



## REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: JUNE 18, 2008

7B

Session:	Public
Subject:	Public Computer Use and Internet Access Policy Update
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Purpose of Report:	For Receipt and Update Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received.

### ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on

- Implementation of the changes to the Public Computer Use and Internet Access Policy, approved by the Library Board in November 2007;
- Operational changes to support customers including signage, workstation reconfiguration, privacy screening, monitoring;
- Comparative review of selected Netsweeper data, October 2007 and April 2008;
- Customer/staff impact and response; and
- Legislative environment.

### BACKGROUND & REVIEW

The Internet Policy Review Project was approved by the Library Board at its May 2007 meeting. The purpose of the project was to examine and evaluate the balance of filtered and unfiltered Internet computers in the Library to determine a level of filtering that would optimize:

- An individual's experience in the library in terms of unintentional exposure to visual images not appropriate in a general public setting pursuant to the Library's Vision to be a welcoming and comfortable community hub for all Londoners;
- The ability of the public 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; and
- The due diligence that the Library can undertake in order to mitigate risk of unintentional exposure to sexually explicit images for its customers.

At its November 2007 meeting, the Library Board received the report on the Internet Filtering Pilot Project. Based on the results of the study, the Board approved the following guidelines to govern the levels of filtering:

- Filter selected public workstations, including WI-FI access, to mitigate the unintentional exposure of its customers to sexually explicit images that are not appropriate in a general public setting, in order to provide a welcoming environment for all customers.
- Maintain a balance of filtered to unfiltered computers in all locations in order to enable unrestricted access to information and resources on the Internet.
- Remove the filter for extreme violence URLs as our research demonstrates that there is negligible interest in these sites.
- Provide a minimum of one unfiltered public workstation in each library location.
- Provide a minimum of six unfiltered public workstations in the Central Branch.
- Filter function-specific public workstations to enhance their use by the public e.g. Employment Research Centres, Homework Centres, etc.
- Filter all public workstations primarily designated for use by children and youth.

The Board requested an update on the implementation of the policy changes in six months.

## **UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC COMPUTER USE & INTERNET ACCESS POLICY**

The following table provides a summary of the steps taken to implement the specific changes to the policy, approved by the Library Board in November 2007.

<b>Table 1 Implementation of Public Computer Use &amp; Internet Access Policy</b>	
Filter selected public workstations, including WI-FI access, to mitigate the unintentional exposure of its customers to sexually explicit images that are not appropriate in a general public setting, in order to provide a welcoming environment for all people.	WI-FI access filtered; balance of filtered to unfiltered public workstations achieved in all locations according to parameters below.
Maintain a balance of filtered to unfiltered workstations in all locations in order to enable unrestricted access to information and resources on the Internet.	Excluding specific function workstations, 10 % of public access workstations are unfiltered system-wide. Access to information and resources is enhanced by presence of staff-assisted unfiltered Research workstations in all locations (except Glanworth, Carson, Lambeth, Northridge).
Remove the filter for extreme violence URLs as our research demonstrates that there is negligible interest in these sites.	Extreme violence removed as blocked filter.
Provide a minimum of one unfiltered public workstation in each library location.	One identified unfiltered workstation provided in each branch location, located to minimize unintentional viewing by the public.
Provide a minimum of six unfiltered public workstations in the Central Branch.	Six unfiltered workstations moved to west side of "Cyber Central" to minimize unintentional viewing by the public.
Filter function-specific public workstations to enhance their use by the public e.g. Employment Research Centres, Homework Centre, etc.	No change from prior configuration.
Filter all public workstations primarily designated for use by children and youth.	No change from prior configuration.

## CUSTOMER SUPPORT

In addition to the changes to the Public Computer Use and Internet Access Policy, the Library also undertook a number of operational changes to support our customers. Table 2 summarizes the operational changes implemented.

