Criterion A **Describing the Issue**

As our society is becoming more and more dependent on the Internet, a constant debate on the content which is put on the web has aroused. The main debate is on whether the Internet should or should not be censored. Most people claim to be against censorship, but only with respect to those ideas that they agree with. The main concern for censoring the Internet is to prevent children from seeing forbidden content for their age. Advertisements for drugs, pornography and violence can easily be found by anyone. The web pages containing this type of content can have a bad influence on the way children will perceive the world later in life, argue the people which agree with censorship. However others argue that censorship would be a violation of freedom of speech and that it is the responsibility of the parents to guard their children while they are surfing on the web. "Banning whatever offends any group, will soon lead to no art, no culture, no humor, no satire" says Erica Jong in an article from the Information Age. Even though it is true that there are too many inappropriate topics on the Internet, it still remains the user's choice whether he wants to access those sites.

Criterion B **IT Background of the Issue**

The first forms of what we know today as the Internet have originated during in 1969 during the Cold War into a system called ARPANET which stands for Advanced Research Projects Agency Network. This system was developed to keep countries and units in fast and easy contact. This was a key invention in the development of society as we know it now. Fulfilling its objective in 1990 ARPANET was disbanded, and it developed into an international network. The internet was a domain for researchers, academics, and government officials in its early years. Users needed to know cryptic commands and codes to be able to use the Internet. The World Wide Web (WWW) has led to the transformation of the internet to a multimedia environment, leading to web pages that could integrate not only text, but also images and sound. The World Wide Web is nowadays made-up of millions of interlinked web pages. To view this new environment that has been created web browsers have been developed. Web browsers are easy-to-use software programs that allow its users to explore the web by clicking on hot links. Since the Internet is still a premature development not enough laws have been imposed concerning the content which can be uploaded, another reason is that no one owns the Internet so it is hard to come up with an agreement between all the countries. The first steps that were taken against the censoring of the Internet began in February, 1995 when the "Internet Freedom and Family Empower Act" was introduced as an approach that would empower parents, rather than the State, to make decisions about what is considered decent in every household. In response to this many religious groups asked for a federal Decency Police that would shut down the immerging online communications industry by making online service providers criminally liable for the activities of their customers. A way to stop web pages with unwanted content is by using filter programs. A filter is a program that accepts a certain type of data and then outputs the transformed data.

Criterion C **Analyzing the Impact of the Issue**

There Internet holds an enormous amount of information regardless to its content. Surely censoring the Internet will have a major impact on the society. It is hard to predict whether it will have a positive or a negative impact; the only definite thing is that it will never be the same once censored. Society has taken two different approaches in dealing with this problem. The first is just leaving it alone, and not looking at what offends them. Or they let the government choose what is appropriate for the people's view. However with the laws taken until now the freedom that the Internet gives allows anyone to view inappropriate material, which could put themselves or others in great danger. As a result of the absence of censorship on the Internet there have been many new rules and committees formed. Debating on this problem millions of dollars are spent every year. The Internet community is now divided into two different groups. The new comers which find it very difficult to adapt to Internet, because they feel threatened and insulted at the content posted. And the other group of experienced users, which also fill a threat that freedom of speech will be lost the Internet is going to be censored. In an effort to censor Internet materials a major computer on-line service attempted to filter out all sites with intolerable words. The word "breast" became part of the list. Unfortunately, this immediately impacted women's health discussion groups (breast cancer; breast feeding), the exchange of favorite recipes (which include chicken breasts) and even fishing groups (red-breasted bream, a type of sunfish).

Criterion D **Solutions to Problems Arising from the Issue**

The desirable goals for the solution to this problem are: protecting the children from seeing adult content and to enable adults to avoid materials, which offends their personal or community standards. In my opinion the best solution to achieve both of this goals is by using filters. Instead of making laws and trying to censor the Internet the government should allocate money for creating professional software filters and distributing them for free. These filters should ban the access to certain URL lists and words, which can be considered inappropriate, once they are activated. However even though this solution seems suitable, many problems can arise, such as not filtering the correct content.

The second solution is also based on filtering, but not by a program but by your Internet Service Provider. Your ISP should track all your actions on the Internet and in case something looks suspicious (for example searching on how to make bombs) they should immediately report it to the police for investigation. But this solution has ethical implications since your privacy is being violated and the ISP might use the you.

The first solution is probably better since it can be controlled by the user himself and he can keep his freedom. A filter program can also be adapted to the new needs and development of the Internet.

Criterion E **Selecting and Using Sources**

1. http://www.cybercollege.com/internet.htm **Internet Censorship** (Monday, 28 Jan)
2. http://www.slais.ubc.ca/courses/libr500/fall1999/www_presentations/c_hogg/unitedstates2.htm **Obscenity and the Internet in The US** (Monday, 28 Jan)
3. http://www.slais.ubc.ca/courses/libr500/fall1999/www_presentations/c_hogg/unitedstates.htm **The legal history of Internet Censorship and Pornography in the US.** (Monday, 28 Jan)
4. http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/online/teachers.htm **How to Protect Kids' Privacy Online** (Monday, 28 Jan)
5. http://www8.zdnet.com/products/content/zdim/0212/zdim0010.html **Policing the Net** (Monday, 28 Jan)