**REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD**

**MEETING DATE: September 19, 2007**

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**Recommendation**

It is recommended that this report be received.

**Background & Review**

At its meeting of May 23 2007, the Library Board received the Internet Policy Review project plan which provided timelines and key measurements as part of the assessment process.

Key measurements include:

- customer response on exposure to images, inappropriate in a public setting;
- customer/staff feedback on sites blocked;
- response from Netsweeper on blocked sites;
- general feedback from the public (unsolicited); and
- feedback from other libraries.

A staff project team has been responsible for implementing and monitoring the project.

**Monitoring Report (June/July/August)**

**Activities of Monitoring Team**

In June, the Team tested the Netsweeper on a number of occasions to see if filters denied or provided access to URL’s (through Google searches). An update on this work was provided to the Board in June. Through this process, the team discovered that a number of “filtered search words” were still in place from the earlier filtering related to children's machines. These were removed from the filtered machines.
Members of the Monitoring Team met with Netsweeper in August to receive an update on the software and to explore further its capabilities in improving the experience of our customers in a filtered environment. Areas explored included:

- The Net Alert function that can be used by individual customers to query denied sites directly to Netsweeper, for improved customer privacy and speedier review;
- Messaging on the “deny” screens to assist customers, such as Net Alert, seeking staff assistance or using unfiltered machines;
- Netsweeper’s capacity to filter “re-direct” sites, which can be used to circumvent some filtering software;
- NetSweeper’s current research into the development of software to filter “image only” sites.

In preparing policy and procedure recommendations, the Review Team will consider the implementation of any software and hardware features that are available that would improve the customer’s experience.

Netsweeper reported on the accuracy of its filtering software. The categorization process, which is the heart of the Netsweeper software, is both a technical and human function and is not perfect. (The general process of categorization has been provided to the Board in a June communiqué.) Netsweeper reports a false positive error rate (ie. errors in categorization) of less than 2% in the Pornography category and less than 4% in Extreme Violence, being the two categories that the Library has selected for filtering. Overall, Netsweeper’s accuracy rate for all filtered sites is between 2 and 8%.

**Placement of Internet Workstations**

As part of the Library’s ongoing due diligence, supervisors undertook a review, in August, of the current placement of workstations in locations. With the exception of two locations (one recommended minor shifting, the second, Masonville is undergoing renovations) all locations reported that computers were placed to optimize the effectiveness of the following placement factors:

- Amount of walk-by traffic directly passing behind the screens (as privacy screens are not effective when viewing the screens from directly behind).
- Proximity to or in view of staff for service support.
- General management and behaviour monitoring.
- Computers located in both adult and children's/youth areas.

Over time, the placement of computers to reduce the impact of unintentional exposure to images on the computer screen has become a less effective solution for a number of reasons:

- First and foremost, the sheer number of computers has increased exponentially. For example, in 2001 in the old Central there were about 23 public workstations providing Internet access. Today there are 110 public workstations in the Central Library providing Internet access. Throughout all locations there are 230 public workstations providing Internet access. (In addition there are 75 catalogue-only workstations, 45 workstations in the ERC’s, 32 E-mail only workstations and 33 Children’s CD-ROM workstations.) In branch locations, it is difficult to isolate computers due to the openness of the spaces. All areas in Library locations are open to all customers, of all ages, and services are adjacent to each other without barriers.
• Service initiatives such as Employment Resource Centres, Teen Annex, Homework Centres require configurations for specific purposes which can’t always be isolated within the location.
• Isolating computers is not a feasible solution. Past experience has shown that they can become the focus of inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, staff cannot properly view or supervise isolated locations and isolated computers are more vulnerable to theft or vandalism.

Privacy Screens

The Library has been installing privacy screens on public Internet workstations since 2001. Privacy screens are designed for an office environment in order to keep information on the screen private from others. Many profess that privacy solutions are a preferred solution to unintentional exposure to images on a computer screen. However, the Library’s experience of using privacy screens in public settings does not prove this true. Although they are a step in the right direction, they do not conceal screen content when viewed from directly behind the workstation. They blacken or blur the screen image when viewed from the sides. Therefore, they provide limited effectiveness in public areas where traffic flow occurs behind the computers.

Currently about 70% of public workstations providing Internet access are equipped with privacy screens. Home work centres and children’s area workstations are excluded for two reasons:

• To enable parents and children or a number of students to collaborate at a workstation. This has been a frequent request over the years.
• To provide an added level of security by the monitoring of activity in the area.

Some people with low vision or impairment find it difficult to use a workstation with a privacy screen.

Review of Key Measurements of the Project

• Customer response on exposure to images, inappropriate in a public setting
  Since June 1st, only three reports have been received by staff or from customers directly about exposure to inappropriate images while in the Library. These did not occur on unfiltered machines. Logs reported by Supervisors have no other local reports or observations by staff recorded for June, July and August.

  The Netsweeper filtering software cannot affect images transmitted by e-mail.

• Customer/staff feedback on sites blocked
  If an internet user at the library identifies a blocked site that they believe should not be blocked, they may report this to library staff and the Library will submit the URL to Netsweeper. Since the reporting period began, customers have only queried four blocked sites as being potentially incorrectly blocked. Customers are encouraged to write the specific URL on a feedback form. They are not required to provide any personal identification unless they wish to have a response from the Library.

• Response from Netsweeper on blocked sites
  Netsweeper has been responsive when queried on blocked sites. Of the five inquiries made to date:

  • 2 are unblocked
• 1 remained blocked
• 1 was not a filtering issue. The screen link required software not available at the Library.
• 1 was not blocked but the customer attempted to access on a special function computer

Public Feedback Process related to Filtering Project

One of the project’s measures is the effect of filters on the individual library experience. In order to measure this, the Library has put in place a public feedback process in order to receive comment from individuals and to gauge public opinion generally on the subject. In order to assist with obtaining feedback, the Library undertook the following steps:

• Prior to the initiation of the test, LPL shared information on the project with community partners, including Council;
• Updated information related to the project has been posted and is refreshed on the LPL website;
• Public feedback forms are available at all branch locations, with staff procedures in place to encourage people to write their comments.
• Information about the pilot project is available to the public in a variety of media;
• Media interviews have been provided and were an opportunity for public comment;
• An online public forum to receive feedback and dialogue is available on the website, at http://lplforum.wordpress.com/.

Feedback

The Library continues to receive general feedback during the review period. Approximately 20 comments, requests for delegation, blogs, letters to the editor (London Free Press) have been recorded from June 1st to Sept 15th. General feedback to date has been:

• Library website forum: 7 comments, 6 in support and 1 against.
• Staff comment: 6 comments, all in support
• Free Press letters: 2 letters, both in support
• E-mail, feedback form from public: 7 comments, 3 in support, 4 against
• Delegation requests: 3 received, all against

In general, those against the project expressed concern over the possible filtering out of valuable information. Those in support felt that exposure to images would spoil their library visit for themselves or their children.