<b>Table 2 Customer Support</b>	
Ensure that unfiltered workstations are clearly identified.	All unfiltered workstations have external signage; the recently implemented patron registration/login system for the public computers provides on-screen notification to the customer if they are using a filtered or unfiltered workstation.
Placement of Central Library unfiltered workstations.	Plants have been placed and space dividers are ordered to be installed behind the six unfiltered workstations to limit unintentional public exposure from the book stacks area.
Provide Net Alert on filtered workstations, to allow customers to send denied URLs to Netsweeper anonymously for evaluation and provide on-screen messaging encouraging customers to ask for staff assistance.	Net Alert was implemented in May. On-screen messages enable customers to send site for re-assessment by Netsweeper and encourages customers to speak with staff. See report below.
On unfiltered workstations, provide on-screen messaging that alerts customers that they are entering a site categorized as Pornography, allowing them to continue or change their search and seek assistance from staff, if necessary.	This option was reviewed with Netsweeper and the Library decided not to implement this feature. The on screen messaging cannot be synchronized with the patron registration/login session on the unfiltered workstation and would result in poor customer service.
Update staff orientation and training on policy changes.	Completed.
Provide messages to key community partners.	Completed.
Establish monitoring processes.	Consistent with review of other policies, administration will track internal and external indicators which may indicate the need for policy review, prior to the standard two-year review period. These include: changes to vendor services; legislative or legal environment; customer service response.

### Implementation of Net Alert

Net Alert was implemented system-wide on all filtered workstations in May 2008. The system enables a customer to send a message anonymously to Netsweeper if they consider the categorization of a URL as Pornography inappropriate and encourages the customer to speak with staff regarding concerns or access. Netsweeper reviews the sites within 24 hours and makes adjustments to the categorization if deemed appropriate by its criteria.

In a review of Net Alert notifications received, May 16 through May 27, 2008 the following observations are made:

- The number of Net Alerts per day averages between 7 and 10, factoring in consecutive requests for the same URLs.
- Approximately 8,000 attempts were made to access URLs categorized as Pornography, during the time period.

- 75 Net Alerts notifications were sent excluding consecutive requests for the same URLs
- Of the 75 URLs selected by customers to be sent to Net Alert, 12 URLs, or 16 %, were re-categorized from Pornography to other categories.
- 45 % of Net Alerts are generated by Central Library customers.

## **COMPARATIVE REVIEW NETSWEEPER DATA**

### **Filtered and Unfiltered Workstations System-wide: Access Patterns**

Information was provided to the Library Board in November 2007 on the patterns of access to 25 information categories on filtered and unfiltered workstations. Data for April 2007 is provided along with the October 2007 data in Chart 1 (page 6).

It should be noted that:

