

INTERNET USE POLICY

The Belfast Free Library considers use of any public access computer or public Internet connection in its facilities to constitute an acceptance of its Internet Use Policy. Library patrons will reaffirm the agreement each time they use a public access computer.

Purpose

The library provides free Internet access to all members of the public. Provision of Internet access is consistent with the mission of the library, which states, "The Belfast Free Library is dedicated to helping individuals of all ages pursue independent learning by providing access to timely and useful information in all formats." The library endorses the American Library Association (ALA) Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement. In order to meet criteria necessary to receive government technology funding, the library does have basic filtering in place on its computers. A patron who is not a minor under 17 years of age may request that a librarian remove the filter for purposes that are lawful. Minors under 17 years of age may request that erroneously blocked sites be unblocked.

General Guidelines

In order to be fair to everyone, limits on the length of time a computer may be used have been established. Patrons may use a library computer for a maximum of one hour per day. Library staff may grant additional time for research or certain other purposes or if no one else is waiting for a computer.

By mutual agreement, two people may sit together at a computer as long as their behavior or conversation is not disruptive to others in the library.

Children's and Young Adults' 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 library encourages you to read the brochure "Child Safety

on the Information Highway” [include hyperlink, where possible] available at library service desks.

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the library’s computers when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications. The unauthorized disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors is prohibited.

Minors under the age of 17 are required to have a parent’s or guardian’s signed permission to use Internet computers. Minors under the age of 17 are limited to the filtered computers on the Children’s Floor.

Unacceptable Uses

Some behaviors are not permitted in the library. The library has a set of behavior guidelines that apply to users of the Internet as well as to all other library services. In addition to those general behavior guidelines, users of the library’s computers are not permitted to:

- change the settings and configurations of public access computers,
- use library computers for unauthorized access, including so-called “hacking”, and other unlawful activities,
- behave in a way that intrudes upon the rights of others. Patrons are not permitted to invade the privacy of other library patrons, harass library staff or patrons, damage or disrupt library computer resources, or spam in violation of federal, state, or local laws or ordinances,
- use library computers to violate copyright protection or licensing agreements in violation of applicable federal, state or local laws or ordinances, including, but not limited to, Title 17 of the *United States Code*.

Some content available on the Internet is not protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. No library patron is permitted to use a library computer to view obscenity or child pornography, or to display this illegal content, or if a minor to view materials harmful to juveniles in violation of federal, state, or local laws or ordinances. *The legal status of any particular content can be determined only by a court of law.*

The library will cooperate fully with authorities if there is probable cause to believe that library equipment has been used for illegal purposes.

Use of the library's Internet service may be revoked at any time if this Internet Use Policy is not adhered to.

This Internet Use Policy, like all other library policies, will be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary.

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Belfast Free Library on April 26, 2016