Parents group wants Net censored

Racy pictures downloaded from the Internet were shown to state senators by a parents group at Columbus, Ohio, which wants to limit access to the World Wide Web by library computers.

‘These pictures were downloaded at the Medina Public Library, Michelle Yezerski said Thursday as she handed the law- makers graphic color prints depicting various sex acts.

‘We’re not talking Playboy or National Geographic,’ she said.

Yezerski is executive director of the Medina-based Citizens for the Protection of Children.

The group wants lawmakers to require pornography-screening software for a system being installed to link the state’s 700 public libraries and branches to electronic resources, each other and the Internet.

The Senate Finance Committee is considering the state’s two year, US836.13 billion budget that was amended in the Ohio House to require the screening.

Yezerski and a dozen or more supporters also challenged opponents’ estimates that it would cost US$500,000 to US$750,000 a year to impose the screening. A representative of a California company testified it could be done with two black boxes for less than US$30,000.

Yezerski said children also should be protected from written material on the Internet that depicts rape, torture or mutilation and said there have been several incidents reported recently in which pedophiles used computer ‘chat lines’ to contact minors.

About 20 library officials from around the state, most wearing red lapel ribbons to denote their solidarity, attended the committee hearing to oppose screening. They said the screening treads too near censorship and would impose state control on a system that has long relied on local oversight.

Deborah F O’Connor, director of the Geauga County Public Library and president of the Ohio Library Association, said 30 years. of library service has convinced her

local control is best, but conceded the Internet presents new problems. “Of all the changes I’ve seen, those presented by cyberspace are the most dramatic,’ she said. But, she said, local library boards are best equipped to establish policies on computer use, just as they set policies for purchases of books and other materials, hours of operation and employment.