Community Forum

The September 13th community forum was an important continuation of this transparent public process. Two public sessions were held on September 13th, from 1pm-3pm and 6pm-8pm. The forum was an open public session. Individuals and groups from the community were invited to attend and all opinions on the topic were welcomed and encouraged.

Notes, written presentations and electronic submissions to the forum are included in Appendix 1.

Internet Filtering in other Public Libraries

Staff has continued to collect information from other public libraries in preparation for the final report and policy review in the next phase of the project. Information received to date includes:
• **Burlington** - approximately 25% filtered  
• **Calgary** - At least one computer in each of the Library’s branches uses filtering software. All other computers feature the option of filtered or unfiltered Internet access. Branches: 1 filtered to 7 or 8 unfiltered; Central 4 filtered to 52 unfiltered (1 in 13)  
• **Cambridge** – no computers filtered  
• **Edmonton** - no computers filtered  
• **Hamilton** - no filtered computers  
• **Mississauga** – all filtered computers  
• **Oshawa** – no filtered computers  
• **Sault Ste. Marie** – filtered computers in children’s area only  
• **Sudbury** – all filtered computers, except one at Central Branch  
• **Winnipeg** - all children’s and selected adult computers in branches are filtered; all terminals actually have some level of filtering - i.e. lowest filter level blocks chat/IM; highest filter level in children’s areas - at the Central Library approximately 10% would have the “children’s level” of filtering, 90% would have the less intrusive filtering  
• **Woodstock** – all filtered computers

**Research Scan**

The Internet Policy Review Team continues to research filtering and the use of filtering software in public libraries including, but not limited to, the following: filtering Software (in general); consumer reports; reviews; filtering Software (Netsweeper); public policy reports, position papers, opinion statements, articles, etc.

**Next Monitoring Period**

During the next and final monitoring period the following activities will be undertaken by the Project Team:

• Review and incorporate the results of the community forum  
• Conduct a detailed analysis of available Netsweeper data, June through October  
• Review and report on internet filtering activities from other libraries  
• Continue to scan for legal and professional references to the issue  
• Develop a recommendation re: filtering levels and related service supports  
• Develop an ongoing due diligence schedule  
• Review policy and update as required.

The pilot project ends on October 31st, 2007. Results, data, and findings will be reviewed at that time and a summary report with recommendations will go forward to the November Board meeting for a board decision.
Public Forum on Internet Filtering Pilot Project

September 13, 2007

Afternoon Session

Ms. MacDonald welcomed everyone to the public forum on the Internet Filtering Pilot Project.

Board members attending included Gina Barber, Jerry Colwell, Svetlana MacDonald, Joanne Tilley and David Winninger.

Presentations:

Jane Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Children’s Aid Society, London and Middlesex (see attached)

Megan Walker, Executive Director, London Abused Women’s Centre (see attached)

Questions/comments:

- It was clarified that the viewing and distribution of child pornography is illegal and a criminal offense.
- A query was made regarding the library’s policy on viewing inappropriate material.
- If there are images of sexuality and nudity, a staff member can advise the customer that this is a public space and these images are objectionable to other individuals.
- The Library is providing information on internet awareness and safety through a project team led by the Coordinator, Literacy.

Ken Heslop, Detective Superintendent, Criminal Investigation Division, London Police Services (see attached)

Questions/comments:

- Social network sites such as MSN, Facebook and chatrooms were discussed.
- Social predators prefer anonymity and may use false ID’s to access library computers.
- It is not the Library’s responsibility to “police” social sites
- A query was made whether the use of privacy screens, computer placement and clearing the ‘cache’ would protect individuals - Detective Heslop replied “no”, this would not block intentional or unintentional exposure.

Barbara Schust-Lawrence, Executive Director, Glen Cairn Community Centre

- In December, a group of children from a daycare visited the Pond Mills Branch and observed inappropriate images on a computer screen.
- Parents were advised that these children had viewed inappropriate images and she stressed that the Library should be a safe place for children.
- Ms. Schust-Lawrence read letters from two community members (see attached ).
Marie Blosh (see presentation attached)

Mike Armstrong (no presentation provided)

- Mr. Armstrong explained that based on an experience he had at the library that he felt that Netsweeper was filtering out sites that did not contain inappropriate images.
- When visiting the Library, he noted that some parts of his website, [londonanime.ca](http://londonanime.ca) have been filtered (Ms. Mitchell followed up on this information and the site is not filtered by Netsweeper. It is available on filtered computers in the 2nd floor area).
- He felt that filtering software cannot make moral decisions and does not stop child pornography or violence against women. It is not a proactive solution against these issues and other solutions should be sought.

**Evening Session**

Ms. MacDonald welcomed everyone to the public forum on the Internet Filtering Pilot Project.

Board members attending included Gina Barber, Nancy Branscombe, Jerry Colwell, Jan Lubell, Svetlana MacDonald, Josh Morgan, Joanne Tilley and David Winninger.

**Nick Dyer-Witheford, Associate Dean, Faculty of Information and Media Studies (see attached)**

Questions/comments:

- A query was made of Mr. Witheford regarding an example of ‘strong sanctions’ – he replied that this could mean withdrawing computer use privileges.
- Another query was made asking how we could restrict viewing of inappropriate images by children – Mr. Witherford replied that we could re-organize the space and install privacy screens.

**Wanda Grendys (see attached)**

**Jacqui Denomme (see attached)**

**Paul Foreman (see attached)**

**Hayley McPhail (no presentation provided)**

- Ms. McPhail cited incident reports from 2001-2007 regarding the viewing of inappropriate images.
- She stated that police should be called if there is a performance of an indecent act while viewing inappropriate images.
- She suggested that the Library provide a warning in the Terms of Use Agreement stating that it is inappropriate to view pornography and that internet services will be revoked.
- She observed that no consistent library standards are in place and that an aggressive policy is needed to deal with these situations rather than filtering.
Oliver Hobson (see attached)

Responses received on our online public forum have also been included.
Good afternoon. My name is Jane Fitzgerald and I am the Executive Director of the Children’s Aid Society for London and Middlesex. It is an honour to be able to address you today on an issue of such importance to our community.

I appreciate that the library is attempting to strike a balance between public access to information while also respecting the need for the library to be a community space that is welcoming and safe for all.

My remarks are made as the Executive Director of an agency whose mission in this community is the “protection and care for children at risk, and the promotion of the healthy development of children, families and our community”.

We know that we cannot achieve this mission without the help and support of our whole community. It is our belief that the reduction of risk to children cannot be delegated to one public body. We believe that the Library, and indeed the whole community, shares our mission with us.

From this perspective we believe that the “duty to protect children” tips the balance in this debate.

