

Title of Resolution: Resolution on Network (Net) Neutrality

Rationale / Purpose for Resolution:

Network (Net) Neutrality, the principle that online content should be treated equally by network connectivity providers, is under attack in Canada and in the U.S. Cases of Canadian Internet Service Providers engaging in practices that effectively prioritize some and censor other forms of information on their networks have already been documented. Canadian telecommunications policy and regulatory enforcement need to be updated in order for them to preserve the democratic principles of the Internet. Public debate over this topic has already begun and policy-making seems imminent. Library associations should seize this opportunity to educate and advocate for net neutrality.

Prior History of this Resolution (IF ANY):

This resolution has been developed jointly with Danielle Dennie, of the CLA Working Group on Information Policy. We have consulted Canadian experts in Net Neutrality for input in the drafting of this resolution. The same resolution will be presented at the CLA AGM later this spring, with the intent of making a joint statement of position on net neutrality.

Action Proposed:

Whereas the federal government, via the Telecommunications Act, incorporates into Canadian telecommunications policy the value of “common carriage” which requires the separation between the network infrastructure and the content that moves over the network, so that all content is treated equally; and

Whereas Network Neutrality (Net Neutrality) is the principle that all information or service sent over broadband, or high speed internet access, should be treated equally with no degradation or prioritization or privileges based on content, source, ownership or destination of information or service; and

Whereas the public Internet was founded upon principles of openness, including Net Neutrality and equal treatment of content providers by connectivity providers; and

Whereas New Media have not yet been adequately addressed by and incorporated into Canadian telecommunications policy; and

Whereas cases of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) discriminating among content and violating the principles of Net Neutrality in Canada have already been documented; and

Whereas libraries and librarians have a vested interest in maintaining Net Neutrality, both as content providers and as a portal to content via the Internet; and

Whereas it is the position of the British Columbia Library Association that “It is in the interest for libraries and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions” and “It is the responsibility of library administrators and librarians, as guardians of the peoples' freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom” (BCLA Statement on Intellectual Freedom); and

Whereas the IFLA/UNESCO Internet Manifesto Guidelines instruct that “In the interests of keeping the Internet as a neutral mechanism for the delivery of information and services, librarians should resist any efforts to introduce a tiered pricing model or otherwise diminish the neutral nature of the network”;

Therefore, be it resolved that the British Columbia Library Association affirms the right of all in our communities to equitable access to and use of the internet, free from commercial bias; and

Be it further resolved that the British Columbia Library Association urge the Canadian government to re-examine the Telecommunications Act in order to clearly legislate in favour of a neutral Internet, requiring ISPs to comply with common carriage provisions and conduct business in a manner that is open, transparent, and accountable; and

Be it further resolved that the British Columbia Library Association call for the CRTC to develop clear and enforceable rules to protect Net Neutrality; and

Be it further resolved that the British Columbia Library Association educate the library community about Net Neutrality and encourage the library community to act in support of Net Neutrality.

BCLA Committees / Interest Groups Consulted (IF ANY):

Information Policy Committee, Intellectual Freedom Committee

Endorsement by BCLA Committees / Interest Groups (IF ANY):

Information Policy Committee, Intellectual Freedom Committee

Fiscal Implications (IF ANY):

If net neutrality is not maintained, library's costs for providing Internet service and/or delivering their own content via the Internet could increase.

If this resolution necessitates a change in existing policy, state the policy and the change:

N/A

If this resolution establishes policy, state the policy:

N/A

If this resolution conflicts with existing policy, state provisions for resolving the conflict:

N/A

If this resolution proposes a BCLA position statement, indicate the position's relations to libraries and library service:

As part of the BCLA mission is "to advance by education and through cooperative effort the mutual interest of all libraries and library personnel" and the principle of net neutrality is in the interest of libraries and library personnel both pragmatically (keeping Internet-related library costs reasonable) and ideologically (in defense of the principle of intellectual freedom/ access to information), adopting a position in favour of net neutrality is in line with the BCLA mission.

Initiating Individual, Committee or Interest Group:

Devon Greyson, Information Policy Committee

Mover's Name, Telephone and Email:

Seconder's Name, Telephone and Email: