

Don't Filter Me!



When Your School Blocks LGBT Content with Websense Web Filtering Software

Websense's web filtering software has a "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" category. Some schools and libraries block this category in the mistaken belief that the category was designed to include sexually explicit websites.

Websense defines its "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" category as: "Sites that provide information about or cater to gay, lesbian, or bisexual lifestyles, but excluding those that are sexually or issue-oriented." Websense's definition of the "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" category can be found at the following link: <http://www.websense.com/content/URLCategories.aspx>

Websense recently issued a public statement to clarify for its customers that the "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" category is not intended to capture sexually explicit websites and can be unblocked without exposing viewers to sexually explicit material. The statement explained:

Out of the box, Websense filtering products do NOT block Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) classified sites. But some system administrators override the default setting and block LGBT sites under the mistaken impression that they need to do so in order to block adult content or malware that might be hosted on such sites. Anyone who mistakenly blocked LGBT sites can just uncheck that selection.

It is important to note that Websense customers do NOT need to block access to sites classified as "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" in order to ensure that their school networks are protected from undesirable adult content and malware. Adult content, pornography and malware have their own individual categories and are blocked if the organizations select those categories.

You can read the entire statement from Websense at the following link: <http://community.websense.com/blogs/websense-insights/archive/2011/09/01/websense-comments-on-aclu-don-t-filter-me-campaign.aspx>

No filtering software is perfect. If your school or library's network administrator believes that sexually explicit material has been incorrectly placed in the "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" category, the administrator should alert Websense to the incorrect categorization. Errors can be reported to Websense at the following address: suggest@websense.com

Public schools and libraries must ensure that their Internet filtering software operates on a viewpoint-neutral basis. Blocking the "Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual Interest" category can lead to viewpoint discrimination because the category includes LGBT-supportive websites but not similar websites with anti-LGBT viewpoints.