



The Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) at The University of Western Ontario has concerns about the implementation of the internet filtering project at London Public Library.

FIMS is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about media, communications, information technologies and library services. We are committed to principles of intellectual rigour, creative exploration and the ethics of information provision in service to the public. Our Master of Library and Information Science program strives to apply, adapt, and expand the historical knowledge base of librarianship to the problems and challenges posed by current information environments and we emphasize a critical inquiry into the production, circulation, and use of information, information systems, and information technologies for the public good. We are particularly interested in how the information professions respond to challenges posed by new technologies, of which internet filtering is but one example.

We have concerns about extending internet filtering, which has been used at LPL in the children's areas since 2001, to the adult sections of the library because:

- Internet filtering software is known to be unreliable.
- Filters create a false sense of security.
- By installing internet filters, a library delegates an important professional decision to a proprietary computer program.
- Once internet filtering is implemented, it becomes too easy to expand the categories of information being censored.
- Filtering software is ill-equipped to determine the context in which materials are presented.
- To create a welcoming public space, in most libraries, library space planning tools such as the placement of furniture and terminals, the use of privacy and other visual screens are the tools of choice for providing privacy for public computer use.
- Incidents of patron misconduct can be addressed by existing patron conduct policies that apply to all library users.
- The Criminal Code of Canada specifies precise standards for what constitutes unlawful obscenity and child pornography. These standards have been upheld by Canadian courts because they are narrowly tailored to regulate specific risks of harm. A general and ill-defined blocking of pornography is incompatible with these standards.
- Expanding filtering in the adult sections of LPL would compromise the library's commitment to the Canadian Library Association's Code of Ethics and Statement on Intellectual Freedom and would raise serious issues under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms with respect to freedom of expression, including the right to receive information.

We are sympathetic to concerns about the harm caused by violence and pornography. However, expanding internet filtering software to block access to content throughout the public library is a technological solution that, in our view, is ill-suited to complex social problems. We therefore respectfully call on the London Public Library Board to reject the continued implementation of the Internet filtering project.