



CENTER FOR ONLINE
SAFETY AND LIBERTY

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

CENTER FOR ONLINE SAFETY AND LIBERTY

INTRODUCTION

Safety and liberty online should not be at odds with each other. When speech is indiscriminately censored and access is curtailed, online spaces for discussion, creativity, support, and protest either disappear or are drained of their diversity and vitality. At the same time, online spaces marked by gender-based violence, hate speech, or targeted harassment are not spaces in which marginalized individuals are genuinely free to participate.

Too often, online policy debates treat safety and freedom as a zero-sum choice: more safety is assumed to require less liberty, and more liberty is assumed to tolerate harm. This framing is both false and damaging. It obscures the ways in which overbroad censorship can undermine safety, while allowing real abuse to persist unaddressed. It also marginalizes the very communities most often invoked in the name of protection.

The Center for Online Safety and Liberty (COSL) was launched in 2025 to challenge this false binary. COSL is founded on the principle that safety and liberty are not competing values, but mutually reinforcing ones—and that durable, inclusive online spaces require both. We confront both governments and corporations that perpetuate the false binary between safety and liberty, and we pursue change through research, permissionless innovation, and grassroots action.

During 2025, COSL launched ten ambitious projects that promote safety and liberty as parallel values, clustered within four Priority Areas: Safer Hosting, Supporting Fans, Cyberbullying and Abuse, and Legal Advocacy. While most of these initial projects are managed in-house, COSL also offers fiscal sponsorship to vetted independent projects that advance our mission and fit within one of our Priority Areas.

COSL ended 2025 with a small team of seven, with oversight from a compact startup Board of four. Despite these limited human resources, we published over twenty blog posts, over 400 social media posts, and eight podcast episodes during the year, placed two op-eds, and secured our first philanthropic grant—all in addition to our broader programmatic work. Read on to discover more about our achievements in 2025 as well as our vision for the organization's future.

DRAWING THE LINE

When our last Annual Report was published, the Center for Online Safety and Liberty (COSL) was little more than a vision. During 2025, that vision began to take tangible form. We closed out the year as an organization that—while still small and finding its feet—has already begun to demonstrate meaningful impact. That momentum will continue into 2026, as COSL prepares for its first major international conference appearance at RightsCon 2026 and enters its next phase of growth.

Our upcoming RightsCon appearance marks the culmination of the first phase of COSL's headline research and advocacy initiative, Drawing the Line. The project responds to a growing and troubling trend: the use of child protection, anti-trafficking, and "decency" justifications to support increasingly overbroad censorship of sexual expression online. Consistent with COSL's core commitment to treating safety and liberty as equal and inseparable values, Drawing the Line examines where the online rights of fans, artists, LGBTQ+ communities, abuse survivors, and other predominantly marginalized groups are being unjustly curtailed. Crucially, it also highlights where this overreach diverts limited institutional resources away from the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of real child sexual abuse.

The inaugural Drawing the Line Watchlist 2025 presented challenging evidence that governments are currently failing to strike this balance. Its headline finding was that the growing allocation of law enforcement and prosecutorial resources to victimless works of personal expression—such as art and fiction—classified as child sexual abuse material (CSAM) has come at the expense of pursuing perpetrators and supporting victims of real child sexual abuse. Among the Watchlist's key recommendations was that the term CSAM should be reserved exclusively for material that directly victimizes a real child, and that laws, prosecutorial priorities, and crime statistics should consistently respect this distinction. Drawing this line is not a matter of free expression alone, but a necessary condition for ensuring that the interests of children and survivors are genuinely placed first.

The launch of the Drawing the Line Watchlist 2025 took place at a public webinar on 10 December 2025, featuring members of the project's Advisory Board: Emma Shapiro of the Don't Delete Art campaign; Ashley Remminga, a researcher focusing on transgender and

gender-diverse participation in fandom; and Zora Rush, a responsible AI practitioner with experience at Microsoft. The Watchlist's findings were also amplified through op-ed coverage in both the popular press, including [The Guardian](#), and academic policy outlets such as [Internet Policy Review](#).

