 for questionnaire returned from Lothian and Borders Police webmaster.)

Webmaster Malcolm Robertson submitted the following responses:

The website has been designed in accordance with the police service’s strategic plan. A website policy – which is in line with the police service policy – has been developed. No guidelines document has been developed for the website.

The initial structure was formally planned. A new site is being planned. The content is planned and generated by the police agency’s corporate communications department.

The target audience is the public at large, with emphasis on their own region. Usability studies have not been undertaken but are being planned.

Disabled viewers are not catered for. But this is also being planned for the near future.

Unique requirements for an effective website are seen to be the ability to instill confidence in the security of any transactions. The website should also reflect a professional approach.

A full-time web developer has been appointed to ensure ongoing development of the website. Efforts to stimulate growth from a static web presence to a dynamic service approach include building a new site to incorporate online applications as and when they are developed centrally by PITO. Some applications may be developed locally.

The website is promoted to the target audience through the press and by using letterheads and vehicle advertising. There are no measures to determine whether such promotion is improving the image of the police service agency.

e-Newsletters and off-line publications are not published online. However, this is being planned.

e-Government efforts are being supported by implementing e-Policing initiatives, e.g. through PITO. The website supports policing service delivery by making it possible to report crime online. Other interactive areas are being planned.

The police agency does not have a strategy of investing in the appropriate technologies to develop the website. Budget allocation is sporadic and ad hoc and on an individual issue basis.

A dedicated web team ensures ongoing development and maintenance of online services. A well-defined process has been developed for generating, maintaining and improving the website content. Central government policy and directives lead the web team regarding the bridging of the digital divide the web team.

The website is bound by specific legal frameworks.

4.7.3 Comments: Lothian and Borders Police Service website best practices

The website has a communication strategy that strives to involve the community through consultation and participation. It is clear that the web developers are aiming at establishing a website that will deliver service to the community and will be user-centric. The website strategy is not available on the website. The website has, however, been designed in accordance with the police agency's strategic plan.

It offers a number of downloadable documents. It gives various safety tips. The youth is targeted and a considerable volume of information is made available to them.

There is an awareness of e-Government efforts and interactive development for the website is underway. In terms of the Gartner Group's model for e-governance the website is rated as being in phase 1 (see Chapter 2).

Its register of interpreters whom the public can approach and the language line are unique features.

The website is promoted through the press, letterheads and vehicle advertising.

4.8 Website: Strathclyde Police Service

4.8.1 Evaluation: Strathclyde (Glasgow) Metropolitan Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 7 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The logo for the Strathclyde Police Service, as is stated on the home page, is *Working together – Building safer communities*.

Information furnished is comprehensive. The date of update is given on the home page. The latest annual reports are available (downloadable in PDF). Press releases are published. Job vacancies are furnished. The policing area is indicated as well as information on the senior management team and the joint police board. Operations and units are covered. Information on specialist work, selection and training of staff, displays, presentations and forthcoming events are available.

The home page is attractive and immediately engages the user. The thumbnail images enhance the content.

Chief Constable William Roe states the purpose of the site. It is to provide text information. Feedback from the targeted audience is not promoted. Only two e-mail addresses are given: one for recruitment and one for contacting the Strathclyde police.

Press releases and speeches and a calendar of events are not given. An organigram for senior management is presented. Campaigns and launches are not published.

No links to authors of content and website team are given.

The site content is current, credible and relevant. The language usage is good. No errors were found. Content reflects topics of interest to the assumed target audience – the residents in the Strathclyde policing area and the broader community.

Headings and subheadings are clear. It is easy to understand how the information is organised on the site.

There is no evidence that the information is verified and checked. The content of the website is in line with its strategy/purpose.

Regarding police-specific content the police agency strategy is available online. The vision and mission are also available. Basic guidelines are given for reporting crime in emergency and non-emergency situations. Advice in case of emergency is given. There are contact details (physical addresses and telephone numbers) for reporting crime, and local police stations, and to join the police.

The Spotlight Initiative (to help reduce crime and to dispel the fear of crime) and other community projects are expounded on. Crime statistics are provided.

Recruitment receives prominent attention.

Successes are reported on.

(b) Architecture

The home page layout is simple, uncomplicated and uncluttered. The website has a consistent look and feel throughout. It is organised in a logical fashion.

The location is easy to find and the URL is logical. It is easy for the user to find the correct information. The information is written and presented clearly. The site is designed in such a way that the search for information follows an easy-to-understand pattern.

Users can easily navigate backwards and forwards. There are navigation functions across all pages – it is possible to move about without returning to the home page.

The URL gives a clear indication of the police service. Each page has a unique URL.

External links are lacking, except for one to the PITO portal. There are links back to the home page from each page. The internal links are adequate.

The pages flow on logically.

The top menu bar provides links to frequently used pages.

(c) Site technology

Once a user is searching for information, it does not take long to find it – no more than three clicks.

Few pages require vertical and horizontal scrolling. Thumbnail images are used in such a way that they add to the appeal of web pages. Only one form – for job application – can be e-mailed on request.

A few documents are downloadable.

(d) Style

The site is interesting and appealing. There is a consistent look and feel. The text is both readable and legible.

The language is of a high standard. No errors were encountered. The writing style is clear and simple.

The site projects an appropriate image.

(e) **Service delivery**

Contact details are limited to physical addresses and telephone numbers. E-mail contact addresses are lacking (except in the case of applying for a job). There is no indication how the webmaster could be contacted.

The site offers hints to the community on how to combat crime. It gives contact details for reporting violent, serious and non-serious crime. Community participation in combating crime is encouraged through the PITO initiative. It gives details on the Spotlight Initiative, which is the strategy to reduce violent crime, disorder and the community's fear of crime. Adding warmth to the website, the Chief Constable, William Rae, in the section About Us, welcomes users to the Strathclyde Police website. It includes a page on the Office of the Chief Constable with details on how to complain about unsatisfactory police service.

No search facility is provided.

No online forms/transactions are available. No feedback facility is provided. Digital democracy is not present. There are no discussion forums and no contact details for the webmaster or other staff members. No surveys on user needs have been undertaken. Usability testing has not been undertaken.

4.8.2 Interview/questionnaire: Strathclyde Metropolitan Police Service webmaster

(a) **Personal interview**

An informal discussion was conducted with webmaster David Christiansen (June 2002). He had recently been appointed in the position and felt that the website was still in early stages of development. He explained that he worked closely with the corporate communications department and most of the copy came from that department.

(b) **Questionnaire response**

(See Annexure A: 8 for questionnaire returned from Strathclyde Metropolitan Police webmaster.)

Webmaster David Christiansen submitted the following responses:

The website has been designed in accordance with the police service's strategic plan. A website policy has been developed. At the beginning of the website project a management group was formed with individuals from departments dealing with force policy, IT, data protection and

executive departments. The role of the group was to form an overall force policy on the publication and management of the website and its content.

A guidelines document for design and authoring has been developed by the IT and corporate communications department. The corporate communications department is responsible for the content of the website. IT is responsible for the infrastructure and graphical content.

The structure was planned before the initial development commenced. However, unexpected issues arose during the initial phases proving that the phase 1 structure was not feasible. The initial structure was never attained. However, throughout the life of the website there has always been and always will be a structure planned before development.

The content was generated by the division itself and by corporate communications reporters. It was edited by corporate communications. Initial teething problems were experienced with the division not knowing what was suitable and what was not. Now, individuals in all divisions and departments have been appointed as Internet liaison officers. Their role is to provide information regularly to populate their specific areas on the website. At present, all such information is being collated.

The general audience is the public. A children's website is under construction.

No usability studies have been undertaken. No user surveys have been undertaken either. The effectiveness of online service delivery has not been measured. However, log analysis does take place.

