The Librarians of the Technical College System of Georgia and Their Response to Internet Filtering, Or How to Win Friends and Make Procedural Changes

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THE LIBRARIANS OF THE TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM OF GEORGIA & THEIR RESPONSE TO INTERNET FILTERING

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About Internet filtering within the TCSG

- Technical colleges in the state of Georgia are mandated to filter ALL computers.

- Required Categories
  - Gambling
  - Pornography

- The level of filtering is determined by each TC and in some cases by individual campuses.
Examples of Filtered Categories

- Real Estate
- Guns
- Violence
- Drugs
- Games
- Cultural Institutions
- Non-traditional Religions & folklore & occult
- Travel
- Streaming Media
- Storage Networks
- Web Hosting
- Racism & Hate
- Vehicles
- Entertainment
Filtering: Trick or Treat?

- Q: Who controls the filtering?
- Q: Why is there filtering?
- Q: What can we do about it?
The Department [TCSG] supports the concept of academic freedom. ...students must be free to cultivate a spirit of inquiry and scholarly criticism.

...students must be able to examine ideas in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence ....
...access from Technical Colleges to Internet resources should be structured in ways that point students to those resources that have been evaluated prior to use. While students shall be able to move beyond those resources ... they shall be provided with guidelines ....

Students and employees utilizing Technical College-provided Internet access are responsible for good behavior on-line ....
The purpose of Technical College-provided Internet access is to facilitate communications in support of research and education. ...students' use must be in support of and consistent with the educational objectives of the Department [TCSG]. Access is a privilege, not a right. Access entails responsibility.
Filters can block valuable information, thus preventing the library from fulfilling one of its prime missions.

Alternatives to filters include acceptable use policies....

The Georgia Library Association cannot recommend the use of Internet filters in libraries.... We believe that decisions regarding the use of Internet filters must remain with local boards.
The Problems

- Students’ intellectual pursuits hampered by extreme filtering on some campuses
- Disconnect between librarians and IT
- No structure in place to address specific filtering issues on most campuses
Response to Internet Filtering

- Internet Access Committee was formed at the Library Council meeting in February 2008
- Goal: loosen Internet filtering restrictions throughout the TCSG through the creation of committees made up of all stakeholders where no such committee presently exists
- Means: Internet Filtering Position Paper agreed upon by LC and presented to the TCSG
The Yeas have it

- June 2, 2008 – amended proposal voted on by LC members and passed unanimously with some modification
- June 2008 - LC President presented the proposal to the TCSG
- June 18 – Deputy Commissioner emailed the Presidents encouraging them to open up dialogue between IT and librarians
Survey

- Conducted in September 2008
- 36.4% indicated the problem was eliminated or reduced
- 63.6% indicated Internet Access stayed the same
- 72.7% of survey respondents believed the problem of Internet filtering was Important or Very Important
References


