

Dear Chairman Abrams and members of the committee.

I come before you today as a private citizen, sharing of my experience trying to apply community standards to shape local library policy.

Several years ago, I was asked by the mayor to accept an appointment to the board of our local library. He expressed concern that the library was providing access to pornography, material that was harmful to minors.

Early in my board service I began hearing from parents. They reported of their frustration with library staff who were confronted about inappropriate viewing by patrons and access by children. At first, library administration denied the claims. Several parents tested the policies and presented evidence that pornography was indeed being accessed, and available to children. The library administration's response was first to discourage and next to stall action on complaints. It seemed that intimidation by staff was prevalent.

Library board members pressed for a public hearing on the issue. This turned out to be a "circus" atmosphere. People traveled in from out of the area and others represented special interest groups. The American Library Association took a hard stance as did the American Civil Liberties Union. These and other attorneys threatened the board, using accusations of censorship and suggesting litigation. To my surprise, it was apparent that our library director was coordinating the opposition!

Our library board reviewed the matter, discussed options, but failed to take meaningful action. Otherwise committed board members were hesitant to continue the process of examination and revision of policies to protect children.

Members of the committee, I love libraries!

My children, and now my grandchildren, are avid readers. However, the public library must be a safe place for children. Their safety must trump the freedom of a minority who desire to view sexually explicit images in our public facilities. Community standards seem to take second place to organized opposition from professional organizations. Our local libraries should have basic protection ensured through State policy.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.



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