

Somerset County Library System

INTERNET, WIRELESS NETWORK AND PC USE STATEMENT



INTRODUCTION

The Somerset County Library Commission has adopted this statement as an expression of the library system's practices and policies with regard to public use of library PCs, wireless network, and Internet services.

Electronic databases and the Internet are important tools for providing information, materials and library services. The Somerset County Library System (SCLS) maintains a library home page as a starting point for patron access to the Internet. The SCLS home page includes links to selected websites on common research topics and links to age-appropriate websites for young people. Links from the library's home page also lead to the library's electronic databases, the online catalog and pages with information about library services and programs. Sites are selected for linking based on criteria established in the library's Collection Management Plan.

SCLS provides unfiltered access to the Internet. The Commission believes that it is the responsibility of library users to make decisions about what kind of information they and/or their children will access. The Internet contains a vast amount of data and while it is a valuable resource for timely, accurate and unique information it can also contain outdated, inaccurate, incomplete and/or misleading information. You must evaluate the information you receive carefully and you need to accept the risk that you may come across material you will find inappropriate or offensive.

Parents are encouraged to communicate with their children about the Internet and to establish family guidelines for its use. Useful information about Internet safety issues can be found on several websites, including <http://www.onguardonline.gov/topics/net-cetera.aspx>.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

What are the guidelines for public use of the Internet and library PCs?

The library is a public place and privacy is not guaranteed. Since people may observe each other's activities, you may inadvertently see the material other people are viewing. You need to accept the risk that you may come across material that you will find inappropriate or offensive.

Computers in the library's Youth Services Departments are for children and/or young adults. Adults may use these computers only if they are accompanying a young person.

SCLS uses a print and time management system to manage patron use of its public PCs. Reservations are accepted on a first come/first serve basis. PC use is limited to a total of 4 hours per patron per day. The length of individual PC sessions is determined by each branch library.

You must use the library's computers and the Internet responsibly. Access to the PCs' operating systems is not permitted. You may not do anything to damage equipment, change computer or printer settings or alter

programming. You may not use the library's PCs or wireless network to prepare or transmit destructive computer codes, access other computers without authorization or do anything illegal. Violation of these guidelines will jeopardize your use of the library's networks and/or its computers in the future.

Library users are invited to submit online reviews of materials in the library's catalog and may be invited to add comments to blogs that are part of the library's website. All comments are subject to moderation by SCLS staff. Reviews and blog comments will be accepted so long as they contain no profanity, vulgarity or language that may be considered offensive or threatening in any way and reveal no personal, contact, or identifying information about the reviewer/blogger or other individuals. Reviewers and bloggers are solely responsible for the content of what they have written. SCLS is not responsible for any content written in a review/blog posting. SCLS may choose to withhold a review or blog posting for any reason and will not post a review/blog comment that does not meet the requirements of SCLS policy. In instances where language in a review or blog posting represents a threat to life or property moderators will immediately notify the Library Administration and/or police.

There is a per page charge to print from the library's PCs as determined by the Library Commission. Charges will be higher for color printing than for black and white printing and all payments must be made in advance of printing. If you would like to save your work you may use your own storage device or obtain a flash drive, available for a donation, from the library.

As with all library records, the use of the Internet and/or databases are confidential, and the library staff endeavors to protect each user's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received and information consulted. The New Jersey Statute NJSA 18A: 73-43.1-3 requires that library records which contain the names or other personally identifying details regarding the users of libraries are confidential and are disclosed only in the circumstances outlined in the Confidentiality of Library Records Policy.

INTERNET ACCESS

Who can use the library's PCs?

All visitors to any of the libraries in the Somerset County Library System are welcome to use the library's PCs provided they comply with the guidelines for use as described in this statement. You do not have to have a library card, or be eligible to get a library card, in order to use the library's PCs. A guest pass will be issued to patrons who do not have a library card.

What are the guidelines for children and young people?

