January 22, 2019, BLT Agenda Comments

These comments on Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees (BLT) agenda items are submitted by:
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IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

I am disappointed the Trustees have chosen, for the second time in recent months, to meet at the same time as the City Council. While I appreciate staff and the Trustees, should they be interested, can review the video of the Council proceedings at their leisure, the overlapping timing severely impairs the public's ability to participate in both.

Item 1. Minutes of the December 17, 2018 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

I did not notice any typos in the minutes. That does not mean there are none, but well done!

Item 6. Review of the NBPL Internet Use Policy (NBPL 5)

I am opposed to implementing filtering on the adult terminals. As the staff report indicates, even if the library believes in censorship (which I hope it does not) the software is likely to block access to some information that is quite innocuous, while failing to block some of the information it is intended to block.

How much federal E-rate funds does the library receive, and is it sufficient to offset the cost of implementing and maintaining the program?

Regarding the proposed policy:

1. In the new opening paragraph, I find the emphasis on "serious" content humorous. Is it really our intent to banish laughter from the Internet?

2. I like the use of "*patrons*" in preference to "*users*" or "*customers*" (although "*user*" still appears in paragraph 5 – in which paragraph the words "NBPL Use Policy" should be hyperlinked).

3. In paragraph 4, if a minor patron asks the library to unblock a lawful website, what standard does the librarian use to determine if it is, indeed, "harmful to minors," or not? Does it require approval by a parent or guardian? I would also suggest combining the two confusingly similar sentences into: "*Any adult Library patron who is unable to access a lawful website, and any minor patron unable to access a lawful website that is not harmful to minors, may request Library staff to unblock access to that website.*"

4. In the last paragraph before "THE INTERNET AND CHILDREN," since "*patrons*" is both plural and gender-neutral, "*his or her*" could (and should) be "*their.*"

5. In the final paragraph, the link to http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents does not work from the Mariners Branch. Has it been blocked or is it just wrong? More generally, how will

patrons know an item is being blocked by NBPL as opposed to being inaccessible for some other reason?

   a. The Internet Archive's "Wayback Machine" has captures of what the "Parents & Guardians" page looked like on May 5 and May 8, 2012, when the policy was last being revised. It is not obvious that "netsmartz.org." has anything exactly comparable today.

Item 7. Review of the Laptop Borrowing Policy (NBPL 10)

The promise in the staff report that "*Any Library patron who is unable to access a lawful website that is not harmful to minors can request staff to unblock access to that website*" seems inconsistent with the statements in the Item 6 staff report.

Aren't the laptops connected through the Wi-Fi network, and doesn't the Item 6 staff report say all Wi-Fi content will be filtered with no possibility of unblocking items?

As to the revised policy, in the renumbered Paragraph 7, the words "Circulation Policy" should be hyperlinked, as should "Internet Use Policy" in Paragraph 1.

Item 8. Review of Rules for Acceptable Use of Wireless Internet Connections (NBPL 11)

General comments:

I find NBPL's practice of blocking access to its Wi-Fi network during hours when the library is closed to be inconsistent with its mission of serving as a beacon of information to the public.

Especially since the library is trying to increase (and get credit from the *Library Journal* for) its Wi-Fi sessions, it is very frustrating to see the network is running, but public access is prohibited because "the library is closed."

Is our library's commitment to the dissemination of information less than that of Starbucks or the Irvine Company (or, for that matter, the City Hall which I don't believe turns off public access to its network when the physical doors lock)?

As to the revised policy:

1. The two references to "Internet Use Policy" should be hyperlinked, as should the reference to 17 USC § 512(i)(1)(A) (in which the "§" symbol is misprinting as an "S").I notice this policy continues to use "user" in most (but not all) places in preference to "patron."

2. To me, "user" seems natural in this context, but I think one or the other should be used for consistency – and to be consistent with the other policies, I would choose "patron."

Item 11. Proposed use of the Retail Space located on the Central Library 2nd floor entrance.

It has occurred to me that moving the Central Library's scanner (and copier?) from the room behind the reference desk (if that is the plan) may create an unanticipated problem: library patrons wishing to scan or copy reference (and other) materials may be unable to take them through the security gate without setting off alarms.

In connection with copying, I would again like to remind the Trustees that it is an embarrassment the library is locked into a contract requiring it to use machines for which it has to charge $0.15 per page when the City's published cost/rate for providing that service is $0.03 per page (see line 5 of the latest [Schedule of Rents, Fines, and Fees](#)). The move to the new space *would* seem to provide an opportunity for at least the Central Library to develop a system by which it can provide printouts at the same price as elsewhere in the City system.

Item VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

As the Trustees may know, the City Council is exploring embarking on a multi-million-dollar [update of the Newport Beach General Plan](#). In preparation for this I went to the library to review the printed copy of the General Plan adopted in 2006 that has always been available in the reference section at each of the branches. I was surprised to discover that a month or two ago the library discarded all copies it held of a great many City-generated documents, including all surviving copies of the 2006 General Plan. It also appears to have discarded a number of non-City documents it once held, such as hard copies of the Environmental Impact Reports connected with John Wayne Airport (even though containing impacts of the Airport is supposedly the City's number one priority).

While I appreciate that the library may not regard itself as a repository for information of this sort, I don't believe that position has ever been vetted with the Trustees, and prior to a clear understanding having been reached, I feel the discarding of these documents was both short-sighted and misguided.

Before undertaking any more such actions, I would suggest the Trustees engage in a dialog with City Hall staff as to their mutual expectations of the library as a repository, permanent or otherwise, of public information.