



American Association of Law Libraries
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Network Neutrality

Network Neutrality (net neutrality) is a principle that ensures that all internet traffic is treated equally. Net neutrality is important to law librarians because it protects the unique, open nature of the internet, and promotes innovation, competition, and intellectual freedom. Net neutrality has recently become endangered as telecommunication companies try to create a tiered system of broadband access in which companies and websites would pay for premium access to faster data connections.

Net neutrality ensures that the internet remains open and non-discriminatory. AALL is a member of the Save the Internet Coalition and the Open Internet Coalition, which bring together individuals, nonprofit organizations, businesses and bloggers who strongly support net neutrality. AALL was pleased when, in a follow-up interview on YouTube after his 2010 State of the Union, President Obama said, “I am a big believer in net neutrality....This is something we’re committed to.”

On September 23, 2011, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published its Final Rule on Preserving the Open Internet, laying out the rules governing net neutrality. The introduction of these rules concludes a two-year process conducted by the FCC to develop and finalize rules to protect an open and nondiscriminatory internet. The rules will enforce transparency of network management practices; prevent blocking of lawful content; and prohibit content based discrimination. The rules are set to take effect on November 20, 2011.

On April 8, 2011, the House of Representatives passed a resolution that AALL opposed, H.J. Res 37, which would require the FCC to repeal the rules and strip the agency of its authority to implement net neutrality. **AALL urges Senators to vote No on an identical resolution, S. J. Res 6, because:**

- **Net neutrality ensures that small business owners, entrepreneurs, students, and members of the public have a consistent and reliable way of accessing information online.** Without net neutrality, law libraries may not be able to pay the fees for preferred access, preventing users from finding the up-to-date online legal information they need.
- **Net neutrality promotes innovation and competition.** Companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple would not have been able to get off the ground if they were forced to pay a premium. Net neutrality provides all internet users with access to lawful content on the web, regardless of the providers’ opinion of the material.
- **Net neutrality protects intellectual freedom, which is critical to our democracy.** Law librarians strongly believe in the right of members of the public to be informed, and AALL supports nondiscriminatory access to information for all library users.