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Should Libraries Filter Their Content and Why?

Internet censorship is the control of what can be seen, published, or viewed over the Internet. Libraries should censor their computers because people in the library are focused on their work or using the resources provided by the library to get their work done. However, computers used by the library must have the necessary censorship to both protect the library as the intermediary medium between Internet content and its users, and to protect users from harmful, illegal, or offensive content. In addition, people who work at their jobs should not worry about their desired website being inaccessible due to censorship, as there is never a reason not to allow an academic Internet feed. Also, those who use the Internet in the library for malicious reasons are the reason why libraries should censor their computers. People assume that there are countless people in the library, so it is impossible to monitor the use of the library's computers, but there is no need to investigate every suspicious activity when the computers are censored, and certain websites are inaccessible anyway.

It is understandable why libraries are against content filtering and any form of censorship. Some users might find a particular point of view offensive, but that does not mean content should be banned. Nevertheless, libraries should still censor their

computers as they serve as public institutions and must comply with those regulations and prevent users from viewing malicious, harmful, or illegal internet content. Public libraries and schools ought to install content filters for the Internet access they provide to their users and students. Public and educational institutions have a responsibility to visitors and to prevent the general public, especially children and minors, from engaging in such activities.

Unfortunately, today's filtering technology is not precise enough to make very narrow distinctions and cannot prevent access to images or content that should not be prohibited. Because child protection laws and regulations should block only narrow categories of languages, such as obscene images, child pornography, or images that are considered harmful to minors. The entirety of the censorship process and the use of an internet filter software remains flawed and unfinished. According to the AIA, research demonstrates that there might be unreliable algorithms on both ends with unnecessary over-filtering that hinders users from reaching valuable websites and academically relevant content, so-called "overblocking" (AIA, 2015) and insufficient under-filtering in order to block images that meet the criteria for illegal and harmful content. Filters often block users from accessing a wide range of material information and expressions that are "protected speech" under the law and may not meet child protection standards. The library's Internet filtering software is not intended to restrict free speech or police the Internet itself in any way. It is designed to protect all library users by protecting minors and preventing certain individuals from accessing highly harmful and illegal content.

What is important to note, however, is deciding what types of content to filter is a legal and political decision made by the library and school administration. Filter settings

should not be selected solely by the technological staff, who may be inexperienced in the importance of intellectual freedom in libraries, but the library administrators or school official must be in charge of implementing filters and censors. In addition, filters should only be applied to library-provided devices for use in the library or school. User-owned devices that connect to the library's wireless or wired network should neither be censored nor filtered.

Wisely using content filtering software and implementing content filter bypass mechanisms on sites that are not illegal or in violation of the library's Internet Use Policy should ensure that content from illegal sites is not accessed. Systems are protected and visitors are not harmed. These Internet filters are much more sophisticated and accurate than they were a few years ago. For example, the line between protected speech and obscene content is slowly but surely being drawn very precisely so that libraries are not used for illegal activities and Internet users are not prevented from accessing the desired website and going about their business.

References

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