

## **Position statement of the Malta Library and Information Association (MaLIA) regarding restriction on full internet access to library staff at work**

MaLIA is fully aware that unrestricted Internet access, like any other work tool, can be the cause of abuse and loss of productivity in any workplace and because of this, MaLIA is informed that some employers have implemented severely restrictive measures to preempt such abuse.

MaLIA believes that in the case of library staff, especially when carrying out professional qualified library work, Internet serves as a very powerful information tool. Most library staff need to access internet to be in a good position to fulfil their immediate contracted professional duties and also to meet their wider information duties. Examples include browsing general sites to be in good position to answer queries from library users, keeping up to date with current events in the library scene and keeping up to date with new emerging technologies such as social networking tools for new and innovative ways in information provision.

In this sense MaLIA feels that the practice in certain library work places, where Internet access is too severely restricted, should not be accepted as a normal professional practice. Rather, employers are encouraged to provide unrestricted internet access to staff and exclude only specific sites such as pornography and promotion of hate or racism. If access to such sites is needed for specific information seeking duties, authorisation should be sought from the Librarian in charge.

In this context, MaLIA fully understands that employers have the right to check workplace IT equipment accounts for abuse as long as the employer spells out clearly, through a written policy, what activities are allowed/not allowed on employer equipment during working hours. MaLIA also understands that any employer has the right to take disciplinary action against individual library staff who clearly abuse declared Internet work place policies after a due process of verification and as necessary legitimate defence and arbitration.

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