

Internet Access in Public Libraries

Jim was glad to find computers connected to the internet in Forest Grove Public Library. He sat down and began browsing. He was not experienced with computers or the internet and simply began clicking on links, pictures, highlighted words, etc. At some point an image of graphic child pornography popped up on the screen. At that point Jim panicked and quickly got up and left the area, afraid that he would get in trouble.

Soon a young mother with her kids walked by. Her daughter said, "Mommy... what is that?" The woman was alarmed, herded her children away and informed a librarian. The librarian turned off the screen and called the police, since child pornography is not merely offensive, it is illegal; illegal to produce, illegal to transport and illegal to possess. The police came and seized the computer as evidence and took it away. Jim was caught and prosecuted for transporting and possessing child pornography.

Questions:

1. Where did Jim find child pornography?
2. Who possessed the picture?
3. Who transported it to the screen sitting in the public library?
4. Are internet websites the equivalent of "holdings" in any library connected to the web? (How do books find their way into a library, btw?)
5. If you think that websites are in fact the equivalent of holdings do you think the following warning, or something like it should be posted at the library door: "Warning... there is no necessary correlation between the titles of books herein and their contents. The contents of these books changes, on average, every 48 hours. Some of these books are illegal for you to take and look at. We do not know which ones fall into that category. Enter at your own risk."