Sometimes a security specialist works in a relatively small organization where there’s no one else interested in discussing security policies. It can be lonely and dispiriting to work on policies that can evoke such strong emotional responses from colleagues, so I’m glad to report on a useful resource for anyone interested in policy.

The Security Policy discussion group at Groups.Yahoo was founded in December 1999 by the Toronto (Canada) information assurance consultant, Anton J. Aylward, following a seminar and workshop held by the local chapter of the Information Systems Security Association (ISSA). Mr Aylward very kindly contributed the following description of the project and has allowed me to publish his text with minor edits.

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The aim of the group is to act as a discussion forum for security professionals involved in formulation and security policies at all levels and in all areas of business, education and government. We discuss what constitutes policy, what is effective and the spectrum of policies, procedures, standards, guidelines and justifications, how they are formulated, promulgated, monitored and enforced.

Policies are the foundation of any effective security scheme, as every textbook on the subject tells us. They also seem to be one of the most difficult aspects of the information security practitioner's job. Many books and Web sites offer sample policies, but distilling them and customizing them to fit a particular organization, gaining approval and sign-off and then dealing with disseminating and enforcing them is daunting and stressful.

The workshop format, first held in April 1999, was a departure from the normal format of events sponsored by the Toronto chapter of the ISSA. Instead of listening to a previously prepared presentation, the attendees were invited to share their experiences dealing with security policies. Many interesting views emerged. The participants had very differing views of what constituted policies, who should be responsible for stating them, how to communicate them and how to enforce them.

The security-policy group began as an extension of the workshop, where the original attendees could share their experiences, ask questions and gather opinions. It now has members from many other areas and fields of interest. We invite readers to join us.

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Contact Information:

Security-Policy group home page: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/security-policy](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/security-policy)

ISSA home page: [http://www.issa-intl.org](http://www.issa-intl.org)
NEW! 18-month online Master of Science in Information Assurance offered by Norwich University; see <http://www.norwich.edu/msia> for full details.


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