November 24, 2009

Dear Ms Hubbard Krimmer;

I have been informed of the potential questions regarding the London Public Library Internet Service Policy. Libraries should be places where everyone feels welcome and safe. In that regard, when Filters are recommended as a safety measure, we need to remember that they are actually a very poor means of accomplishing this goal. Filters create the illusion of protection and cause parents and staff to be less diligent in their responsibility to monitor use, etc. I have reviewed the London Public Library Internet Service Policy and on behalf of the Canadian Library Association, I congratulate you and your Board on developing and implementing a robust and effective policy that exhibits all the characteristics of “best practice.”

The London Public Library Internet Service Policy should be emulated by any Canadian Public Library still developing such policy. I was unable to find any provision that did not seek to establish a robust yet balanced provision of service to your community. The policy is aligned with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, while taking appropriate measures for the protection of minors.

The policy statement clearly articulates the vision and mission of the library,

“All customers of London Public Library, including those using the Library’s Internet services, are responsible for following the Library’s Charter of Use and Rules of Conduct which are designed to provide a welcoming and safe environment for the enjoyment of the public and staff so that all persons may enjoy the benefits of the Library.”

And with a computer use policy that informs users of their responsibilities,

“Users are responsible for determining the legality of any sites they access. Users are subject to federal, provincial and municipal legislation regulating Internet use and must not use the Internet for illegal purposes including copyright violation, obscenity, child pornography, sedition and the incitement of hate. The use of the Library’s Internet services for illegal purposes is prohibited.”

Further, staff responsibilities are clearly outlined and the consequences of misuse of the library internet use policy provides for appropriate consequences.

“The Library will take action on any inappropriate behaviours related to use of the LPL Internet Service, such as intimidation, harassment, bullying, etc., according to the library’s Code of Conduct. LPL will take action in a situation where unlawful activity occurs, and will contact the police. For legal reasons, complaints from patrons that a user is accessing legally prohibited material may also result in LPL contacting the police. Any person violating Library rules for Internet Service risks suspension of Library privileges, exclusion from the Library for a period of time, banning and/or prosecution.”
The proof and effectiveness of any policy only comes into public view when a questionable incident occurs. In this case, the policy, staff training, and your positive relationship with the London City Police was demonstrated by the incident that occurred on August 19, 2009.

The London Police Services issued the following statement:

*The London Police Cyber Crime Unit has charged a London man after a complaint was received that he was viewing and printing child pornography at the Central Branch of the London Public Library. A search warrant was subsequently executed at a London residence. Charged with one count of accessing child pornography, one count of possessing child pornography and one count of printing child pornography is Robert Johnston, 71 years. The investigation is continuing.*

One cannot eliminate all negative human behaviour but one can deal effectively with objectionable behaviour when staff have received the appropriate training and have the right policy in place to support their actions. The result of the incident on August 19, 2009 is reason to congratulate you and your Board for putting all the pieces together.

Once again, please accept my congratulations on a job very well done!

Regards

John Teskey
President, Canadian Library Association