



LIBRARY PROTECTION PLAN

A Guide to Help Concerned Citizens
Persuade Public Libraries to Protect
Children from Internet Pornography

NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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Introduction

Most people are stunned to find that many of the nation's libraries provide unfiltered Internet access, not only to adults, but also to children. An increasing number of parents, in particular, are saying: "I don't believe that my tax dollars should be used to make pornography available to children in libraries. What can I do about this?"

Recent decisions are revealing our federal courts' willingness to put the right for adults to view pornography in libraries above the need to protect children from harmful material. Even though libraries may not be required by federal law to install filters, individuals can make a difference in their communities by persuading their public libraries that the right thing to do is to take steps to protect children anyway. The National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families hopes that this package will give you the critical information needed to join others in working with public libraries to make them safe places for children.

The following pages will give you an overview of current library filtering issues and resources to equip you to fight pornography in your neighborhood libraries. Thank you for your interest in protecting children and families. It is the commitment of individuals like you that makes such a difference.

Please feel free to contact the National Coalition with any questions by phone at 513-521-6227 or via <http://www.nationalcoalition.org>

Understanding Your Library's Internet Policy

First, it is important to understand your local library's Internet policy. Take the time to find out the answers to the following questions:

Does your library provide access to Web sites? Newsgroups? Chat Rooms?

Is filtering software currently used?

If so, what product is in place?

Is the filtering software in place for adults? Children?

Are minors required to have their parent's permission to gain Internet access?

If so, does this permission mean total access to any material?

Is there an Acceptable Use Policy currently in place?

If you are not satisfied with the current policies regarding Internet access at your local library, your objective will be to change the policy to one that is an appropriate use of community funds.

But first, you should take the time to do some research and prepare yourself to support your argument with facts.

Doing Your Homework

Before taking any steps toward changing your public library's Internet access policy, you **MUST** take the time to become knowledgeable about the subject. The following pages will help you prepare.

[The Internet Pornography Problem](#)

[The Effects of Pornography](#)

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The Internet Pornography Problem

Though a valuable information resource, the expansion of the Internet has led to an explosive growth of the pornography industry. Individuals seeking "adult entertainment" no longer have to risk the embarrassment of being seen in an adult bookstore or strip club, but can view pornographic pictures and videos and take part in live visual interactions in the privacy of their own homes.

With this new ease of access came a greater risk of exposure of children to harmful material than ever before. Sexual material, from frontal nudity to the most depraved obscenities, can be accidentally reached by a few innocent mouse clicks of children curiously navigating the Web. Only certain commercial pornography sites require a credit card to enter, and most sites display hard-core teasers through which computer users connect to pornography sites within seconds. Visit <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/videogame.phtml> to read a story about one family who found out just how easy it is for children to be exposed to pornography on the Internet.

The most dangerous aspect of the Internet is its use by pedophiles. Child molesters and predators use the Internet to pose as youngsters themselves and communicate with children, expose them to pornography and arrange to meet them in person.

Consider these statistics:

In September 2000, 27.5 percent of minors (17 and under), which represents 3 million unique visitors, visited an Adult Web site. In comparison, one of the most popular music sites among minors had only 802,400 unique visitors for the month of September. Of these minors visiting Adult sites, 21.2 percent are age 14 or younger and 40.2% are female. In July 2000, minors visiting Adult sites (33%) surpassed that of the overall population (32.5%).

Source: NetValue. 12/00

While 75 percent of parents say they know where their children spend time online, teens reveal the truth. Fifty-eight percent of teens have accessed an objectionable Web site, 39 percent have seen sites featuring offensive music, 25 percent have seen sites featuring sexual content, and 20 percent have seen sites featuring violence.

Source: Websense, Inc. and Yankelovich Partners. 8/9/00

In a survey of teens ages 15 to 17, 76 percent with Internet access at school said there is already filtering or blocking technology installed there. Sixty-three percent said they favor legislation requiring Internet filters in schools and libraries, even though 46 percent reported being blocked from non-pornographic sites while searching for health information.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation. 12/01

The Effects of Pornography

Many people think that pornography is just harmless fun and that it has no detrimental effects. However, it is virtually impossible not to be affected by pornography, legal or not, and the sexual messages that saturate our society today.

Shaping Attitudes and Relationships

Research has shown that pornography and its messages are involved in shaping attitudes and encouraging behavior that can harm individual users and their families. Pornography is often viewed in secret, which creates deception within marriages that can lead to divorce in some cases. In addition, pornography promotes the allure of adultery, prostitution and unreal expectations that can result in dangerous promiscuous behavior.

Young people growing up in our already overly sexualized culture are being exposed to sexually explicit material on a daily basis through network television, movies, music and the Internet. Children are being subjected to sexual material and messages before they are mentally prepared to understand or evaluate what they are viewing. In addition, the majority of sex education is taking place in the media, not in the home, church or school.

Below are some of the common, but false messages sent by our sexualized culture.

- Sex with anyone, under any circumstances, any way it is desired, is beneficial and does not have negative consequences.
- Women have one value - to meet the sexual demands of men.
- Marriage and children are obstacles to sexual fulfillment.
- Everyone is involved in promiscuous sexual activity, infidelity and premarital sex.

Pornography and Addiction

Not only is the pornography industry, as well as the mainstream media, filling consumers' heads with these false beliefs and attitudes, but studies have found that pornography can be highly addictive. In fact, Dr. Victor Cline, an expert on sexual addiction, found that there is a four-step progression among many who consume pornography.

1. Addiction: Pornography provides a powerful sexual stimulant or aphrodisiac effect, followed by sexual release, most often through masturbation.
2. Escalation: Over time, addicts require more explicit and deviant material to meet their sexual "needs."
3. Desensitization: What was first perceived as gross, shocking and disturbing, in time becomes common and acceptable.
4. Acting out sexually: There is an increasing tendency to act out behaviors viewed in pornography.

The National Council on Sexual Addiction Compulsivity estimates that 6 to 8 percent of Americans are sexual addicts.

Pornography and the Community

Sexually oriented businesses, such as strip clubs and massage parlors, attract crime to communities. In addition, the general content of pornography supports abuse and the rape myth (that women enjoy forceful sex) and serves as a how-to for sex crimes, primarily the molestation of children. Land Use Studies by the National Law Center for Children and

Families show evidence of the correlation of adult businesses and crime. For example, in Phoenix neighborhoods where adult businesses were located, the number of sex offenses was 506 percent greater than in areas without such businesses. The number of property crimes was 43 percent greater, and the number of violent crimes, 4 percent greater.

Dr. Mary Anne Layden, director of education, University of Pennsylvania Health System, pointed out, "I have been treating sexual violence victims and perpetrators for 13 years. I have not treated a single case of sexual violence that did not involve pornography."

