



**NATIONAL
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SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION**

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February 8, 2017

Dr. Julie B. Todaro, President
Mr. Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
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Dear Dr. Todaro and Mr. Fiels:

Once again, we write to express our alarm concerning the American Library Association's ongoing support of access to hardcore, adult pornography in public libraries across America.

Very soon, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) will publicly announce its annual "Dirty Dozen List" which catalogs top promoters of sexual exploitation and pornography in America. Due to the ALA's intractable and extreme opposition to the use of Internet filters at public libraries, we write to inform you that the ALA will appear on this list for a fifth consecutive year. Consequently, the ALA now shares a shameful spotlight with the ilk of Backpage.com, one of the biggest facilitators of sexual exploitation in the nation.

No public library in America is constitutionally required to provide adult, hardcore pornography to patrons on computers or in printed publications. This fact was made clear in congressional testimony, as well as by the U.S. Supreme Court when in 2003 it upheld the Children's Internet Protection Act. We note that in 2016, an appeals court in Wisconsin yet again ruled that there is not a constitutional right to view pornography at a public library.¹ Yet, the ALA persists in misleading libraries by encouraging them to not utilize Internet filters based on the false notion that to do so constitutes censorship and a violation of the First Amendment. The First Amendment is not a license for public libraries to be used for illegal activities.

For more than twenty years, the ALA has persisted in presenting overwrought claims about the impact of Internet filtering despite remarkable advances in filtering technology. The hysteria continued in its 2014 report *Fencing out Knowledge*, in which the ALA claimed that

¹ WKOW.com, "Appeals court rules no constitutional right to view porn at campus library," <http://www.wkown.com/story/31060535/2016/01/26/appeals-court-rules-no-constitutional-right-to-view-born-at-campus-library> (accessed January 31, 2016).

Internet filters are subject to “technical limitations [which] continue to preclude the accurate identification of obscene images on the internet. . . .”¹³ The report also suggested that Internet filters are exclusively based on keywords or flesh tones and are not keeping up with technology, yet simultaneously admitted “few studies measuring the performance of internet filters have been conducted since 2008.”¹⁴

It is 2017, and there have been remarkable advances in filter technology since 2008. Ronald DeHaas, President of Covenant Eyes, Inc., an Internet accountability and filtering company, confirms that when today’s filters are used to identify and block pornography, they are highly effective. Nevertheless, the ALA claims that filters are only accurate 83% of the time, and complains of “substantial blocking of legitimate content”¹⁵ known as “overblocking.” In the Internet filtering industry, instances of overblocking are referred to as “false positives.” DeHaas reports that false positives have become so extremely rare as to be inconsequential. His company’s Internet filtering system is more than 99.9% successful in avoiding overblocking sites rated as pornography. Moreover, within the Internet filtering industry, false negatives (e.g. underblocking) are more common than false positives, meaning that any error in the technology is more likely to result in a person accessing pornography than not being able to access legitimate content.

Furthermore, state-of-the-art image recognition technology, for both still images and videos, has been developed by Covenant Eyes and was released by the company in 2016. This technology does not use skin tones to recognize pornography, as discussed in *Fencing out Knowledge*, but rather uses convolutional neural networks that “learn” to recognize pornography through artificial intelligence. Similarity to pornography is determined on a scale of 0 to 100—zero being pornography, 100 being totally “clean.” When the threshold is set below 20, accuracy for false positives exceeds 99.5%. A library could choose a threshold that would give accuracy more than 99.9%, and effectively filter against true, hardcore pornography while not blocking legitimate content. Indeed, today’s filtering technology is much more accurate than suggested by the outdated studies cited in the *Fencing out Knowledge* policy brief.

Additionally, readers of *Fencing out Knowledge* come away from the document with the impression that the ALA views the Internet as a harmless environment, where both children and adults can mingle and exchange information and ideas with little threat of serious harm. With respect to use of the Internet at schools, it suggests that “riding in a school bus or participating in organized sports present risks that should be considered, yet few would deem the risks of these activities to outweigh their benefits.”¹⁶ Riding the school bus and participating in organized sports, are activities conducted within the protective oversight of school administrators, teachers,

¹³ Kristen R. Batch, *Fencing out Knowledge, Impacts of Children’s Internet Protection Act 10 Year Later, Policy Brief No. 5*, (American Library Association, June 2014, p. 16).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 18).

