Computer and Acceptable Internet Use Policy
Information Services

Policy Statement

Free Library of Northampton Township (FLNT) provides library patrons with computers and devices with Internet connections as well as wireless networks that library users may use with their own devices. Equipment and network access are essential tools for accomplishing the library's mission to provide access to information resources and services. Those who use FLNT's computers or wireless network to access the internet must abide by federal and state laws, particularly those ensuring the safety of minors, and follow FLNT's policies. All computer equipment and wireless network equipment is provided in partnership with the Information Technology Department of Bucks County Free Library.

In establishing and enforcing this policy, FLNT seeks to ensure that no activity occurs that is unreasonably disturbing to others or inconsistent with library activity such as reading, studying, accessing materials and resources, and other similar conduct associated with a public library.

Use of the library's network, equipment, and software is a privilege governed by this policy. Computer and Internet use also are addressed in FLNT's Behavior Policy. These documents are available on the library's website.

A library patron's use of FLNT's computers or wireless network to access the Internet constitutes the user's agreement with these policies.

All FLNT employees are authorized to enforce the policy. Violators generally will be reminded of the policy, given a warning, and then be asked to stop using the equipment if the behavior continues. Serious or repeat behavior problems may result in immediate banning without warning. Those who are asked to leave the library will be banned within the framework of the library's Banning Guidelines.

FLNT shares its network with ten independent public libraries that are part of the Bucks County Free Library (BCFL) district and system. The Regulations section of this policy applies to all other member libraries as well.

Separately, FLNT and each member library establish and enforce their own local guidelines for managing public use of technology, such as the type of identification required, time limits, and number of permitted sessions. Guidelines at the other county libraries may vary.

FLNT and each of the other county libraries have reciprocity agreements regarding banning. Banning at FLNT automatically means one is banned from all other county libraries. Being banned from another county library means that person is also banned at FLNT.

Appeal of the Computer and Acceptable Internet Use Policy or instances of banning may be made, in writing, to the Board of Directors of the Bucks County Free Library, 150 South Pine Street, Doylestown, PA 18901. In instances of banning, the library user, including the parents or legal guardian of a minor child, will be notified of the appeal hearing by overnight mail via UPS or Fed-Ex.

Regulations

General Provisions

By using a FLNT computer or device on the library's wireless network, each user agrees that the library will have no liability for direct, indirect, or consequential damages related to the use of the information accessed.

The Internet is not a secure medium and third parties may be able to obtain information regarding users' activities. BCFL system libraries will not release information on the use of specific sites by members of the public, except as required by law or necessary for the operation of the library.

The library is not responsible for damage to users' equipment or storage devices for any loss of data, damage, or liability that may occur from use of the library's software, equipment, or network. Those accessing the Internet through the library's wireless connection are advised to use virus-checking software.

Prohibited Uses

Patrons who use FLNT's computers or wireless network to access the Internet must be respectful of others. Computers and devices are in public areas and people of all ages may be exposed to what is viewed on them.

Harmful, disruptive, or destructive behavior by anyone, including toward or by minors, is prohibited, including the following:

- Accessing any items prohibited by CIPA while using FLNT's computers or wireless network;
- Downloading, installing, and modifying software;
- Gaining or attempting to gain access to restricted files or networks;
- Damaging or modifying settings or software;
- Violating individual privacy rights, including attempting to view or read information being used by others;
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of another's personal information;
- Computer tampering, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking;
- Eating or drinking in designated computer areas; and
- Disregarding the reasonable direction of library staff members.

Illegal activities are prohibited. Library staff may capture an Internet browsing history to aid in the investigation of suspected crimes and will contact law enforcement for any suspected violations of federal or state laws and local ordinances, including:

- Accessing obscene materials, child pornography, or materials harmful to minors;
- Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to other computers or computer systems;
- Engaging in activities that violate copyright laws and licensing agreements; and
- Using the computer or wireless network for other criminal activities under federal or state law.