Child Pornography

Most will agree on the amount of harm caused by child pornography, which consists of photographs, videos, magazines, books and films that depict children engaged in sexual acts, all of which are illegal. All production of these materials is an illegal and permanent record of the abuse or exploitation of children. The typical child molester befriends the child, often through Internet chat rooms, and, after building "trust," exposes the child to pornography. This is done in an attempt to make the child think that this behavior is acceptable and to lure him or her to participate. The experience of exploitation and abuse becomes a lifelong struggle for the victim and leaves them with the fear that their photos are still out there. To learn more about the long-term effects of being a victim of child pornography, please read Sandra's story at <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/sandra.phtml>.

Library Incidents In the News

The following are some past library incidents outlined in an Amicus Curiae Brief by the Family Research Council (<http://www.frc.org>) and filed with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania during the Child Internet Protection Act trials.

The Associated Press, March 17, 2002:

"Surfing the Web for pornography is a common use of computers at the city library, but library officials say - short of child pornography - they have no plans to restrict such use. Over the past two months, the Concord Monitor [N.H.] checked at least one of the library's Internet computers on 10 days. On five days, one of the last 12 sites viewed on a computer was pornographic."

The Associated Press, February 20, 2002:

"Police seized 26 computers from a local library after an off-duty officer discovered three pages of sexually explicit photos of children in a garbage can. Sun Prairie Police think someone used a library computer and printer to download the material off the Internet. The library does not use software to block sensitive material, but a library policy prohibits illegal computer use, Kennedy said."

The Lancaster New Era, April 6, 2001:

"For this report, the New Era analyzed the electronic trails, or history files, left by computer users at the libraries over three days: March 29 and 30, and Monday of this week. The computers can retain, for as long as three weeks, the addresses of Web sites their users have accessed. At the Manheim Community Library, the New Era found 10 X-rated Web sites had been visited on a single day, March 24 – from 'Electrosmut' to 'Dirty Sweet Teens' and 'Sex Illustrated.' At the Milanof-Schock Library in Mount Joy, a computer user had accessed a digitally altered, nude photograph of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton posing with her husband and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. At the Ephrata Public Library, the New Era found more than 70 pornographic Web sites had been visited on a single computer during a three-week period. The sites included 'Smut Hut,' 'Bondage Girl' and 'Ebony Fantasy.'"

The Bremerton, Wash. Sun, March 21, 2001:

"About one in every 17 Web pages viewed on Kitsap Regional Library computers in the past month displayed "adult material," a preliminary library analysis revealed. Information compiled from three recent data logs - each containing five to 11 days worth of recorded Web visits taken between Feb. 11 and March 6 - showed library patrons visited 14,951,238 Web pages. Of those visits, 850,435 pages (5.69 percent) were sites WebSense would consider 'adult material.'"

The Washington Times, June 23, 2001:

"An internal audit conducted by the county in May found that users accessed 7,000 pornographic Web sites in Chesterfield's nine public libraries during a two-day period. County supervisors have received hundreds of e-mail messages and telephone messages in support of the filters."

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, June 16, 2000:

"Inside Little Rock's Main Library recently, an employee caught a teen-ager viewing porno-

graphic images on one of the library's 33 computers. On a different day at another library, a branch manager spotted children peering over a man's shoulder at a Web site filled with sexually explicit photographs. During one day two weeks ago, a Playboy site received 655 hits within the library system. A site that bills itself as 'Sluts' was requested 689 times, and 'Dominatrix' was visited 170 times."

CST, November 7, 2001:

"KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Police files show that among other things, there has been a sodomy arrest at the downtown public library, KMBC 9 News' Jeremy Hubbard reported. Several people have also been kicked out of the library for other offenses, according to police reports. One man was looking up 'raw nude teens.' Another watched animated characters undress. Patrons can look at pornography in public libraries with no privacy, and it is on taxpayers' money. A few months ago, a man complained that his daughter could see a man downloading pornography nearby. Upon investigation, it turned out to be child pornography, Hubbard reported. According to another report, a couple was found using the Internet to download hardcore porn in the children's room at the library."

The Associated Press, Nov. 1, 2001:

"Russell L. Pitcher, 44, of Bloomington, was detained Sunday at the Monroe County Public Library and charged with possession of child pornography after a library patron complained that a man was viewing sexually explicit images of children. Police allege Pitcher downloaded 389 images from the Internet of children in sexually explicit poses, and that he printed some images on a library computer printer."

The Seattle Times, Aug. 26, 2001:

"A friend of ours was just furious the other day. She'd gone to her neighborhood library to find a book for her grandson. She sat down to use a computer terminal and what was already on the screen shocked her: children having sex. She quickly closed that screen, but the one behind it showed pornographic photographs of teenagers. She told the librarian she was concerned that a child might have sat at that workstation. The librarian was sympathetic, but said there was nothing he could do. He said, 'This is freedom of information.' I said, 'This offends me.'"

The Daily Camera, Aug. 24, 2001:

"In 2000, a network administrator in Ashtabula, Ohio, made a horrifying discovery. A public library patron had left child pornography on the hard drive of one of the library's computers. With the Internet-ready computers accessible for free to anyone, tracking the husband and father who was ultimately charged with 23 felonies could have been impossible."

The Chicago Daily Herald, July 28, 2001:

"Winkler said her change of heart occurred a few days before the election while she was working on a library computer with her 13-year-old daughter. She said a man was viewing pornography on the computer next to them. 'It was a graphic pornographic image that filled the whole screen, so it was pretty noticeable,' Winkler said. 'I didn't feel safe, and I wanted to get out of there.'"

The Providence Journal-Bulletin, July 25, 2001:

"A convicted child molester, Foster was arraigned before U.S. Magistrate Judge David L.

Martin in U.S. District Court. He has been held at the detention center since June 22, the day he was arrested in an FBI sting operation for allegedly using an East Providence public library computer to make a date to have sex with a 12-year-old girl. The police and the FBI began investigating Foster after librarians at the Weaver Library found sexually explicit images of a minor among his trash."

The Orange County Register, July 9, 2001:

"Kathy Ayres couldn't resist jumping into a heated debate at her local library when a nearby conversation caught her ear: A woman who was with her young daughter was arguing with an older man at a computer terminal. The mother was raising an objection to the man because he was looking at porn on the Internet, Ayres, 55, of Seal Beach, said. She told him she didn't appreciate him making the material available to her 8-year-old daughter. Ayres said the man retorted that he wouldn't stop looking at porn because it was his right. When Ayres and the mother complained to officials at the county's Los Alamitos/Rossmoor Library, they were told that nothing could be done."

The May 10, 2001 issue of the New Times Broward-Palm Beach, reports multiple incidents of patrons accessing pornography and multiple incidents of masturbation by those looking at pornography: "Hoffman filed her library suit in December 1999, when she became fed up seeing patrons surfing porn sites on library computers. A few months later, she made a records request for all incident reports involving Internet porn at county libraries between April 1997 and March 2000. She got a stack of documents so big it cost her almost \$1000 in copy and research fees. She highlighted the findings in her lawsuit: 14 incidents of masturbation documented by library and police reports, 23 complaints about patrons viewing porn, two incidents of men exposing themselves, and one instance of a man fondling a female patron."

