

Massachusetts Library Association's Internet Filtering Statement

Approved by the MLA Executive Board, January 5, 2001

Massachusetts Library Association supports the principle of open access to information and ideas regardless of the medium in which they exist. We believe that a democracy can only succeed if its citizens have access to the information necessary to form opinions and make decisions on issues affecting their lives. The Association regards access to this information as a right of free citizens.

The Association also recognizes concerns regarding access to the Internet. However, the use of Internet filters to restrict access poses many problems for libraries. Filters can block constitutionally protected information, thus preventing the library from fulfilling one of its most basic missions. Because of their inherent imperfections, and an environment that changes daily, Internet filters can engender a false sense of security.

Massachusetts Library Association recommends unfiltered access on all machines in libraries, and opposes attempts by federal and state governments to mandate the use of filters. Decisions concerning Internet policy should be the responsibility of local library boards.

Massachusetts Library Association strongly recommends that librarians develop and promote web sites that best satisfy users' interests and needs, and that they instruct users on effective searching techniques. Libraries should develop Internet use policies that are consistent with their resources and mission, and support the ideals and principles of intellectual freedom.