No doubt it is this concern that lead you to pilot this initiative. We applaud you for the leadership you have taken.
• By putting measures into place that restrict the possibility of our community’s children and youth from inadvertently viewing pornography, you are doing your part to ensure a safe and child friendly public space.

• While this issue appears to have been a long time coming to Canada, it is in fact not a new issue – and been hotly debated in the U.S. since the mid-90’s. Unlike the United States where Congress passed the Children’s Internet Protection Act in 1999, Canada does not currently have any legal requirement for public institutions like libraries and schools to be required to have filters or blocks on all computers. In the U.S. – not to do so would in fact prohibit the institution from receiving federal monies.

• While we do not have a legal requirement, we have a moral one? To answer this we need to examine what we know about the impact of pornography in our society and its potential impact on children.

• We know ….that people misuse the internet to distribute what is euphemistically called child pornography (but is really images of child sexual abuse), racism and hate literature and that having open computer terminals in a public space increases the chances that a child might inadvertently view inappropriate images.

• We know ….of the significant role that images of child sexual abuse can play to create opportunities for child sexual abuse.
• Finally, we know... that unintentional exposure to child pornography, hate literature and violence can be disturbing and potentially traumatizing to the viewer, especially if that viewer has a history of trauma.

• We at the Children’s Aid Society know this because we deal every day with the continuing growth in the number of children who require our protection — children who are victims of abuse and maltreatment. The reasons behind this growth are complex.

• I would like to remind you of the 2003 research findings of Dr. Alan Leshied of the University of Western Ontario into the reasons behind a 70% increase in the number of children coming into the care of the CAS in London (in the six year period between 1995-2001). Among his findings was an increase in violence against children for reasons of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

• He concluded that children admitted into care in 2001 were at greater risk than those admitted it 1995; and that overall this increase in children requiring protection occurred due to a set of complex factors, all which interconnect and compound one another and that a whole community response was required.

• His call to action is no less compelling today, and is relevant to the issue before you. We believe that the study’s title says it well... “Protecting Children is Everybody’s Business”.

• We ask that you put the safety and healthy development of our most vulnerable members above all other considerations. We believe that the Library is, and should continue to be, a warm, welcoming and safe place for all.

Thank you
September 13, 2007
Chair and Members
London Public Library Board

Re: London Public Library Internet Filtering Policy

The London Abused Women’s Centre (LAWC) is a feminist organization offering counselling, advocacy and support services to women abused by their intimate partners in a safe, non-crisis, non-residential setting. The long-term goal of the agency is to end violence and abuse against women.

Recommendations:
The London Abused Women’s Centre offers the following recommendations to the London Public Library Board for its consideration as part of its internet filtering policy debate:

It is recommended that:

- All computers within the library system be filtered for pornography;
- The library seek internet filtering software specific to pornography and continue to do so as technology advances;
- The London Public Library consult with the Advocacy and Communications Committee of the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse about training all LPL employees in workplace harassment, sensitivity issues, diversity and woman abuse;
- The London Public Library post signs at all computer terminals advising patrons that the internet filter can be unblocked should it prevent access to non-pornographic information. It should be made clear however, that unblocking a filter to view pornography will not be tolerated and in fact monitored to ensure compliance;
- The London Public Library participate in the work of the Mayor’s Task Force to End Woman Abuse; and,
- The London Abused Women’s Centre be invited to participate in ongoing discussions on this issue.
Rationale:

The London Abused Women’s Centre defines pornography as:

The graphic sexually-explicit subordination of women through pictures and words that also includes women being presented:

- As dehumanized sexual objects, things, or commodities;
- As sexual objects who enjoy humiliation or pain;
- As sexual objects experiencing sexual pleasure in rape, incest or other sexual assault;
- As sexual objects tied up, cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt;
- In postures or positions of sexual submission, servility, or display;
- Women’s body parts — including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, or buttocks — are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts;
- Being penetrated by objects or animals;
- In scenarios of degradation, humiliation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual. (Catharine MacKinnon, 1992)

The agency believes pornography silences women by helping to shape and reinforce a hostile and uncomprehending social environment which makes many women reluctant to speak at all. As a result, for example, rape, sexual harassment and other violent sexual crime is significantly underreported by women.

Further, pornography creates a social climate in which, even where women do speak, their opinions are frequently paid little serious attention—especially where what women say contradicts the picture of women contained in pornography. Thus, women who do report sexual crimes are often disbelieved, ignored, ridiculed, or dismissed as neurotic.

Pornography may silence women by causing their words or the intent of their words to fail to be understood, or to be misunderstood. For example, pornography may help to form and reinforce the general view that women who utter ‘no’ in sexual contexts frequently do not intend to refuse a man’s sexual advantages by so speaking, and indeed may often intend to further encourage them.

The questions the Board and society should then ask are:

- Does permitting access to pornography in a publicly funded venue like the Library violate women’s rights to safety and equality? We believe the answer is yes.
• And secondly, should the right to freedom of speech and expression take precedence over a woman's rights to safety and equality? We believe the answer is no.

Given this, LAWC supports internet filtering at each computer in the library. We believe it is akin to the Board's current practice of choosing the books it purchases for its patrons. An internet filtering policy would be no different. We understand that the Southern Ontario Library Association "encourages library boards to set policies that recognize the need both to protect an individual's right to access information and the right of others not to be confronted with objectionable information."

LAWC does recognize the difficulty with current filtering software in that it may not distinguish between pornography, according to LAWC's definition, and non-pornographic materials. This may mean that those patrons who require information on sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, gay and lesbian rights or even woman abuse, may be prevented from accessing these sites. We acknowledge this to be problematic but believe that with sensitivity and other training provided to library staff, patrons will feel safe asking for assistance in removing the filter without feeling blamed, judged or otherwise prohibited from asking. We consider this to be an interim solution until more accurate software is developed which would not filter non-pornographic sites.

The London Public Library Board's review of this issue has opened the library to be involved in other woman abuse, workplace harassment, diversity and women's equality issues. These issues can successfully be addressed through the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Megan Walker
Executive Director
Good afternoon. Thank you for the invitation to speak today at your forum on the Internet Filtering Pilot Project. My name is Ken Heslop and I am a Detective Superintendent with the London Police Service and the officer in charge of the Criminal Investigation Division. The London Police Service is committed to providing a safe and secure community for all citizens of the City of London. In the area of Internet criminal activity, this is accomplished through education, monitoring and enforcement. We are very concerned about the use of the Internet for crimes against children, as in child pornography and child luring investigations. We are equally concerned about the intentional and unintentional exposure of pornography to unsuspecting children and citizens in our community.

Today, I have been asked to speak for a few minutes on the London Public Library’s Internet Filtering Pilot Project. The London Police Service supports this initiative and applauds the Library for being proactive in this area. A few days ago I had the opportunity to view the areas in this library where the unfiltered computers were located. Despite the best efforts of the library to place the unfiltered computers at the end of a bank of computers, the opportunity for unintentional exposure from the computer screens is still possible. Even with the privacy screens, the computer screens could still be viewed as people passed behind the computers moving toward an area with chairs and couches. I wondered why there would be a need to have unfiltered computers in the library at all, and should the library go further and put filters on all of the computers – hence the reason for the forum.