The Rocky Mountain News, April 19, 2001:

"The 64-year-old Denver woman plopped onto the little preschool chair a teen-ager had just vacated, looked at the computer terminal the boy had been using and saw an animated sexual act. She quickly pushed her granddaughter away and told her to go find a book. 'I don't care if I ever go back I'm so angry,' Krupa told the House Information and Technology Committee on Wednesday. Krupa said she complained to the library she has visited for 43 years but was told that it does not block images on the Internet."

The Associated Press, March 21, 2001:

"The Snohomish County sheriff's detective was at the Everett library's Evergreen branch last month when she caught a man showing a computer image of a nude woman to her 8-year-old daughter. But the encounter made her wonder whether local librarians are monitoring Internet use. They don't, and library administrators in Snohomish and Island counties don't feel that is their role,..."

The Tulsa World, March 1, 2001:

"Bob Perkins, who is a member of the Stilwell Library Advisory Board, said there are a lot of issues surrounding the library's closing. Perkins said there have been several complaints lodged with the board about people viewing child pornography in the enclosed room, where people have access to the Internet on the library's computers."

The Wichita Eagle, February 21, 2001:

"This guy was calling up and checking out teen (porn) sites. I was seeing this out of the corner of my eye. There were people all around. He just kept doing it. He didn't care; it didn't bother him that everyone could probably see it.' 'I went home mad. I mean, I've got a teenage daughter, and here's this guy calling up teen sites. I've been in the technology center at least three times in the last few months when I saw some middle-age guy call up a teen sex site and just look at it.'"

A commentary in the October 6, 2000, issue of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune reveals the inconsistencies between public library policy for the Internet and the library's general acquisition policy. "Twice while at the Selby Public Library several months ago, while going to the quiet reading room on the second floor, I've seen youngsters -- maybe 12 to 14 years old -- looking at pornography at the corner cubicle of computers. We don't allow porn magazines to lie around in the open. In fact, the libraries don't even carry them. Why do we think we need to allow every type of hard-core porn to be available now just because the medium has changed?"

The Times Picayune, Aug. 25, 2000, reported an incident in which two girls witnessed a man masturbating while seated at a computer terminal while viewing pornography at the local library.

The Plain Dealer, August 2, 2000:

"'Porn lovers sit quietly in libraries' is the headline on the station's Web site, and the text is virtually the same as the narration on the broadcast. A hidden camera showed an adult patron, his face blurred to conceal his identity, reaching down into his pants. Sure enough. After these two alarming examples of the kinds of people now "flocking" to libraries, we hear a librarian say this: 'It's not up to us to make judgments. ... We're here to serve them, and get them what they need.' Here's a pretty safe bet: The librarian who said that did not know her comment would be accompanied by footage of a masturbating man."

WCCO TV Minneapolis, Minnesota, reported May 5, 2000, about complaints of librarians who work in an environment polluted by Internet pornography:

"During the course of its investigation, the I-Team visited the children's department and found a young boy openly accessing Internet sites featuring naked women -- and then printing them. The I-Team found that the pictures on the Internet are much more graphic than anything that our grandparents may have seen. Librarians Wendy Adamson and Mary Kay Harris told the I-Team that they've seen far worse on the Internet. '(There) was a man looking at a picture of a young boy performing oral sex on a man,' Harris said. The I-Team found that these are not isolated incidents. At times, the team found as many as one quarter of all downtown library Internet computers devoted to sexual images. It's a secret that the public, and even the highest-ranking library officials, didn't know about until now. 'We are losing control of what is happening in the library and relinquishing control to these people,' Harris said. 'These people' referred to by Harris are Internet users who spend hours in the library viewing Web sites that feature sexual images. 'The only other place that resembles our environment right now is an adult bookstore,' Adamson told the I-Team."

The Saint Paul Pioneer Press, May 6, 2000:

A federal grand jury on Monday indicted a Dayton man who is accused of downloading

child pornography from the Internet at an Edina library. He was arrested on Friday. Nathan Dominic Smith, 20, allegedly possessed 47 floppy disks containing about 600 images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct."

The Baltimore Sun, March 15, 2000:

"Three young boys, between 10 and 12, were viewing sexually explicit material over the Internet. One was participating in a sex chat room. Two others were viewing pornographic pictures. Ivins, 26, said he complained to a librarian, but was told there was nothing she could do. Witnesses said use of library computers to get onto Internet sex sites was a serious problem. Kristin Thompson, 25, said she was walking through a library in Oxon Hill with her 15-year-old brother when they saw a computer that was left showing an explicit scene involving sex with animals. 'It was disturbing for me to know that my brother had to be exposed to such vulgar and explicit material,' she said."

The Record (Bergen County, NJ), March 2, 2000:

"At Wednesday night's council meeting, Council President Judy Orson railed against what she described as a library board that does not see the need to change its policy, which allows complete access to every Web site from library computers. Orson said that she has received several complaints recently from residents who say they saw teenagers accessing adult Web sites at the Preakness branch, which has had Internet access for about three years."

Legal Issues Regarding Pornography and Filtering

You don't have to be a lawyer to tackle the question of Internet pornography in your local library, but a general understanding of the basic principles is very beneficial. The following should help you as you prepare to take on your local library.

Pornography and the First Amendment

In *Miller v. California* (1973), the Supreme Court stated, "This much has been categorically settled by the Court, that obscene material is unprotected by the First Amendment."

Some argue the words of the First Amendment - freedom of speech - include all speech. Yet there are laws against consumer fraud, conspiracy, libel, slander or falsely shouting "fire" in a crowded theater. Many assume if pornography is available in a community, it is legal. This simply isn't so: there is a difference between enacting and enforcing legislation. Many prosecutors have limited resources to enforce the obscenity and pornography laws of their community. Since they tend to respond to the most clearly expressed priorities of their constituents, community inaction can be mistaken for community approval.

Material that is illegal to possess refers only to child pornography. The very existence of child porn is considered "contraband," or illegal, because the very act of photographing a child in any sexual context is abusive. Thus, when technology enabled pedophiles to prepare "synthetic" child pornography (digitally blending an adult body with a child's face, or vice versa), the law was extended to include such material. However, an April 2002 U.S. Supreme Court decision overturned the "virtual" child pornography law, saying that is was too broad and criminalized such mainstream movies as *Traffic* and *American Beauty*. Currently, Congress is working on a new "virtual" child porn law that will stand up to constitutional scrutiny.

Material that is legal to possess but illegal to distribute includes much hard-core pornography, although the term includes a broad spectrum from just beyond soft-core to erotica. The legal term for prosecutable hard-core pornography is "obscenity," which is defined by the following Miller test: Would the average person, applying contemporary community standards, find that:

- The material taken as a whole, appeals to an unwholesome (prurient) interest?
- The material depicts specific defined sexual conduct in a patently offensive way?
- The work taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value?