Internet Use and Filtering

Bucks County Free Library receives federal funding for public Internet access and complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Both CIPA and the Pennsylvania Child Internet Protection Act requires BCFL to implement and install technology protection measures – or Internet "filters" – to prevent a minor's access to information and images that are "child pornography" or "obscene," or to any material deemed "harmful to minors," and to ensure that no person has access to information and images that are child pornography or obscene while using a public access computer. All FLNT computers and the library's wireless network are filtered.

BCFL's ability to restrict access and exposure to images and information is subject to the limitations of filtering software. Filters are not foolproof and can give a false sense of security that library users are completely protected from offensive or potentially harmful material. The libraries of the BCFL district and system will have no liability for damages related to the operation, failure, or possible circumvention of filters.

Library users access the Internet at their own discretion and are responsible for any websites they reach. Despite the library's best efforts, users may encounter sites they find offensive or potentially harmful. If a user finds that other users are visiting offensive or potentially harmful sites as defined in this policy, it should be reported to library staff.

Parents and legal guardians, and not the library or its staff, are responsible for monitoring and guiding their own minor child's use of all library resources. FLNT strongly encourages parents and legal guardians to closely supervise and assist their children in using the Internet while accessing FLNT's computers or wireless network.

An adult is defined by CIPA as a library user aged 17 or older. Under CIPA, the library staff will disable the filter for a session for any adult (age 17 or older) upon request so the adult user can engage in bona fide research or other lawful purposes. The library may require identification to establish that this federal age standard has been met.

A minor is defined by CIPA as a library user aged 16 or younger. A website may be unblocked temporarily for a minor as long as library staff has first determined the site has been incorrectly filtered and is not prohibited by CIPA as "child pornography" or "obscene" or contains any material "harmful to minors."

Internet Safety

Minors while using FLNT's computer or wireless network to access the Internet shall not:

- Reveal any of their personal information, such as name, address, or phone number over the internet, including through the use of email, chat rooms, Instant Messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
- Disclose or use any information that may allow a person to locate them without first obtaining the minor's parent or legal guardian's permission; and,
- Arrange face-to-face meetings with someone they met on the Internet without first obtaining the parent's or legal guardian's permission;
- Access or attempt to access inappropriate material or prohibited material under CIPA; nor
- Gain or attempt to gain, through hacking, unauthorized access to personal or organizational data.

Reporting Questionable Content

Library staff may observe that a minor or other computer user may be accessing questionable or inappropriate content on a computer. Members of the public are encouraged to alert staff when someone may be accessing something inappropriate on a library computer. In either case, library staff will investigate as soon as possible, if not immediately. All occurrences of inappropriate behavior will be documented using incident logs or incident report forms.

If reported by a member of the public, the staff member will ask the complainant for a detailed description of what was witnessed as well as the complainant's name and telephone number. Library staff will determine whether the content in question is inappropriate under the circumstances. In making this determination of a reported violation under CIPA, staff will refer to the legal definitions of "child pornography," "obscene," and "harmful to minors," as set forth in CIPA.

Library staff members will approach potentially offending library users with discretion to discuss the matter and, if necessary, deliver warnings as quietly and privately as possible, contingent upon circumstances.

When the situation is resolved, a library staff member will follow up either by phone or in person about the resolution of the complaint.

General Guidelines

FLNT does not charge fees for computer use or wireless network access. Printing fees are established by the Library Board and reviewed annually.

All computers and devices are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

A library card or a guest pass is required for computer use, except for use of designated "Express" stations, which are available on a walk-up basis for sessions lasting 20 minutes or less.

In order to ensure that the computers can be accessed by as many people as possible, sessions have time limits. Individual timed sessions may be extended at the discretion of library staff based on public service needs.

When sound is turned on in adult computer areas, ear buds or headphones are required to be worn at all times and kept to a volume that no one else can hear. Noisy interactions are not permitted, including extended cell phone conversations.

Volume levels on computers and devices in the children's computer area are set by library staff at a level that does not interfere with library use outside the children's area.

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Approved by the FLNT Library Board
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