

Internet Filtering Messaging and Q&A

Jefferson County Public Library values free and equal access to information, even when that information may be controversial, unorthodox or unacceptable to others. With the implementation of filtering software, we are trying to balance our commitment to customers' diverse interests and individual rights with the need to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for all ages.

Why did the Board of Trustees change its policy on filtering software?

Colorado's 2004 Internet Protection in Public Libraries law ([C.R.S. 24-90-601](#)) mandates Internet access be filtered for customers under the age of 17. It requires that public libraries adopt and enforce reasonable policies of Internet safety that are consistent with the federal "Children's Internet Protection Act," as amended, ([P.L. No. 106-554 - PDF](#)). In the past, our policy was to filter computers in children's and teen areas while allowing adults the choice of using filtered or unfiltered access. This policy worked well for years; however, more recently, a growing number of patrons (including children) have complained of inadvertent exposures to pornography in our libraries.

We have chosen to extend filtering to adult computers to protect minors and others from these inadvertent exposures. We feel that accessing pornography in a public place is inconsistent with the welcoming and comfortable environment we seek to provide.

How does JCPL's filtering software work?

Jefferson County Public Library uses McAfee's TrustedSource™ software. The software blocks images for adults and sites for children and teens and wireless users that depict pornography. This includes materials accessed through the Internet that are intended to be sexually arousing or erotic, including but not limited to fetish pages, animation, cartoons, stories and child pornography.

Images/sites that provide scientific or medically accurate information regarding general, sexual or reproductive health should not be blocked; nor should images/sites depicting non-pornographic images of the bare human body such as classic sculpture, paintings, and artistic nude photographs.

Patrons who feel that a specific site should/should not have been blocked may submit a [Web Site Suggestion Form](#). JCPL will review the site to determine if it fits into the above categories and either add or remove the block.

Who decides which images/sites should be blocked?

In conjunction with Library staff, the filtering software vendor uses a process combining technological and human review to make decisions about which images/sites are blocked. This allows us to preserve access to scientific, medical and other images/sites that may address issues related to the human body.

Will children be safer using filtered Internet access?

That is the goal. However, no filtering software is totally accurate, nor is it a substitute for parental judgment and oversight. JCPL believes that the reading and viewing activity of children is ultimately the responsibility of parents who guide and oversee their own children's development. JCPL does not intrude on that relationship, except when mandated by law.

In addition to filtering, the Library works hard to provide age-appropriate materials and experiences for kids and teens, as follows:

- Computers in children's areas provide guided access to content specially created and selected for them;
- Chat, email and other online communication are not permitted on children's area computers; and
- The Library website provides web pages specifically directed to kids and teens.

Will objectionable material based on hate or violence be blocked?

No. The filtering software is designed to block images/sites that are pornographic in nature.

Will information on health and sexuality be blocked?

The filtering software is designed to block images and videos/sites that depict pornography, not medical information or images. However, there may be instances where information has been inappropriately blocked.

If this happens, please complete the [Web Site Suggestion Form](#). JCPL staff will evaluate the request and if deemed appropriate, will forward the site to the filtering software vendor for unblocking. The customer will then be notified of the decision within two business days.

Does JCPL filter social networking sites?

No. Popular social networking sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Xanga and others, allow users to share photos and detailed profiles of their likes and dislikes. In all, an estimated 300 sites make up the social network universe.

JCPL does not filter these sites because they cannot be reliably reviewed by filtering software, and because blocking these sites completely would unnecessarily block vast amounts of inoffensive materials. The content of social networking sites has not been found to meet the Library's criteria for filtering. Most site vendors have policies regarding appropriate use and display of content and most users abide by the policies.

Parents are encouraged to explore the Internet with their children, supervise them, provide clear guidelines regarding what sites and activities are off-limits and teach their children safety rules for dealing with strangers online.

Does JCPL prohibit illegal downloads?

We try to protect copyright laws by restricting bandwidth to certain online content providers known for providing access to illegal content. Patrons who try to download illegal content will find that it takes hours versus minutes to complete. While this may not be a perfect solution, we believe it provides a strong disincentive to patrons who may try to download movies or other illegal content.

How can customers request that an image/site be permanently blocked or unblocked?

Customers may complete and submit a [Web Site Suggestion Form](#). JCPL staff will evaluate the request and if deemed appropriate, will forward the site to the filtering software vendor for unblocking. The customer will then be notified of the decision within two business days.

Will customer laptops using JCPL's wireless Internet connections be filtered?

Yes. JCPL's filtering software works at a network level to block sexually explicit sites on any computer accessing the Library's wired or wireless network.

Doesn't filtering violate my first amendment rights?

No. The United States Supreme Court has reviewed this issue and held that libraries' use of filtering software is not a restraint on people's First Amendment Rights. In [*Roth v. United States and Alberts v. California, 354 U. S. 476*](#), the Supreme Court held that obscenity is not subject to First Amendment guarantees. In [*United States v. Am. Library Ass'n, 539 U.S. 194*](#), the Supreme Court held that a library's use of filtering software was a "collection decision," not a restraint on private speech under the First Amendment clause. The Library Board of Trustees has the authority to establish policies to guide the operational affairs of Jefferson County Public Library, and their revision to this policy falls within the limits of the law.

I want to register a complaint about this decision. Who can I talk to?

Please contact the Deputy Executive Director, Ann Cress, 303-275-6170.