Material which is illegal to distribute to minors includes the legal terms "indecent" and "harmful to minors" -- material which has First Amendment protection for adults but not for minors because of the surpassing value of protecting the young. Restrictions on broadcast indecency and telephone pornography extend into this category, as does much concern about Internet porn.

Recent Related Legislation and Decisions

Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) - The Child Internet Protection Act, which went into effect April 20, 2001, would have required public libraries to install filters designed to block pornography on computers or risk losing federal funding. The American Library Association (ALA) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) appealed CIPA, resulting

in the May 31, 2002 decision by a panel of federal judges to throw out the law. The panel's ruling argued that such a mandate for filtering in libraries violates First Amendment rights in that some Web sites containing protected speech could be blocked by the filters and adult library patrons may have to face "embarrassment" by having to ask permission to view certain Web sites.

The Justice Department has appealed this ruling with the U.S. Supreme Court, which will likely hear the case in 2003.

Child Online Protection Act (COPA) – The Child Online Protection Act of 1998, the law intended to make it a crime to place sexually explicit material on the Internet where minors can be exposed to it and require commercial Web site operators to use credit cards or other age verification procedures to protect minors, also currently faces scrutiny by the courts. The ACLU challenged the constitutionality of COPA, resulting in an appeals court ruling that its reliance on "community standards" to define "material harmful to minors" made the law too broad in scope. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed the decision on May 13, 2002, saying that the reliance on "community standards" does not make the law unconstitutional. However, the Supreme Court sent COPA back for review of additional constitutional concerns not previously addressed by the lower court.

Sexual Harassment and Libraries – Title VII of the Civil Rights Act guarantees women protection from sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment includes situations where employers fail to eliminate hostile working conditions, which may exist when pornography is pervasively viewed in the workplace. Some librarians have filed sexual harassment suits and won, because their employers failed to stop them from being exposed to pornography.

Key Points and Arguments

In any discussion of this topic, you will want to be prepared – not just to respond to questions – but also to advance the key points of your argument. Here are some key points in the library filtering debate:

1. Should public funds be used to distribute pornography?
2. The courts have held that pornography in the workplace constitutes a "hostile environment" resulting in sexual harassment. Is this the atmosphere that we want in our libraries?
3. Who changed the selection policy? Libraries have never provided *Hustler* or *Deep Throat* in the magazine or videotape selections. Why change this on the Internet?
4. Libraries don't have, and never had, an affirmative obligation to provide all constitutionally-protected speech. There has always been a selection policy to determine appropriate material.
5. The ALA's policy that children are entitled to access the same sexual material as adults was rejected by the Supreme Court in the 1968 case of *Ginsberg v. New York*.
6. Libraries should not provide indiscriminate access to illegal materials (child pornography, obscenity and material harmful to minors).
7. If a parent regularly displayed hard-core pornography to a child, it might be considered child abuse. Is that what we want our libraries to promote?

Responses to Anti-Filtering Arguments

1. *"Government can't censor; libraries are government; therefore, libraries can't censor."*
 - a) Libraries have always censored – it's called the selection policy. In legal terms, a library is a "limited public forum" which can discriminate based on subject or content, not viewpoint, to preserve its purpose.
 - b) Government has never been in the business of distributing pornography. Do we want it to start now?
2. *"The May 2002 federal court decision against the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) means that public libraries cannot filter Internet access."*

Not so. The decision against CIPA, which is currently being appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court by the Attorney General, does not remove the right or ability of local public libraries to voluntarily have and enforce Internet use policies or use filtering software. The panel of judges ruled only that - in some circumstances involved with CIPA - Congress could not require libraries to install filters against their will in exchange for federal Internet funding.
3. *"Librarians are not babysitters."*

No one expects them to be. But can't parents expect libraries to work with them, not against them?

4. *"Isn't protecting children the parent's job?"*

Parents have primary responsibility for their children. But would that justify a liquor store selling alcohol to kids without checking ID? Would we let a sex shop sell pornography to kids if the parents weren't there? The community has responsibilities too.

5. *"Once we start censoring, where does the line get drawn? Do we finish up banning Catcher in the Rye?"*

It certainly requires judgment to set a selection policy, but libraries have been doing that for years. What's the alternative – no line at all? Even for children? Even for illegal material?

6. *"If software existed that precisely excluded illegal – and only illegal – material, libraries would be happy to use it."*

Since when did libraries base their selection policies purely on what's legal or illegal? There's also a question of what is appropriate in the library. (Singing and dancing on the library table is probably legal, but it's inappropriate.) Besides, it's a poor excuse to say that you have to carry illegal material because you can't exclude it without also excluding some legal material.

7. *"Filtering software is technically inadequate for libraries – the criteria are vague and overbroad and require too much staff time."*

Not so. Many libraries are successfully using filtering software to the satisfaction of both the libraries and the patrons.

Independent research has confirmed that filtering software is effective and embraced by information technology professionals. A March 2002 report published by filtering expert David Burt (available online at http://www.n2h2.com/pdf/facts_on_filters_whitepaper.pdf) revealed that Internet filtering software is largely effective, though not perfect in blocking Web sites. Of 26 laboratory tests of filtering, 19 found filters effective, 4 found them of mixed effectiveness, and only 3 found them ineffective. In addition, Burt's report shows that nearly half of all public libraries are already using filters.

8. *"Why can't adults view what they want?"*

In their own homes they can, other than child pornography, which is illegal even to possess. But they don't have the right to compel the rest of us to pay for it. A patron also does not have a constitutional right to compel a library to acquire anything the patron wants to read.

9. *"Unfiltered Internet access is cheaper than filtered access."*

And unfiltered water is cheaper than filtered water. Would that justify providing unfiltered water supply in government buildings?

10. *"You shouldn't be able to tell my kid what he can't see."*

We already do – your kid isn't allowed into a "XXX" bookstore any more than mine is. If we don't allow kids to buy *Penthouse* in the 7-Eleven, why would we allow them into the porn areas of the Internet?

About the Opposition

In any debate, it is always imperative to understand the opposition. None of us has all the answers, and understanding our opponents' real concerns can lead to a better solution for all. Little is achieved in demonizing the opposition.

Equally, it is important to be realistic where deep philosophical differences exist. Failure to appreciate such differences is like entering a maze wearing a blindfold. Astounding as it seems to most Americans, both the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the American Library Association (ALA) advocate, as a matter of solemn policy, that libraries should make anything in the library available to anyone, regardless of age. Anything, of course, in their philosophy, includes unfiltered Internet access.

To read more about the ACLU's position on filtering in libraries and the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) visit <http://www.aclu.org/features/f032001a.html>.

To read more about the ALA's position on filtering in libraries and CIPA, visit its Office for Intellectual Freedom at <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/>.