While Drawing the Line was COSL's flagship initiative in 2025, it was far from the only project launched during the year. The sections that follow provide an overview of COSL's other activities and achievements.

PRIORITY AREAS

SAFER HOSTING

COSL's key projects within its Safer Hosting Priority Area are:

- **Liberato**, a non-profit offshore hosting service for websites and virtual machines. Liberato is a hosting service aimed at activists, artists, nonprofits, community groups, and others who may be censored or shadow-banned on mainstream commercial hosting platforms. Liberato distinguishes itself from commercial offerings by prioritizing privacy, freedom of expression, and trust and safety. Liberato is also our in-house hosting service, which hosts all of COSL's project websites.
- **Modtools.io** is a repository of past, present, and upcoming open source trust and safety tools and services. The highlight of this suite is **Dead Dove**, a content-warning WordPress plugin that we developed originally for Fan Refuge (see below). We're also working on a number of upcoming projects including another WordPress plugin that integrates with the Checkstep moderation service, and an API that will detect whether content can be offered without age verification to users from a given jurisdiction.

SUPPORTING FANS

With foundational roots in online fan communities, Supporting Fans is another key Priority Area. The related projects are:

- **Beyond the Filter.** Our Beyond the Filter podcast discusses the practice and politics of censorship resistance both within and beyond fandom. Episodes released in 2025 covered topics as diverse as the censorship of animated pornography, criminalization of women fans in China, age verification and payment provider censorship, and scientific research into the links between fictional material and sex offending.
- **Fan Refuge.** Building on Liberato's foundation, Fan Refuge will be a fan platform that offers an easier onramp for creators and fans to share fandom content that would be at risk of overbroad censorship on mainstream platforms. Built by a team experienced in fandom spaces, a priority for Fan Refuge is to maximize the joy of connecting people with those who share their passion, while minimizing toxicity such as hate speech.

CYBERBULLYING AND ABUSE

Cyberbullying and Abuse Prevention is the COSL Priority Area that most directly addresses safety online. Kristin Spooner, who was coordinating the projects in this priority area, resigned in September 2025, leaving these projects temporarily without dedicated leadership.

- **Prevention Today for a Safer Tomorrow** is a project to maintain hosting for public health-based information for preventing online abuse, along with discussion and support resources. Although some of these remain active, we have had to wind back certain other prevention interventions including Google ads to deter image-based sexual offending, and scientific research into abuse prevention and mental wellness.
- **Digital Privacy and Safety** is a repository of resources to educate the public about ways in which they can protect themselves from online threats, whether those threats come from individual abusers, authoritarian government surveillance practices, or corporate data collection. It currently consists of a self-help guide on protecting yourself online, and we hope to expand this resource in future.

LEGAL ADVOCACY

COSL's fourth and final Priority Area is Legal Advocacy. In addition to the Drawing the Line project, the following projects fall within this area:

- **Political advocacy.** Among the overbroad safety laws that we campaigned against this year were the Interstate Obscenity Definition Act, the Stop CSAM Act, and Australia's Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. We also filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, and co-signed four joint letters including one in November with 60 other rights groups on the [Role of Encryption in Securing Trust and Enabling the Digital Economy](#).
- **Harmful to Minors** is a project dedicated to archiving takedown and suspension notices pertaining to sex and gender, which frequently utilize the pretext that such content is "harmful to minors". In doing so, we aim to provide more transparency into these requests and hold those who make them to a higher standard of accountability.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

As 2025 closed, our Board of Directors was helmed by experienced non-profit director, lawyer, and trust and safety consultant **Jeremy Malcolm** as Chair. Fandom denizen **Brandy Brightman** served as Secretary, content creator and harm reduction/prevention activist **Sarah Chastain** as Treasurer, and **Maggie McNeill**, a writer, sex worker, and former librarian, as ordinary Board Member. Additional members who served during 2025 were Doctor of Social Work and Certified Sex Therapist **Kristin Spooner**, trauma-informed Counsellor **Fay Brown**, and **Michael McGrady Jr**, a freelance journalist who covers the law and politics of the sex industry.

