

Statement to Library Board of Trustees

September 24, 2012

My name is Danielle Surkatty and I'm a resident of Yakima. I am speaking today as the Advocacy Chair of the Zonta Club of Yakima Valley, a local service club dedicated to improving the lives of women.

We support the use of filtering software to disallow the viewing of pornography in the library, both hard and soft core. We are supportive of the **strong existing policies** of the Yakima Valley Libraries which protect children by requiring parental permission for unfiltered viewing. We would also like to commend your staff who acted to report the recent incident in the library to the police, thereby protecting this public space from the inappropriate private behavior of one individual.

We understand that the Library's Board of Trustees guides the policies in respect to book collections and internet filtering. We appreciate your service to the community.

We watched the argument at the Washington State Supreme Court in the case of Bradburn v. North Central Regional Library District. The Supreme Court ruled that a library's Internet filter policy **does not violate the free speech protections in the Washington State Constitution** and that a library **can filter Internet access for all patrons**, including adults, without violating the State Constitution. Just as a local library may exercise discretion in its book and materials acquisitions, the ruling clearly states that a local library can also decide what Internet content to provide to patrons.

It's important for us all to remember that **obscenity** and **child pornography are NOT protected speech under the 1st amendment**. The Supreme Court, ever since *California v. Miller*, has ruled that obscene materials – such as hardcore pornography – **do not receive First Amendment protection**, and therefore can **easily** be prohibited. Even softcore pornography – can be regulated and prohibited from public display.

We appreciate that the privacy screens, **when used**, protect the adjacent computer users from inadvertent viewing. However, we would like the Board to address further the issues of the inadvertent hearing of audio from objectionable content and the inadvertent viewing by a person passing behind the library patron. This is of particular concern when that person may be a minor as exposure of porn to minors is **illegal**.

These legal rulings provide a strong basis for the Board to act in the interest of our community to continue to filter categories of websites and to disallow the viewing of pornography on the computers.

In the packet of materials you'll find a list of articles on the subsequent criminal action of library patrons after viewing porn in a library. You'll see that the criminal actions of the perpetrators affected other library users. Needless to say, we don't want to see this happening here!

Not only is pornography harmful to the individuals involved, but it has also become a leading cause of human trafficking, in particular domestic minor sex trafficking in the United States. There are two reasons for this:

- Trafficked children and adults are forced to participate in pornographic films and threatened with violence if they do not participate.
- Children are being filmed in pornographic movies more often, thus creating a higher demand for it.

Based on recent arrest statistics and field research, it's obvious that sex trafficking in the US is getting worse and that minors, both boys and girls, compose the largest segment of trafficking victims. What is driving this demand? **According to a growing body of evidence, the leading cause is pornography.**

While supporters may describe porn as a healthy expression of free speech performed by consenting adults and focus on 1st amendment rights, **the more we learn about the impacts of porn, the more we realize that this should not be our focus or provide an excuse for allowing viewing.**

The reality is that those who work in the porn industry are the **victims** of a business model that is **based on the commercial sexual exploitation of both men and women.** According to a former porn star who now works with victims, they suffer from, amongst other problems: severe depression, a wide **range of** mental illnesses, nightmares, flashbacks, suicidal tendencies, drug abuse, addiction and overdose, unwanted pregnancies, STD infections, prostitution, physical and sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence.

In the packet you will find additional information on the strong ties between pornography and sex trafficking. I have also included a list of books on human trafficking in the United States that I would like you to consider adding to your book collection.

Thank you for allowing me to speak and for all you do to create a safe environment conducive to the study and acquisition of knowledge in the Yakima Valley Libraries.

Danielle Surkatty, Advocacy Chair

Zonta Club of Yakima

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