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 5.

and the local community. Moreover, critical safety measures are erected to minimize potential risks to students. Unfettered Internet access, however, opens school classrooms and libraries to an overwhelming torrent of toxic pornography that no school can possibly manage to shield students from without the aid of Internet filters. The ALA should recognize that filters are to the Internet what crossing arms are to school buses. Internet filters guard students from the onslaught of illegal, obscene material widely available on the Internet.

The report further opines that, “Swimming pools can be dangerous for children. To protect them, one can install locks, put up fences, and deploy pool alarms. All of these measures are helpful, but by far the most important thing that one can do for one’s children is teach them to swim.”¹⁷ We agree. Teaching children to swim is vital to preventing drowning, just as teaching children skills to navigate the Internet is an important step in preserving their online safety. However, the skill of swimming is of little good if children are dropped—not in a pool—but a shark tank. The Internet, for all its good, bears more resemblance to a shark tank than it does a swimming pool. Filtering out “the sharks” of illegal obscenity hardly seems unreasonable.

Last year, the following new items were reported, all involving library computers and pornography. A few of these instances are listed below. Such incidents put the community at risk, especially children.

- **“Anderson man arrested on child pornography, voyeurism charges after graphic photos found on phone”¹⁸**
Police say the 36-year-old man was taking inappropriate pictures of children, teens and adults without their knowledge. Library workers told police that they found child pornography on a computer that the man had recently used.
- **“S.E. Idaho man arrested after allegedly viewing child porn at public library”¹⁹**
A man was arrested after allegedly viewing child sexual abuse images at a public library in southeast Idaho.
- **“Officer injured in arrest of suspect over possible child porn at library”²⁰**
A man viewing child sexual abuse images at an Austin library got into a fight with police. Police say it appeared he was saving the images to a hard drive. The security officer

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁸ Alexis McAdams, “Anderson Man Arrested on Child Pornography, Voyeurism Charges after Graphic Photos Found on Phone,” *CBS 4 Indianapolis* (October 26, 2016), <http://cbs4indy.com/2016/10/26/anderson-man-arrested-on-child-pornography-voyeurism-charges-after-graphic-photos-found-on-phone/> (accessed February 4, 2017).

¹⁹ Idaho State Journal, “S.E. Idaho Man Arrested after Allegedly Viewing Child Porn at Public Library,” (October 26, 2016), http://idahostatejournal.com/news/local/s-e-idaho-man-arrested-after-allegedly-viewing-child-porn/article_0a619f61-9de1-5afd-bae0-aa5f7e49aa96.html (accessed February 4, 2017).

²⁰ Andy Jechow, “Officer Injured in Arrest of Suspect over Possible Child Porn at Library.” *KXAN.com* (September 21, 2016), <http://kxan.com/2016/09/21/officer-injured-in-arrest-of-suspect-over-possible-child-porn-at-library/> (accessed February 4, 2017).

recognized the man, having kicked him out of the library once before for viewing porn on the public computers.

- **“Man Charged With Viewing Child Porn at Library”**²¹
A man was arrested after he was discovered looking at child sexual abuse images at a county public library computer. He was on release from the area detention center as a federal prisoner facing other child sexual abuse images charges.
- **“Sex offender arrested for downloading child porn at National City library”**²²
A convicted sex offender was arrested for allegedly downloading child sexual abuse images on a computer at a public library and then distributing the images to other people.
- **“Seattle Molester Under State’s Watch Begged For Child Porn”**²³
Police say a sex offender fresh from prison downloaded child sexual abuse images at a number of public Wi-Fi sites, including the Seattle Public Library.

