



H. Tina Kim
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER

CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
JOHN C. LIU
BUREAU OF AUDIT

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
ONE CENTRE STREET, ROOM 1100
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007-2341

TEL: (212) 669-8459
FAX: (212) 815-8559
TKIM@COMPTROLLER.NYC.GOV

May 28, 2013

Mr. Thomas W. Galante
President & Chief Executive Officer
Queens Public Library
89-11 Merrick Boulevard
Jamaica, New York 11432

**Re: Letter Report on the Audit of the
Queens Public Library's Controls over Internet Access
(Audit Number 7A13-074AL)**

Dear Mr. Galante:

We are sending this Letter Report to provide the results of the audit regarding the Queens Public Library's (QPL) controls over internet access. The objectives of this audit were to determine whether the QPL's controls are sufficient to prevent unauthorized access to inappropriate sites as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).¹

It is our opinion that the QPL's policies are sufficient to prevent unauthorized access to inappropriate sites as required by CIPA. The Comprise M86 Security software used by QPL to filter out restricted sites and content has the ability to detect inappropriate websites and prevent unauthorized access. We noted that the Comprise M86 software package is updated daily to reflect new websites that should be controlled. In addition, we found that the individual libraries we tested complied with QPL policy. However, our test of eight websites that should be blocked based on QPL's policies found that several were initially accessible despite the use of Comprise M86. When these websites were identified, however, the library staff immediately contacted the service desk and the exposure was eliminated.

Recommendations

The QPL should:

1. Continue monitoring the access controls over the internet and deny access to websites as prescribed by CIPA, and
2. Continue to eliminate all questionable websites (that do not comply with regulations) found by the public or librarians by contacting the service desk.

¹ The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the internet. Schools and libraries subject to CIPA are required to adopt and implement an internet safety policy addressing: (a) access by minors to inappropriate matter on the internet; (b) the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications; (c) unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online; (d) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and (e) measures restricting minors' access to materials harmful to them.

Background

The QPL serves 2.3 million people from 62 locations and has seven Adult Learning Centers and two Family Literacy Centers. QPL's circulation of books and other library materials is among the highest in the country.

CIPA requires that schools and libraries in the United States use and implement measures to protect children from harmful online content as a condition for the receipt of federal funding under the Universal Service Discount Program and the Library Services and Technology Act. CIPA was signed into law on December 21, 2000, and was found constitutional on June 23, 2003.

The use of internet filters or content-control software varies widely in public libraries in the United States because internet use policies are established by the local library board. Many libraries adopted internet filters after Congress conditioned the receipt of universal service discounts on the use of internet filters through CIPA. Other libraries do not install content control software, believing that acceptable use policies and educational efforts address the issue of children accessing age-inappropriate content while preserving adult users' right to freely access information. Some libraries use internet filters on computers used by children only. Some libraries that employ content-control software allow the software to be deactivated on a case-by-case basis on application to a librarian; libraries that are subject to CIPA are required to have a policy that allows adults to request that the filter be disabled without having to explain the reason for their request.

The QPL leases the commercial filtering software Comprise M86, which categorizes all websites' URLs.² Filtered URLs are in three categories with certain restrictions mandated by law: adult content, bandwidth, and security.

- **Adult Content** – Child Pornography, Pornography Adult Content - Sites that display full or partial nudity in a sexual context, sexual paraphernalia, sex-oriented businesses such as clubs, nightclubs, escort services, and sites supporting the online purchase of such goods and services. This category by policy should be filtered for users under the age of 17.
- **Bandwidth** – Peer-to-Peer File Sharing - Allows users to download media files such as music, movies, and games using software that searches for other connected computers.
- **Security** – Bad Reputation Domains, BotNet (a collection of connected programs communicating with other similar programs in order to perform tasks - it could be used to send spam email or participate in computer attacks), Hacking, Malicious Code/Virus, Phishing, Spyware, and Web-based Proxies/Anonymizers (an anonymizer or an anonymous proxy is a tool that attempts to make activity on a website through which the person browsing can use the site without leaving any identity traces).

Audit Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

The fieldwork for this audit was conducted from November 26, 2012, through December 31, 2012.

² A uniform resource locator, abbreviated URL, also known as web address, is a specific reference to a source of help or information.

Mr. Thomas W. Galante
May 28, 2013
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Our audit reviewed QPL's policies regarding content and blocking controls as well as a list of restricted sites and content (i.e. words, phrases, profiles, images, URLs).

- To gain an understanding of the QPL's internet filtering software, we reviewed its written policies and procedures. In addition, we requested the categories of filtered websites at the QPL as well as the internet software used for all its sites.
- To determine the total number of libraries, we obtained the list from the QPL website. To conduct our testing, we randomly selected 10 of 62 libraries (see Appendix I). We judgmentally selected and tested eight websites (not identified in this report due to their content) that we expected to be blocked based on QPL's policies. We tested access to these sites at both the adult and children's terminals.
- To determine if QPL monitored each filtered internet session, we visited each of the 10 randomly selected libraries and tested the libraries' internet usage time limit.
- To determine whether the unfiltered internet browser history was monitored and erased, we visited each of the 10 randomly selected libraries and checked the website browser history at the beginning and at the conclusion of each individual computer session.
- To determine whether QPL is effectively monitoring the internet controls over unauthorized access to inappropriate sites, we requested exception reports that identify illegal access and who is responsible.

On April 19, 2013, an exit conference was held and the preliminary letter report dated April 4, 2013, was discussed. On May 1, 2013, we submitted a draft letter report to QPL officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from QPL on May 16, 2013. In its response, QPL agreed with our recommendations.

The full text of QPL's response is included as an addendum to this final report.

Sincerely yours,



Tina Kim

- c: Darlene Askew Robinson, General Counsel, Queens Library
Lisa Epps, Chief Information Officer, Queens Library
Elizabeth Weinstein, Director, Mayor's Office of Operations
George Davis III, Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Operations
Vincent Liquori, Director of Financial Audit

QUEENS LIBRARIES TESTED

Library	Location
Bayside Library	Bayside, NY
Briarwood Library	Briarwood, NY
Douglaston - Little Neck Library	Little Neck, NY
East Flushing	Flushing, NY
Flushing Library	Flushing, NY
Hillcrest Library	Flushing, NY
Hollis Library	Hollis, NY
Mitchell-Linden	Flushing, NY
North Hills Library	Little Neck, NY
Windsor Park Library	Bayside, NY



Thomas W. Galante
Chief Executive Officer

May 16, 2013

Tina Kim
Deputy Comptroller
City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street, Room 1100
New York, NY 10007

Re: Draft Letter Report on the Audit of the Queens Public Library's Control over Internet Access (Audit Number 7A13-074AL)

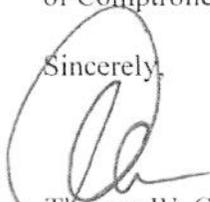
Dear Ms. Kim:

We have received the Draft NYC Comptroller's Letter Report dated May 1, 2013 on the Audit of the Queens Public Library's Control over Internet Access (Audit Number 7A13-074AL).

We agree with the Draft Letter Report and will continue to diligently comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act.

I want to extend my appreciation to the work of your office, your professionalism, and all of Comptroller Liu's efforts for the people of this great City.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Galante
President & CEO

cc: Vincent Liquori, Director of Financial Audit
Darlene Askew Robinson, Esq. General Counsel, QBPL