One Community's Success Story

A couple of years ago, concerned Memphis-area citizens came together to fight pornography in their public libraries and, after a lot of hard work and perseverance, were successful in influencing their library board to change its Internet use policy and install filters on all computers. Now a model for taking on libraries across the country, Memphis' success shows how much a few concerned citizens can do.

How did they do it?

George Kuykendall, the Executive Director of one of the National Coalition's Model Cities, Citizens for Community Values (CCV) of Memphis (<http://www.ccvmemphis.org>), initiated a crusade to make Memphis/Shelby County libraries safer for children. Kuykendall and CCV Memphis linked arms with Richard Ladd, a concerned citizen waging his own war against pornography in libraries, to address the Shelby County Commission during its review of the library system's \$17 million operating budget.

The group found friendly support in three commission members and was invited to speak in front of the entire commission. Each member of the commission reviewing the issue was given a package of material attesting to the seriousness of the library porn issue. Less than 30 days later, the commission heeded to Kuykendall's group's request and passed a motion to withhold funding from libraries until a method was devised to deal with Internet pornography. Tommy Hart, a commission member who supported this campaign, told a Memphis area newspaper that he did not realize the seriousness of the library porn issue until Kuykendall and others came forward.

This initial victory was just the first step in effecting change within the Memphis library system. The County Commission and Kuykendall's group faced great opposition from the Memphis/Shelby County Library Information Center. Its director, Judith Drescher, was completely against filtering Internet access and stood behind the policy that adults should be allowed to access anything they choose. Drescher also felt that parents alone should shoulder the responsibility of keeping children away from harmful material in public libraries. However, with the threat of losing funding from the county, the Library Board of Trustees was forced to take a closer look at filtering. A group from the Memphis/Shelby County Library Information Center initiated their own research on filtering and presented it to the board.

About two months later, the board was to vote on the filtering issue and Kuykendall's group was ready to be there and be heard. Kuykendall and CCV Memphis coordinated a rally outside of the Main Library where the board held its meeting, and about 300 concerned citizens showed up to wave signs with slogans like, "Pornography – Who Needs It?" and "Keep Libraries Safe for Children!"

The result – the Memphis/Shelby County Library Board voted to toughen its Internet use policy and install pornography-blocking software on all public-access computers. In addition to agreeing to use filtering technology, the Memphis library system also offered a two-hour "Safety Net" workshop for parents and their children that included tips to help parents keep their child's online experiences safe, fun and productive.

To read Memphis/Shelby County's updated Internet use policy, visit <http://www.memphislibrary.org/about/internetpol.htm>.

Sample New Library Internet Use Policy

The following is a sample Internet use policy developed by the National Law Center for Children and Families (<http://www.nationallawcenter.org>) in May 2000.

Section 1. Purpose for Providing Internet Use: The Library provides limited access to the Internet in a non-public forum, as a service to our patrons. The Internet is a resource that enables Library patrons to connect to information beyond that contained in the Library's collection. The Library is not a commercial Internet service provider. It is the Library's policy to provide Internet access to the public within the limits of available space, equipment, time, personnel, and other resources. The Library cannot guarantee access to the Internet at any given time. The Library is not open to the public for all forms of expressive activity. In offering Internet access, it is not the intent of the Library to create a public forum with respect to the receipt and communication of information through the Internet.

The Library may recommend interesting, useful, and legal Internet destinations and resources for Library patrons to access and explore. However, the Internet is currently an ungoverned and unregulated source of both verified and unverified information. While the Internet does contain a wealth of useful material, it also provides access to sites containing material that some patrons may find offensive or objectionable as well as access to sites that may be illegal, unlawful, or obscene.

This Internet Policy is intended to affirm and serve to advance the following governmental interests:

- (A) The protection of children from exposure to obscene material, child pornography, or material harmful to them; and
- (B) The aid and support of parents and/or the guardians of children in the discharge of their primary responsibility for their children's well-being; and
- (C) The prevention of the creation of a sexually hostile work environment for library patrons and employees, and the prevention of discriminatory conduct; and
- (D) The maintenance of discipline and order, and the limitation of disruptions in the study or work environment of the Library; and
- (E) The minimization of providing access to illegal pornography; and
- (F) The aid and support of Federal and state criminal and civil laws designed to deter and punish trafficking in obscenity, child pornography, stalking, and harassment by means of computer; and
- (G) The promotion of respect for authority and traditional values, be they social, moral, or political; and
- (H) With respect to minors, the exclusion of material which is "pervasively vulgar" or "educationally unsuitable" for the respective recipient age group.
- (I) The preservation of the Right of the Nation and the States to Maintain a Decent Society.

In providing computer access as an information resource, such as the use of or providing access to or through the Internet, World Wide Web, or an interactive computer service (as defined in 47 U.S.C. § 230 (e)(1) and (2) and § 231 (e) (1) and (3)), the Library realizes that electronic display is more public in nature than other print media. It also recognizes that while it is impossible to monitor totally all the information or images that can be

accessed on the Internet, some amount of control can be exercised. The Library will seek to facilitate, provide, and encourage Internet use in its facilities that is in accord with general community standards. The public dissemination of obscene material or child pornography is not necessary nor required under the Library's mission and is inconsistent with public policy and community standards. The Library also seeks to avoid and minimize the opportunity that unrestricted access to the Internet would result in exposure and exhibition of offensive sexual materials that could contribute to a hostile work place or other sexual harassment or discipline problems within the Library environment.

Recent news reports and studies indicate that the problem of children and adults (including registered sex offenders) accessing sexually explicit pornographic materials (including child pornography, hard core adult pornography, and with respect to minors, pornography that is harmful to minors) in public libraries may result in situations potentially harmful to public health and safety. In particular, a 1999 report entitled "Dangerous Access," released by Filtering Facts, a librarian organization that promotes the protection of children in public libraries, documents 503 incidents of patron accessing pornography in public libraries. Children were involved in 245 of the incidents, and 20 involved child pornography, a molestation, and several attempted molestations. The report documents at least 195 incidents of children accessing pornography in public libraries, at an average age of 12 years. Many instances are reported where adults have exposed minor children to adult pornography and child pornography, such as would be done intentionally by pedophiles, child stalkers, or child pornography addicts.

The Library reserves the right to evaluate, test, use, and implement software and network control and filter mechanisms designed to limit or restrict access to sources of information or images deemed inappropriate for Library dissemination under the criteria set forth in Sections 2, 3 and 4, below. The Library reserves the right to restrict or attempt to restrict entry into the Library's computer terminals or network of any materials that could or would be outside the selection criteria or policy for the Library's physical book, film, magazine, or other collections, and the Library may use, employ, or delegate such judgments and functions to outside parties, consultants, Internet service providers or filter services, as well as to staff and directors of the Library. Finally, the Library reserves the right to claim and take advantage of the "Good Samaritan" immunity protections for voluntary use of screening and blocking mechanisms and procedures to restrict access to pornographic, violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable materials, whether or not such material is otherwise constitutionally protected in other forums or places, as provided in federal law in Title 47, United States Code, Section 230 (c) (47 U.S.C. § 230 (c) (1) and (2)).