Such incidents demonstrate that it is gravely irresponsible to provide unfiltered Internet at public libraries. Facilitating potential access to illegal, obscene material—much of which is degrading and violent—may excite sexual fantasies among library patrons who consume such material on library premises, prompting some to act out. Yes, irrespective of incidents such as those described above, the ALA has failed to acknowledge the real and serious harms of illegal, obscene materials.

Our society is struggling to cope with the impacts of multiple forms of sexual abuse and violence. Child sexual abuse (which is 167 times more common than autism),²⁴ adult sexual exploitation,²⁵

²¹ WYKY FM, “Man Charged with Viewing Child Porn at Library,” (August 26, 2016), <http://www.somerset106.com/man-charged-with-viewing-child-porn-at-library/> (accessed February 4, 2017).

²² CBS8.com, “Sex Offender Arrested for Downloading Child Porn at National City Library,” (May 9, 2016).

²³ Levi Pulkkinen, “Cops: Seattle Molester under State’s Watch Begged for Child Porn,” (January 14, 2016).

²⁴ U.S. Department of Justice. “The National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction: A Report to Congress, (August 2010), <http://www.justice.gov/psc/docs/natstrategyreport.pdf> (accessed February 2, 2017); National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, “Facts for Prevention: The Health Impact on Children & Youth,” (January 2011), http://www.preventtogether.org/Resources/Documents/Health_Impact_on_Youth.pdf (accessed February 4, 2017).

²⁵ Bryce Covert, “Women in Baltimore Public Housing Were Forced to Trade Sex for Basic Repairs.” *Think Progress* (Jan 9, 2016), <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2016/01/09/3737612/baltimore-housing-sex-settlement/> (accessed February 4, 2017); Melissa Farley and Anne Cotton, et al. “Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” *Journal of Trauma Practice* 2, 3/4 (2003): 33-74.

racially-motivated sexual violence,²⁶ sexual assault on college and university campuses,²⁷ sexual trafficking of women and children,²⁸ and incest²⁹— these problems have not emerged from a vacuum, but flourish within the context of unprecedented access to hardcore pornographic material. Adult, hardcore pornography—with its raw, brutal, debasing, violent and hate-filled themes—exacerbates the deeply entrenched social ills mentioned above, and unleashes devastating impacts at the individual and societal level.

The harms of pornography are well documented. For instance, a growing body of neuroscience reveals that adults are developing addictions to pornography, as pornography hijacks the brain's reward center in a way similar to drug addiction.³⁰ A nationally representative online survey of 3,000 people reveals that nearly half of young people (ages 13-24) actively seek out pornography weekly or more often.³¹ This is especially troubling given that research shows that adolescents are more susceptible to forming addictions than adults, because the dopamine neurons in their nucleus accumbens (i.e. the brain's pleasure center) are much more active and have an exaggerated plasticity in response to addictive stimulus.³² Thus, it can be said that a propensity for addiction is more strongly "hardwired" into the adolescent brain.³³

This should be particularly concerning to the ALA, as studies have found that adolescents commonly stumble upon sexually explicit material while searching for information—a common activity of children and teens doing school work on library computers. For instance, one study found that 42% of adolescents reported exposure to pornography within the past year, with 66%

²⁶ Victoria Olive, "Sexual Assault against Women of Color." *Journal of Student Research* 1 (2012): 1-19; Gabby Bess, "Notre Dame Tutor Accused of Forcing Student into 'Racially Motivated' Sex." *Broadly*, (November 2, 2015), https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/notre-dame-tutor-accused-of-forcing-student-into-racially-motivated-sex (accessed February 4, 2017); Associated Press, "Keller Teen Accused of Racially Motivated Sexual Assault of Teammate in Idaho High School Football Locker Room" (May 25, 2016), <http://sportsday.dallasnews.com/high-school/high-schools/2016/05/25/texas-teen-accused-racially-motivated-sexual-assault-teammate-idaho-football-locker-room> (accessed February 4, 2017).

²⁷ The White House Council on Women and Girls. *Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action*, (2014), https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/sexual_assault_report_1-21-14.pdf (accessed January 9, 2016).

²⁸ Polaris. *2014 Statistics*, <https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/2014Statistics.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2016).