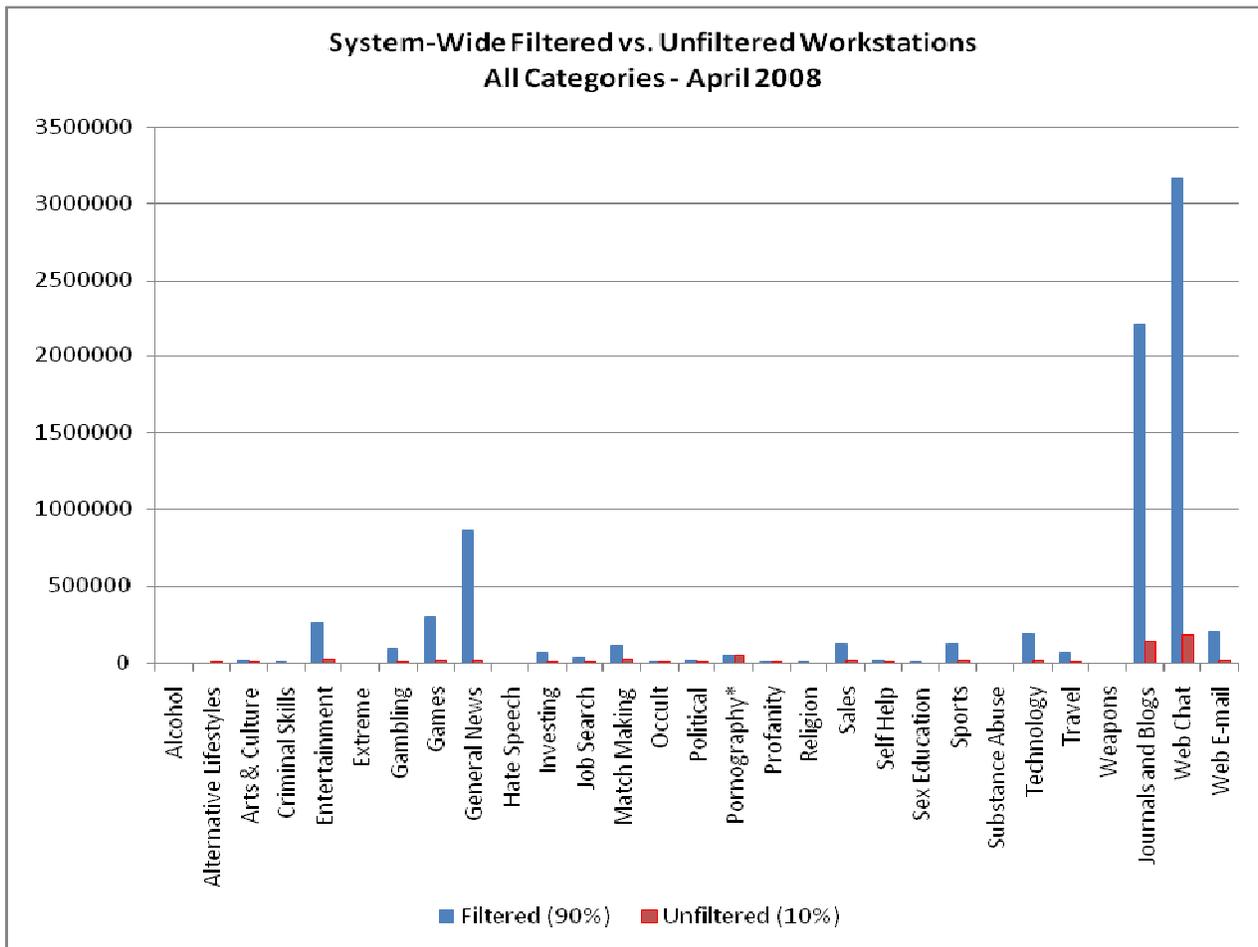
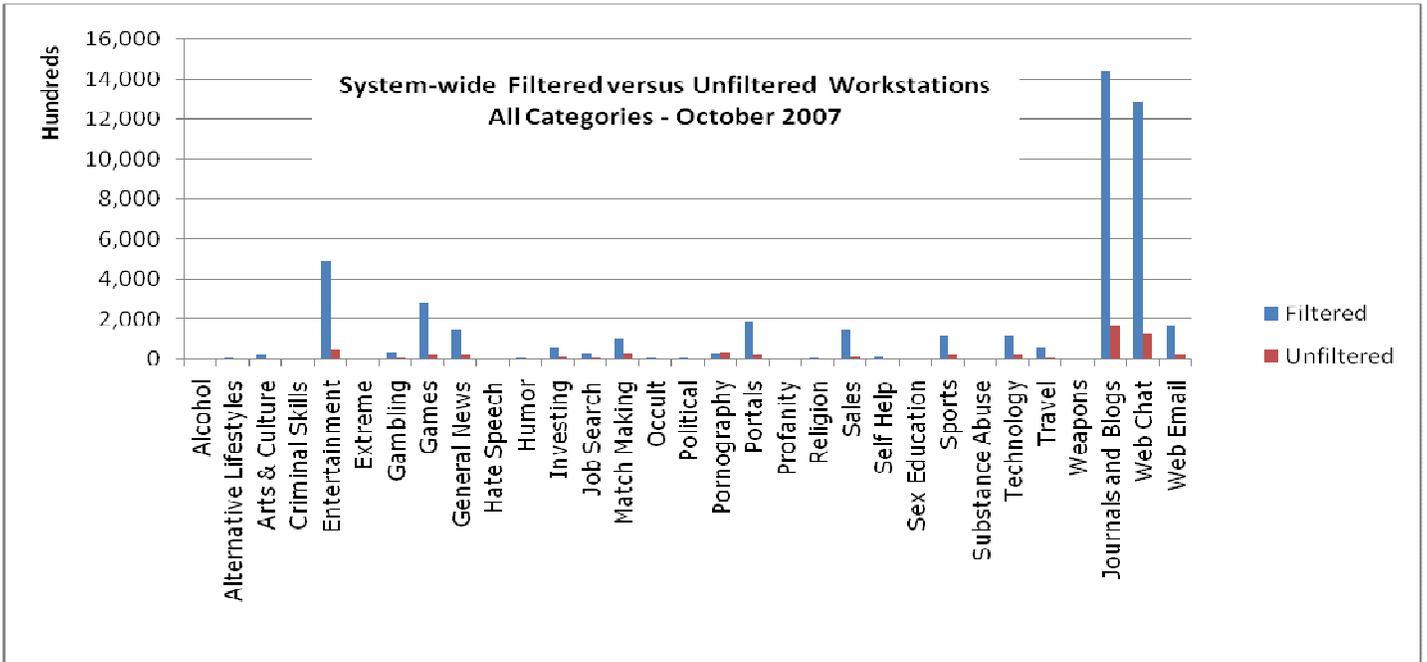
- The difference in the overall number of URLs is due to the fact that the October data was for a two week period, whereas the April data was for a full month;
- 90 % of workstations are filtered; 10 % are unfiltered. Currently throughout the library system, there are 204 filtered and unfiltered workstations, 20 are unfiltered and 184 are filtered. Data has NOT been adjusted in either graph to reflect this ratio. Therefore the traffic on the filtered workstations appears to be much higher than on unfiltered. Based on this ratio, traffic to the Pornography category URLs is significantly higher on the unfiltered workstations. There is a similar pattern of access on both filtered and unfiltered workstations in the October and April data. Customers access a wide variety of information on all workstations. Social networking in the journals and blogs and web chat continues to be very popular. See Chart 1.