There are no unique requirements for a police agency website. Accuracy of information and effective content management are what count.

The technical facilities do not at present support a dynamic user experience on the web. However, there are plans for the website to become more personalised to the user. Identification of key information about the user, from the user, will allow for the information being displayed on the website to be geared towards the user location, interests, age groups, etc.

To promote the website to the target audience, it is advertised in all advertisement campaigns, on all recruitment adverts and on all new livery police cars. Other than log analysis, there has been no official measurement processes on the results of any one campaign.

No e-newsletter or offline publications are published online.

Providing a hyperlink to the electronic reporting of a non-urgent crime facility supports e-Government efforts. The website further supports service delivery by publishing information on any major police campaign or public event, e.g. road safety.

By distributing information about the police service agency and its role and strategy citizens are informed about and invited to participate in police objectives.

The IT department invests in the website's technical requirements. The corporate communications department has invested in personnel to support the development of the website. The web team consists of two developers, one author and two editors. The team is responsible for the website content. A web author is responsible for the content of the website and to organise departments and divisions to produce relevant information.

To bridge the digital divide multimedia terminals as part of a wider-reaching concept are being considered. Such terminals could be hosted at key areas throughout town centres within the policing area. Government plans exist to promote the use of the Internet and getting the capabilities into most households.

Various legal frameworks apply to the website.

4.8.3 Best practices identified: Strathclyde Metropolitan Police Service website

The purpose of the website is clearly spelt out in Chief Constable William Rae's Welcome to Strathclyde Police Service website, namely to "provide comprehensive at-a-glance information on the framework, objectives and activities of Scotland's largest police service. It aims to bring you the latest news from the Force area, including appeals for information on crimes. It also features the initiatives being run by the Force". His welcome adds a personal touch to the site – as does the section Office of the Chief Constable explaining to users how to lodge complaints. The fact that it is brought to the users' attention that the police are concerned about the community's fear of crime adds a further dimension of caring. This is a very special feature of the site.

The website has a guidelines document for design and authoring. There are also indications that meticulous planning goes into the structuring of the website.

The website developers are planning to make the website more personalised. For this purpose, they are looking into identifying key information about users.

Promotion of the website takes place through advertising, e.g. in police campaigns and on police vehicles.

There is an awareness of e-Government plans.

Consideration is being given to installing multimedia terminals with access to the website in an effort to bridge the digital divide.

In terms of the Gartner Group's model for e-Government, this website is regarded as being in phase I.

4.9 Website: Australian Federal Police Service

4.9.1 Evaluation: Australian Federal Metropolitan Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 9 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The home page is attractive and invites the user to look further.

The logo for the Australian Federal Police Service, as is stated on the home page, is *To fight crime together and win*. The content reflects this partnership approach to policing. It, for example, promotes community-based programmes, gives opportunities for volunteers in policing, offers support for victims of crime and has children's games.

Information is available about the Australian Federal Police, its units, its management and structure, crime prevention and education and employment. National news of significance pertaining to law enforcement is also published on the site.

Press releases and a calendar of events are published. Contact details are fairly extensive.

The content is fresh (date of update given on home page). It covers a wide field and the depth of coverage is satisfactory. The language used is clear (headings and text) and error free.

References are given to sources used – it is therefore possible to verify content. However, names of authors are not given.

The content is relevant to the target audience. The target audience is not explicitly given, but is clearly based on the topics covered.

Regarding police-specific content, the following is published: the police agency strategy, vision and mission, basic guidelines for reporting crime, contact details, extensive hints for various situations and community projects.

(b) Site architecture

The location is easy to find. It is also available on search engines. It is not easy to deduce what “afp” stands for until actually encountering the site. The URL could therefore lead to confusion.

The site is designed in such a way that the search for information does not give any problems. The information on the site is presented with great clarity, in terms of architecture, layout and readability and legibility of text.

The menu bars at the top and on the left-hand side are repeated on most pages and make navigation easy. However, there are some pages that do not have a top menu and therefore no “Home” button.

The home page has six major headings, each one with a short description on what it covers. This is very useful.

The site is logically organised. The information is chunked in digestible blocks and it is coherently presented. The pages flow on logically.

The links (both internal and external) are appropriate.

The site map is extensive.

(c) Site technology

The website is the only one evaluated that applies an animated Gif on the home page. It is surmised that the police service is trying to depict its community involvement – each image shows police members interacting with the public. However, the images are very small and detract attention, rather than add to the appeal of the site.

A user searching for information is usually two to three clicks away from it. The site has a search facility as well as an advanced search facility and it also offers search help.

Pages require vertical and horizontal scrolling. Where pages are long, there are adequate navigation aids within the pages leading to the top/end of the document.

The downloadable forms are easy to understand and complete. Privacy and security guidelines are followed. Detailed information is provided about downloadable material.

(d) Style

The website style is consistent throughout. The text is both readable and legible.

Language usage is clear and error free. Images are not always used optimally, e.g. the picture of the client service team under AFP Service Charter is outdated.

(e) Service delivery

Contact lists are extensive and in most cases give telephone numbers, physical addresses and e-mail addresses.

The site offers many services to users. Numerous online forms and police documents are downloadable. Users are advised how to report crime. This site also links to an Australian Crimestoppers website to report information on crime anonymously. Telephone numbers are also furnished to enable users to report emergency and non-emergency crime. According to the webmaster, the site is currently being improved to ensure it meets disability standards. Persons with disabilities who are experiencing problems accessing certain information are requested to e-mail him. His e-mail address is furnished.

Users are notified that they have the right to complain should they be dissatisfied with service rendered by the police. Contact addresses are furnished. Client satisfaction is a priority for the service. In this regard the police service regularly conducts client satisfaction surveys.

A site map also facilitates the task of searching. External and internal links are useful.

There is information on the website itself. Users are offered help if they encounter problems. Feedback on the site is encouraged.

Digital democracy is apparent through the channels for feedback and the downloadable forms.

Relevant documents/publications are published. Campaigns, launches and press releases are published.

The website overall promotes an understanding of the police agency.

**4.9.2 Interview/questionnaire: Australian Federal Metropolitan Police
Service web team**

(a) Interview

No interviews were conducted.

(b) Questionnaire response

(See Annexure A: 10 for questionnaire returned from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) web team.)

The AFP web team submitted the following response:

The website has been designed and populated in accordance with the police service's strategic plan. A specific website policy has been drawn up. The AFP also has website content standards. External consultants were appointed to plan the initial structure of the website. The structure has been maintained. To develop the website, the initial content was analysed and research undertaken to ensure that the content was up to date and informative. The content available had to satisfy government requirements.

The target audience is defined as the Australian public and client organisations.

A usability specialist reviewed the website six months after implementation. The site is frequently reviewed to ensure that requirements are met.

A user survey has been undertaken. Negative comments were received regarding font size (the font size is now in the process of being modified). Survey results have also enabled the website developers to focus on areas of the site most valued by users.

IT security has always been a major consideration for the web team.

Regarding ongoing development of the site, the web team investigates ways of providing online services such as reporting crime, online recruitment, and online referral for client agencies.

There are efforts to stimulate growth from a static to a dynamic web presence. Security and workflow issues must, however, first be resolved.

To promote the website its URL is included in all police agency advertisements, correspondence and media releases. (The web team, however, points out that it does not have any measurement of the way this improves the AFP image.)

Annual reports, police magazines and research reports are published on the website.

The website supports e-Government efforts by observing the requirements of NOIE (national office for the information economy).

The website supports service delivery by providing information/forms for criminal history checks, firearms licences and other needs. The website further has links to "Crime stoppers", the national missing persons unit, and the most wanted information. It also gives information on crime prevention.

Examples of making citizen participation possible include the children's section, the opportunities published for volunteers in policing, the support for victims of crime, and several community-based programmes.

