Internet Pornography in Public Libraries

As students of library and information science (LIS) and future librarians, we are conducting this research for inclusion in an article which will study relationships between legal Internet pornography in public libraries and freedom, censorship, and access to information. In order to better understand current library policies and help advise future policy makers, we are investigating and analyzing public libraries’ guidelines regarding patron use of Internet pornography. A frequently sensitive topic, the act of viewing pornographic images (which fall within legal boundaries) is a freedom protected by the First Amendment. Though not a new issue, Internet pornography viewing continues to cause turmoil across the LIS field, commonly due to inconsistent handling.

Therefore, our research question asks: How do public libraries respond to patrons viewing Internet pornography, while upholding First Amendment rights as well as the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and other legal requirements?


Thank you for your interest in this survey questionnaire. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

All responses are anonymous. The researchers do not request or store any personal or identifying information.

Please direct any questions, comments, or concerns to hgedlund@uw.edu.

* Required

1. **1. Do you work in a US public library?**
   
   *Mark only one oval.*
   
  ☐ Yes
   
   ☐ No

2. **2. Which term best describes the area your library serves?**
   
   *Mark only one oval.*
   
   ☐ Large metropolitan area
   
   ☐ Small metropolitan area
   
   ☐ Large suburban area
   
   ☐ Small suburban area
   
   ☐ Large rural area
   
   ☐ Small rural area
3. Please select the option that best describes your job position.

Mark only one oval.

- Adult services
- Children/Youth services
- Circulation
- Management
- Assistant
- Other:

4. What is your library's policy concerning legal Internet pornography viewing? *

Mark only one oval.

- Allow access to pornography, no conditions
- Allow access to pornography, with some conditions
- Don't allow access to pornography
- Don't know the policy
- Other:

5. Professionally, do you agree with your library's policy?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

6. Personally, do you agree with your library's policy?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

If US public libraries wish to receive government funding for Internet expenses, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires libraries place Internet filters on computers used by children.

7. To receive federal discounts or funding, does your library's policy intentionally comply with:
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Just CIPA
   ☐ CIPA and other state/local laws
   ☐ Neither
   ☐ Unsure

8. Have you ever encountered patrons using your library's technology to access Internet pornography? *
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

9. If yes, how often does this occur? Otherwise, please move on to the next question.
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Most days
   ☐ A few times a week
   ☐ A few times a month
   ☐ A few times a year

10. Have you received complaints about your library's Internet policy regarding the viewing of pornography, and if so, about how many times a year do they occur?
    Mark only one oval.
    ☐ No complaints
    ☐ 1-3 complaints per year
    ☐ 3-5 complaints per year
    ☐ More than 5 complaints per year

If no complaints, please skip to question 11.

11. 10a. What was the nature of these complaints?
    Mark only one oval.
    ☐ Patrons complaining about others viewing Internet pornography
    ☐ Patrons complaining about not being able to view Internet pornography
    ☐ Staff complaining about patrons viewing Internet pornography
    ☐ Staff complaining about patrons not being able to view Internet pornography
    ☐ Other: ____________________________________________________________
12. 10b. What action is taken when a patron complains about another patron viewing Internet pornography and a library staff member witnesses this?

13. 11. Which age groups have accessed Internet pornography at your library?
   Check all that apply.
   - Under 18 years
   - 18-30 years
   - 30-50 years
   - 50+ years
   - None to my knowledge

14. 12. On a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you feel that you were adequately trained or instructed to handle Internet pornography viewing incidents?
   Mark only one oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Not at all prepared  Completely prepared

15. 13. On a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you feel, as an information professional, that viewing legal Internet pornography in public libraries is a right protected by the First Amendment, which guarantees the freedom of speech/expression? *
   Mark only one oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Not at all protected  Fully protected

16. 14. How does your library utilize Internet filters to prevent patrons from accessing pornography on computers? *
   Mark only one oval.
   - Filters on all public computers
   - Filters on all public computers, with option for adults to remove
   - Filters on public computers designated for children only
   - No filters used

Please indicate how much you agree with the following four statements (15 through 18).
17. Libraries have a duty to ensure that children are not viewing Internet pornography.  
Mark only one oval.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. Filtering legal Internet pornography is a form of censorship.  
Mark only one oval.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

19. Libraries should support censoring all legal Internet pornography on their premises, regardless of viewers’ age.  
Mark only one oval.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

20. Patrons’ right to view legal Internet pornography in public libraries should be protected by the library.  
Mark only one oval.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
21. 19. How long have you worked in the public library sector?

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Fewer than 5 years
- [ ] Between 5 and 10 years
- [ ] Between 10 and 15 years
- [ ] More than 15 years
22. 20. Which state do you work in? *

Mark only one oval.

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Florida
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- Ohio