Section 2. Prohibited Access Criteria: The Library will implement software and/or network control mechanisms designed to limit or restrict access to sources of information or images that could be believed to be Obscene, including hard-core pornography depicting sexual conduct where penetration of the genitals is clearly visible and other explicitly sexual pornographic representations of sexual conduct ("ultimate sexual acts, normal or perverted, actual or simulated, ... masturbation, excretory functions, and lewd exhibition of the genitals") within the scope of federal and state obscenity laws and the constitutional test for obscenity provided by the United States Supreme Court in the "Miller Test" announced in *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15, 24-25 (1973), *Smith v. United States*, 431 U.S. 291, 300-02, 309 (1977), *Pope v. Illinois*, 481 U.S. 497, 500-01 (1987), etc.

Section 3. Prohibited Access Criteria: The Library will implement software and/or network control mechanisms designed to limit or restrict access to images that could be believed to be Child Pornography, containing a visual representation of a minor under 18 years of age engaging in sexually explicit conduct, as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2256.

- (A) There is an inference, which may be rebutted, that a participant in sexual activity, depicted as a minor through its title, text, visual representation, or otherwise, is a minor.
- (B) As used herein, sexual activity includes sexual acts by minors such as intercourse, oral sex, and includes "lascivious exhibition of the genitals or pubic area." In determining when genital or pubic area exhibitions are "lascivious," guidance shall be drawn by the following factors discussed in *United States v. Dost*, 636 F.Supp. 828, 832 (S.D. Cal. 1986), affirmed, sub nom, *United States v. Wiegand*, 812 F.2d 1239, 1244 (9th Cir. 1987), cert. denied, 484 U.S. 856 (1987):
 - (1) Examples of sexually suggestive or lewd photographs of children would be those in which the child is depicted as half or partially clothed, posed in such a way as to depict or suggest a willingness to engage in sexual activity or a sexually coy attitude.
 - (2) In determining whether a visual depiction of a minor constitutes a lewd or lascivious exhibition of the genitals or pubic area, the following factors, among any others, may be relevant in the particular case:
 - (a) whether the focal point of the visual depiction is on the child's genitalia or pubic area;
 - (b) whether the setting of the visual depiction is sexually suggestive, i.e., in a place or pose generally associated with sexual activity;
 - (c) whether the child is depicted in an unnatural pose, or in inappropriate attire, considering the age of the child;
 - (d) the child is fully or partially clothed, or nude;
 - (e) whether the visual depiction suggests sexual coyness or a willingness to engage in sexual activity;
 - (f) the visual depiction is intended or designed to elicit a sexual response in the viewer.

A visual depiction need not involve all of these factors to be a lewd or lascivious exhibition of a minor's genitals or pubic area. A determination may be made based on the overall content of the visual depiction, taking into account the age of the minor and the nature of the work and its context, promotion, or marketing.

Section 4. Prohibited Access Criteria: While a computer providing access to the Internet or other interactive computer service is being used by a minor, during such use the Library may also implement software and/or network control mechanisms designed to limit or restrict access to sources of pornographic information or images that could be believed to be "obscene as to minors" or "Harmful to Minors," as that term is used in federal (47 U.S.C. § 231 (e)(6)) and similar state laws, for the age groups of minors who may be exposed to such materials.

Section 5. Unblocking Procedure:

- (A) Provisions for Administrative Review: Any library patron who finds himself or herself blocked from an Internet site he or she believes contains material that does not meet the Criteria listed in Sections 2, 3, or 4, above, and desires to access said Internet site, may make a request that the Library unblock the specified site. If the Library determines that the site does not fall within the Criteria listed in Sections 2, 3, or 4, the Library shall unblock said Internet site.
- (B) Provisions for Administrative Review: An adult library patron may request unfiltered access to the Internet for serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific purposes, and the Library may temporarily disable the blocking software for such purposes.
- (C) Time Period in Which Administrative Review Must be Completed: When a request is received under Subsection (A) or (B), the Library must make its decision as soon as possible, but not later than the close of the following working day. If a decision is not made by such time, the request shall be granted pending review.

Section 6. Disclaimers Regarding Internet Use: The Library has no control over the information contained on the Internet and is not responsible for its content. The Library cannot verify or be held responsible for the accuracy, reliability, quality, timeliness, or legality of information found on the Internet. The Library cannot be held liable for the conduct of Internet users. The Library may not be able to control access to materials or protect patrons from materials they may find offensive. Library users access the Internet at their own discretion and risk, and they are responsible for evaluating the validity and appropriateness of information accessed. Users should be aware that the Internet is not a secure or private medium and that third parties may be able to obtain information regarding users' activities. However, the Library will not release information on the use of specific Internet resources by any users except as required by law or as is legally permitted and necessary for the proper operation of the Library.

Section 7. Warning and Notice to Parents and Guardians: Because the Internet includes some information which parents and guardians may deem to be unsuitable for their children, parents and guardians must provide the necessary guidance and oversight of their children. They are the primary ones who may make decisions regarding whether to permit their children to have Internet access at the Library. Parents and guardians must ensure that they take all appropriate parental and guardian actions in respect to the use of the Internet at the Library by their minor children. The Library and its staff cannot act in the place of a parent or guardian.

As a condition of Internet use at the Library, each user must agree to comply with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including without limitation, all rules and regulations which may be established from time to time by the Library. Further, each user must agree to take no action on the Internet which could cause the Library to incur any expense beyond the general access fees. By initiating use, the user agrees to the fullest extent permitted by law to hold the Library harmless from any liability for any wrongful conduct of the user, including without limitation, any such unauthorized expense, costs, and attorney's fees.

The Library reserves the right to refuse access to the Internet to any person or persons for the violation of this or any other policy of the Library, in accordance with applicable law. The following rules for the use of all Library Internet computers are adopted and established as an integral part of this policy:

Rules of Use for the Internet

1. Each user shall be deemed to agree, by advancing beyond the initial computer screens, to abide by the Library's Internet Use Policy.
2. Copyright: U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code) prohibits the unauthorized reproduction or distribution of copyrighted materials, except as permitted by the principles of "fair use." Subject to fair use, users may neither reproduce copyrighted materials (text, images, programs, and/or data) nor distribute such materials by any means (including electronic mail) without the explicit written permission of the copyright holder. Responsibility for any consequences of copyright infringement lies with the user. The Library expressly disclaims any liability or responsibility resulting from such use.
3. Only Library staff may reboot, restart, or log onto the Library's Internet computers.
4. Users may not make unauthorized entry into other computational, informational, or communication services or resources.
5. Users may not misrepresent themselves or the Library by using computer accounts, access codes, numbers, passwords, signatures, or network identification assigned to others.
6. Users may not invade the privacy of others at any time or in any way.
7. Users may not send, receive, or display obscene materials, child pornography, and/or other materials prohibited under applicable local, state, and federal laws.
8. Users may not use the Internet for illegal activities, including the violation of the rights of third parties, or activities inconsistent with the Library's tax-exempt status.
9. Users may not make any attempt to damage or alter the Library's computer equipment, software, or data, and/or the equipment, software, or data of others.