The agency gives strong IT infrastructure support for the development of the website.

The authoring function for the website is centralised – this means that the website team mostly prepares and publishes content.

The information is regularly reviewed and updated.

The website is bound by specific legislation.

4.9.3 Best practices identified: Australian Federal Metropolitan Police Service website

The website is neatly structured. It invites users because its organisation is uncluttered and the presentation and writing style are clear.

The date of update is given on the home page. It has a site map. Its search facility also makes provision for advanced search (it is the only website evaluated that has such a search facility).

It offers resources for teachers and parents, and also for the youth. It educates on safety and security in general, road safety, and drug awareness.

It has strong agency support for its IT development.

The content of the website is analysed continually to ensure that it is current and relevant. A usability study and user needs surveys have been undertaken.

The website was developed based on the police agency strategic plan. It has a website policy and content guidelines in place.

In terms of the Gartner Group's e-Government model, the site could be regarded to be in Phase 2. The web team investigates ways of improving online service delivery on an ongoing basis. It provides search capabilities, hosts forms to download, has linkages to other sites and gives e-mail addresses of offices or officials. Users can access critical information online and receive forms that may previously have required a visit to a government site.

Users experiencing problems in navigating the website, etc. are invited to contact the web team.

It is also investigating ways of addressing the needs of users with disabilities.

The website is promoted by furnishing the URL on correspondence, press releases and advertisements.

4.10 Website: Hong Kong Metropolitan Police Service

4.10.1 Evaluation: Hong Kong Metropolitan Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 11 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The home page immediately engages the user in the contents of the website. It is bustling and busy, offering a wide variety of news and activity.

The mission statement of the police agency is given. The goals of the site are clear. It informs, it makes contact and encourages interactivity and it offers value-added services.

Press releases are furnished. An organigram is presented and the leadership and photographs are displayed. Campaigns and launches are published.

There are no links to authors of content, but there is a link to the website team.

The site content is current, credible and relevant. The subject focus is broad and the depth of coverage is sufficient.

The language used is clear and error-free. Sentences are clear and simple. Paragraphs are short and to the point.

Physical addresses are given. E-mail contacts are extensive.

The content is relevant to the audience. The website caters for a wide range of needs (of different audiences).

FAQs are dealt with.

No web strategy is available online. However, the content of the website does enhance knowledge of the police agency.

Regarding police-specific content, the mission of the agency is available. There are basic guidelines for reporting crime in emergency and non-emergency situations. There are numerous hints on safety precautions and also advice in case of emergency.

The latest crime figures are given. Successes are reported. There are details of community projects and community participation in policing matters.

Information is given on wanted and missing persons, recruitment, organisation structure, business opportunities and tenders, traffic issues and crime prevention. There are downloadable documents, sections for children, and a discussion forum for former staff.

(b) Site architecture

The location is easy to find.

The home page layout is clear and neat. There is a consistent look and feel throughout.

The site is organised logically. The information on the site is clearly presented. The user can choose between English and Chinese versions. The site is designed in such a way that the search for information is not difficult. The navigation backwards and forwards works well. It is possible to move about without returning to the home page. A shortcoming is that not all pages have “home” buttons.

The website URL makes it easy to identify. Each page has a unique URL.

External and internal links are adequate.

Pages flow logically.

A top menu bar provides links to frequently used pages/functions. However, this is also omitted on some pages.

A site map is provided.

(c) Site technology

No search facility is provided. Multimedia is available. There is a webcam of the Hong Kong traffic.

Online forms are easy to understand. Privacy and security guidelines are followed.

(d) Style

The website is interesting and appealing. It has a consistent look and feel throughout. It projects an appropriate and efficient image. It is readable and legible.

The writing style is clear and simple.

(e) Service delivery

The site is expansive in that it contains details on the city of Hong Kong. It also links to the “Interactive government services directory”. This latter site contains a host of online government department forms. In addition, the police website has extensive online forms for its own service

(e.g. “Complaint of noise report form”, “Complaint against police form”, “Feedback to webmaster” and “Application for access to information”). Such forms can be e-mailed directly or printed and faxed. E-mail addresses and fax numbers are given in all cases. In terms of service delivery this puts this website in the forefront.

It makes use of multimedia. A webcam gives views to the traffic in Hong Kong – providing an excellent service to users who have to make their way through this megalopolis.

Advice is given on various issues, e.g. the latest con tricks, drinking and driving, the rights of crime victims and witnesses, and what to expect in court.

Numerous contact details are given for reporting crime – including police hotlines.

E-mail links are extensive, as are contact details for reporting crimes, local police stations, joining the police, etc.

There are basic guidelines for reporting crimes in emergency situations and non-emergency situations.

Relevant publications and documents are published.

Campaigns and launches are publicised.

Comment and feedback are encouraged.

Confidentiality and privacy are ensured.

Interactivity is promoted. Users can subscribe to a newsletter. Useful links are given.

Topical issues receive attention.

The website promotes an understanding of the police agency.

In terms of the Gartner Group’s model for e-Government, this website is rated as being in phase 3. Users can conduct entire tasks online. In this stage self-service applications are built for the public to access online, and to use the Web as a complement to other delivery channels. It is the only one of the seven evaluated that has evolved to this phase.

4.10.2 Interview/questionnaire: Hong Kong Metropolitan Police Service webmaster

(a) Interview

No interview was conducted.

(b) Questionnaire response

(See Annexure A: 12 for questionnaire returned from the Hong Kong Metropolitan Police Service web team.)

The website has not been designed in accordance with the police agency's strategic plan. No website policy has been developed. There are, however, internal guidelines for the website.

The website structure changed recently – to meet the requirements for dynamic design. Contents for the website are generated in-house. A local design house was recently contracted to help improve the website.

The website's target audience are the citizens of Hong Kong and the rest of the world.

Various surveys have been undertaken. The web team aims at providing a very user-friendly interface. Therefore a usability test, which includes a test for the disabled reader, was undertaken. A survey has also been undertaken to gauge user requirements. Further, the agency has a statistical system that calculates the daily transactions done via online report forms and e-mail – thus measuring the effectiveness of its online service delivery.

The website provides a government-to-citizens service to support the e-Government initiative. Citizens are encouraged to participate and support police objectives by the provision of e-report room functions.

The government has provided district digital centres to serve citizens in remote and undeveloped areas.

The Hong Kong government is currently running a corporate “Common Look and Feel” project to standardise all government bodies' websites. The next revamp is being planned – and is to be implemented during the course of the year.

The website is not promoted.

It does not distribute offline publications or e-newsletters through the website.

4.10.3 Best practices identified: Hong Kong Metropolitan Police Service website

The site is the most advanced of all seven websites evaluated in terms of service delivery. None of the other websites offers online services to the extent that this site does. In terms of the Gartner Group's e-Government model, this website is would be classified as being in phase 3.

The web developers have undertaken survey to assess its usability and whether the website meets user requirements.

It makes contact between users and members and divisions/units of the police service extremely convenient by furnishing all available contact details.

Multimedia is used. A webcam shows the traffic at various places in Hong Kong.

4.11 Website: Princeton Borough (New Jersey, USA) Metropolitan Police Service

4.11.1 Evaluation: Princeton Borough Police Service website

(A summary of the evaluation is given below. See Annexure A: 13 for detailed evaluation of the website.)

(a) Content

The home page is a “welcome page”. It states “Welcome to Princeton Borough Department”.

The list of contents is presented in a table. The user can click on the content (in the table) s/he wants to view.

From the content it is clear that the website only aims at imparting information. There are no interactive features – the only e-mail address is the one for the webmaster.

The content is credible and relevant. However, it is static, in that most of the information remains the same – it does not need to change.

There are no press releases, no FAQs and no calendar of events.

