Libraries Planning a Meeting on Filters

By JOHN SCHWARTZ

Officials of the American Library Association will call a meeting with the makers of Internet filtering software next month to voice concern over a federal law that requires libraries and schools to use Internet filters or risk losing federal money.

The law, the Children's Internet Protection Act, was upheld last week by the Supreme Court after the librarians challenged the law on constitutional grounds.

Judith Krug, director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom at the American Library Association, said that in the meeting, tentatively scheduled for Aug. 14, librarians will ask the companies to ensure that their software can easily be turned off and on again by librarians.

The group will also demand that the companies reveal their database of blocked sites to libraries so they can determine which programs best suit the libraries' needs, or they may work with third parties to develop new filtering software.

"If we can't get what we want from the filtering companies, I say let's make our own," Mr. Krug said.

A representative of one of the leading filtering companies said the industry was ready to cooperate with the librarians. David Burt, a spokesman for N2H2, said his company's product made disabling the software easy. But he said there might be more disagreement about releasing the list of blocked sites, which would be valuable to the company's competitors.

Besides, he noted, "we would be making available the world's largest and best collection of porn sites, and that's not the business we want to be in."