

'Da Vinci Code' protestors organize online

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As the box-office release of the summer blockbuster movie "The Da Vinci Code" nears, many protesters and boycotters are discussing their objection to the film through blogs, newsletters, CD-ROMs and interactive Web sites.

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property has a comprehensive Web site featuring several online options for users to communicate, mobilize protests and learn about the organization's agenda.

The homepage of the site, tfp.org, displays a map of the United States where viewers can click on states, leading to the names and contact information of organizers of local protests. Also on the front page is a mini-review of the movie that can be published on blogs and Web sites.

Individuals who aren't near any protests can create their own using provided protest organizer kits and handouts on TFP's Web site.

"We're organizing 1,000 protests in front of theaters Friday and many hundred after that," said TFP Webmaster John Horvat. "It's a grassroots driven protest."

At a conference at the National Press Club Wednesday several religious-group leaders gathered in opposition to the "The Da Vinci Code."

The Rev. Tom Euteneur, president of Human Life International, was a panelist at the conference and engaged in the debate against the movie.

The organization he represents has released a CD-ROM and maintains a Web site and an updated weekly newsletter.

These religious leaders are engaging in the media because they say they feel Dan Brown's novel, "The Da Vinci Code," has already taken its toll on the faith of many individuals. Movieguide founder Ted Baehr, a panelist at the conference, cited statistics that linked a 4-percent loss of faith and a 10-percent change in beliefs toward Jesus Christ after reading the novel in France.

"We have no specific campaign to young people," Euterneur told United Press International. "We are campaigning to the Catholic population in general."

Baehr, chairman of the Christian Film & Television Commission, said he uses the Web site to encourage a response to "The Da Vinci Code." The site currently has about 3 million visitors a month, but as the release date nears the hits the site has received increased by 25,000 daily.

Movieguide's Web site states that the company "is a ministry dedicated to redeeming the values of the mass media according to biblical principles, by influencing entertainment industry executives and helping families make wise media choices." The site displays an online petition against "The Da Vinci Code" film on its homepage and various articles explaining their complaints against the movie.

One of the panelists, Patrick Reilly, president of the Cardinal Newman Society, said his organization hopes to utilize "the power of viral e-mail." Reilly explains that viral e-mail is an alert or message sent to one party and then passed along to others, spreading the message to many people.

The Cardinal Newman Society's Web site, cardinalnewmansociety.org, displays information about the organization and includes a membership

application and petition forms in .pdf format.

Yet not every protester of "The Da Vinci Code" focuses on online activism. Don Feder, another panelist, said he prefers columns on political commentary over the use of Web sites.

"I happen to like the written word myself," said Feder, a former syndicated columnist.

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