

Statement from Phaedra Bonewits:

I've been aware for a long time that Neopagan.net was blacklisted by various censorship software. Isaac wrote on the issue; he's even quoted on the topic by the Ontario Center for Religious Tolerance on their website (<http://www.religioustolerance.org/cyberpat1.htm> -- unfortunately I've been unable to source the quote).

This is a great example of negative cultural creep. The original purpose of these products was to make non-Internet-savvy parents feel safe about letting their children web surf. The target market was Christian households, thus all the "cultic" keywords being included with the porn. Unfortunately, as these software packages moved into the public zone, in schools, libraries and even businesses, the prejudices of the original market have been carried with them.

Last spring, I had the surreal experience of attempting to use a computer in a hotel's business center, only to find that I could not access my own blog. Correspondence with the chain's customer service was unsatisfying. I was told that "social networking" sites were blocked, as were some keywords. Such absurdity; one could imagine blocking a school computer from Facebook, but business people blocked from LinkedIn? And a business traveler as was myself unable to access her own site? I was told "no one complained before." I wrote back indicating I was not satisfied with their reply. And that was the last I heard.

I'm glad this net software is getting some long-overdue scrutiny.