

TESTIMONY OF DEBORAH PARSONS

HOUSE BILL No. 2324

MARCH 8, 2000

I am Deborah Parsons, Library Director of Marple Public Library. I have a BS from Syracuse University and received my MLS from Drexel University in 1982. My professional experience includes being Director of West Chester Public Library and before becoming Director at Marple, I was the children's librarian for three years. I am the mother of two small children.

I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to describe how the internet policy is working in my library. Marple Public Library serves a community of 23,123. It is one of six Area Resources Centers in Delaware County, which provides reference services and other services to all county residents. Our goal is to provide the best library service to our community. In 1999, 146,935 people used the library.

Our internet policy has worked well in Marple Township. It was adopted by the Board of Directors of Marple Public Library after much discussion and thought about how best to provide Marple Township residents with this technology. The Board of Directors are appointed by Marple Township Commissioners. Our ongoing beginning internet classes are very popular, especially with senior citizens. With six people per class to get hands on experience, 756 people have taken the class in 2 1/2 years.

Six internet computers are placed in the center of the library near the reference and circulation desk and one is placed beside the reference desk. The magazine database Ebscohost, which is provided by the state and is part of Access PA Power Library, is especially popular with students doing assignments. Material from our computers are printed to two printers behind the circulation desk, where users pick up and pay for the copies they have printed. 25,000 people signed up to use the internet computers in 1999. We received one complaint during that time, which was responded to quickly with a conversation between the children's librarian and mother involved. Today, the mother and son are using our internet computers.

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A library must respond to its users to be a vital part of the community, well funded and used. Our annual mailed fundraiser, which is supported very well by Marple Township residents, is one measurement we have of continued community support. Providing internet services to all ages of the community, while providing information and guidance on how to safely use it allows us to serve all residents of Marple Township, including children. I would not hesitate to allow my daughters to use the internet at the Marple Public Library. Knowledge of how to avoid possible dangers on the internet and guidance from their mother and father on internet use will protect them more than filters. Thank you.