I have had a great deal of experience dealing with Internet crimes against children as the officer in charge of the Vice and Drug Section, Sexual Assault Section and a two year provincial child exploitation task force named Project Guardian. In support of that experience I would like to address a few issues related to the Internet and how pornography can be used as a tool in crimes against children. When we are discussing pornography, it can be defined as any sexually explicit writing and/or pictures intended to arouse sexual desire.

Child pornography used to be traded between collectors in the form of magazines or photographs. The Internet has simplified that process and now with the click of a mouse, images of child pornography can be sent around the world in seconds. These images depict child sexual abuse and exploitation and are a visual recording of a crime being committed. The victims who appear in these pictures, at the time the picture or video is produced, and every time it is copied or traded, are subjected to abusive acts of a criminal nature.

The Internet is facilitating individuals who become involved in collecting and trading images of sexual abuse. Internet pornography is a growing industry and very profitable for many people. There are many websites that can be accessed on the Internet which contain sexually explicit photographs, child pornography and extreme violence. Just as an example, yesterday I Googled pornography and received over 24 million results, child pornography received over 3 million results and extreme violence almost 3 million results.

Pornographic images are very graphic and shocking to most people that view them. The risk of unintentional exposure in a library setting is quite high with the number of children and adults that utilize the library on a daily basis. In addition to the unintentional exposure is the utilization of library computers for a criminal purpose – the possession and distribution of child pornography.

The Internet has also facilitated the luring of children for a criminal purpose. It has been our experience that messenger programs and social networking sites are tools used by pedophiles to access children and make efforts to lure them. During the luring process, pedophiles will frequently send links to websites containing both adult and child/teen pornography. This is all part of the grooming process to show the child that this type of sexual activity is acceptable, because it is so easily obtained on the Internet. Utilizing an unfiltered computer in a library setting, the offender relies on anonymity to commit these offences. This is an area where I believe the filtering process should be increased, to prevent people from utilizing messenger programs on library computers. An unfiltered computer in a library setting provides people the resources to facilitate criminal luring in what is supposed to be a safe environment.

Finally, there is a community standard of tolerance or acceptable behavior in the public domain. Communities across Ontario, including our own, have by-laws in place limiting the exposure of adult
magazines in retail businesses and adult video outlets. These restrictions were initiated to create safe and welcoming communities that protect our children and others from unintentional exposure of material that may be offensive. These by-laws were enacted in 1993 as a result of complaints from our community to the police and politicians about sexually explicit or pornographic material being displayed that they found offensive. Adult magazines must be placed at a height of 1.5 meters or more above floor level and behind an opaque barrier so only the title of the book can be viewed, not the cover. Video outlets that have adult videos only do not permit people under the age of 18 years into the establishment. These outlets are not permitted to allow viewing into their establishment, so the majority of these businesses have their windows frosted. These measures have been taken because the community did not want to be exposed to pornographic material and wanted precautions taken in the event of unintentional exposure. In my opinion, the library is no different and installing the filtering program on the majority of the computers is a responsible act that supports our community standard of tolerance.

Due to the explosion of material available on the Internet, police services across the country have adopted a provincial and national strategy to combat Internet child pornography and the protection of victims. In London, we have created a new investigative body, called the Cyber Crime Unit, which is attached to our Sexual Assault/Child Abuse Section to investigate child pornography and luring on the Internet. This Unit began on April 1, 2007 and has already arrested 13 people and laid 52 Criminal Code charges for child pornography and 10 for luring. These investigations are very comprehensive and time consuming. We have had investigations where the suspects have used computers that were not registered to them to commit some of these offences. The filtering process implemented by the library would make this type of criminal activity more difficult to accomplish.

The London Police Service takes the protection of its citizens very seriously and we work with community partners toward that end. The London Public Library has implemented an Internet Filtering Pilot Project that we fully support. The library is designed to be a safe environment that is utilized by children, families, the elderly and all members of our community on a daily basis. The filtering of computers is a responsible position and in addition to preventing unintentional exposure, may prevent a criminal offence from being committed in our community.

The citizens of London have clearly stated their community standard of tolerance for pornographic material being displayed and sold in our city – they don’t want to be exposed to the material. The questions remain – is the London Public Library any different? Do the citizens of London want to be exposed to pornographic material in their libraries? This pilot project and forum should answer those questions.

In conclusion, we support the library in their pilot project to filter the computers and applaud them for their efforts. In my opinion, based on extensive experience in criminal investigations in this area I would encourage the London Public Library to consider placing filters on all computers. In addition, I would suggest conducting research on limiting access to messenger programs and social networking sites. We appreciate the opportunity to speak on this issue and wish you every success with your pilot project.

Thank you.

Ken Heslop
Detective Superintendent
Criminal Investigation Division
London Police Service
September 13, 2007

June Williams
29-370 Pond Mills Rd
London, ON
N5Z 3X6

To Board of Directors of London Public Library:

I am writing this on behalf of children using the Pond Mills Library and all Libraries in general. On more than one occasion my children have come home stating that a male was sitting beside them at the computer looking at pornography. Even though staff was informed of the incidents they stated that nothing could be done to stop this behavior. I find this hard to deal with. A once safe place where children and youth could go to learn and study has now been a place of concern for parents. I refuse to let my children go there by themselves. I feel that they are losing out on a valuable learning experience by not being able to access this once popular place. Children could go study with their friends and have a world of information and books at their finger tips. Now because of people misusing this wonderful place our children are being left out. Please consider the consequences when allowing this behavior to continue.

Sincerely,

June Williams
To the Board of Directors of the London Public Library,

I am writing in regards to the fact that people are allow to watch porno in the library. You want children to come in to read and learn and they are able to see people watching porno. This is very disgusting! There are people out there with a sick mind and this type of stuff just encourages them to act on it. This has happen right in the neighborhood of the Pond Mills Branch. The man acess porno and then acted on it right across the street watching women and children in a fenced in pool. This only happening at the time when the children where there for programs. Polices was called in on him because he was doing very dirty things as he watch them in the pool. How would you feel if he was to harm a women or a child?

The library wants people to come in acess information and to learn to read and use the programs that they offer. Children come in and they see this kind of things will and it will discourage them and they will not want to come back. The library is to be a safe place to go to and to enjoy their time there. Allowing this kind of stuff to happen (porno) can endangers children and how would you feel if it was too? I feel that this kind of stuff should not be able to be seened by people in public.

You say the library is safe place to go to and you may be putting them at rise with a sick person. You need to put the people first and stop allowing porno to be watch in the library.