²⁹ David Finkelhor & Anne Shattuck, "Characteristics of Crimes against Juveniles," Crimes Against Children Research Center (2012), [http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV26_Revised Characteristics of Crimes against Juveniles_5-2-12.pdf](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV26_Revised%20Characteristics%20of%20Crimes%20against%20Juveniles_5-2-12.pdf) (accessed February 4, 2017)

³⁰ Simone Kühn and Jürgen Gallinat, "Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated with Pornography Consumption: The Brain on Porn," *JAMA Psychiatry* 71, no. 7 (2014): 827-834. Ji-Woo Seok and Jin-Hun Sohn, "Neural Substrates of Sexual Desire in Individuals with Problematic Hypersexual Behavior," *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, (November 30, 2015). Porn Study Critiques, "Current List of Brain Studies on Porn Users, (September 29, 2015) <http://pornstudycritiques.com/current-list-of-brain-studies-on-porn-users/> (accessed February 4, 2017).

³¹ Barna Group, "The Porn Phenomenon: A Comprehensive New Survey on Americans, the Church, and Pornography," (2016).

³² Frances E. Jensen with Amy Ellis Nutt, *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guild to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2015).

³³ *Ibid.*

of those teens describing such exposure as unwanted,³⁴ and a recent survey found that 27% of young adults report first viewing pornography before puberty.³⁵ This is alarming given that Internet pornography consumption by adolescents is associated with risky sexual behavior (that can have profoundly adverse effects), such as anal and group sex, hookups, multiple sexual partners, and substance use during sex.³⁶

Such outcomes are not surprising in light of how the human brain develops. Research shows that adolescents are not as readily able as adults to access their frontal lobes—the portion of the brain that controls impulses and allows for rapid, smart decision making.³⁷ Moreover, multiple neurological studies contribute to the view pornography use interferes with “working memory” performance, thus inhibiting the judgment and decision making functions of the prefrontal cortex.³⁸

Moreover, pornography is linked to sexual violence among adolescents and adults. A nationally representative survey of pornography use among youth aged 9–17 found that those with increased exposure to Internet pornography were significantly more likely to report physical and sexual victimization.³⁹ A separate study of 14- to 19-year-olds found that females who watched pornographic videos were at significantly greater likelihood of being victims of sexual harassment or sexual assault.⁴⁰ A study of 804 Italian males and females aged 14 to 19, found that males who viewed pornography were significantly more likely to report having sexually harassed a peer or forcing someone to have sex.⁴¹

Building on the link between pornography use and sexual violence, a recent meta-analysis of 22 studies from seven countries provides clear evidence confirming that pornography exposure is

³⁴ Janis Wolak, Kimberly Mitchell, and David Finkelhor, “Unwanted and Wanted Exposure to Online Pornography in a National Sample of Youth Internet Users” *Pediatrics* 112, no. 2 (February 2007): 247-257.

³⁵ Barna Group, “News Conference on Barna’s New Study: ‘The Porn Phenomenon,’” (January 15, 2016) <https://www.barna.org/blog/culture-media/barna-group/porn-press-conference#.VrS9OrSJndl>, (accessed February 4, 2017).

³⁶ Debra Braun-Courville and Mary Rojas, “Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Site and Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45 (2009): 156-162.

³⁷ Frances E. Jensen with Amy Ellis Nutt, *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist’s Survival Guild to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2015).

³⁸ C. Laier, F.P. Schulte, and M. Brand, “Pornographic Picture Processing Interferes with Working Memory Performance,” *Journal of Sex Research* 50, no. 7 (2013): 642–652; C. Laier, M. Pawlikowski, and M. Brand, “Sexual Picture Processing Interferes with Decision-Making under Ambiguity,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43, no. 3 (2014): 473–483.

³⁹ Michele L. Ybarra and Kimberly Mitchell, “Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents: A National Survey,” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 8, no. 5 (2005): 473–486.

⁴⁰ Silvia Bonino, Silvia Ciairano, Emanuela Rabagliette, and Elena Cattelino, “Use of Pornography and Self-Reported Engagement in Sexual Violence among Adolescents,” *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 3, no. 3 (2006):265-288.