There are no links to authors of content. Information cannot be verified.

The mission of the police agency is given.

Regarding police-specific content, the mission of the agency is given, but not the strategy. There are various crime prevention tips.

There are no basic guidelines for reporting crime. No advice in case of emergency is given.

(b) Site architecture

The location is easy to find. However, the URL is confusing. The URL

(<http://www.princetonboro.org>) gives no indication that it is a police agency website.

The information on the site is written and presented clearly. From the home page it is easy to find the correct information. However, once on other pages no other links are provided back to the home page or – with the exception on one page – to other pages on the site. The page that lists the programmes of the police service does have a few links to some (but not all) of the pages with information on the programmes. The website is thus not intuitively designed.

Internal links are not adequate.

(c) Site technology

No search facility is available – but this is understandable because the website is small. There are no thumbnail images.

There are no forms. There is no index.

(d) Style

There is no consistent style for this website. The layout appears to be a hodge-podge of various elements used. On the home page the US flag is to be seen billowing and the lights of a police vehicle flash.

The text is legible and readable.

(e) Service delivery

On the website only two telephone numbers are given, that of the Chief of Police and 9-1-1 to dial in case of emergency. The webmaster's e-mail address is furnished and feedback on the website is requested.

In terms of service delivery, the site only gives information – and this, too, is limited. There is very limited interaction between users and the website.

Community participation is not a major feature on the site. Information is given on the history of the police service, the Mission, employment opportunities and the personnel. Crime prevention tips are published.

**4.11.2 Interview/questionnaire: Princeton Borough Police Service
webmaster**

(a) E-mail interview

An e-mail interview was conducted with webmaster Mike Bender. According to him they had no specific goal when establishing the site. "The general idea was to have a site that people could

look at that would show our officers, with a short bio for each, a list of what services we provide, the history of our department, special notices such as employment opportunities and general information about our town and department” (Bender, e-mail interview 11 April 2002).

The website developed later. Bender describes it as a “constantly changing document”. It now advertises vacancies and printable applications are available online. “Most applications are printed from the website, instead of being picked up in person at our station,” he states.

His conclusion is that in designing a website the major motivation must be fun.

(b) Questionnaire response

(See Annexure A: 14 for questionnaire returned from Princeton Borough Police webmaster.)

Webmaster Mike Bender submitted the following responses.

No strategy plan was used in the development of the site. The site was designed based solely on what the chief of the police department thought the police could use as a community relations tool and what he thought would look good.

The agency has no website policy. Should an officer want an idea posted on the website, s/he approaches the webmaster. The idea is then discussed with the chief. If he thinks it is suitable it is placed on the web. There is nothing in writing on what should be posted on the site.

The webmaster designed the initial structure. No guidelines at all were used. He spent time studying other websites and looking at their designs. He then started putting information on the site and the structure developed gradually. The structure has remained the same.

The target audience is the residents of Princeton and persons who have an interest in police departments. No usability tests and no user surveys have been undertaken. The effectiveness of online service delivery has not been measured. No needs analysis has been done. The webmaster posts information that the police department thinks users would like to have on the website. No crime prevention tips and no crime statistics are furnished.

Regarding ongoing development new information is posted when required. There are no plans to change from a static to a dynamic website.

The site is promoted in the local press. It is also listed on numerous law enforcement-related websites that have listings of local police departments. There is no measurement to determine whether the site improves the image of the police service. They do have a hit counter (according to this the site’s popularity has increased considerably since it started – from on average 10 hits to 100 hits per day).

No e-newsletter or offline publications are posted onto the site.

e-Government is not supported. Citizen participation is not encouraged. There is no strategy to invest in technology for website development.

The website team consists of the webmaster only. He is also a patrolman. If there is an update he does it when he works night shift.

Ways to overcome the digital divide are not a consideration. Princeton is an exceptionally well-developed area.

4.11.3 Best practices identified: Princeton Borough Police Service website

Princeton Borough Police Department website has received five awards: The Police Associations Award for Excellence in Web Design in April 1999, the Police Guide Award for excellence in November 1998, the Policemans Homepage Meritorious Award as it was “found to be one of the top law enforcement sites on the web” in April 1997, the Gold Tin Award by the Hudson County Sheriff’s Dep Website given to “sites that truly communicate to the viewer the great deal of time and effort put into its creation” in 1997; and the Family-Friendly Award for being a site that “fits all the criteria to be able to display” the award (<http://www.princetonboro.org>).

Based on the number of awards received it was gathered that data on best practices could be gathered from an evaluation of the website. This is not the case.

A major target audience is the youth. Specific mention of the youth is made in the mission statement. A “Drug Abuse Resistance Program” (DARE) is published online. The site also announces other seminars and prevention programmes the service offers.

In terms of the Gartner Group’s e-Government model, the site could still be regarded to be in Phase 1 – it still predominantly serves the purpose of an information website. There is very limited possibility of interaction and transaction.

4.12 Best practices identified

4.12.1 Introduction

The SAPS website could benefit from considering the identified best practices of the above police agency websites. Overall, taking all the best practices into consideration, the conclusion that the aim of these website owners is to strive for improved service delivery would be correct. It is further clear that the websites range from being almost static to dynamic. But that police agency websites will increasingly become dynamic almost goes without saying. Internationally,

policing is growing more complex and a police service web presence needs to be dynamic. Websites evaluated all show an awareness of the need for their websites to continuously evolve. In most cases, the apparent aim is to increasingly apply a user-centric approach and to involve the community in the process.

Website developers realise that online resources can assist in transforming policing service delivery. Websites can no longer remain in a phase of imparting information only. Interactivity is required to involve the community in the task of policing. This enables the community to lodge complaints, to seek advice, and to give feedback online, immediately and direct.

The websites evaluated are in varying stages of transformation. Such transformation is in line with e-Government principles. E-Government (and therefore e-policing) further entails delivering service online. This includes transactions that would normally be conducted at a physical location, for example, enabling the community to complete and submit forms electronically.

Some of the websites have website strategies in place. Most of them do not – but webmasters do indicate that the websites do support the police agency strategies.

Various best practices of the seven websites are listed below. All are important factors that merit attention.

One salient aspect, which many websites – those of police services and others – possibly overlook, is that of introducing a feeling of warmth and community to the website. The Essex police website has showed some insight in this regard. It recognises the importance of a “personal touch” on the website. The Chief Constable in the section “Office of the Chief Constable” extends a welcome to the users of the website and invites them to give feedback. The Strathclyde police website also adds a dimension of caring by announcing that the police service is investigating the community’s fear of crime. In the age of faceless interaction, striving to make a website personal is recommended.

Evidently not many police agency websites are promoted by their agencies. In cases where this is done, websites are advertised on police vehicles, on stationary, in the media and on police documents, for example media releases. This aspect needs attention.

From the evaluations of the given websites, it is clear that police agencies do not yet sufficiently invest in technology to develop their websites. Some police agencies (Essex, Strathclyde and AFP) do invest substantially in their websites, others do not. Police financial managers need to be educated about the growing importance and need for sophisticated, service-delivery websites.