Reasons

The safe of the children are at risk
Place to get people involved in programs that you offer
Allowing this gives sex offenders to act on their sick problems
You are discouraging children to come in to learn
They come into the library just for fun and they are not safe there

I was very uncomfortable with a man in the library because he was watching porno and then watched the children in a very disgusting way. Then later he was touching himself in public across the street. I feel this is very wrong for allowing this in the public libraries, people watching porno! I hope the library will stop this before this sick people harms a woman or a child. How will the library feel if he was to harm someone because you allowed him to watch porno? This should not be able to be watch in the library!

I spoke to parents and they feel the same way that porno should not be watch in view or around children at any time. If this continues parents will not allow their children to go to the library. Thank you for your time on this concern.

Sue Miller
Comments on Internet Filtering at the London Public Library

Public Meeting on September 14, 2007

Marie Bloch
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Please provide a copy of these comments to all members of the Library Board.

I am a London resident and I use the public library. I am not currently working as a librarian, but I did receive a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of California at Berkeley in 1990. I worked as a librarian for ten years, five of which were as a reference librarian at a public library in a mid-sized city (Hayward Public Library in Hayward, California). The other five years I worked as a law librarian at Hastings College of the Law, as I also hold a J.D. from New College of California School of Law.

During my years at the Hayward Public Library, 1996 to 2001, we studied the issue of Internet filters thoroughly. It may seem surprising today, but at that time we debated whether they should be placed on computers in the children’s section. In the end, we balanced the different information needs of children and adults against the relative dangers from unintentionally accessing pornography, and placed filters on the computers in the children’s section only.

I felt that was a good decision, and while the technology has improved since then, my concerns now are much the same. They are based on providing equal access to full and complete information to all adult library users, as well as the problems associated with contracting out website selection criteria to an outside entity. I am sure you will hear others speak on both of these issues.

I’d like to use my time to speak more personally about my experiences as a librarian and library user. I’ll start by saying that I can understand why filters are supported. My observation of the demographics is that many typical adult library users are parents of young children or retired people. Like myself, they live well above the poverty line. We react to the buzzwords of pornography and children, and the filters don’t really affect us because we have Internet access at home. In other words, it is easy to restrict someone else’s access to information, especially when we can say that it is about children and pornography, and has nothing to do with intellectual freedom.

Yet, it is about intellectual freedom. There is another group of typical adult library users. They might be unemployed, under-employed, or living on fixed incomes. Some of them may have medical, psychological, or alcohol or drug use problems. The unifying factor is that they all rely on the public library for access to the Internet. This is usually because they cannot afford the costs of an Internet connection; but it can also be because their Internet surfing is very limited and they don’t want to pay for a connection that they rarely use. I feel very comfortable saying this because I’ve talked to people in these situations about it when I worked at the reference desk.

If my experience is any indicator, you won’t hear from many of these library users at this type of public hearing. Perhaps that is because asking for unfiltered access to the Internet has been made to feel like asking to see pornography.
Regardless, the bottom line is that whether people speak out or not, filtering is an issue that has intellectual overtones no matter which way you slice it, and those concerns must be addressed. If filtering is approached solely as an issue of providing good “customer service”, inevitably the desires of some will override the rights of others.

The safety valve of being able to ask a librarian to turn off the filter, or to use an unfiltered computer, does not solve the problem and is not very realistic. Having to ask for a website to be unblocked puts a library user in the intimidating and embarrassing position of asking to see something that might turn out to be pornography. How many of us would ask? I know that I would rather do without the information than put myself in this position, and I believe that many others would as well. I am especially troubled about this in the case of teenagers, who will be even less likely to approach an authority figure with such a request.

Let me give you an example. A few weeks ago I went to the Masonville branch and tried searching on a filtered computer. I looked for information on satanic cults, and found that some websites were blocked. At the time, the library staff was busy with the summer reading program and I would have had to wait, so I didn’t ask about it.

As for the problem with library users looking at pornography, I think it is extremely important to not use that as justification unless there is clear documentation that there is in fact a problem, and that other methods such as privacy screens and furniture placement cannot resolve the problem. As a librarian I personally investigated some of these types of complaints, and found that often the allegations were unsubstantiated. Sometimes opening an e-mail message unintentionally accessed the pornography. Other times, the real reason for the complaint might be that the complainer was fighting with the computer user and wanted to get him in trouble, or the complainer wanted to get someone off a computer so she could use it herself. I remember situations where the complainer assumed pornography was being viewed because the viewer had rumpled clothing and offensive body odour, or where two teens were sharing a terminal and giggling at the screen.

I understand the frustration of dealing with these types of problems, and will admit that there have been times when I wished computers had never been invented. It is nice to think that technology can come to the rescue. In a lot of ways it is easier than human intervention, or education on safe and responsible computer usage. Chat rooms, for example, pose problems that could easily be avoided by denying access. But we all know that in the long run it is better to teach kids how to protect themselves.

In conclusion, I care about this issue, and came here to speak today, because the plain truth is that many people only have the library computer on which to find the information they need, and this situation will continue in the foreseeable future. It’s even possible that I will one day lose my access and have to rely on the library’s computers. As a librarian and library user, and a member of the London community, I strongly believe that a decision to install filters on more computers will inevitably have impacts on the intellectual freedoms of anybody in this position, and I am against it.
I am a professor at the Faculty of Information & Media Studies whose research involves the politics of the Internet. I'm also here as a frequent user of the London Public Library who loves libraries and what they stand for, and because of this, have some serious concerns about filtering, concerns I will summarize under four headings, democracy, secrecy, precedent and alternatives.

Democracy. It is true that internationally there is a mounting tendency to Internet filtering. And it is true that that often this filtering is aimed at what is deemed pornographic content. Where such filtering occurs, however, it is very often—indeed usually—linked also to the filtering other politically or culturally volatile content—for example the repression of minority rights, including the rights of sexual minorities, or the suppression of news and debate around controversial events. If you want to find places where Internet users will not be bothered by pornographic images, try, for example, China, Iran, Zimbabwe, Burma or Saudi Arabia. There is a very high correlation between restricting access to disturbing online erotica and restricting access to other information that we consider integral to a democratic society. iThe Library Board should pause before it goes down a route which in many parts of the world has results many of us would find repugnant.

Secrecy. What intensifies this concern is the secretive nature of the commercial filtering systems, such as Net sweep. Because the formulae these companies use to filter the net are proprietorial, they are not divulged. Neither librarians nor the public actually know how filtering decisions are being made. One can test to see if a specific website that one already knows of is or is not is filtered, but the overall logic of the filtering process is not transparent. Filtering in effect hands over management of Internet access to a privatized source in a way that precludes proper public oversight.