⁴¹ Silvia Bonino, Silvia Ciairano, Emanuela Rabagliette, and Elena Cattelino, “Use of Pornography and Self-Reported Engagement in Sexual Violence among Adolescents,” *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 3, no. 3 (2006):265-288.

significantly associated with sexual aggression.⁴² As the authors state, “the accumulated data leave little doubt that, on the average, individuals who consume pornography more frequently are more likely to hold attitudes conducive to sexual aggression and engage in actual acts of sexual aggression than individuals who do not consume pornography or who consume pornography less frequently.”⁴³

Further, older adolescents who use pornography are more likely to be attracted to 13 or 14 year olds,⁴⁴ and the earlier college men were exposed to pornography the more likely they are to have engaged in nonconsensual sex.⁴⁵ Fraternity men who consumed *mainstream* pornography expressed a greater intent to commit rape if they knew they would not be caught than those who did not consume pornography. Those who consumed *sadomasochistic* pornography expressed significantly less willingness to intervene in situations of sexual violence, greater beliefs in rape myths, and greater intent to commit rape. In addition, among those who consumed *rape-themed* pornography, the researchers described “serious effects” including less bystander willingness to intervene, greater belief in rape myth, and greater intent to commit rape.⁴⁶ In other words, there was *no* type of pornography that did not result in a greater intent to commit rape by a user if they knew they would not be caught.

From this small sampling of a rich body of research, it is clear that hardcore, adult pornography is not benign “information” that promotes the “enlightenment” of people.

Our nation is now suffering from a public health crisis fueled by the widespread distribution of adult, hardcore pornography. The term public health crisis is used to broadly define both physical and social problems—from cigarette smoking to bullying—and it unequivocally applies to pornography, because pornography is a serious, harmful problem that affects individuals and groups beyond their capacity to correct alone.

Today, pornography is pervasive and is damaging countless lives. The same could be said of cigarettes and the tobacco industry in the 1950s. But as we learned through experience, a public health model that unites government officials, public education efforts, health professionals, and a concerned public, can greatly reduce the impact of a toxic industry. The porn industry of today is simply the big tobacco of the past.

⁴² Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, and Ashley Kraus. “A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies.” *Journal of Communication*, (December 29, 2015): 1-23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Kristinn Henga, Svein Mossige, and Lars Wichstrom, “Older Adolescents’ Positive Attitudes toward Younger Adolescents as Sexual Partners,” *Adolescence* 39, no. 156, (2004): 627-651.

⁴⁵ Mary Anne Layden, unpublished data, 2015.

⁴⁶ John Foubert, Matt Brosi, and R. Bannon, “Pornography Viewing among Fraternity Men: Effects on Bystander Intervention, Rape Myth Acceptance & Behavioral Intent to Commit Sexual Assault,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 18, no. 4 (2011): 212-231.

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The ALA has a part to play in the fight against the public health crisis of pornography. There are meaningful actions that the ALA can immediately initiate to combat its harms. First, the ALA can review the research that documents the harms of pornography on adolescents and adults. Second, it can meet with leaders in the Internet filtering industry to explore the advances in filtering technology and how they can be applied to public libraries today. Third, it can review and adopt robust new policies which promote the safety of library staff and patrons from the harms of exposure to obscene sexual content, sexual harassment, and possible sexual assault, and prohibit access to adult, hardcore pornography at all public libraries.

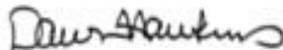
In closing, it is noteworthy that during the confirmation hearings of Dr. Carla Hayden to the post of Librarian of Congress that she made comments affirming the importance of Internet filtering and the advances in filtering technology. If the former president of the ALA (who presided when the ALA sought to overturn the Child Internet Protection Act) and now Librarian of Congress can say that pornography has no place in public libraries, surely it is time for the ALA to accept its social responsibility and do likewise.

We request the opportunity to meet with you and your representatives as soon as possible to discuss these matters in person.

Sincerely,



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President & CEO



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