Young people under the age of 15 must have permission from a parent or guardian to use the Internet. A parent must read and sign the "Youth Internet Access Form for Patrons Under 15 Years of Age" and then the parent or the child needs to present the signed form to a librarian. If the child has a library card the patron type of the card will be changed to allow access to the Internet. If the child does not have a library card, he/she will be given an Internet Access Card. Young people who wish to use the Internet need to be sure to bring their library cards or Internet Access Cards with them each time they visit the library.

Parents may also choose to stay with their children for the entire time they use the Internet, rather than providing them with an Internet Access Card. (The Policy on Unattended Children requires parents and caregivers to stay with children under the age of six at all times during their library visit.)

As with all materials the library offers, parents are responsible for assisting their children in making good decisions about which Internet resources are appropriate for them.

What are the guidelines for older teens?

Young adults between the ages of 15 and 17 must sign the “Young Adult Internet Access Form for Patrons 15, 16, or 17 Years Old”, to indicate that they will comply with the library’s Internet guidelines as described in this statement. The form also indicates that the teen understands the Internet is not filtered and may contain material that he/she may find inappropriate. The teen presents the signed form to a librarian. If the teen has a library card the patron type of the card will be changed to allow access to the Internet. If the teen does not have a library card, he/she will receive an Internet Access Card. Teens who plan to use the Internet need to be sure to bring their library cards or Internet Access Cards with them each time they visit the library.

What happens if a child or young person doesn’t have permission to use the Internet and has a school assignment that requires Internet access?

Library staff may use websites to answer questions for young people who do not have parental permission to access the Internet independently. When deemed necessary by a staff member, he/she may show young people the information on the screen of an appropriate website.

INTERNET SAFETY

Is the Internet Safe?

Yes, the Internet is safe if you take certain precautions. These precautions apply to use of the library’s wireless network and its hard-wired network:

- Never give out personal information, such as your address, telephone number, social security number or information about members of your family. You need to remember that the people or websites you contact over the Internet may not be who or what they claim to be. Internet identity theft has become an important issue and you should take precautions to protect your identity.
- If a website seems to offer more than it can deliver, be careful – fraud is not uncommon. Also, remember that the information you receive over the web may not be accurate, especially medical or legal information. If you are unsure about a website’s credibility, ask for assistance from a librarian. The websites you see on our homepage have been evaluated and determined to be reliable sources of information.
- Finally, be certain to close all of the applications you have used before you leave the computer so future users will not easily be able to see what you have viewed. (You may wish to use the start/shut down/restart option as a further safeguard.)

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

Does the library provide help with using library PCs or the Internet?

The Commission believes education is the key to responsible, safe and intelligent Internet use. To help educate users, the Library provides assistance, training, and handouts in using the Internet, navigating the library's website and using electronic databases. Time available for individual instruction will vary depending on how busy the library is. If you would like in-depth instruction you are encouraged to sign up for the formal training programs offered by the library.

DISCLAIMER

SCLS does not endorse the viewpoints of sites linked to its homepage or guarantee that information accessed via the Internet is accurate, current, etc. The Library is not responsible for sites that contain material library users may find offensive and/or inappropriate. Library patrons are responsible for safeguarding their personal information when using the Internet. SCLS is not liable for comments posted by its users on its blogs or comments made in online reviews of library materials.

Use of the Library's computer equipment and/or networks will constitute acceptance of this policy. Library users accept all risk when they use data or programs from the Internet. Patrons who use SCLS facilities, equipment and/or our wireless networks to either access the Internet or post comments or online reviews to its website agree to hold SCLS harmless from any liability arising from inaccurate or misleading information or from concurrent or subsequent damage caused to the patron's equipment, operating systems or files or from any other direct or consequential injury caused to them through their use of the Internet and/or the library's network, equipment, etc. The Library is not liable for injury or damage caused by patrons' inability to make full use of their allotted time because of technical difficulties. The Library is not liable for judgments, damages or costs that may arise out of comments posted to library blogs or included in online reviews of library materials. Library users are responsible for payment of any fees required by commercial Internet sites.

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Making a Difference in People's Lives Since 1930

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