If the Library determines that a user would benefit from additional instruction in the use of the Internet, the Library reserves the right to request that a user attend an orientation and/or training session.

Further, the Library reserves the right to limit the volume of printing of materials by patrons and/or to impose charges for such printing.

Violation of the Library's Internet Use Policy and of any other rules and regulations may result in a loss of access to the Internet (including the World Wide Web) through the Library's Internet connection and/or a loss of other Library privileges. Unlawful activities may result in prosecution by local, state, and/or federal authorities.

Users may appeal the loss of access to the Internet under the provisions of the Library's Suspension of Privileges Policy. To the extent any provision of this policy or the application

thereof to any circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the policy and the application of such provision to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

Because of the unsettled state of applicable local, state, and federal laws, this policy is considered to be a working document and is being implemented on a trial basis. The Library reserves the right to make any changes in this policy at any time.

Section 8. Severability: If any section, sub-section, sentence, clause or any part of this Policy is for any reason, held or declared to be unconstitutional, inoperative or void, such holding or invalidity shall not affect the remaining portions of this Policy; and it shall be construed to have been the Board's intent to pass this Policy without such unconstitutional, inoperative or invalid part therein; and, the remainder of this Policy, after the exclusion of such part or parts, shall be held and deemed to be valid as if such excluded parts had not been included herein.

This policy will become effective on _____, 2002.

Action Steps

Now that you've done your homework, you're ready to begin taking real steps toward influencing your local library to make changes to its Internet use policy.

1. Talk to Librarians

Find out how the librarians working in your local library feel about the availability of pornography in their workplace. Having some librarians on your side can help you attain your goals. Ask them if they have ever been exposed to something offensive while working and how it made them feel.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act guarantees women from sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment includes situations where employers fail to eliminate hostile working conditions, which may exist when pornography is pervasively viewed in the workplace. Some librarians have filed sexual harassment suits and won, because their employers failed to stop them from being exposed to pornography.

2. Start Writing

Often, writing letters is the first step to getting your voice heard and influencing change within your local libraries. The National Coalition encourages you to write letters to your local newspaper, library board and mayor. You may also want to write to the American Library Association to let them know that you are against their policies.

As you pursue your letter writing campaign, you may be called on to make presentations to the library board, or give media interviews. Make sure you have done your homework and are prepared to respond to their arguments against your position. Refer to [Key Points and Arguments](#) for help. You may also want to read our [Media Tips](#) to prepare you for any interviews.

Here are links to sample letters located at the end of this section to get you started:

[Sample Letter to Local Newspaper](#)

[Sample Letter to Mayor](#)

[Sample Letter to Library Board](#)

[Sample Letter to America Library Association](#)

3. Rally Support and Start a Petition

Talk to your friends, family and neighbors about your local library's policy on Internet filtering to gain support for your cause. Organize a meeting at your church, civic organization or school to inform members of your community about the harms of pornography and how children can be exposed in your local library – a place where they are supposed to be safe. You may want to garner the support of a local organization that shares your concern. Using the name of a well-known organization can help you gain supporters and press exposure.

Start a petition of citizens who want your local library to install filters and get as many sig-

natures as you can. Ask those supporting your effort to also begin writing letters to your mayor, library board and the ALA as well. You may also want to ask the librarians who support your effort to write letters, complaining about offensive material that they are sometimes exposed to against their will.

4. Speak Out and Deliver Petitions

Ask to speak at a meeting of your local library board and deliver your signed petitions. Tell them you, and other tax paying citizens, want the library to help parents protect their children from pornography on the Internet by installing filters on computers. Remember to do your homework and be prepared to respond to the board's arguments against filtering.

You may want to have someone come and speak with you whose child has been exposed to pornography in the library. This will help show the seriousness of this issue.

5. Approach your Local Government

If your initial letters and presentations to your local library board are unsuccessful in getting the desired result, approach your city council or county commission. Approach individual council/commission members who may be sympathetic to your cause in attempt to gain member support. Ask to speak in front of a council/commission meeting about the need for filters in your local library and request that library funding be withheld until its Internet use policy is changed and filters are installed. Express that, as a tax-paying citizen, you do not want your hard-earned money to support the distribution of pornography to children using their local library.

At this meeting, again deliver the petitions to show the community's support of your request. You may also want to again have someone speak with you who has a personal story of their child's exposure to pornography in the local library. This will show the council/commission the seriousness of this issue.

If the council/commission votes in your favor, the press will likely pick this story up and report that the library's funding has been restricted until a new Internet use policy is adopted. If your local media does not report on the decision, draft a press release announcing your victory with the council/commission and send it to key media contacts in your area. If you are working with a local organization, ask them to draft the release. For help writing a press release, visit http://www.newhorizons.org/gng_pr5a.html.

6. Hold a Rally Outside Library Board Meeting

If your city council or county commission votes to withhold funding from your public library until it installs filters and updates its Internet use policy, the library board will hold a meeting to discuss its resulting actions. Find out when they will be discussing this matter, and plan a rally outside of the meeting. Pass out flyers urging concerned parents and citizens to make signs and participate in a rally to urge the library board to install filters.

Also, send out another press release to your key media contacts announcing the rally. Follow up with these contacts to make sure someone is there to cover the event. This will help you gain exposure to your cause and put additional pressure on the library board.

Sample Letter to Local Newspaper

Dear Editor,

I was shocked to learn recently that the Internet service in _____ library has no filtering software in place to prevent access to pornography by children. Apparently, some officials question whether such filters have a place in libraries. How difficult is it to decide whether children should have access to hard-core pornography in the library without their parents' knowledge or consent?

The library exists not only for adults, but also for children who should have maximum opportunity to use it. This will not happen if parents have to choose between allowing their kids unrestricted access to hard-core pornography or making the library off-limits.

It is inadequate to respond that parents should be responsible for monitoring what their children read and see – it is neither practical nor desirable for parents to be with their children 24 hours a day. No one expects librarians to function as baby-sitters, but library policies should work with parents, not against them.

The issue is not censorship, since I do not believe that our library has ever provided pornographic publications such as *Playboy* or *Hustler*. The issue is use of public resources – a public library is presumably accountable to its sponsors. Cities like Boston, Seattle, Orlando, Memphis and others have cut through the philosophizing to protect their children by installing Internet filters in their libraries – it is time for us to do the same.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to Mayor

Dear Mayor _____,

As a resident of NAME OF CITY and a voter, I am delighted that patrons are able to access the Internet through our public libraries. However, I was shocked and surprised to find that no filtering software has been installed to prevent access to pornography by children.

