

'We need to keep pornography out of . . . taxpayer facilities'

# Cyberporn at libraries has smut foes furious

By Jeremy Redmon  
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An Internet search for material about Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" produces some surprising results.

Along with numerous sites devoted to the classic novel, searchers gain access to another kind of "little women" — those featured on pornographic World Wide Web pages.

Scores of similar findings have enraged anti-pornography groups, which are waging war in the Washington area and across the country to block access to Internet smut on publicly owned computer screens.

"Pornography is harmful to society and especially to young people's minds," says Springfield resident Karen Jo Gounaud, a mother and founder of Family Friendly Libraries.

Mrs. Gounaud and others are stirring debate among public library and school officials in Loudoun, Prince William and Fairfax counties on how — or whether — to prevent children from looking at Internet pornography.

And the topic has become a hot issue in Virginia's gubernatorial race.

Purveyors of pornography have found profitable niches on the Internet. And new Web pages devoted to the most extreme types of sex spring up every day in cyberspace. Some provide free access to their material.

High-tech companies are selling software — of varying effectiveness — to block access to cybersmut. At least three pornography-blocking software programs are for sale to local governments, including Cyber Patrol, X-Stop and Bess.

"The filtering software is much more reliable than just having written rules and making librarians act as policemen," Mrs. Gounaud says.

Family Friendly Libraries and another group, Fairfax City-based Enough is Enough, are two groups committed to barring Internet pornography from public schools and libraries.

"We need to keep pornography out of public, taxpayer facilities," says Dixie Sanner, a Leesburg resident and volunteer with Enough is Enough.

But critics argue the protective software is written by engineers with no legal experience.

The Chicago-based American Library Association opposes the filtering software. The association says the software, which blocks access to material containing sexually explicit language, is not 100 percent effective because it sometimes blocks innocuous material such as research on breast cancer.



Karen Jo Gounaud (right) of Family Friendly Libraries and Dixie Sanner of Enough is Enough are furious at public-library access to pornographic Internet sites, and want screening software installed.

Photo by Bert V. Goulati/The Washington Times

Park View High School, opposes a new policy in Loudoun County public libraries requiring use of the blocking software at all times on all computers. She believes the requirement infringes on her First Amendment rights and wants the libraries to offer users the option to turn the software off or on.

"After all is said and done, this is a violation of the First Amendment," says Mrs. Smith, Education Committee chairman of Mainstream Loudoun — a civil liberties group that has threatened to sue the Library Board over its policy.

In an interview with The Washington Times earlier this month, Republican gubernatorial candidate James S. Gilmore III said he supports blocking access to pornography on all public computers and would support a Virginia law requiring that filtering software be installed on all state government computers. The former state attorney general then backed off, saying he needs to study cost and practicality questions.

His Democratic opponent, Lt. Gov. Donald S. Beyer Jr., says he opposes such a law because he believes the software is not 100 percent effective.

Existing Virginia law prohibits its state employees from looking up "sexually explicit" material on state-owned computers. But, absent the filtering software, nothing actually prevents an employee from doing so.

Five Virginia college professors and the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in May in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, asking a judge to declare the state law unconstitutional. The professors and the ACLU argue the law threatens their academic freedom and violates their free-speech rights.

Vienna resident Jim Lemon, 43, an international export manager, has no such qualms.

Mr. Lemon wants Fairfax County libraries and schools to use the software to protect his 8-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter. He is concerned that Internet pornography may incite some adults to sexually assault his children in the public buildings.

"It would be pretty risky to have any individuals using pornography at the very same facility where you have a large number of children," Mr. Lemon says.

## FILTERING PROCESS

Here is how Washington-area jurisdictions stand on the use of special software to filter out Internet pornography from public computer screens used by adults and children.

### Require filters:

- Loudoun County public libraries
- D.C. public schools
- Prince William County public schools

### Considering filters:

- Prince George's County public schools
- Fairfax County public schools
- Prince William County public libraries

### No filters under consideration:

- Fairfax County public libraries
- D.C. public libraries
- Prince George's County public libraries
- Loudoun County public schools
- Arlington County public libraries and schools
- Alexandria public libraries and schools
- Falls Church public libraries and schools
- Montgomery County public libraries and schools

The Washington Times

■ "Pornography is harmful to society and . . . to young people's minds."

— Karen Jo Gounaud

"It filters out constitutionally protected material as well as what people believe is unconstitutional," says Judith Krug, an association spokeswoman.

Anti-pornography groups discount this argument, saying two other types of software on the market avoid this problem.

X-Stop blocks entire Web sites, not key words. The Bess and Cyber Patrol programs allow librarians to approve or restrict the material readers can call up on the Internet.

Michael S. Bradshaw, the CEO of Anaheim, Calif.-based Log On Data Corp., which created X-Stop, says computer engineers base their decisions on the U.S. Supreme Court's three-point rule for obscenity: it appeals to prurient interests, has no literary or political value and violates the community's standard.

Sterling Park, Va., resident Pamela Smith, 44, a teacher at

## A SAMPLING OF FILTERING SOFTWARE

■ Bess, manufactured by Seattle-based N2H2 Inc. Bess is a combination of hardware and software used with computer networks and would sell for \$4,000 for a 5,000-computer network with an annual 20-cent-per-computer subscription fee.

■ Cyber Patrol, produced by Microsystems Software Inc. of Massachusetts. Cyber Patrol sells for \$29.95 per computer and has a \$29.95 annual subscription rate.

■ X-Stop, made by Anaheim, Calif.-based Log On Data Corp. X-Stop sells for \$20 per computer, and users pay a yearly \$9 fee to get their software updated daily with new sites to block.

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