

INTRODUCTION

No one can question the profound impact the Internet is having on our society. The ways we communicate, conduct business, and entertain ourselves are all changing as more individuals, businesses, and organizations become members of this new electronic community. The purpose of this sixth version of the Guide is to explore some of the new legal questions fostered by the continued growth in the scope and use of the Internet. While there are clearly new and unique issues that are exclusive to the Internet, you will also find that many existing principles of law still apply.

We hope this Guide will allow anyone conducting business through the Internet to form an understanding of some basic principles of law so the readers can continue to educate themselves and/or their legal counsel. The Internet has also introduced new terms including URL's, metatags, linking, web browsers, digital signatures, etc. It is our hope that this publication will give you a basic understanding of this new jargon. Although prepared by lawyers, this Guide should not be utilized as a substitute for legal advice in the complex and evolving area of Internet law.

We were aware that as soon as the first version of this Guide was published in August 1999, some of the information would soon be outdated. Among other new developments covered by this sixth edition are domain name disputes, cases involving jurisdiction, the Supreme Court decision on peer-to-peer file sharing, liability for uploading a computer program that erased data on a company provided laptop, and trademark infringement claims based on sponsored links. Helpful Internet sites now appear at the end of the Guide. To facilitate revisions, this publication is available on Merchant & Gould's web site

www.merchantgould.com as well as the web site of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, www.mnsbao.com. If you are looking for the most current version of this Guide, please check the above web sites to see if an update has been completed. It is our sincere hope that you will find the following Guide not only informative and provocative, but useful as you enter the exciting and dynamic world of the Internet.

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