
Board Policy



Public Internet Use Policy

Policy Statement

Pierce County Library System operates under the fundamental belief that libraries play a vital role in a democracy by supporting an individual's access to the information they seek. Free Internet access is a critical service in supporting this role and further supports the mission of Pierce County Library System to bring the world of information and imagination to all people of our community. The Library embraces the opportunity to expand the resources and information available to the community, and may act as a portal to materials selected and provided by others as an additional means of fulfilling its mission.

Purpose

To establish the guidelines for the use of the Internet on library equipment supporting Pierce County Library System principles and within applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Definitions

- **Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA):** Congress has adopted the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which within specific parameters requires libraries seeking federal funds through e-rate and/or Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to filter material available on the Internet within established guidelines.
- **Internet Filtering Software:** Software designed to restrict or block access to unwanted Internet content.

Policy

Free Internet access connects the people of our community to a world of information, resources and services. The Internet provides unprecedented opportunities for library users to access information, resources and services beyond the library's physical books and other materials. However, because the Internet is a vast and diverse network with content that may be inaccurate, incomplete or offensive to some individuals, some of the ideas, information, images and commentary on the Internet are beyond the scope of the Library's mission and selection criteria. The Pierce County Library System Board of Trustees considers that all materials selected or accessed by adults are protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution until such time as they are determined unprotected by judicial action. Consequently, except as set forth in this Policy, the Library System does not monitor, filter or endorse materials on the Internet.

Pierce County Library System has chosen to comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and the Public Internet Use Policy reflects CIPA guidelines and requirements for public libraries. The Library complies with CIPA requirements for Internet filtering in order to be eligible for federal funds such as e-rate reimbursements and Library Services and Technology Act grants.

Access by Adults

Per CIPA, individuals 17 years of age or older may choose to use unfiltered access to the Internet. Consequently, the Pierce County Library System's computers that provide access to the Internet are filtered to the extent required by CIPA, and persons 17 years of age or older have the right to turn off the

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filter for their use.

Tablets, e-readers, and other mobile devices provided by the Library for customer use that may access the Internet may provide only filtered access if the ability to provide a choice to adults is not technically feasible. The Library provides Wi-Fi access that customers may access using their own devices. The Library does not filter Wi-Fi access on these devices and leaves the filtering choice to the customer.

Access by Minors

In compliance with the Children’s Internet Protection Act, Pierce County Library System provides a filter on all Library computers available to minors. Per CIPA, a child is defined as a minor if he or she is under the age of 17. The Library offers tools including technological tools such as Internet filters, as well as skilled staff and resources to assist parents, guardians and caregivers in their work with their minor children. Internet filtering or blocking software is an imperfect technology and can filter material that is not harmful to children and can fail to filter other material that may be harmful. Even with these limitations, it is a tool to assist library users in limiting access to the full spectrum of Internet interactions. Pierce County Library will select a filter which is intended to block access to the following:

- Visual depictions that are obscene, contain child pornography and are harmful to minors.
- Sites that have the potential to pose safety and security issues for minors, such as chat rooms, message/bulletin boards, free pages and other forms of electronic communications. This does not include electronic mail.
- Sites that instruct and encourage minors in performing unlawful activities, such as “how to hack.” Use of Pierce County Library computers for hacking or other unlawful activity is prohibited.
- Sites that encourage and/or allow unauthorized disclosure, use of, and dissemination of personal identification information with regard to minors.

The Library will maintain a description of filter criteria used and will provide the description upon request. The Library will regularly evaluate the filtering software and use the most appropriate technology or tools to provide Internet filtering. Pierce County Library will monitor and evaluate filters and technology and update to improve the performance of the tool in meeting the Library’s objectives.

Rules Governing Use

The Library’s Rules of Conduct govern behaviors and activities in the Library. In addition, Pierce County Library staff will establish guidelines and procedures to provide the fair, reasonable, and legal use and access to Internet resources including time restrictions due to the limited resources. Internet users must use their own Library card to access the Internet to ensure appropriate Internet filtering settings are applied and any time restrictions are enforced. Internet users may not view, printout or download any material considered illegal or obscene by federal, state, or local statutes, such as child pornography or visual depictions of the sexual exploitation of children. Internet users must abide by copyright laws protecting material on the Internet, and by software license laws. Internet users will refrain from using library computers to intentionally alter stored data, information, software or hardware in any computer system.

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Compliance

Disciplinary actions will be taken for behavior that is illegal. Disciplinary actions can be taken for behavior that either consciously or unconsciously violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library. Pierce County Library System reserves the right to suspend or restrict Internet access privileges for those persons who access, use, or disseminate constitutionally unprotected speech, or otherwise misuse their Internet privileges.

Privacy and Security

The Library cannot guarantee privacy for individuals using electronic or other library resources, as inadvertent viewing of library materials can occur in a public facility and because the Internet and World Wide Web are not secure.

Although the Library has adopted these policies, it disclaims any warranties on the effectiveness of any filter and disclaims any liabilities if the filter is inadvertently not implemented upon request. The Library further assumes no responsibility for damages, direct or indirect, arising from any use of the Library's connections to the Internet.

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Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Pierce County Library System, April 10, 2002; Revised January 14, 2004, March 8, 2006, February 12, 2014.