4.12.2 Best practices identified

Best practices for a police service agency website – based on the seven websites evaluated – include the following:

(a) Content

- Website strategy. A website strategy, which determines the overall putting together of the website, should be available.
- Audience-specific content. Content should be compiled for the specific target audience(s). It therefore follows that there should be clarity on who the target audience(s) is(are).
- Cultural sensitivity. Police agency websites serve communities with different cultures and needs. Catering for different language groups is an example. This should be a major consideration in putting content together.
- Logo significance. The logo on the home page should spell out what the police and the website are striving for. The content should further be in line with the mission of the police service agency. This implies that the mission should also appear on the website. It should communicate with the audience defined as its target audience.
- Breadth and depth of information. Information should be broad and cover as many aspects of the police agency as possible. Information should also have sufficient depth to satisfy users' need for specific information.
- Source reference. There should be reference to the sources from which the material is gained. Further, authors should be mentioned and contactable to verify content. Dates should be given.
- Police-specific content should include the structure, leadership and history of the police service agency. Media releases, crime statistics, and details of campaigns, launches, successes, employment opportunities and conferences, etc. should be posted on the website. The Australian Federal Police website also publishes national news pertaining to law enforcement on the site. This is something to be considered.
- Contact details. Extensive and adequate contact details should be provided. This includes contact details for emergency and non-emergency situations.
- Availability of publications. Various police agency publications, e.g. the annual reports, should be available on the website.
- Guidelines. The web developers should adhere to strict guidelines in designing the website and content.
- Surveys. Usability studies and surveys of user needs should be undertaken.
- Digital divide. A strategy for bridging the digital divide should receive attention.
- Comment and feedback. Interactivity should be encouraged.
- Community participation. This should be encouraged.

(b) Site Architecture

- Location. The location should be easy to find. The URL should be clear. It should also be available on search engines.
- Overall layout. The overall layout should be simple and uncomplicated.
- Site organisation. The site should be organised logically.
- Consistency. It should have a consistent look and feel throughout.
- Information chunking. Matching information should be chunked together in digestible blocks.
- Intuitiveness. The site should be designed in such a way that the search for information follows an easy-to-understand pattern.
- Menu bars must be understandable and guide users to where they want to be on the site.
- Home page: The home page must be informative, inviting, concise and easy-to-read. The identity of the police service and the type of services offered must be immediately visible to the user.
- Search facility. A search facility should support a user-centric approach.
- Restrained use of graphics: Content should be given priority over flashiness and cumbersome graphics that slow down downloading. An uncluttered appearance promotes usability.
- Consistent use of menus: A side, top and (sometimes) a bottom menu bar should be used to ease navigation, especially in large websites.
- Site maps/indices. This feature adds value. It makes searching much easier for the user.
- Updates. There should be an indication when the website was last updated.

(c) Technology

- Click-throughs. It should not take too many mouse clicks to get to required information.
- Links. Both external and internal links should work well, be useful and be designed in such a way that the user can easily return to the originating location.
- Documents on the website – such as annual reports – should be downloadable.
- Where scrolling is required, pages should have adequate navigation within leading to the top/end of the document.
- Investment in technology. Police service agencies should invest in appropriate technology to develop their websites. They do not seem to regard this as a priority yet.
- Privacy and security. The privacy of users and confidentiality should be ensured.
- Visual aspects. Graphics must not slow down downloading time.

(d) Style

- Consistency. Layout and language style should be consistent throughout.
- Text. Text should be interesting, appealing, readable and legible.
- Visual aspects. Graphics add to the attractiveness of the page.

(e) **Service Delivery**

- e-Government principles. Certain governments provide formal guidelines for the development of governmental websites, and the use of these guidelines is enforced. This includes accuracy and completeness of information, usability, and transformation of online services to a full e-Government model. There should be evidence that e-Government principles are coming into play.
- Welcoming and fun. These are worthy elements recommended for a police agency website. Welcoming users to a website creates a sense of community. The Princeton website manager states that the website should be fun. Fun brings lightness – the more so with regards to matters as serious as policing. It also helps attract and keep the attention of the youth – a major segment of police agencies’ target audience.
- Latest policing news. The latest policing news, new campaigns and launches should be available.
- Forms and processing. The website should provide easy access to forms, which could be submitted electronically.
- Publications. Important and updated publications/bulletins/leaflets/posters should be placed on the website and should be downloadable.
- Identification: The website URL should be easy to identify.
- Appeal to a universal audience. Cultural sensitivity should be present.
- Contact details. Users should have access to contact details of the persons/departments in the police service agency they would need to contact.
- Benefits. The benefits that the specific police service offers to the community should be made clear in the content
- Language and language usage should be clear and error free.
- Mission, vision and strategy of police agency and website. The latter supports the former. Both should be published on the website.
- Logo on home page. This makes it clear how the police agency and website are pursuing its goal of service delivery. It effectively “builds the brand” for the website.
- A dedicated community relationship section. Police agencies worldwide are emphasising the need for partnership policing. It is a requirement today that the community needs to be involved in policing.
- Multicultural diversity section. Communities are becoming increasingly diverse. For a website to render optimal service, this must be taken into consideration. The Lothian and Borders websites, for example, accommodates groups from ethnic minorities by informing them of the official interpreters and language lines that are available.
- Accessibility for disabled persons. This is an e-Government principle in most governments. Police agencies as part of government need to consider the universal accessibility principles.
- Youth focus. Most of the websites have dedicated specific sections to young children and to the youth. In this age of serious concern about juvenile crime, the electronic media has a definite role in the education of children and getting a higher level of involvement in crime awareness and crime fighting.

- Education. A police service agency website should play a strong role in educating people on issues such as drug abuse.
- Research: Ongoing research should be conducted in order to develop the website.
- Complaints. Users should be informed how to lodge complaints against the police service. This enhances community participation.
- Website feedback. Users should be able to give feedback. This is a valuable way of assessing user needs and opinions.
- Surveys. Surveys on user needs as well as usability studies should be undertaken. This is valuable in gauging user needs and opinions.

(f) **Aspects not always present on websites, but which could add value**

- Glossary. Given the numerous policing-specific terms, a glossary could be helpful for most users.
- A to Z (alphabetical) index. This could add value.
- Updated information. Furnishing of an update notice that indicates the freshness and currency of the published information. It should clearly identify news or information that has been added in the past two weeks.
- References and author. References and indications of the author(s) make content on the web more credible because it can be verified. Contact details will also be useful.
- Usability testing. Usability testing will point out shortcomings that website developers could then rectify.
- Section on missing/wanted persons. Some websites have such sections, while some do not. This is a contentious issue. Placing details of a wanted person on a website, and not removing it when s/he is no longer being searched for, could result in legal proceedings against the police service.

4.12.3 Interviews with/Questionnaire for webmasters

Feedback – as reflected in the “Questionnaire for webmasters” – from webmasters indicated that websites and online services have gained in importance in the past few years.

Formal processes for site maintenance and content management are usually employed.

A website team has mostly been described in the responses. There are, however, distinct roles defined for the information owner, the web master, the web author, and supporting roles such as graphics designer.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter applies an evaluation framework for best practices (as shown in Tables 17 – 21) to seven police agency websites. The evaluation framework assesses content, architecture, technology and style of each website as well as the extent of its service delivery.

Based on the best practices derived from the evaluation of the seven websites, the interviews with the webmasters and the findings in the foregoing chapters, an instrument is designed to assess the SAPS website. This is described in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 – DEVELOPMENT OF A WEBSITES EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

5.1 Introduction

In order to assess the SAPS website, a websites evaluation instrument was subsequently developed. Its development was based on the findings and recommendations derived from the following:

- The Customer Expectations Measure (see Chapter 1)
- The literature review (see Chapter 2)
- The GCIS audit of government websites (see Chapter 2)
- The SAPS website query analysis (see Chapter 3)
- The evaluation of best practices of other police agency websites (see Chapter 4)

5.2 Development of instrument

As is pointed out above, the websites evaluation instrument was developed based on various findings and recommendations. These are discussed below.

5.2.1 Findings: Customer Expectations Measure

In Chapter 1 it is pointed out that to be effective, a police agency website must pay attention to satisfying user needs. It cannot succeed if it does not combine valuable content with good information architecture and is delivered by effective technology.

In the early days of the establishment of the SAPS website, the Customer Expectations Measure (Ask Africa 1997) – despite its many shortcomings – indicated what would-be users would want in terms of content.

