
Board Policy



Public Computer, Wi-Fi, and Internet Use Policy

Policy Statement

Libraries are crucial for democracy, providing access to information. The Pierce County Library System (the “Library”) provides free access to the internet through library owned computers as well as wireless access through personally owned devices.

Purpose

To establish the guidelines, conditions and responsibilities for internet supporting the Library’s principles and within applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Policy

The internet is a global electronic network of ideas, images, and commentary that enhances resources already available at the Library. However, the internet is decentralized and unmoderated, and some websites provide information that is inaccurate, incomplete, or dated and some content may be offensive, disturbing, or potentially illegal. The Board of Trustees the rights of all Library patrons to read, seek information, and speak freely, as guaranteed by the First Amendment protections for materials accessed through the Library’s collections or services. Consequently, the Library does not monitor or endorse internet content unless otherwise stated in this policy.

To remain eligible for federal funding, the Library has chosen to follow internet content filtering protocols of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (“CIPA”) which mandates that any public library receiving such support must filter access to internet content on library owned equipment to screen for obscenity, child pornography, and in the case of minors, material deemed harmful to them, to be eligible for federal funds such as e-rate reimbursements and Library Services and Technology Act grants.

Filtering

The Library filters internet access in two ways: Security Filtering and Content Filtering:

Security Filtering consists of a range of technologies designed to prevent malicious or harmful activities from occurring or originating from Library computer equipment. To ensure the security of Library networks and data, the Library maintains cybersecurity standards, through security filtering. These standards include ongoing restriction of access to certain sites, practices, and materials that could harm the Library’s network or be harmful if accessed through it. This process is separate from content filtering and applies to all computer devices in use at the Library at all times.

Content Filtering software that is designed to restrict or block access to unwanted or prohibited internet content. The Library uses a content filter on Library owned computers and laptops that is intended to block access to the following content consistent with CIPA guidelines:

- Visual depictions that are obscene, contain child pornography, and are harmful to minors.
- Sites that instruct and encourage minors in performing unlawful activities, such as “how to hack.” Use of Library computers, networks or Wi-Fi for hacking or other unlawful activity is prohibited.

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- Sites that encourage or allow sharing personal information about minors without authorization

A description of content filter subject categories used is available upon request. The Library regularly evaluates its content filtering practices.

Internet Access from Library Computers and Personal Devices

The Library provides public computers and laptops with standard software for internet access. Library visitors must use library devices responsibly and any loss or damage will be handled according to rules for replacement or repair of Library equipment. Library owned devices have security and content monitoring and management software to prevent unauthorized changes including the installation of software.

All library visitors, adult and minor, may use the Library's public Wi-Fi network on their own personal devices to access the internet. Security filtering remains in place, but content filtering is not available on personally owned devices.

The Library affirms the right and responsibility of parents and caregivers to monitor their child's use of materials and resources, including their use of Library computers and personal devices to access the internet.

Regardless of the device used, activities that will alter, damage, disable, vandalize, or otherwise harm computer equipment, hardware, software, or networks both on Library premises and elsewhere are prohibited.

Access by Adults (17 and older)

In compliance with CIPA regulations, the Library provides a content filter on all its computers available to minors. CIPA defines a minor as a child under the age of 17. All computers located in children's areas will have content filtered internet access with no option to remove it. Minors logging into a Library owned device have content filtered internet access with no option to opt out.

Rules Governing Use

The Library Rules of Conduct establishes acceptable and prohibited behaviors and activities in the Library. The Executive Director will oversee the establishment of guidelines and procedures to provide the fair, reasonable, and legal use of access to internet.

Users of Library computers must use their Library cards to access the internet ensuring that appropriate content filter settings and any time restrictions are applied. Users with a guest pass will automatically receive content filtered internet access, regardless of age, without the option for unfiltered access.

Users are prohibited from using library computers to conduct activities that will damage, disable, vandalize, or otherwise harm computer equipment, hardware, software or networks both on Library premises and elsewhere.

Compliance

Behavior that violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library or any illegal behavior will be handled according to the [Library Rules of Conduct](#). The Library 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 does not guarantee privacy for individuals using electronic or other library resources. Many of the sites, services, and content on the internet are not secure.

Disclaimer

Although the Library has adopted these policies, it disclaims any warranties or liabilities on the effectiveness of any filter. The Library is not responsible for any damages, direct or indirect, arising from any use of the Library's connections to the internet.

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, September 11, 2024.

By the enactment of this policy the Board of Trustees of Pierce County Library System is concurrently rescinding any prior policy or procedure within PCLS that is either in conflict with or expansive of the matters addressed in this policy.