

REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: Wednesday, May 16th, 2007

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	Internet Policy Project Plan
Prepared By:	Anne Becker
Presented By:	Anne Becker
Purpose of Report:	For Decision: Approval <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Recommendation

To approve the implementation of the Internet Policy Project Plan.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to review the balance of filtered and unfiltered computers in the Library to determine an appropriate balance of filtered and non-filtered machines. Key factors we will study are:

- an individual's experience in the library in terms of unintentional exposure to visual images not appropriate in a general public setting;
- the steps the Library can undertake in order to mitigate risk of exposure to such images for its customers and itself;
- a customer or employee's ability to use the Internet as an effective research tool;
- the Library's ability to provide a broad spectrum of information reflecting all sides of an issue, as consistent with our collections management policy.

Issue / Opportunity

The Internet offers access to a wealth of material that is personally, professionally and culturally enriching to individuals. It also enables access to some content that may be: objectionable or disturbing to some users, controversial, and/or illegal. It may provide users with information that is inaccurate or out-of-date.

To provide users with choice, both filtered and unfiltered access is available at LPL. Currently, 43% of Internet access machines are filtered at London Public Library. We filter computers in the following areas:

- Children's Library and children's areas in branches
- Teen Annex at Central Library
- Employment Resource Centres
- Homework Centres
- Catalogues and E-mail computers, to restrict their general access to the Internet except for specified sites.

Customers must "click" an 'I agree' statement to abide by LPL rules of use. On an unfiltered machine, customers can access any Internet site they choose. From time to time, customers may access images which are not appropriate as part of a public environment that is supposed to be inviting and safe for all. Images on the computer screen become part of the Library environment for all customers and those images that are sexually explicit or extremely violent may be unintentionally viewed by members of the general public (i.e. as people are walking behind a computer).

We have received negative comments on an infrequent but regular basis from customers at Central and at Branch locations about these types of incidences. Our mission statement and value promise assures customers that we will provide a welcoming environment for all people, such as families and children, and pays attention to the individual's experience in the Library.

Through this project, we are identifying an effective response to these concerns. This project will:

- Test a difference balance of filtered versus unfiltered machines within the Library. The balance will continue to provide availability of unfiltered machines, but the majority of machines in public space will be filtered.
- Improve the environment for our customers in our libraries, by minimizing the possibility of accidental exposure to visual images from the Internet on public computer screens that are not appropriate in a general public setting.
- Develop good communications strategies that provide messages on this issue that enable positive responses both internally and externally.
- Put in place feedback, monitoring and assessment criteria and processes to ensure that filtering software is meeting the defined needs of LPL and its customers

Background & Review

Since the Internet Policy was first introduced in 1997, it has been revised several times to respond to the dynamic nature of the electronic environment. Computers have quickly gone from becoming an adjunct to our information services to being a major component of our service response in all locations. Moreover, computers have become a major component of our interior landscape, visible to all who use library facilities. This presence means that the Internet is part of the library's public environment and as such, its impact, has to be managed in order to meet our mission statement and to fulfil our value promise.

The Library recognizes that filtering is only one piece of an effective Internet policy and, because of the diversity of electronic communications, that filtering will not eliminate all inappropriate images. In addition, the Library provides information for parents and children on Internet safety on our website, educational courses and programs. Privacy screens and the positioning of computers have been used to minimize the impact on the interior environment.

Brief Description of Desired Situation

LPL is striving for an environment in all locations that is as inviting and welcoming as possible, where everyone can feel comfortable. We also want to make sure that we do not restrict access to information that is valuable for our customers, including information on both sides of controversial issues that may not be of a popular viewpoint or opinion. We want our staff to be well trained so they can deal with customer's concerns. LPL wants to be an active player in finding constructive solutions to this issue being debated in the broader library community. The library will continue its educative focus for parents and children regarding Internet safety and will continue to use such hardware as will reduce the impact of visual images in the library environment.

Deliverables:

- For this study period, June – October, 2007, public computers will be filtered in the Library system, with the exception of designated computers.
- Internet awareness training related to chat rooms, emails, etc. for the public.
- Mechanism to expand filtering to wireless environment.
- Feedback mechanism for the public and staff.
- Report to the Board including any revisions to policy that reflects our findings and a recommended balance of filtered and non-filtered machines.
- Report to the wider library community.

Proposed Action Plan

Action Plan					
Phase	Action Steps	Start Date	End Date	Owner	Progress Against Plan
INITIAL PHASE	♦ Verbal report to the Board about the issue and the project.	March 21 & April 18		A Becker	✓
	♦ Prepare project plan and develop schedule	April 11	April 13	T Travers/ M Wilkinson (MW) M Mitchell (MM)	✓
	♦ Review filtering software to select categories to be filtered.		April 20	MW/ D Mitchell/ T Travers	✓
	♦ Supervisors Meeting - get input on project scope and communication package, procedure, etc. from supervisors	April 27	April 29	S Hubbard Krimmer (SHK) MM, L Sage (LS)	✓
	♦ Final project plan signed off		April 30		
	♦ Develop feedback mechanism for receiving customer comments / input	April 23	May 9	N Ward/ MW, MM, LS, SHK, D Caloren	✓
	♦ Supervisor Meeting - Review procedures with staff; orient staff to feedback mechanisms (forms, etc.), FAQ's etc.		May 11	MW / D Caloren /LS	✓
	♦ Report to Library Board on summary of action plan		May 16	A Becker	✓
	♦ Identify machines to be filtered and those to be unfiltered.		May 18	T Travers/ MW	
	♦ Supervisors to train and orient staff to procedures, feedback, FAQ's etc.	May 14	May 25	Supervisors	
	♦ Convert the identified machines to filtered	May 28	May 31	T Travers/IT	
	♦ Prepare signage and external communications and communicate with appropriate community partners	April 28	May 16	LS / A Becker	
♦ Prepare internal communications	April 13	June 1	LS/ SHK/ MW		
LAUNCH & MONITORING PHASE	MILESTONE: Review Begins June 1				
	♦ First monitoring point	June 30	July 6	MM / Senior Team & Project Team	
	♦ Second monitoring point	August 31	Sept 7	MM / ST / PT	
	♦ Third monitoring point	Sept 30	Oct 5	MM / ST / PT	
ASSESSMENT PHASE	MILESTONE: Present preliminary assessment of review to ST Oct 23				
	♦ Present preliminary Report to Supervisors		Nov 9	SHK, MM	
	♦ Report and Recommended Policy to the Board		Nov 21	A Becker/ SHK / MM	
	♦ External communications with community partners/ library community	Nov 22	Dec 15	LS	
	♦ Initiate annual policy review process	Nov 2008	Annual	MM	