Precedent. The third factor is precedent. The filtering program has been introduced, we are told, on the basis of un-enumerated ‘infrequent but regular’ patron complaints about pornographic images seen by people who don’t want to see them. What, then, if the library receives ‘infrequent but regular complaints about patrons inadvertently seeing on library computers let us say, religious symbols or images they don’t like?( This, by the way, is not hypothetical—there is currently in London a controversy about the display of an artwork by respected artist Jamalie Hassan because it uses Islamic symbols to which some people object)Or if the Library receive complaints about images of the violence of war or of factory farming—all of which is certainly disturbing. Is the library then, on the basis on those complaints, going to filter such images? Setting up this precedent, we open a door we should not go through.

Alternatives. This brings me to alternatives. I sympathize with the concerns of people inadvertently exposed to digital images they find disturbing, images that in some cases I am sure I would respond to in the same way. I am particularly sympathetic to concerns of staff. In another life I was a shop steward and a union president for a public service local where these toxic workplace issues cam up. But there are alternatives to content filtering. Better screening of computers is one. Strong sanctions against patrons who engage in demonstrable objectionable behavior—such as using downloaded images to harass staff—is another. The library should be a pleasant and safe place; there are, however, ways of ensuring this that do not endanger its central role as a public institution committed to the open, free circulation of information.

See the discussion of the Open Net Initiative Report, headed by Internet scholars from Oxford and Cambridge, discussed on BBC News online, URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6665945.stm

"Few states restrict their activities to one type of content," said Rafal Rohozinski, Research Fellow of the Cambridge Security Programme. He added: "Once filtering is begun, it is applied to a broad range of content and can be used for expanding government control of cyberspace. It has become a strategic forum of competition between states, as well as between citizens and states."
The London Public Library Board
251 Dundas St.,
London, ON, N6A 6H9

Att’n: Anne Becker, Chief Executive Officer
Ph. (519) 661.5142
Fax (519) 663.5396
e anne.becker@lpl.london.on.ca

Dear Anne Becker:

"Imagine! Imagine a place that is open to all, from the youngest to the oldest, the weakest to the strongest. A place that respects differences, special needs and diversity and encourages discovery, dreaming and learning. Imagine a place that is packed with knowledge to enable and empower people. A place that is filled with books, computers, CDs and DVDs...and people can borrow them for free...Imagine a place that engages the 'whole' person. A place where the spirit takes flight...free to express, to explore, to feel, to question and to learn. Imagine, this place exists and it belongs to the residents of London. Imagine, the London Public Library."

LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN...Imagine! 2006-2008, p.2

Congratulations! The London Public Library Strategic Plan, 2006-2008, solves a problem which confronted me more than a year ago. One day I turned on a computer to research my topic and was greeted by a sequence of pornography. Two Asian beauties were languidly spitting semen into each others mouths: one on top of the other, upside down, heads and faces closest to the screen. I closed the site and repeated my request for legitimate information, necessary to make an informed decision, unrelated to sex of any kind. The pornographic sequence returned a second time. I closed the site, got up and button-holed the nearest librarian. I typed in my request for information, and the pornographic sequence played out a third time in all its gory glory: crimson mouth wide open to receive, black lacquered eye lashes half closed, evocative chiffon florals, spit. I looked at the staff librarian. She said, sadly, "it's not illegal. There is nothing we can do." I answered, "There IS something you can do, you just haven't found it yet."

I repeat this incident because unless you had seen it, you would never believe it exists.

A public library serves its community: residents, children, schools - professionals and ordinary citizens use electronic data bases that provide information, nurture creativity and exploration and promote intellectual development, assist research, further culture and provide strategic information which empowers citizens to make informed choices based on truth, decency and common values.

The invasive pornographic sequence hit me in the face like a shotgun blast. I was stunned speechless, angry and determined to respond with whatever passionate necessity was required to clean it up like dog vomit in your living room. Hence, this letter.

I was surprised to read in the London Free Press that at the July meeting, city councillor, Nancy Branscombe, backed by four library board members, quickly moved to rescind the filter program to block offensive or inappropriate websites and content;

Tony Sarnak spoke for the Canadian Library Association Committee for Intellectual Freedom, feeling a threat to his democracy; and Sam Trosow, "one of the city's most active notables", I mean, "most notable activists" and a teacher of Library Science at U.W.O. felt it was a "drastic measure"...with contemplative back-up from U.W.O. professor, Roma Harris, ... that filters block websites that provide needed health information. Had I attended this meeting, I would have suggested that pornography, not
filters of aberrant sexual behaviour, was a threat to democracy; and that I was not looking for health information when I was hit in the face with that unsolicited piece of liver, and that perhaps if U.W.O. should obtain a copy of Anne Becker’s Strategic Plan … Imagined 2006-2008, and wrote an equivalent plan, they might raise student fees less often, less high, from “a fiscally responsible financial perspective of priorities and projected goals”, p. 27, for youth.

It is my view that U.W.O. professors should do the job they are paid to do, and like city councillors, borrow a copy of the London Public Library Strategic Plan, 2006-2008, and shamelessly copy it: “building value-added partnerships with the community, corporate entities and government at all levels which enrich our knowledge and provide greater access to the world of information for all Londoners.” p.12

Besides academic sophistry and ordinary stupidity, there is a third issue in this discussion. The use of normal words for abnormal acts by activists for “intellectual freedom” is, indeed, a threat to our democracy. For example, the gays were too lazy to coin a new word for “marriage”. Ancient Hebrews Leviticus 18, called it something else. Stephen Harper, Paul Martin and the Supreme Court of Canada used a double adjective to qualify a word already taken in the vernacular: hence, “same-sex” marriage. I have absolutely no objection to soul-mates of similar or mixed gender, long may they live healthy lives in the arms of one-another. God knows love is in short supply. The definitive term, however, is misleading. The difference between a beloved soul-mate who knows your mind and heart before you do, and a life partner with whom you procreate offspring requires a more specific word. Both are not the same kind of marriage. Nature is affronted by the total lack of a fruitful harvest, fulfilled in every plant, insect, creature, bird, fish or animal from protoplasms to the ends of galactic space by one male and one female together creating small copies of itself.

In the issue of pornographic web sites, the sexual aberrants have at least coined a new word for their behaviour: “hurtoorp”. Look for a website listing “hurtoorp”. Feast your eyes on screaming children, the sale of people for sex slavery, body parts and other hell on earth. Child murders, kidnappings and all manner of abuse are reported in newspapers with increasing frequency. The U.S. justice system has just completed a research report on child murders. Incarcerated criminals willing to participate in the study confirm that more than 85% of men who watched pornography and child abuse on computer websites progressed from observing to actual violent acting out: kidnapping, sexual assault and murder. The grim reality is no longer a virtual dream.

It is a sobering fact. The London Public Library is not only informing and serving this community, it is protecting the community from deviance, child molesters, rape and murder. Freedom of expression is not freedom to violate your neighbour. Thank you London Public Library: your trends, challenges, limitations and goals are right on target. You have fulfilled what I wanted at the beginning of this letter: a way to filter offensive material from websites watched by innocent citizens of this community leading normal lives. Thank you, Anne Becker.

