

Good afternoon. My name is Meg Hawkins; I am the Librarian at the Rachel Kohl Community Library in Concordville PA. I have a Master's Degree in Library science, I've been a librarian for 18 years and have been in the Delaware County Library System for 6 years.

The Rachel Kohl Community Library is a small library in western Delaware County with approximately 9,000 members from Concord Township and surrounding unserved areas. The 8-member board is composed of people appointed by 4 local townships. We have two full time employees and 5 part time staff. It is a growing library with over 27,000 items including 3 public access Internet computers. In the months of discussion before the Internet was in place we decided to put the computers in an open area near to the circulation desk. Our countywide acceptable use policy is posted at each terminal, along with pamphlets and brochures such as The Internet and You: a Parent's Guide. Pamphlets and copies of the policy are available at the circulation desk and at the children's librarian's desk.

We have a small but growing demand for Internet access, usually around 8 people per day, and so we are able to provide fairly personal service to our patrons. We can provide hands on help to after school students or families on the weekend. The users are primarily families and we have lots of opportunities to talk with the moms and dads. As library staff, we investigate on our own, and use continuing education to keep aware of, useful sites for homework help, medical reference, car buying etc.

Our policy stresses the right and responsibility of moms and dads to guide their own children. At this time we are very aware of our Internet users, and offer guidance frequently. Since they have to sign in at the circulation desk, we ask them if they need assistance. My concern is that the idea that a computer has filters leads to a false sense of security and we would be inclined to be less attentive to children's use of the Internet than we are now. We would pay less attention to who was using the computer, and for how long, because we would assume that there was protection. But it has been proven time and again that filters do not work. We do not know the qualifications of the companies that make filtering software. As the mother of two young daughters, age ten and eleven, I believe the best guidance and protection of my children lies with me. Other mothers have spoken to me of their great sense of responsibility in taking care of their children and protecting them. We have behavioral policies in place in the library to protect children, and everyone else, but Librarians do not ever take the place of an interested parent.