Ask Africa, the design company that undertook the survey, then recommended the following content and information infrastructure for the SAPS website:

- Reports (crime statistics)
- Strategies and priorities (current strategy on crime prevention/high profile crimes)
- Community policing (information on community policing/community involvement/media statements to improve SAPS public image)
- Projects (criminal information/wanted criminals/missing persons)
- A mechanism that would enable to user to give feedback

5.2.2 Findings: Literature review

The literature makes it clear that there is one overriding factor if a website is to succeed in what it wants to achieve: It must have a user-centric approach. This means that it must cater for its users' needs, and it must be easy for users to use (i.e. it must be user friendly).

A website with a user-centric approach has the following features:

- Service delivery is the prime reason for the website. Web developers must ensure that this message is conveyed clearly by the website.
- It is interactive or it is striving to be more interactive. Users must be given the facility to give feedback, to ask questions and to request certain information or services.
- It is continuously evolving. Like the progression of e-Government, a website must develop from giving information only, to making interaction and transactions possible. Its ultimate aim should be transformation – where users could obtain all the services they would usually find at a physical police station or office via the website.
- A website strategy serves as an important guideline in meeting the organisation's vision and mission.
- Basic website rules apply. These include many aspects: The look and feel must be appealing. The website should have a specific identity and this should be clear on any web page. Information should be easily accessible, the website should have an overall content structure, internal and external linkages should be satisfactory and information should be current. Illustrations should be small. Printable versions of long documents should be available.
- User needs assessments or website audits are undertaken. Usability tests should be considered.

5.2.3 Findings: GCIS audit of government websites

The audit revealed the following:

- It is difficult to find information on most sites. This is attributed to factors such as poor information organisation and navigability, design and layout that could be improved and the need for improved search engines.
- Interactivity only takes place to a limited extent.
- The choice of main categories on the home pages is often not logical.
- Information is sometimes presented in confusing categories.
- The choice of headings (also for links) is often not logical.
- Hierarchical structures are often deep – this requires many clicks to get to the actual information.

Other factors include a lack of clearly defined aims, insufficient indication of publication dates, a lagging behind in updating websites, and poor indication that web pages form part of a specific website.

The GCIS audit, in addition to the general comments on the shortcomings of government websites, also provided comments to individual departments on their websites. In this way the SAPS also received a critique of its website.

5.2.4 SAPS website audit

The SAPS website was audited between 20 and 23 February 2001. The audit report pointed out the following (cf. GCIS 2001):

- Pages on the website have their own look and feel.
- In many cases the source and dates are not provided.
- Headings are not always descriptive of what is to be expected.
- Certain important information is missing for example a statement on the aim of the website, the vision and mission, contact details, CVs of some high-profile roleplayers, announcement of activities and events, and an annual calendar of events.
- The content is not organised logically
 - It is difficult to navigate the site. The only link to main options is via a home button at the bottom of all pages.
 - There are dead/broken links and pages with no link to any other pages.
 - There is no search facility.
 - There is limited interactivity because only two e-mail addresses are given on the website.
 - There are too many large graphics and attention-getting devices, e.g. large images.
 - Backgrounds are busy.
 - Document formats are not consistently indicated.
 - No indication is given of applicable browsers with which the site may be viewed.
 - Script error messages appear often.

5.2.5 Findings: SAPS website query analysis

Questions/feedback that SAPS website users directed to the SAPS Internet communication official during the period April 2001 to May 2002 were processed and categorised into major categories and subcategories in terms of user needs.

The queries predominantly indicated the following requirements:

- Specific content
- A website that delivers online service
- Interactivity

Regarding content, the following needs for information on the following issues appeared to be most important:

- Trends in crime, e.g. the Nigerian scam
- Contact details of various police division/units and individuals
- Work opportunities
- Human resource management
- Laws, Acts
- Statistics
- Stolen goods
- Reservists
- Steps/ procedures
- Police priorities/ objectives
- Issues involving women and children

5.2.6 Findings: Evaluation of best practices of other police agency websites

The best practices generally identified in the seven websites that were evaluated are given in Chapter 4 (see 4.12.2).

5.3 Instrument design

The various findings and recommendations elaborated on above were applied to develop the websites evaluation instrument. In addition, sources used to develop the website evaluation framework in Chapter 4 (cf. 4.2 and Web page evaluation sources consulted under Bibliography) were also consulted. The purpose of developing this instrument is to assess the SAPS website.

The website evaluation instrument has seven categories, namely content, architecture (overall design), information architecture (information structure), technology, style, service delivery and delivery of e-Government services.

Table 24 below was compiled to glean information from the four evaluators approached to evaluate the website.

Table 24 Website evaluation instrument: Preliminaries

Evaluator information	
Name	
Date	
Screen Resolution	
Browser	
Internet connection	
Site information	
Internet site address (URL)	http://www.saps.org.za
Name of the site	SA Police Service
Author, editor, institution	South African Police Service
Webmaster	sandra.stewart@sita.co.za
Currency	No indication of last update
Purpose of the information	To inform the user (SA citizens), to explain the structure and services of the South African Police Service and to persuade them to come involved in fulfilling the SAPS mission, i.e. to serve and protect all people in South Africa.

5.3.1 Evaluation criteria

The following rating system was used to evaluate the SAPS website.

3	Full compliance – all aspects of the criteria are covered
2	Evidence of compliance to most aspects of the criteria
1	Some evidence of compliance; comply to some of the aspects
0	Do not comply at all
–	Could not be evaluated

5.3.2 Evaluation of website content

Website content refers to the meaning conveyed by the text and graphics.

Table 25 Evaluation of content

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
1. General			
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site clearly identified (especially the home page, but other pages as well) 		



Home page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately engages user in contents 		
Home page quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home page uncluttered, informative, inviting, concise and easy-to-read 		
Home page coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of the site easy to identify from the home page 		
Target audience and relevancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended audience clearly specified • Content relevant to the target audience 		
Reason to return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style, quality and freshness of content sufficient reason to return to the website 		
Website alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of website is in line with its strategy/purpose 		
2. Content			
“About us” page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An “About us” page provided, with correct information on (or links to) pages such as Introduction, Mission and Vision, Structure, Leadership, History 		
“Where to find us” page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address given • Physical location given • Map given • E-mail links given 		
Organisation structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organigram presented • Leadership presented, with photographs 		
Press releases/official news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases furnished and up to date • Speeches from main role-player provided 		
Calendar of events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furnished and updated 		
Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report published on the site • Other high-profile reports published 		
Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail provided on special projects, campaigns, launches and other initiatives 		
‘What’s New’ section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site includes a ‘What’s New’ section, or highlights recent changes 		
FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAQs comprehensive, and updated 		
Glossary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glossary for terms used on website. Glossary link on menu bar 		
3. Credibility			
Content authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content has an authority listed (i.e. the user knows whom to contact about content issues) 		



Authorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to authors of content and website team 		
Author	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear who is authoring the page. Author can be contacted for clarification 		
Content style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of the content credible (does not read like a brochure – with no way of verifying content) 		
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibliographies or references given 		
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material supported by evidence. Information is reliable. Free from factual errors 		
Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site content balanced and does not indicate a level of bias 		
Completeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate coverage of the subject with no obvious omissions 		
Breadth of coverage (comprehensiveness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All aspects of intended subject covered 		
Depth of coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site goes to the level of detail as per the mission and purpose; user gets entire idea 		
Timeliness of coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh content provided • Reflects changing information needs of an e-enabled user 		
Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References to other sources (print and Internet sources) • Where information is derived from a print version, it is clear which edition derived from 		
Content currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The date the article was written/site created given • Indicated when article/site was last updated or revised • Indicated how often the information/site is revised or updated 		
Dates and updating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date/update on the home page, every page • Date format consistent throughout the site • Indicated how frequently the site content is updated 		
4. Content quality			
Quality control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that information is checked and verified • Attention to detail • Absence of mistakes, inaccuracy and incongruities 		