### **Unfiltered Workstations at the Central Library**

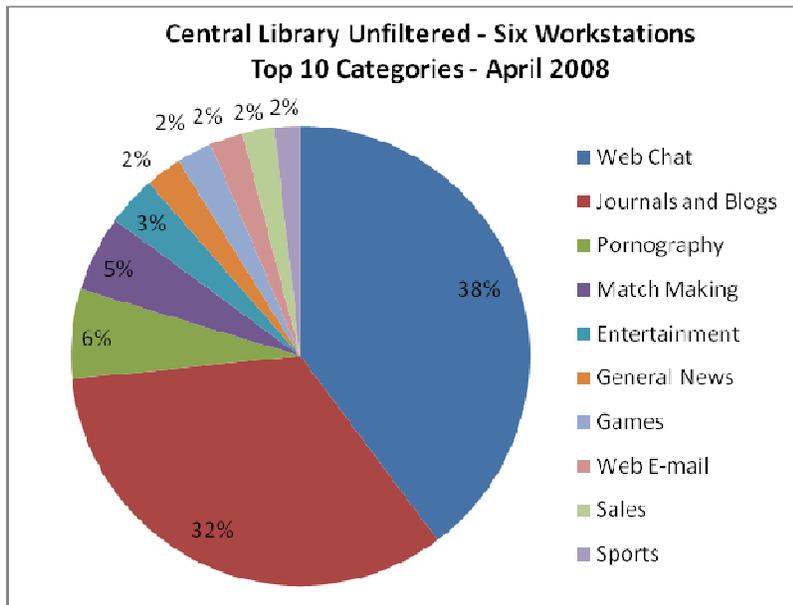
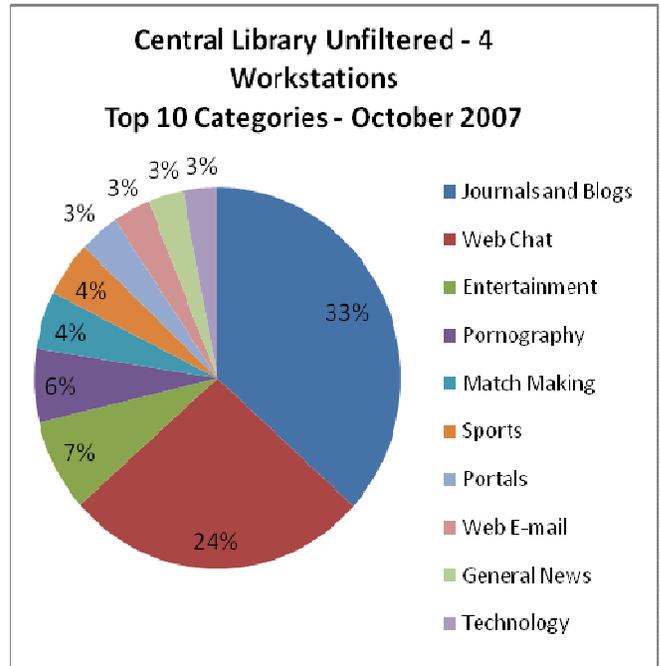
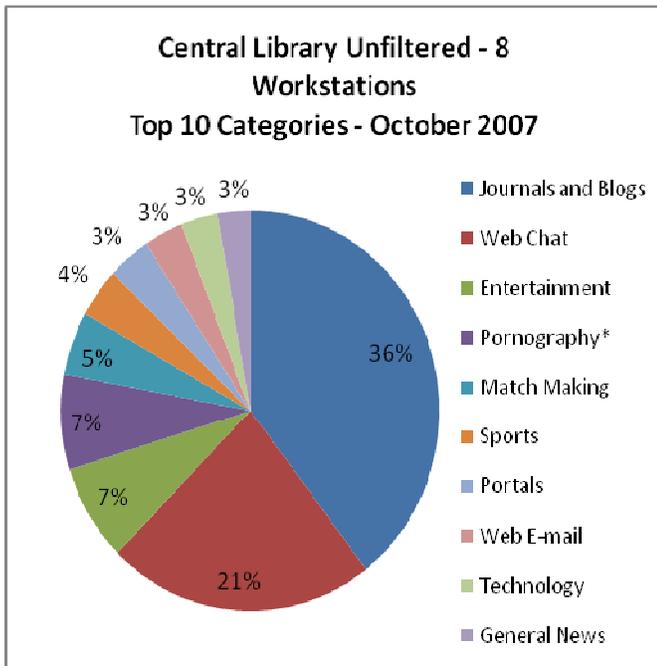
Comparative information was provided in November 2007 on the impact of providing four or eight unfiltered workstations at the Central Library. In January 2008, the number was established at six unfiltered workstations and they were moved to the south west corner of "Cyber Central" to minimize the viewing of screens by other customers. The installation of plants and space dividers (on order) further minimize this. In Chart 2 (page 7), the use of these workstations for 10 major information categories (including pornography) is presented.

Compared to overall general usage patterns in Chart 1, attempts to access URLs on the unfiltered workstations at the Central Library, categorized as Pornography, remains the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> highest usage category. This percentage has remained fairly consistent despite the decreased number of workstations. In terms of customer service, based on feedback received, an increase in unfiltered workstations at Central would not appear to improve the opportunity to access information sites. Furthermore, additional workstations would make placement more difficult and potentially increase the risk of unintentional exposure.

**Chart 1**  
**Filtered and Unfiltered Workstations System-wide**



**Chart 2**  
**Unfiltered Workstations at the Central Library**



## **CUSTOMER IMPACT AND RESPONSE**

Overall, there has been a significant reduction in concerns and occurrences related to the unintentional exposure to inappropriate images on workstations over the first six months of 2008, compared to the previous year.

### **Feedback/Occurrences Regarding Exposure to Visual Images**

Since January 2008, 7 comments from the public and 2 staff comments were received regarding concerns to exposure to visual images not appropriate in a general public setting across the entire LPL system. Branches and Central staff report that there were few verbal comments made by members of the public regarding the filtered or unfiltered workstations. In the same six month time period in 2007, we received 24 written comments by the public and 10 written comments by staff.