Sincerely, Wanda Grandys
Sept. 10, 2007

cc. Helen Connell
London City Council
Good Evening: My name is Jacqui Denomme, I am currently an assistant in the Community Outreach and Program Services Department, but have spent most of my time here at Central on the second floor as an information assistant.

First of all, I would like to share with you the letter which I wrote to Anne Becker, London Public Library’s CEO, as a response to those letters sent to the London Free Press expressing their opposition to our new internet filtering measures. Normally, I might not be so bold as to write a letter such as this directly to our CEO, but my strong feelings about this overroad any trepidation I might have had. Here, then, is my letter:

Anne, I want to give you my support of the continued filtering of most internet machines. I would be willing to stand up in public and speak on behalf of library staff if need be.

Those who are opposing this for ideological reasons and citing threats to democracy and free speech need to remember that a democracy is a work in progress. For every freedom a person has to DO something, we also have legal protections for others, to prevent them from having harmful things done TO them! We do not allow people to expose themselves in public, nor do we tolerate as a society, intimate sexual acts in public. Many porn viewers were doing things while sitting at our public machines that society would expect should only be done in the privacy of one’s own home.

We did offer open access to all sites here, with as many protections as we could. Many porn sites included the usual pop-up ads and windows that could not be closed. Unwitting patrons of all types and ages would be presented to graphics that they did NOT want to see. We as a public place have to balance access to information with protection FROM offensive information. We made every effort to do this with privacy screens and computer placement, but it did not work.

The argument about not having access to medical sites is specious. We pay a great amount of money to subscribe to periodical databases that include current, high-quality and authoritative health information. We have four unfiltered machines for patrons who need specific websites that might speak to topics of a personal or sensitive nature. We have reams of book information, up-to-date periodical information and so forth. We are obliged as a public library to provide access to information. We are not obliged to provide access to every piece of information that is available in every single format. We have books ABOUT art - we do not need to supply the art. We have books ABOUT pornography. We do not need to supply the pornography.

We are a community service and need to provide our services within the context of what is acceptable to the broader community, which includes children and people to whom unexpectedly being exposed to pornography when they did not actively choose it is upsetting. I am not personally offended by this material and therefore am not speaking on behalf of my own sensibilities. At the same time, I very often had the experience of assisting a patron who sat down at one of our computers, logged in and were assaulted by visuals that most people would find extremely upsetting. These patrons WERE embarrassed and upset and as a staff person, I was embarrassed that these patrons were put in a position of having to encounter this at what should be known to be a very safe place for them and their children.

I wish to share this with you to give you support in standing up to this. I regret that it did not happen sooner. Please don’t be swayed by the arguments that are appearing in press - they are not relevant to our situation. Library staff continue to be passionate about providing access to information. We continue to be passionate about upholding and safeguarding free speech. But we cannot be confident about doing this when it is clearly upsetting to others. If none of our community of library users were upset by stumbling upon pornography on our computers, we would happily continue to turn a blind eye to the use of it by others. I believe that having 4 unfiltered computers provides an excellent compromise, that by providing this filtering we are being responsive to staff and our patrons and that by standing firm in this we are in no way compromising free speech. No one is prevented from posting pornography, nor are we as library staff trying to stop pornography providers from doing what they do nor are we speaking out against pornography in general. By limiting access to this in a public place we are upholding also the value of "freedom from" which is of equal importance.

There, I have had my rant.
This then, was the letter I wrote to Anne. Because I told her that I felt strongly enough about this topic to speak publicly about it, she invited me to attend this session. In the meantime, I had the opportunity to speak with other staff who are ideologically opposed to internet filtering in the library. I listened to their reasons and their reasons are valid and speak to the passion that library staff share regarding free speech and the sharing of information. Again, there is a concern of balancing the comfort level of the broader community, but from the other angle. What if there is information that needs to be shared; for example, information about gay sex or safe sex. What if displaying books with this information makes some of our library customers uncomfortable? Is that, then, reason enough to block this information from others who do indeed want and need books, or articles about these topics? This is the thin edge of the wedge that many of us fear might be widened if we commence with internet filtering. I support this argument, but would add to that - we are not suppressing information about anything by filtering most of our computers. We are suppressing disturbing visual images. I think it is necessary to be clear about what it is that we are doing. Making the distinction between unwanted graphic images displaying extremes of sexual activity in a public and family-oriented institution and information and knowledge about human beings in all of their capacities is very important and one that library staff continue to uphold and balance.

Thank-you.
Dear Reader,

Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to test multiple parental control suites. Around 18 months ago, I researched a number of these while working for an internet telecommunications company overseas. After a six week study, I concluded that my firm should not offer this type of product to our customers for the following reasons.

1. The large number of websites incorrectly filtered or not filtered hampered the overall internet experience.
2. The firm I represented would likely receive more support calls than what would be considered acceptable.
3. The false impression that the internet filter would protect children from all dangerous content.

Technology behind Netsweeper

It is essential to understand that the technology behind internet filtering is not 100% perfect, nor will it ever be. I will try to explain the technology Netsweeper uses, with explanations of its strengths and pitfalls. A more in depth explanations of the technology as well as a more robust testing facility can be found on their website.

Netsweeper filters internet traffic by categorizing each website and preventing access to websites categorized as pornographic (or otherwise indecent). Many categories exist including but not limited to, Health Education, Criminal Skills, General and Portal. Each website is given one or multiple categories depending on its content. According to my testing, nearly all web pages were given the same category as it’s root domain.

Certain potential vulnerabilities come to mind at this point.

- What happens if a website is not specifically a pornographic website, but rather includes pornography on one of its pages. For example, a personal website or blog that includes nude photos.
- Can a user use frames or another middle party to view the content? This way, Netsweeper will use the category for the third party, rather than the website visited.
- Will subdomains or personal web pages be categorized correctly? Some personal workspace providers host hundreds of thousands of websites.
- Will people be able to access information regarding certain topics such as sexual education and sexual health?

To be honest, there are many more potential vulnerabilities and this list is by no means exhaustive. It will give us a general idea of the accuracy of the internet filtering service Netsweeper offers.

Testing

Using the "Test a Site" feature on Netsweeper’s website, I tested a large number of websites. Approximately 80-85% of websites were filtered correctly. I have included a list of failures below. Some websites were found by trial and error; others were found by searching for keywords using Google. Keywords were chosen by emulating what I feel a child would enter. The tests include the URL of a domain in question, the category Netsweeper lists it as, notes with regards to the web page’s content, and implications as to abuse of the loophole. NOTE: Some websites have links to pornographic or otherwise inappropriate material for work locations.