Quality of verbal expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site measures up in terms of readability • Clarity of grammar and use of language • Articulation of complex concepts • Lack of typographical errors – spelling, punctuation, etc • Absence of duplication and repetition 		
Clear and concise wording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition – an appropriate literary style adopted • Content constructed of simple, clear sentences (as against dense, complex writing) • Paragraphs short and to the point (as against long and convoluted) • Vocabulary appropriate for the perceived target audience 		
5. Legal issues			
Terms of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link provided to the terms/conditions of use statement, including copyright notice, privacy policy statement and disclaimers 		
Copyright notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copyright notice appears prominently for copyrighted material • Indicated if some material is in the “public domain” 		
Disclaimer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclaimer included, describing the limitations, purpose, scope, authority, and currency of the information • Sources of information disclosed (copyright issues) • Disclaimer clear and unambiguous • Disclaimer brought to the attention of the user 		
Privacy statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy statement included on the home page • Clearly stated what information is collected about individuals when they visit the website, how it is used and if it is disclosed • Clearly stated that confidentiality is ensured 		
Content suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content non-offensive and non-discriminatory 		

5.3.3 Evaluation of website architecture (overall design)

Website architecture refers to the overall design, structure, and navigation within the site. The principles of user-centric design must be applied:

- The website structure should organise the site’s content, information flow and categories (subjects) in such a way that users can logically navigate the site, track their progress and determine their location within the site on any web page.
- The user should not need to have an understanding of the internal structure of the department or agency to find information or services.
- A complex structure that requires multiple layers of subcategories, or a long series of steps before reaching the required information is avoided. All content should be accessible within three or four mouse clicks.
- The navigation system should be intuitive to help users easily locate information or services. It should require an economy of user’s time and action.
- Links to the home page, high-level site categories, and the search facility should be provided on every page. These links allow users to easily navigate from one area of the site to another.
- The size, shape, position, and function of important elements should remain constant. Inconsistency leads to confusion and frustration.

Table 26 Evaluation of site architecture

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
1. Website structure			
User-centric structure	The site’s content is structured to allow information to flow according to the usage pattern of the average/typical user		
Positioning clear	The information is categorised to allow users to logically move through the site with ease, track their progress and determine their location within the site on any web page		
Intuitive structure	User does not need to have an understanding of the internal structure of government or individual agencies in order to find information or services		
User-centric layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site designed to follow the user’s thought process • Site is simple, internally consistent, and easy to use, neat with an appealing look and feel 		
Balanced design	Website “range” not too wide, and information not hidden too deeply, forcing the user to hunt for it		



Site organisation	Site organised in logical fashion. Headings and subheadings clear. Easy to understand how information is organised on the site		
2. Navigation			
Consistent link structure	Links to the home page, high-level site categories, and search facility provided on every page		
Commonly used web navigation labels	Consistency with commonly used web navigation labels (such as Home, About Us, What's New, Media Releases, Publications, Search, Contact Us, Useful Links, Site Map, Feedback and Help)		
Easy to navigate	User can easily find way backward and forwards. Structure is apparent and logical. Navigation functions consistent across all pages. Possible to move about without returning to home page. Navigation intuitive and consistent		
Easy to find	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website clearly identified • Available on search engines 		
Image maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where image maps are used, they are clear as to where they lead (or a text description is included to assist) • Hotspots (sections containing links) on image maps clearly defined • Text links provided in tandem with image links (to facilitate viewers who turn off image displays or use browsers that cannot display images) 		
Site map	Map provides hierarchical structure of all main pages on website		
Index	Index or table of contents guides user (an "A to Z index")		
Flow	Pages must follow on logically – pages should begin with clear transition		
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background image, where present, does not overwhelm page; does not affect site's readability • Background and text work well together 		
Indication of page position	Site structure is such that it is always clear where the user is within the site		
Navigation aids and scrolling	Where pages are long, there are adequate navigation aids within the page leading to the top end of document, for easier reading. Internal page links avoid excessive scrolling and bring user directly to a particular location within page		



3. Links and menus			
Links (internal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate internal links provided to navigate the website • Links checked regularly and point to pages still in use 		
Links (external)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperlinks provided to other relevant resources • External links well selected and maintained • Links checked regularly and point to pages still in use • Expired or dead links (web page) not found 		
Link description	Links descriptive enough to clearly indicate where and to what they lead. External links clearly indicate user is leaving the site		
Link colour	Site implements link colour changes (on hover, activated)		
Links back 'home'	Links back to the 'home' page from each sub-page		
Top menu bar	Top menu bar provides links to frequently used pages/functions		
Menu bar	Menu bar consistent throughout the site		

5.3.4 Evaluation of information architecture (information structure)

Information architecture refers to the overall structuring of the information presented on the website.

Table 27 Evaluation of site architecture (information structure)

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
Information architecture (structure)	Coherent presentation of information		
Information construct clarity	Information chunked in digestible blocks Short pages provided		
Coherent presentation of information	Packaging of information effective – not too long or too short		
Effective categorisation	Hierarchical groups or categories allow users to find information in multiple ways		

Use of menus for finding information	Menus provide an overview of basic elements of site		
Menus provide effective grouping	Menus show approximate breadth and depth of site by indicating how many subsets exist under each grouping		
Organisation (clear headings, subheadings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site's information organisation clearly marked • Headings and subheadings clear and they make sense • Easy to understand how information is organised on the site 		
Information access	Content rating systems, usability, search facility, site map, steps to destination, readability, effectiveness of image maps		
Uncluttered/easily scanned	Pages not dense with links and content, and with plenty of "white space". Presentation organised to facilitate scanning the page – not necessary to read all the content to discern content of interest		
Attention to detail	Absence of dead ends and outdated pages		

5.3.5 Evaluation of website technology

Website technology refers to the use of specific technology elements, features and facilities.

Table 28 Evaluation of site technology

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
1. Features and facilities			
Search facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site has internal search facility • Instructions and tips for searching • Search facility accessible from every page • Advanced search function available 		
Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to understand and complete • Privacy and security guidelines followed • Alternative to forms provided 		
Downloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed information provided about downloadable material • Alternative formats provided • All material tested and confirmed as virus free 		

Browser support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pages display on various browsers and platforms • Lack of script errors • All pages error-free in the most widely used web browsers • All pages print properly 		
2. Multimedia			
Innovative use of technology	Innovative use made of multimedia – e.g. audio and video broadcast and streaming media		
Interactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful and relevant links at appropriate places • Adequate number of links – not too many or too few • Effective use made of e-mail lists, newsletters, newsgroups, chat, bulletin boards • Other value-added services provided 		
Singularity of purpose	Absence of unrequested intrusions (e.g. pop ups), no “attention clash”		
Responsiveness and connectivity	Speed of connection, response time, download time satisfactory		
3. World Wide Web factors			
URL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL clarity – rate the domain distinctiveness, memorability, competitive positioning, and address permanence • Site clearly identified – police service, country • URL gives a clear indication of police service • Each page has a unique URL 		
Website management	Evidence of effective maintenance and management process		

5.3.6 Evaluation of website style

Website style refers to the aesthetics – the appearance and visual appeal of the site. It is important for a designer to establish a strong visual identity and apply it throughout the web site.

The branding of a website can be established by incorporating common design elements such as colours, logos, styles, etc., into every page. This presents a professional and consistent visual identity as well as informing users where they are.