Since January 2008, there have been 5 recorded occurrences of unintentional exposure to visual images not appropriate in a general public setting. Each incident was reviewed to assess appropriate follow-up. In the same six month time period in 2007, 20 occurrences were cited over the Library system.

### **Feedback on Access to Information Resources**

Since January 2008, only a few instances have been noted where a customer has approached staff re: the blocking of a site. In all cases, the customer could be accommodated on an unfiltered or Research workstation. The Library requests that the categories of these specific sites be reviewed by Netsweeper and with a view to a possible change in category. This process has worked well with the vendor.

The Netsweeper software is not 100 % accurate in its categorization. There is an expected error rate of approximately +/- 4 percent on URLs categorized as Pornography. Access to unfiltered workstations in all locations, with additional access through Research workstations in most locations, provides an opportunity for customers to access all information on the Internet. Customers are always encouraged to use these workstations or to seek assistance from staff when concerned about a denied URL.

## **LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT**

There are external factors which also have the potential to influence decisions that the Library makes regarding filtering access to the Internet. We continue to monitor the legislative environment in order to be aware of the potential impact on the Library as an Internet service provider. Currently we are monitoring the progress of:

Ontario, Bill 37, Child Pornography Reporting Act (1<sup>st</sup> reading, March 2008)

Manitoba, Bill 7, Child Pornography Reporting (2<sup>nd</sup> reading, April 2008)

Canada, Bill C214, An Act to Prevent the use of Internet to Distribute Pornographic Materials involving Children (1<sup>st</sup> reading, April 2006)

Canada, Bill 427, An Act to Prevent the Use of the Internet to Distribute Child Pornography, Material that Advocates, Promotes or Incites Racial Hatred, and Material that Portrays or Promotes Violence Against Women (1<sup>st</sup> reading, April 2007)

Canada, Bill 506, An Act to Prevent the Use of the Internet to Distribute Pornographic Material Involving Children (1<sup>st</sup> reading, February 2008)

## SUMMARY

The Public Computer and Internet Access Policy was reviewed in 2007, and subsequently approved with changes in November 2007 against four criteria. This update to the policy changes addresses the four areas.

- **An individual's experience in the library in terms of unintentional exposure to visual images not appropriate in a general public setting.**

There has been a significant reduction in the number of reports of unintentional exposure by members of the public in terms of reported occurrences and in comments and feedback from public and staff, primarily from Central Library. This has been partially achieved through the slight reduction in the number of unfiltered workstations at the Central Library and an ability to place them in an area of "Cyber Central" with less traffic.

- **The ability to use the Internet as an effective research tool.**

Data indicates that the public does use the Internet for research on a broad variety of topics. Primary uses appear to be for social networking, entertainment, games, etc. Very few requests have been received for staff intervention or site review through Net Alert. There have been no requests for an increase to the number of unfiltered workstations in any location. Research stations in most locations are used by customers with staff support to pursue in-depth complex reference questions, when required.

- **The Library's ability to provide a broad spectrum of information reflecting all sides of an issue, as consistent with our collections management policy.**

There has been no change in this aspect of Internet workstation use since November 2007. The availability of unfiltered workstations in all locations ensures that all issues can be explored.

- **The due diligence that the Library can undertake in order to mitigate risk of unintentional exposure to sexually explicit images for its customers.**

The Library continues to review positioning of workstations as part of its due diligence. The installation of privacy screens on unfiltered workstations has been increased and all of these workstations will be screened by September 2008.

Due diligence includes the ongoing monitoring processes that have been established:

### *Vendor performance*

- Sampling of Net Alert reports for inconsistencies
- Follow-up to all inquiries from customers or staff regarding specific URLs
- Annual vendor meeting (or more frequent as required) to review software upgrades, issues, etc.

### *Customer response*

- Tracking and follow up of customer/staff feedback, occurrences
- Ongoing staff training and review of procedures, etc.

### *External environment*

- Monitoring legislative changes that may impact filtering
- Corresponding with other public libraries regarding policy and practice
- Monitoring changes to filtering products and privacy screening