At the end of 2025 our staff comprised **Caden** as Technologist, **Joshua Casey** as Social Media Manager, **Laura Edwards** as Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications and Outreach, **Haley Ekberg** as Webmaster, **Y H** as Marketing Officer, **Timi Makinde** as Software Developer, and **Kelechi Udeagha** as Technical Manager. During the year, our other team members included **Jarnail Singh** as Head Technologist, **Sophia Campana** as Webmaster, **Amina** as Fundraising Officer and Membership Officer, **Nandini** as Technologist, and **Valerie** as Activist.

COSL Advisory Boards can be convened at the Priority Area or Project level. Currently we have an Advisory Board for the Drawing the Line project, which as of the end of 2025 included **Aur lie Petit**, **Emma Shapiro**, **Ira Ellman**, **Masayuki Hatta**, **Ashley Remminga**, and **Zora Rush**. Their biographies are available on our [Drawing the Line microsite](#).

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

COSL was established with the objective of balancing its revenue between three sources: grassroots donations, revenue-generating projects operated as a social enterprise (of which Liberato is the only current example), and philanthropic funding. During 2025, modest revenue was received from each of these sources, with grassroots donations being the source that requires most development.

As to be expected from a startup nonprofit, our expenses exceeded our revenue in 2025, with the shortfall being taken from assets, which were the savings passed to COSL for its formation by its predecessor nonprofit. The largest ticket item of Contractors reflected a need for COSL to continue to pay the system administrators of Liberato during its transition from nascent commercial enterprise to nonprofit project. This expense has been much reduced as Liberato's operations have been taken over by COSL volunteers.

COSL remains solvent.

REVENUE/INCOME

Name	Total
Grants	10,000.00
Sales	7,183.06
Donations	3,385.00
Interest	0.25
Total income	20,568.31

NET WORTH

Name	Total
Total assets	2,333.17
Total liabilities	158.70
Net worth	2,174.47

EXPENSES

Name	Total
Contractors	20,700.81
Cost of goods sold	3,673.12
Software licensing	1,690.22
Printing and design	1,407.81
Hosting and domains	620.78
Bank fees	458.59
Mailbox fees	257.03
Legal fees and licenses	95.00
Marketing	50.00
Total	28,953.36

FUTURE PLANS

During 2026, COSL plans a period of careful growth, at every level of the organization. With an initial startup board of enthusiastic volunteers, our success and longevity will depend upon recruiting one or two more experienced and well-connected board members. If you are reading this Annual Report, you likely have what it takes to be a member of the COSL Board. We encourage you to reach out to express your interest.

Alongside strengthening the board, we also plan for sustainable growth in our staff, who have been almost exclusively volunteers. Among the positions that we hope to recruit in 2026 would include an HR Manager, Membership Officer, Activist, Graphic Designer, Development Officer and Podcast Producer. A volunteer from within the Board or the Staff to manage our Cyberbullying & Abuse priority area is also sought, as well as a new manager for the Harmful to Minors project.

To support our projected growth, building revenue will be a priority for the organization. Our 2026 goal is to at least double our revenue in each category of philanthropic grants, sales, and grassroots donations. At the same time, we aim to hold expenses as level as possible, in order to attain positive revenue and to begin building a reserve. For this reason there are currently no plans to commence any new projects in 2026.

By prioritizing stability alongside ambition, COSL aims to remain a trusted, credible voice at the intersection of online safety and civil liberties — capable of meeting emerging challenges without losing sight of the values that brought the organization into being.

REACH OUT

Want to get in touch with the Center for Online Safety and Liberty? We’d love to hear from you.

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