

Week 6 discussion forum

Due Friday, March 5 by midnight (3 points)

Information policy as library policy issues are alive and well. The national spotlight shown briefly on the King Library last Winter in a fairly contentious case regarding Internet filtering. I subscribe to many blogs, but one of my favorites is Mary Minow's Library Law Blog. She commented on the public hearings at:

<http://blog.librarylaw.com/librarylaw/2008/02/report-by-san-j.html?cid=104362956>

Please read Mary's observations and don't miss a dissenting opinion below her blog post under "Comments".

Time permitting, you can skim the full San Jose Public Library report at:

http://www.sjlibrary.org/about/sjpl/commission/agen0208_report.pdf

An update on the SJPL report was provided by the author, Sarah Houghton-Jan, during a conference presentation at last Fall's Internet@Schools conference:

<http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/2009/10/il2009filtering.html>

In 250 words, I'd like to hear your perspective on the issues involved. What do you find to be the most persuasive arguments for or against internet filtering in a public library setting?

The outrage parents feel that their children are unprotected from inappropriate content at the library is understandable, but I feel that their anger is partly related to the misconception of the role of the librarian and libraries. That a higher code of principles to information access is upheld eludes parents.

Internet filtering, whether it is effective for a parent's sake or rife with the problems Minow's blog and Houghton-Jan's presentation indicate, does not have a place in library computers. Section 52 and 53 of the *ALA Policy Manual* outlines the areas of "Services and Responsibilities of Libraries" and "Intellectual Freedom." Reading these policies, the *ALA Library Bill of Rights* as cited by Rubin (2004, p. 203), and the fact that there is no legal definition of pornography and that the California State Penal Codes 311 and 313 are ambiguous (Houghton-Jan, 2009), makes it very difficult to be in support of Internet filtering. Blocking undermines information seeking and information literacy skills taught by teachers and librarians. Ultimately, because every parent's values are different, it is the parent's role to teach their children what is appropriate when inappropriate incidents arise outside the home.

References:

American Library Association. *ALA policy manual*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/governance/policymanual/index.cfm>

Houghton-Jan, S. (2009, October 28). *Trying not to filter: Internet filtering technologies update* [Slideshare slides]. Retrieved from <http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/2009/10/il2009filtering.html>

Minow, M. (2008, February 22). *Report by San Jose Public Library shows filters still don't work well*. Message posted to <http://blog.librarylaw.com/librarylaw/2008/02/report-by-san-j.html?cid=104362956>

Rubin, R.E. (2004). *Foundations of library and information science* (2nd ed.) New York, NY: Neal-Schuman.