Test 1: Find a website that displays pornographic pictures but is not a pornographic website.
URL: http://www.ask.com/pictures?q=pornography&search=search&qscc=178&o=0&l=dir
Category: Search Engine/ Search Keywords
Notes: Ask.com is a search engine similar to Google. It has an image search engine. I just typed “pornography” into their search engine.

Implications: The categorization service sees www.ask.com as reputable. This technique would allow users to view indecent material using third parties. Most schools have similar systems in place to prevent the use of social networking websites/applications such as MySpace and MSN Messenger. This technique is often used by youth to circumvent these systems. One can be pretty sure they will already know how to bypass Netsweeper’s internet filter completely.
Test 2: How accurate are the categories. Will children (still) be able to use the internet to find information relating to criminal skills?
URL: http://www.instructables.com/id/EB8CXSRF4jX6GD8/
Category: General
Notes: Searched via Google "How to make a bomb"

URL: http://www.wikihow.com/Hotwire-a-Car
Category: General
Notes: Googled "How to hotwire a car". 1st result

URL: http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/6241
Category: Portfolio
Notes: Googled "How to hotwire a car". 2nd result

URL: http://ask.metafilter.com/15253/Best-place-to-steal-a-car
Category: General
Notes: Googled "How to steal a car" 2nd result

Implications: None of the four websites tested specialized in criminal skills, however they did have lots of information on the subject. Unless a website is specifically dedicated to one topic, web pages on the site may be incorrectly categorized.

Test 3: Will NetSweeper prevent access to websites specializing in sexual education?
URL: http://www.sexaddictionhelp.com/
Category: General
Notes: This website is one of the few websites I could find on people with sexual addiction.

URL: http://www.adultweblaw.com/laws/childporn.htm
Category: Pornography
Notes: This is a legal definition of child pornography. No images, just pure law. Found by searching for "What is child pornography"

URL: http://www.whitetouseast.com
Category: Pornography
Notes: Although this website does include some pornographic pictures, I would describe them as more academic pictures, similar to those found in a grade school sexual education textbook. The website explains what sex and gives details as to the act of sex. Googled "What is an erection". 1st result.

URL: http://www.prostitutionprocon.org/questions/whatisprostitution.htm
Category: Pornography
Notes: Googled "What is a prostitute". First relevant result.

URL: http://www.walnet.org/cslp/papers/sdavis.html
Category: Pornography
Notes: Googled "What is a prostitute". One of the top results. Academic paper.

Implications: Sexual education websites as well as related websites may be blocked by NetSweeper. Personally, I am most worried about this. Any child looking for information regarding their body or the changes they may be going through are effectively shut out from unbiased information. It is an embarrassing topic for youth who may find shelter in the internet.

Test 4: How accurate is the categorization service when a pornographic website is found?

URL: http://men.com
Category: Matchmaking/Pornography
Notes: This is an all purpose website for men. It is also a magazine. The website itself is large, but I could not find any
references to pornography or matchmaking. It deals with men’s issues such as relationships, health, entertainment. Implications: Websites completely unrelated to pornography can still be filtered depending on the type of content.

My overall evaluation of NetSweeper is as follows:

Pros
More accurate than most I have tried in the past
Less websites incorrectly marked as pornography when they should be categorized as information based websites.

Cons
As a result of the categorization method of filtering internet traffic, there are many obvious ways to circumvent the system
Children and teens will likely already know ways to circumvent this type of traffic
Still many examples of false positive
Not all websites are categorized correctly

I feel that the technology itself is not ready for prime time. There are many other ways to prevent the accidental view of dangerous images. For example, we have found that privacy screens have worked quite well in their task.

Based on the results of my testing, NetSweeper looks to be a more temporary solution to an ongoing problem. Changes in policy may be a more effective long-term solution. Some suggestions include:
a) 3-strike system
b) Penalty-based system (temporary suspension of computer access)
c) Additional signage

I would recommend against the use of filtering technology, NetSweeper or other options. To my experience, they do not work. If you would like to have a longer talk regarding my opinions, please feel free to contact me at paulforeman@gmail.com. I would be more than happy to provide any additional information, examples or insight into this problem.

Kind regards

Paul Foreman
Thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak with you on this matter.

My name is Oliver Hobson. I am father to three boys ranging in age from 9 months to 9 years of age. We are regular users of Library services.

I have always believed that what people do in their own homes is their own business. When we come out of our homes and engage with others in society, ideally there should be a common understanding of what mutual respect means. Ideally we should be sensitive when dealing with one another. The reality is some of the library’s patrons have not demonstrated an understanding of mutual respect or demonstrated sensitivity to others when using this communal resource. We are here having this discussion today because of an ill mannered few determined to view pornography in a publicly shared space. All this issue is about is how to deal with bad manners.

The viewing of pornography, is a particularly male pastime. There is nothing more pathetic than to see a man reduce himself to a stammering, licentious, quivering bump which is what happens which is what happens when overexposed to pornography. Sadly, as a youth at an all boys military school, I’ve been there. Most men I know have and regret their loss of dignity at their leisure.

This is my view. My view is most appropriately expressed with in my home. It is a view I shall share with my sons if they ask and it is their right as growing individuals to accept or reject it when forming their own.

The library board is not father to my children, as far as I’m aware. The London public library is not your home or my home, neither of us should have the right to impose with our middle class attitudes and sensibilities here as it is neutral space in that regard.

This library serves a diverse population of people that hold a wide range of personal views as to what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior when using the internet. The only common ground each patron shares is that we have been or are tax payers of one form or another. We all have an equal right to access the complete resources that we, collectively, have paid for regardless of the personal approval or disapproval of other patrons or your selves.

Your decision to use internet censoring software at some library computer terminals and your wish to use this software on all terminals in this publicly funded space, gives you the power to decide for all patrons what is tasteful and distasteful.

If you allow yourselves to censor sites for pornography because it displeases you, what is there to stop you from censoring political sites that you disagree with or religious websites you take exception to? There is nothing that’s stopping you which makes your decision to censor our access to the internet particularly dangerous.
May I remind you that you are not on the board of Yahoo or Google, companies who have noted to censor the people of china on behalf of the Chinese government. Neither is the London Public library a personal stronghold where you can do as you please and ban as you wish as the awful Heather Reisman does in her awful book stores. I can opt to not spend my money in Reisman’s Chapters. I do not have that option with you which makes you quite different from Chapters.

This is a public library owned by us all. The children have their own area and the teenagers theirs. Please stop interfering with the adult patrons with your automated censoring of the Internet. You have no right to demand my trust that you will censor with caution and you are demanding it. You massively overstep your bounds when you do this.

Privacy screens that obscure views of users monitors or moving furniture around to enhance privacy should be an adequate solution for preventing people from peering over the shoulders of the other patrons who use these computers. I am displeased that you are spending my tax dollars on expensive software solutions/licenses when simpler and less costly solutions as to safeguarding the privacy of users are available.

I wish you would stop.

Thankyou.