I am sure you will share my concern that providing pornography to minors is a poor stewardship of public funds and property. I do not believe that our library has ever included pornographic publications such as *Playboy* and *Hustler* in its printed book and magazine selections. The introduction of a new technology should not change that policy.

The tremendous advantages offered by the Internet exist not only for adults but also for children. It is important that children be given maximum opportunity to tap into this wonderful resource. This will not happen if parents face a choice of either allowing their kids unrestricted access to hard-core pornography or making the public library off-limits without parental supervision.

No one expects librarians to function as baby-sitters, but we do expect that library policies should work with parents rather than against them. I ask that you take steps to protect the children in our community from accessing pornographic material in the library that is illegal for them to obtain in the marketplace.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to Library Board

Dear _____,

As a resident of NAME OF CITY whose taxes help to fund the local library, I am delighted that Internet access is provided to patrons. However, I was shocked and surprised to find that no filtering software has been installed to prevent access to pornography by children.

I strongly suggest to you that providing pornography to minors is a poor role for the library. I do not believe that our library has ever included pornographic print publications, such as Playboy or Hustler, so a new technology should not change that policy.

The tremendous advantages offered by the Internet exist not only for adults but also for children. It is important that children be given maximum opportunity to tap into this wonderful resource. This will not happen if parents face a choice of either allowing their kids unrestricted access to hard-core pornography or making the public library off-limits without parental supervision.

No one expects librarians to function as baby-sitters, but we do expect that library policies should work with parents rather than against them. I ask that you take steps to protect the children in our community from accessing pornographic material in the library that is illegal for them to obtain in the marketplace.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to the American Library Association

Mr. John W. Berry
President, American Library Association
50 E. Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Mr. Berry,

"A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." – ALA Library Bill of Rights, Section V

I recently became aware of the above passage from the "Library Bill of Rights" which your organization promotes to community libraries across the nation. I was astounded to discover that the interpretation of this policy gives children unrestricted access to pornography on the Internet – and that your organization accepts that outcome.

The library exists not only for adults, but also for children who should have maximum opportunity to use it. This will not happen if parents have to choose between allowing their kids unrestricted access to hard-core pornography or making the library off-limits without parental supervision.

It is inadequate to respond that parents should be responsible for monitoring what their children read and see – it is neither practical nor desirable for parents to be with their children 24 hours a day. No one expects librarians to function as babysitters, but library policies should work with parents, not against them.

No library in this community has ever included hard-core pornography in its selection criteria for printed books or magazines. Why should a new technology make such material an appropriate addition?

I ask your organization to reconsider its position with respect to protecting children and minors from pornography that would be illegal for them to obtain in the marketplace. Candidly, I believe your opposition to such protection is indefensible to the vast majority of taxpayers who fund the nation's libraries. I ask that, rather than opposing such protection, you begin to take the lead in making our nation's libraries once again safe for children.

Yours sincerely,

Media Tips

First, and most important, you must have an interview game plan or agenda. You must have a good reason for doing the interview and know how you will say what you want to say. Think of the key message like this: What is the most important thing for your audience to remember? This is your key message.

Pre-Interview Checklist

- Be prepared – Know the media, the scope, the format, the reporter, the subject, the audience.
- Practice – Anticipate positive and negative questions. Develop appropriate responses.
- Use pre-interview time wisely – Chat with the reporter and ask about the interview. But remember that nothing is "off the record."
- Clearly define your message – Outline main points and stick to them. (Carry notes with you for reference during breaks.)
- Relax – Everyone gets nervous. Take deep breaths to relax.
- Remember that you are a resource – You have good information. Don't be afraid to share it. And never let an incorrect fact go uncorrected.
- Be on time – Never miss a deadline.
- Be courteous – Reporters are people, too. Don't forget to say thank you.

Using Notes

Notes can be used for a broadcast interview or a print interview. If you're doing radio, keep your main points in front of you, and the information that backs them up handy. For television, you may want to use small note cards. Do not use them during the interview, but keep them close for review during the breaks.

Phone Interviews

Often, an interview will be conducted over the phone. This allows you to use notes. Never agree to such an interview immediately. Take your time, collect your thoughts and notes, and call the reporter back in plenty of time to meet his/her deadline. This enables you to confirm that the interview is legitimate.

Phone interviews also allow you to be relaxed in your natural setting. The disadvantage of a phone interview is its impersonal nature. You can't get to know the reporter as well. You can't look them in the eye and become a real person to the interviewer during the interview. One good technique to increasing your credibility on a phone interview is to ask the interviewer questions. Not just about the subject of the interview, but some appropriate personal questions. For example, ask them if they have kids, or a family. This could help them relate to the issue of pornography affecting families.

Interview Tips

- Be yourself. Relax. The reporter wants to interview you because you're the expert.
- If you are representing an organization or group, tie it to the public interest.
- Use "we" statements when you are talking on behalf of an organization or group,
- Use "I" statements when you are talking about things like personal conviction. This will give your comments a more personal flavor.
- If you are representing an organization or group, don't express personal opinions or

-
- conjecture. What you say will be viewed as the opinion of the organization as a whole.
- Don't be afraid to interrupt. On-air reporters sometimes make speeches. Don't let them. Be polite, but persistent, and give your answer.
 - Keep the reporter's audience in mind.
 - Be credible. Avoid generalities and be concise. Stick with your message.
 - Never lose your cool. Remember your manners, especially in debate situations.
 - Keep it short and simple. Don't go on at length.
 - Always assume your audience knows a little about your subject.
 - Speak in headlines. Make your most important point first, then support it.
 - Tell the truth.
 - Don't "wing it" if you don't know the facts.
 - Avoid jargon. Most people don't understand acronyms or technical terms you use regularly.
 - Make your point, not the reporter's. You don't have to answer every questions as long as you respond.
 - Nothing is EVER off the record. If you do not want to be quoted, don't say it.
 - Never say "no comment." You'll look guilty. If you can't answer, tell them why.
 - Use your language, not the reporter's. If you don't like the words used in a question, don't repeat them. Another option is to refute the statement. A charge that goes unchallenged leaves the impression that you agree. Use positive words. Don't repeat negative ones. For example:
 - Q: "Why does your organization want to censor pornography?"
 - A: "You've really misunderstood us. We oppose censorship, John. We're simply asking that children not be exposed to pornography in their local libraries. It is already illegal for them to obtain pornography in the marketplace."
 - Use examples and cite statistics, as long as they are not cumbersome.
 - Point to a third-party expert to add credibility.
 - Stress solutions. Talk about hope...that communities have won and many are winning.
 - Emphasize how easy it is to get additional information on the subject.
 - Always have a Web address or phone number that a reporter or audience can contact to receive such information.
 - Be confident. You're the expert. The reporter wants you to succeed so he/she can get a good story.

After the Interview

- Check back, but never ask to read the reporter's copy.
- Follow up when appropriate.
- Feel free to ask for a copy of the tape or publication.