

# *Access Silicon Valley*

May 16, 2008

**Via Facsimile**

San José City Council  
200 East Santa Clara Street  
San José, California 95113

Re: Access Silicon Valley Coalition Opposes Library Filtering

Dear San José City Councilmember:

We are writing to urge you to support access to essential information and oppose any plans to impose content filtering in the San José libraries, including Councilmember Constant's Proposed Internet Use Policy. We all want San José libraries to continue to be a safe place for all members of the community to learn. But, restrictive internet policies are not the answer.

The people of San José rely on the libraries for access to important information via the internet more than two-million times per year. Any plans to impose filtering in the San José libraries would severely and unduly threaten this important access. It is well-acknowledged that software filtering programs end up improperly blocking sites on everything from healthcare and sex education, to LGBT issues and teen drug/alcohol abuse, and civil rights and politics.

We understand that the San José Library's recent test of internet filtering software also found extensive overblocking. Specific sites that were inaccurately blocked included WebMD and the American Urological Association; a World War II history site; Univision.com (one of the largest Spanish-language broadcasters); Victims of Pornography (an anti-pornography support group); and PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbian Gays - a LGBT support and advocacy group). The filters also blocked access to information in the library's Health and Wellness Resource Center database and the World Book Encyclopedia online. They even blocked entries in the library's own online catalog of available books.

Censoring the internet would have a particularly detrimental effect on the ability of youth and low-income and minority members of the community to access essential information. Public libraries are often the only source of free, public internet access to complete schoolwork, find important information for their families, and to learn about personal issues.

Internet use at San José libraries is very high and problems are extremely rare. Records show that there were only ten complaints at the King Library and only three complaints in total last year from all eighteen of the branch libraries combined. We believe that any limited problems can, and should, be properly dealt with by the use of privacy screens, recessed seating,

