Internet or Objectionable Content Complaint

When library staff receive a complaint about objectionable content:

1. Staff confirms the nature of the content being viewed and the reason for the complaint

   - Illegal content graphically depicts obscenity, child pornography, and, within context, material harmful to minors.

   - Objectionable content is distinguished from illegal materials in that the former may be merely offensive to some but is legally protected, the latter is a breach of state or federal law.

   - Services should be provided in accordance with Patron Services policies. In general, staff should act in favor of an adult patron's right to view constitutionally protected material, online or in any other medium.

   - Staff may extend the length of trespass periods if a patron's violation of library rules has been previously documented in security reports. In general staff should not trespass patrons because of mere access to objectionable materials while information seeking. However, viewing objectionable material coupled with an objectionable act can be basis for trespass.

See also: Blocking Patron Internet Use with PQ Admin.

Helpful information to be used as needed. Print off for patrons as appropriate:

Minnesota Statutes

13.40 (Minnesota Data Practices Act);

134.50 (Internet access libraries);

617.241 (Obscene material);

617.246 (Child Pornography);

617.292 (Materials harmful to minors).

Other sources

U.S. Public Law 106-554 Title XVII, the Children's Internet Protection Act

ALA Freedom to View

ALA Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks

Illegal Content

The following visual depictions constitute illegal activity:

- Child pornography
- Obscenity
- Material harmful to minors when minors are in view

Trespass periods - First offense: 90 days, Subsequent offenses: 365 days

- If material is child pornography (617.246 (Child Pornography)); lock computer, if possible, call law enforcement, and fill out security incident form and trespass the library user from all GRRL locations.
- If material is obscene (617.241 (Obscene material)); or harmful to minors (617.292 (Materials harmful to minors)) and minors are present, tell the library user, "Based on Minnesota statute I believe this content is illegal," log off computer, fill out security incident form, and trespass the library user from all GRRL locations.

When library staff either observe or receive a complaint about content they believe in good faith to be illegal, they may follow the steps outlined above or contact the person in charge to handle the situation when available. In the absence of supervisory personnel, staff may call local law enforcement. Staff are not permitted to call law enforcement for material which is merely deemed objectionable by a staff member or a patron and not accompanied by an act which breaches library rules of behavior.

Lock Computer Image in Re'Quest

- **Select computer station** from Client List.
- Click **"Find Computer"** at the bottom of the screen. Responses will be either "Computer is available on the network" or "Computer is unavailable on the network."
- Proceed with calling law enforcement, if appropriate.

If the computer is available on the network

- Click **"Lock This Computer."** Click only one time to avoid potential issues with freezing. This prevents the patron from changing the screen image and disables the keyboard.

- The "Lock This Computer" icon turns red when it is activated.
- **Be patient!** This is not instantaneous; it takes about a minute to lock. Do not click it multiple times, once is enough. This function can sometimes be unreliable.
- If nothing has happened in a few minutes, try again.
- **If patron session is about to end, extend session time if possible.** You must move the mouse or keyboard at least once every five minutes or the session will end due to no activity. This option will not be available at closing.

If the computer is not available on the network

- **The lock mechanism is not available. Proceed with calling law enforcement if appropriate.** IT has been working with PQ Admin to address this issue. The procedure will be updated when other resolutions are developed.

When appropriate, **click "Unlock This Computer" to unlock the station.** Again, be patient, as this is not instantaneous.

Legal Content that another library user finds objectionable

1. Staff sends a message through Re'quest software to notify the patron against whom the complaint has been made,
   - **Be patient!** This is not instantaneous; it takes up to a minute to send a message. Do

not click it multiple times, once is enough. This function can sometimes be unreliable. If nothing has happened in a few minutes, try again.
- Cite relevant statutes and policies:
    - If material is harmful to minors (617.292 Materials harmful to minors) and minors are NOT in view, warn the library user "Please be aware that if minors were present what you are viewing could lead to loss of computer privileges and other consequences including trespassing."
- Follow local procedures for documenting these situations.

2. If a patron complains about what someone is looking at, relocate the complainant to another computer, if possible.

3. Possible language to use with the library user complaining:

   - GRRL filters web access to pornography within the guidelines of federal law, including obscenity, child pornography, and material harmful to minors. Filtering may be disabled to some sites for research or other lawful purposes. GRRL cannot fully protect a patron from encountering images or ideas that may be considered controversial."

   - It is appropriate to explain that the Internet filters are not perfect and work by blocking specific phrases.

If the computer is not available on the network

- Sometimes the message mechanism is not available. Address the patron in person if the situation warrants using the language above.