Table 29 Evaluation of website style

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
1. General style			
General impression in keeping with purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site projects an appropriate stylish, image • Home page designed attractively – entices user to further exploration 		
Overall visual appeal	Consistent visual identity established		
Visual aspects functionality	Visual aspects add to website pages without distracting the user		
Overall presentation	Site interesting and appealing at first impression		
Ease of reading	Complex components simplified, e.g. the use of synopses and summaries		
Readability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readable fonts throughout • Optimum paragraph and sentence length • Text not too big or small • Not too much bold, italics, capitals • Not too many font types 		
2. Specific elements			
Relevancy of graphic images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of images (not just ‘eye-candy’) • Use of thumbnail images to speed page download and give viewer choice as to whether or not to download full-size image • Images have captions or identified in text 		
Use of graphics (style)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of the graphical images good • Graphics prove functional and contribute to usability • Images enhance the resource and do not distract from the content 		
Legibility	Addresses user’s ability to recognise words on the web pages. Contrast between text and background sufficient. Font size not too small for continuous reading. Limited number of practical type styles and typefaces		

Writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content written in a style appropriate for the World Wide Web • Acronyms, jargon, and complex words avoided • Content clear and simple • Content free of material that could be generally considered offensive • Succinct, easily “scannable”, plain English used • Correct spelling and punctuation used 		
Consistent use of fonts	Standard fonts used throughout the website Font type and size clear and easy to read		
Consistent colour scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent look and feel throughout the web site • Consistent colour scheme applied from the 216 colour browser-safe palette 		
Ease of use	Perceptual clarity, focus of attention, visibility of functions		
Titles	Title of the site and the pages descriptive of the content		
Usability testing	Usability testing undertaken, and the results published online		
User matching	Website appears sensitive to the needs of different user types		

5.3.7 Evaluation of service delivery

Table 30 Evaluation of service delivery

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
1. Police-specific content			
Target audience identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives concerning target audience stated • Target audience clear • Website contains definition of target audience 		
Content relevancy	Content and language relevant to all online segmented users		
Police Service strategy	Strategy available online		
Vision and mission of police service	Vision and mission available online		



Organisation structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organigram presented (where applicable) • Leadership presented (with photographs) 		
Police Service Acts	Relevant acts and ordinances published		
Policy documents	Policies and white papers published		
Police Service documents	Relevant publications, documents, procedures, etc. published		
Statistics and crime statistics	Latest crime figures provided		
Successes reported	Updated information on police service successes		
Community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of projects involving community published • Community involvement encouraged (e.g. reporting crime) 		
Customisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible to uniquely define topics of interest • Possible to set keywords for personal e-mail 		
Emergency service	Emergency contact numbers furnished		
Special attention to topical issues	News and advice provided on topical issues, e.g. on Nigerian scams		
Attention to high-profile crime	Checklists and tip sheets provided for high-profile crime that affects all citizens, e.g. hi-jacking of cars, housebreaking		
Other services	Value-added services, hints and advice, e.g. safety precautions, crime prevention		
2. Contacting the police			
Reporting crime (emergencies)	Basic directions and numbers for reporting crime in emergency situations easy to locate. Clear there will be a response		
Reporting crime (non-emergencies)	Basic directions and numbers for reporting crime in non-emergency situations easy to locate		
Reporting crime by e-mail	Users enabled to report crime by e-mail		
Contacting the police for reasons other than reporting crime	Includes general enquiries, data protection, firearms and shotguns, help for crime victims and website feedback		
Single point of contact (simple enquiries)	Electronic mail contact info: A single e-mail address (contact person) provided for service enquiries		

Contact information for head office	Head office contact information (address, phone, e-mail, person to contact, etc) easy to find		
Contact information for head office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple methods of contact (phone, fax, e-mail) • Multiple routes of contact that facilitate different objectives 		
Contact information for head office	Search function available within the contact information – helps steer user to the right information		
Contact info for local offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local office addresses, phone, e-mail easy to find • Site lists physical business locations • Locations can be searched by geographical area • Hours of operation provided 		
Response to enquiries	Indication that a person will respond to every piece of electronic correspondence, route it to another person as necessary and follow up to ensure that service has been delivered		
Languages supported	Citizen can receive service in the language of his/her choice		

5.3.8 Evaluation of SAPS delivery of e-Government service

Table 31 Evaluation of e-Government service delivery

Topic	Description	Rating	Notes
1. General			
Self-service	Provision for self-service, online access to resources, etc.		
Portals	Portals employed for enhancing access		
“Life events” approach	Site structured around the user’s life events and activities (rather than the police service’s internal organisation structure).		
Digital democracy	Discussion forums, public opinions, online forms available that enhance the concepts of digital democracy available		
Links	Links provided to the main government / departmental websites		



Appropriate security	Sufficient level of security provided for e-Government services. Appropriate authentication mechanisms (e.g. certificates) must be used to support self-service		
Database integration	Proper database integration in place to support self-service functionality		
Customer service and respect	Evidence of customer service management, e.g. effective management of requests and complaints from customers (evaluate the ease of contact and responsiveness)		
Matches user sophistication level	Website matches likely technological savvy of the user <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site targeted to average users should not require plug-ins to use key features • Site appears sensitive to different user types such as average vs. power users • Site differentiates its services between remote access vs. office users 		
Personalisation: The ability to create "my site"	Site is customisable. Possible to uniquely define topics of interest and how they are presented		
2. Interactive features			
Interactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site offers users information customised to specific needs • Users can submit content to website 		
Newsletter	Users can subscribe to an on-line newsletter or e-mail newsfeed		
E-mail links	Adequate e-mail links provided for all online services provided		
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment, feedback and input encouraged • Incentives for feedback given 		
Vacancies	Information on vacant positions and joining the police		
Emergency situations	Sufficient advice provided to handle emergency situations		
Initiatives	Information provided online on the police service's campaigns and initiatives		
Surveys on user needs (results available online)	Questions on navigation, purpose of visits, site aesthetics, and type of people who visit the sites		
Promotion of police service objectives	Website effectively promotes understanding of police service		

Ensured reaction	One phase higher than just offering an electronic brochure on the WWW		
Contact information	Contact information (e.g. e-mail) for the webmaster given.		
User support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of user support on the site – help documentation, e-mail help, and fax-back service adequate • Interactive feature sufficiently explained. 		

5.4 Peer evaluation

Evaluators were requested to undertake the evaluation of the SAPS website during December 2002 to March 2003, using the websites evaluation instrument. This was requested at a later stage as evaluation near completion of the research would ensure its currency.

Mouton (1996:31) explains the purpose of peer evaluation, namely to serve as a control mechanism in the search for truth. “The search for truth is not just another option or a matter of choice. Scientists who are engaged in scientific research are bound, as it were, in a ‘moral contract’ to commit themselves to the search for truth” (Mouton 1996:31). Mouton (1996:57) refers to “the market of intellectual resources”; such “market” could include peer evaluation as an item. Further, he explains (1996:57) that there are two types of resources, theoretical and methodological resources. Methodological resources include all the methods and approaches in the research process. Peer evaluation would be one such approach.

Four persons were approached and appointed as evaluators of the police agency websites. They are the following

- Evaluator 1: A website designer. She was selected because of her experience and ongoing work in the field.
- Evaluator 2: An independent website consultant
- Evaluator 3: A visitor to the SAPS website (she is a regular visitor) who surfs the World Wide Web daily and has experience in collating information for websites.
- Evaluator 4: A technology designer. He was also selected because of his experience and ongoing work in the field.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the recommendations and finding of earlier research that are used in the development of the websites evaluation instrument.



The instrument has seven categories, namely content, architecture (overall design), information architecture (information structure), technology, style, service delivery and delivery of e-Government services.

The evaluations of the SAPS website by the four evaluators, using this instrument, are discussed in Chapter 6.