

To: Montana State Library Commission  
From: Karen Strege  
Re: Internet Use Policy  
Date: August 11, 2004

Attached you will find MSL's current Internet Use Policy and a substantive revision. I present this revision as part of the Commission's regular policy review. Furthermore, library department staff members have noticed an increase of public access computer users who access sites that display sexually explicit pictures. Some staff members are uncomfortable viewing this material and report that other library users have complained. We have reviewed the Commission's current policy to devise an easily understood, one-page policy summary to give to all users.

During the past month, I have asked other similar libraries about their policies. I found that the State Law Library's one-page policy prohibits users from accessing pornographic sites in addition to the usual restrictions. After speaking to Judy Meadows, the State Law Librarian, I'm convinced by her reasoning that we should adopt a similar policy.

Her reasoning and now mine is that the State Law Library and our library, although publicly funded, are not public libraries that must and should provide users with materials for all interests. The State Library's library department has one purpose in offering Internet access to users and that is to allow our users (primarily state employees) to seek information to facilitate their work.

I also spoke to Charlene Porslid, the director of the Montana Historical Society's Research Center. Currently, the Center does not have a policy; however, we agreed that it might be helpful for all State agency libraries to have similar policies and plan to discuss this idea at a state agency library roundtable meeting.

I understand that some may look at this proposal as one that condones censorship. However, the different purposes of libraries require the adoption of different policies to achieve different goals. The attached policy may not be suitable for public, school, college, or other special libraries. I would not recommend this policy as a model for any other library without a careful examination of that library's purpose.

The MSL staff and Commission members know that the function of our library department has changed from a public-like library, which provided public libraries material to libraries and Montana citizens, to a specialized library, with a very narrow and important mission. Our policies should reflect this transition. I look forward to discussing this proposal with you next week.