

Acceptable Use of the Internet and Public Computers at the Whitman Public Library

Purpose

The Whitman Public Library recognizes that within the Whitman community there are groups and individuals with diverse interests, backgrounds and needs. The Library further recognizes and emphasizes that the public library is an institution of a democratic society and was established to serve all of the people in a community.

Electronic information and networking is a new and very rapidly developing area of public and private activity. The Library recognizes that these developments pose new challenges as well as new opportunities for the library board, the library staff, and library users and their families. The Library believes that these challenges and opportunities are best addressed by adherence to the fundamental principles of traditional library use and the principles of a free society. These new methods of receiving information do not change the mission of the Whitman Public Library.

Responsibilities of the Library

Congress and the courts have recognized that there is no single organization to govern, control, or select information for the Internet. Because of this freedom of information, the breadth of information on the Internet, the unstructured and unregulated nature of the Internet, and the unreliable state of filtering, the Whitman Public Library cannot control the content of resources available on the Internet.

Access

The Library does not select the material on the Internet and has no means or statutory authority to assure that only constitutionally protected material is available on the Internet. That authority to determine what is illegal (obscene) content rests with the Plymouth County Attorney or the Massachusetts Attorney General.

As stated in the American Library Association's Resolution on the Use of Filtering Software in Libraries "...the use of filtering software to block access to constitutionally protected speech violates the Library Bill of Rights"; therefore, the Whitman Public Library will not impose blocking or filtering software to limit access to Internet sites.

Confidentiality

Whitman Public Library upholds the right of confidentiality and privacy for all library users. In order to protect the privacy of the user and the interests of other library patrons, the Library will manage access to the Internet by judicious placement of the terminals, and other appropriate means. To that end, no one under the age of 18 may use the computers located adjacent to the adult audiobooks section; and no one over the age of 17 may use the computers in the youth services area. The computers located in front of the circulation desk can be used by patrons of all ages.

Users are urged to respect the sensibilities of others when accessing information that may reasonably be offensive to someone else. However, absolute privacy for patrons using electronic resources in the Library cannot be guaranteed. There exists a possibility of inadvertent viewing by other patrons, either by watching the user's screen, or because a user may leave the screen unattended. The Library's Behavior Policy applies to the conduct of patrons using electronic equipment and resources. Failure to follow this policy could result in revocation of library privileges.

Responsibilities of Users

The Internet is a global entity with a highly diverse user population and information content. Though the Internet provides users with a wide array of excellent information, it also contains information that may be inaccurate, outdated, or personally offensive. Library patrons use it at their own risk. A good information consumer evaluates the validity of information found. Use of Internet resources carries with it a responsibility to evaluate the quality of the information accessed.

The availability of information does not constitute endorsement of the content by the Whitman Public Library. **Access, use, or dissemination of information via the Internet in the Library is the responsibility of the user. In the case of minors, it is a joint responsibility of the user and the parent or guardian.**

Supervising Children's Use

The public library, unlike schools, does not serve *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent). Librarians cannot act in the place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet. The responsibility for what minors read or view on the Internet rests with parents or guardians.

The following are recommended guidelines for parents and guardians to ensure that children have positive online experiences, whether at home or in the library.

- Use the Internet as a family. Join your children in Internet exploration.
- Explore the wide range of available information and tell your children about sites you consider inappropriate for them.
- Provide guidelines for your children on the amount of time they spend online, just as for television viewing.
- Instruct children NEVER to give out personal information (name, address, password, telephone number, credit card number) online.
- Teach children to be good online consumers. As with print information, consider the source, date, and accuracy of online information.

Rules Governing use of Library Computers

1. Patrons may download files using supported media. The library is not responsible for damage to media or for corruption of data, including damage caused by mechanical malfunction or corruption caused by virus or spyware infection while using library computers.

2. There is a charge of \$.10 per page for printing from computer stations. Patrons may pre-pay for printing at the circulation desk.
3. Patrons must respect other's privacy by not attempting to observe or comment on what others are viewing.
4. As a courtesy to others, patrons should log off when finished with a computer session. This also protects the privacy of a search.
5. Patrons may not gather around terminals when doing so may obstruct others or create noise that distracts others. No more than two people at one time may use a workstation.
6. Whether or not they are in use, children's computers are for the exclusive use of children ages 17 and younger and their accompanying caregivers. Conversely, computers designated for patrons ages 18 and older may not be used by children at any time.
7. Do not misuse computer equipment or software. Misuse may result in loss of computer privileges, loss of library privileges and prosecution.

Misuse includes but is not limited to:

- Viewing illegal material
- Hacking into the library computer system or any other computer system
- Mishandling, damaging or attempting to damage computer equipment or software; tampering with computer settings
- Interfering with system operations, integrity or security
- Attempting to gain or gaining access to another person's files
- Harassing others with messages, prints or images
- Violating copyright laws and software licensing agreements
- Failing to pay for printing
- Refusing or ignoring a staff person's request to give up a search station
- Failing to sign up for a computer
- Any other violation of the Computer Use Policy