



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 17, 2018

Parents Sue Library Group Over Graphic Online Porn in Schools

A group of Colorado parents has sued a state library group for allegedly allowing the distribution of pornography to school children. The parents claim that the Colorado Library Consortium is facilitating the access of unfiltered online pornography through the library group's relationship with EBSCO, a nationwide corporation that provides educational databases to schools. EBSCO is also named in the lawsuit, filed on behalf of the parents by the Thomas More Society, a faith-based legal advocacy group.



The parents' group, calling itself Pornography is Not Education, says that the EBSCO databases used by the library consortium "contain erotic and BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadomasochism) stories that could be located through innocent searches by kids and their parents," reported the *Denver Post*.

One of the parents, Drew Paterson, recalled that the problem came to light nearly two years ago when his wife stumbled onto graphic pornography linked to their daughter's online school account in the local Cherry Creek School District. "She calls to me, 'You need to come here right now and see if I'm seeing what I think I'm seeing'" Paterson told the *Denver Post*. "It was just appalling. And the thought our middle school daughter could be exposed to that was just appalling."

Matt Heffron, senior counsel for the Thomas More Society, said that the suit his group has filed on behalf of the parents group "is about two things: protecting children and calling out corporate deceit." Explained Heffron: "EBSCO gets schools to purchase databases by falsely promising the databases are age-appropriate and specifically tailored for elementary, middle, and high school children."

While EBSCO and the library consortium insist that the databases are safe, the parents charge that they are actually riddled with graphic pornography that is easily accessible to children. Furthermore, the lawsuit charges, both EBSCO and the Colorado Library Consortium are aware of the problem.

"This is not the Internet, as some school officials have falsely stated," said Heffron. Instead, he charged, EBSCO controls and limits the content of its databases marketed to schools, and the databases are only accessed initially through the Internet. "That control of the databases is why parents can expect the databases to be safe for their children at school," he said. "They should not be infested with adult sexual fantasies."

According to the lawsuit, among the pornography discovered on the EBSCO school databases used by the Colorado Library Consortium:

- A "summer reading list" for children that included many pornographic "bondage, discipline, sadomasochism" (BDSM) stories, which students could locate using the search term "romance."
- An EBSCO database marketed to school children that contained a full-text e-book entitled *Pornography in America: A Reference Handbook*. That e-book included live links to a company hosting



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video pornography and promoting the pornography industry.

- Hyperlinks to websites themed on “lust,” “bondage,” “sex toys,” and other inappropriate subjects accessed using such search terms such as “robotics,” “girl’s stories,” “boy stories,” “grade 7 biology,” and “respiration.”

- More than 100 instances of advertising for a specific large-scale “sex toy” store.

In September of this year, the Cherry Creek School District announced that it had discontinued purchasing or using any products from EBSCO, a move the parents group applauded. “We were happy Cherry Creek finally did the right thing,” said Dr. Robin Paterson, one of the lead parents in the campaign. “But EBSCO is still supplying its pornographic databases to school children in other school districts across Colorado.”

Paterson insisted that EBSCO was offered ample opportunity to comply before the parents filed the lawsuit. “We tried to work with them for the last two years,” said Paterson. “So did the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. But all EBSCO was willing to do is put on a band-aid, not fix the problem.”

In both 2017 and 2018, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation named EBSCO to its “Dirty Dozen List” of the worst 12 corporations in America that perpetuate sexual exploitation.

The parents group pointed out that inexpensive technology exists by which EBSCO could block sexually explicit materials from the databases it supplies to schools. However, says the lawsuit, thus far EBSCO has refused to incorporate the technology.

Not surprisingly, the Colorado Association of Libraries blasted the lawsuit as an effort at censoring materials available to schools, with the association’s president, Carol Smith, saying that the concerned parents “are on a personal crusade to impose one particular worldview upon the entire community.” Smith charged that “their true aim is to censor all electronic materials from school and public libraries, despite the fact that both federal and Colorado state statutes adequately and appropriately address the need to ensure age-appropriate access to information in our public schools and libraries.”

For its part, EBSCO has denied the charges leveled by the parents, saying through a spokesperson that it “does not include pornographic titles in its databases, embed pornographic content in its databases, or receive revenue for advertising for any organization. We are appalled by the tenor of the allegations related to our intent and the inaccuracies of statements clearly made in absence of factual information.”

EBSCO, which is based in Birmingham, Alabama, provides databases to over 55,000 schools across the United States, as well as in Canada, Europe, and South America.

Drew Paterson insisted that the reality is far different from what EBSCO and the Colorado Library Consortium claim. “Children don’t have to be looking for porn,” said Paterson. “They can stumble into it in these EBSCO databases.”

Matt Heffron of the Thomas More society said that the lawsuit boils down to adequately protecting children. “It is against the law to ply children with pornography,” he noted. “If the local convenience store or movie theatre can’t do it, why should EBSCO and the Colorado Library Consortium be allowed to get away with it?”

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