

The Internet & How to Control It

INFO 100

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software

a variety of packages: CyberPatrol,
NetNanny, SafeSurf, Surf Watch, AOL,
MSN parental controls

using a variety of techniques: keyword
match, white lists, black lists

rating systems: PICS (Platform for Internet
Content Selection) RSACi (older)

blocking what?

pornography, sexually explicit materials

prohibition of chat, IM

but also

things you disagree with (hate speech,
evolution, sexuality, drugs etc etc etc)?

technological issues & problems

ambiguity of language

image files

dynamism of the web

legal attempts

Communications Decency Act of 1996, criminalized Internet transmission of “indecent” material to minors, overturned 1997 *Reno v. ACLU* Internet as “unique and wholly new medium of human communication” deserving of highest of level of free speech protection

Child Online Protection Act 1998, commercial distribution of material “harmful to minors”, stayed from enforcement by decisions in *Ashcroft v. ACLU*

legal attempts

Child Internet Protection Act 1999, public libraries and school receiving e-rate funds must install filters on all public computers to block obscenity, child pornography, materials harmful to minors, could be disabled for “bona fide research purposes”

Multnomah County Public Library v. United States circuit court ruling unanimously that it would restrict substantial amounts of protected speech “whose suppression serves no legitimate government interest.”
cf. China, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Singapore, etc.

what you can't restrict

vagueness
overbreadth
prior restraint
content (narrowly tailored, compelling gov't interest, no less restrictive alternative)

what you can restrict

obscenity (“community standards”
fighting words
community standards
incitement/clear and present danger
libel & slander

the newest idea

.kids.us

“kid friendly” sites, validated by an advisory board reporting to a federal (private) contractor

“lack serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value for minors”

no IM/chat

no distinction between children & teens

no sense of standards, points of view

the overall questions

who gets to decide who sees what?

government?

parents?

individuals?

where? (schools, libraries, offices)

on what basis?

for what purposes?

using what technological means?