

St. Johns County Public Library Advisory Board
Minutes of the Internet Filtering Workshop
March 9th, 2011
Southeast Branch Library

LAB MEMBERS PRESENT

Carolee Bertisch
Kathy Dvornick
Martha Drabiski
Pat Laurencelle
George Minton
Marilyn Wiles
Bill Napper

STAFF PRESENT

Debra Rhodes Gibson, Library Director
Jae Bass, Technical Services Administrator

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT

Jerry Cameron, Assistant County Administrator
Michael Hunt, Deputy County Attorney
Karen Pan, County Administration

GUESTS PRESENT

Wylie Thibault, Director of Information Systems
Whitney Curtis, Reference Librarian, Stetson University College of Law

- 1.) **Call to Order:** Carolee Bertisch called the workshop to order at 9:30 am
Members of the LAB introduced themselves.
- 2.) **Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made to accept the minutes of the February 9th meeting by Pat Laurencelle and seconded by Marilyn Wiles. The motion was approved.
- 3.) **Workshop: Library Internet Filtering**
 - Overview – Director Gibson welcomed the large crowd. Mrs. Gibson stated that the purpose of the workshop was to obtain public comment concerning the filtering issue and to come to a resolution. These comments will be reviewed by the LAB. Director Gibson also spoke of the change regarding the Internet Use Policy; this has been sent to Legal for final approval. At the February 9th meeting, the Library’s Public Internet Use Policy was strengthened by including the words, “information harmful to minors” to the list of actions, laws and policies that users of the Library’s equipment, including computers, must comply with. The Library uses professional staff filters rather than relying on technology. The staff implements that policy and has been thoroughly trained in its use.
- 4.) **Filtering Overview**
 - Presented by: Whitney Curtis, Reference Librarian, Stetson University College of Law –

Ms. Curtis outlined various court decisions and laws pertaining to filtering. US vs. ALA 2003 – “The Supreme Court upheld the Children’s Internet Protection Act, which requires libraries receiving the federal funds for Internet access, to install filters so that both adult and child patrons cannot access materials considered obscene child pornography, or ‘harmful to minors’.” In these cases the courts were concerned whether filtering involved unconstitutional restraint.

Curtis also noted several other factors to be addressed in deciding to filter. Numerous research studies found that filters over block and under block. That is, they block needed information and permit unwanted information. Filter providing companies also retain personal user information including what web sites individuals use. There is also a possible in loco parentis issue; a library is making itself responsible for a child rather than the parent. Ms. Curtis also spoke of alternatives such as placement of computers, internet safety training, and education.

Curtis then asked if anyone had any questions.

Brendan O’Connell, 10 Oceanside Dr. – Mr. O’Connell questioned Curtis whether she believed the CIPA decision was the “law of the land.”

Curtis replied that she was not qualified as a professional or a citizen to render an opinion. She did, however, provide the citation for the case.

O’Connell asked what prevents a Wi-Fi user from bringing up pornography on their computer rather than a library computer. Bertisch said such an event is covered by the current policy. Gibson added that a trained staff member would intervene.

Gibson further said that the policy shows that it is the parents’ responsibility to guide children’s computer use and not the Library’s.

Annette Cappella, of St. Augustine said she was concerned with filters and it would be a violation of the 4th Amendment privacy rights. Ms. Cappella also inquired about search history on the computers.

Gibson said currently when you log off the library computers your information is cleared at the end of each session. Director Gibson also said that if filters are in use there will be a record of viewing history.

Ed Mulvey, of St. Augustine asked why all the other surrounding counties filtered and St. Johns doesn’t?

Director Gibson stated that she could not comment on surrounding counties and why they’ve chosen to filter.

Bill McCormick, of St. Augustine asked about WI-FI and children coming in with their personal computers.

Director Gibson regarded the current Internet Use Policy and said whether they are accessing the internet from one of our devices or through our Wi-Fi on their personal device the policy still applies.

Mr. McCormick said to Director Gibson, "So the current policy is working?" Director Gibson said, "yes, and we provide internet safety training as well."

Christine Chapman, 425 Trade Wind Lane – Ms. Chapman brought up to Mr. Cameron that the County uses filters for its employees. She said, "We just want to protect our children."

Mr. Cameron replied that the County lawfully filters to assure that its employees are doing their jobs. Mr. Cameron also commented that we are here to recognize everyone's point of view. This includes electronic and human filtering.

Director Gibson stated the Library has tracked complaints since January and there were a total of 11 for six branches. Director Gibson also said that complaints do not always result in a policy violation.

- **E-Rate**

Jae Bass, Technical Services Administrator –

Jae Bass stated that filters are not totally accurate. Studies show that only 83% of unwanted text is blocked and only 54% of unwanted images are blocked. Jae also stated that we provide internet safety training, in person and with tutorials on our website.

Ed Mulvey of St. Augustine – stated that our system blocks no content now and they'll take the 53%; it's better than nothing.

- **Electronic Options & Budget Impact**

Wylie Thibault, Director of Information Systems –

Mr. Thibault stated that the estimated cost for filtering would be \$2,400.00 for 200 computers and an additional \$12,000.00 if we were to include wireless access. Mrs. Bass said the federal government would provide a \$3,000.00 discount for Internet services if filters were in place. Bass stated that there will be an additional employee cost when an adult patron requests the filters to be turned off.

Mr. O'Connell said he doubted the filters would increase employee costs because of the fact that staff is already involved in the Internet Use Policy.

Jerry Cameron asked Jae Bass, "How would we know if the content is inappropriate or not?"

Jae Bass said that a librarian would have to review the content and then release it.

Kerri-Ann Hartley of 925 Lew Blvd. – says she's a mother of four children and does not take them to the library because we do not filter and that 54% is huge compared to zero.

Bill McCormick said that he brings his grandchildren to the library. He objected to those who want to enforce the filtering and impose their values on others.

Dr. Patricia Laurencelle talked about rather than relying on inefficient technology we've chosen to utilize our current policy and it has been effective. The Library has reviewed and revised the Internet Use Policy as technology and the community has changed through the years. Dr. Laurencelle also stated that we have a filtering process that's human moderation enforced by the staff and adult judgment and infrequently needed policing.

Jeff Rott of 7 Oceanside Dr. – says he is the father of four children and common sense says we should want to protect our children. Mr. Rott also acknowledged that we can't monitor 100% but suggests if we add human filtering with internet filtering the percentage will be much higher. He also stated that we should educate on filtering as a way to add security.

Catherine McGarvey of 131 Marshside Dr. – asked if we want our children to see explicit sex and violence. She stated that they are children and we need to do a better job of protecting them.

Mr. O'Connell spoke several more times then read a short passage from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's 1978 Harvard Commencement Speech in which the author criticized the morality of modern society.

A motion was made and passed to adjourn at 11:20 am

Respectfully Submitted,

George Minton, Secretary

Angelina Gervasi, Staff Liaison