POLICY ON INTERNET ACCESS
FOR BERKS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Purpose

The public libraries of Berks County are committed to the promotion of lifelong learning. As part of that commitment, the libraries will provide public access to the diverse and unique resources available via the internet and the World Wide Web.

Children and the Internet

The *Children's Internet Protection Act (pub. L. 106.554)* requires that a library receiving federal funds must "have in place a policy of Internet safety for minors that includes the operation of a technology protection measure with respect to any computers with Internet access…." In compliance with this provision of federal law, the public libraries have installed a filtering mechanism on all computers and library provided internet connections to protect young users from inappropriate material.

Parents are reminded that filtering is not foolproof. It diminishes the likelihood that searchers will inadvertently retrieve text or images that they may find offensive, but does not completely eliminate that possibility. Filters may also block access to sites that users would consider both inoffensive and useful. Parental supervision of young children searching the Internet is strongly advised.

Rights of Adults

Adults (those 18 and older) may request unfiltered access to the Internet for any purpose that does not violate the law or the libraries' policies. The filter on an individual library-owned computer will be disabled in response to such a request. Library staff may not disable the filter on patron-owned laptops or other wireless access devices.

Right to Privacy

All library users have the right to expect that their information-seeking activities in the library are private and confidential with the understanding that no records of internet use are being retained. While the Berks County Public Libraries and member libraries do not retain internet usage records or history and works to protect patron's privacy, they are not responsible for insuring the privacy of any information or data sent or received by patrons while using the libraries PC's, laptops, tablets, network, or Wi-Fi.

Conditions and Terms of Use

1. Information available via the Internet may be protected by copyrights or trademarks; use of such information must not violate any copyright or trademark law.

2. Because the Internet allows access to ideas, information and commentary from sources around the world, the libraries cannot control its content. Therefore, individual users must accept responsibility for determining the validity and accuracy of information located on the Internet. The libraries are not responsible for any use made of information obtained from Internet resources.

3. The Internet and its available resources may contain material and ideas that are controversial and conflict with the personal beliefs of users. Parents or guardians, not library staff, are responsible for the information selected and/or accessed by their children.

4. Viewing of certain materials in the public library may be considered improper in time, place or manner. Libraries reserve the right to terminate an Internet session that disrupts library services or involves user behavior that violates library policy.

5. Patrons may not use public library Internet connections for any commercial or for-profit purpose.

6. A cost-recovery fee for print-outs may be charged.

7. The County of Berks, Berks County Public Libraries, member libraries, member library board members, or any employees are not responsible for damages to patron owned equipment including but not limited to, laptops, tablets, cell/smart phones, gaming devices, Library of Things devices, etc. while using the libraries wireless internet connections. This includes but is not limited to, damage caused by configuration changes, viruses, spyware, malware, or other malicious code received via the libraries wireless connections.

8. Printing is available, through the libraries' wireless connections, based on fees set by each member library.

Limitations

Some libraries do not provide access to subscription services, e-mail, or chat lines; use of such web-based services as "Hotmail" may be permitted at the discretion of the local library.

User Responsibilities

1. Users will digitally accept the Internet Access Policy before gaining access to any public library Internet connection. Users must observe time limits and other procedural guidelines set by individual libraries for use of the Internet terminals and wireless networks.

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2. Users are responsible for damage to equipment beyond what occurs with normal usage; hardware and software may not be abused, modified, or destroyed.

Staff Assistance

Library staff have received training in Internet searching and are capable of offering basic instruction in how to navigate. However, due to limited staffing and time constraints, patrons are encouraged to take the initiative and explore on their own.

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