



Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policies

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-Revised January 12, 2004

Manchester District Library provides access to computers, software, electronic databases and the Internet for educational, informational, and recreational uses by library patrons. To further these goals and comply with national, state, and local law, the library requires that computer users abide by the following policies.

Sign-up and time limits

Users are required to sign-up at the desk before using a computer. To ensure privacy, patrons may choose to use only a first name or initials when signing in.

There is a 30 minute time limit when others are waiting to use a computer; otherwise there is no time limit except for the limits of library hours. When all stations are occupied a patron should sign up on the waiting list and notify staff that they are waiting for a computer. Patrons may not ask someone to vacate a computer. Staff will determine when time limits apply. When someone is waiting staff will wait approximately five minutes to see if a station opens up, then notify the user who has been on the computer the longest time that the 30 minute time limit will apply. This user is then granted a few minutes to finish activities.

Computers are available only during the hours that the library is open. Patrons must stop using the computers at closing time.

Printing

The library offers printing from the computers at .10 per page. Patrons are responsible for payment at the time they print. Patrons must pay for all pages printed including "junk pages" at the bottom of Web pages. Staff will be glad to show patrons how to use print preview to avoid unnecessary printing costs.

Downloading or Altering Computer Configurations

Patrons are able to download material to floppy disk. Disks are available for purchase at the desk.

Patrons are not allowed to download material to the library's computers, to install their own software on machines, or to alter computer configurations.

Functions at some Web sites may require that you download a plug-in or other set of computer instructions. Patrons may not download these files to the library computer or network. The library does not guarantee that all Web sites will work on library computers and the library can not be expected to make alterations to the library computers to accommodate specific Web sites.

Email

Patrons may use computers to access their individual Email accounts over the Web. We can not guarantee that all Email services will work on library computers. Staff can not be expected to understand how to use the many different Email services available, though staff may be able to provide some help within reasonable time limits.

Chat Services and Instant Messaging

Use of chat services or instant messaging is not allowed on library computers. Chat rooms and other forms of instant messaging are determined to be outside of the library's mission and not within guidelines of acceptable use because: 1.) The value of information obtained via chat is diminished by uncertain authorship, 2.) Other libraries report they are time- and resource- consumptive, 3.) The pace of real-time conversation encourages ill-considered and unsafe behavior and, for that reason, chat and instant messaging are most likely to be implicated in harm to young people.

Gambling

Use of the Library's computers for gambling is specifically forbidden.

Game Playing

Educational and informational purposes take precedence over recreational purposes. Playing games on the Internet is allowed only when such use does not interfere with others' use of the Internet. If someone is waiting to use the computer, a game player can be asked to give up the computer. If the game uses so much bandwidth that it interferes with patron or staff use of computers, the user can be asked to stop playing the game. There is a one hour per day limit on game playing.

Filtering and Children's use of the Internet

The computers in the children's area offer educational and recreational software designed for young children and these computers do not have access to the Internet. Middle school age children are frequent users of the Internet in the library and they often come to the library without parents. Staff has consistently seen appropriate use of the Internet by these children for school work and recreation.

Michigan Act 212 (2000) requires that the library restrict access by minors to harmful materials over the Internet. Filtering software has been installed on the library computers to attempt to provide some level of protection from harmful materials and to offer an option for those parents and others in the community who prefer filtered access. Filtering software is very far from perfect. Some objectionable Web sites will not be blocked by the software and some Web sites with no inappropriate content will be blocked inadvertently. The library can not guarantee that the filtering software alone will fully protect children from objectionable material.

The public library, unlike schools, does not serve in loco parentis (in place of a parent). Although library staff members often help students with research projects, library staff members are not able to constantly monitor children's use of the Internet. The best protection of children takes place when parents are involved with children's use of the Internet and teach their children safe practices for Internet use. Library staff can direct parents to Web sites with Internet safety tips and to databases and search engines that are designed for use by children.

Unfiltered Internet Access

Staff can easily turn off the filtering software on an individual computer and will do so at the request of any adult user or for a minor when requested to do so by a parent or guardian. It is well understood that filtering may interfere with many appropriate uses of the Internet and staff will not question a user's reasons for unfiltered access. Staff may also use their discretion to turn off the filtering software for an unaccompanied minor when it is determined that the software is interfering with appropriate research, such as a high school student researching breast cancer.

Information Quality

Due to the ease of publishing on the World Wide Web, the Web includes a large amount of inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-date information. Patrons use information from the Internet and other sources at their own risk and the library can not be responsible for any harm resulting from inaccurate information. The librarians can direct users to databases and Web sites that may be more reliable than the general Internet.

Research Help and Computer Help

Librarians can offer suggestions that can save you time and often lead to better quality information. Users requiring more extensive research help can make appointment with a librarian.

Library staff is glad to provide computer assistance to patrons. However, the extent of help may vary with staff duties at the time. Users requiring extensive instruction in computer use are referred to classes provided by Manchester Community Education.

Privacy

Users must be sensitive to the fact that workstations are in public areas and, therefore, images on the screen are subject to view by a wide audience. The library avoids collecting or maintaining records that could compromise the privacy of patrons. Library staff is instructed to keep patron research in confidence. Patrons are asked to respect the privacy of other patrons.

Many Web sites collect information on the activities of registered users at their sites. Patrons should be wary of giving out personal information on the Internet. Although many commercial Web sites provide safe ways to submit credit card or other personal information, there are also less legitimate sites on the Web and there can be flaws in the security of legitimate Web sites. The library is not responsible for the consequences of patron Internet transactions. It is especially important that parents teach children not to reveal personal information such as their name or address on the Internet.

Laptops

Patrons are allowed to use their own laptop computers in the library. The library can not provide laptop users with access to the library's Internet service, but patrons may plug laptops into power outlets on the mezzanine. The library can not be responsible for the security of patrons' laptops.

Copyright

Materials obtained on the Internet and through databases installed on the computers may be subject to laws that govern making reproductions of copyrighted works. A work protected by copyright may not be copied without permission of the copyright owner unless the proposed use falls within "Fair Use" as defined by United States copyright law (USC Title 17). Customers are responsible for compliance with all international, national and state laws governing copyrighted materials.

Misuse

Misuse of the computer can result in the loss of computer privileges, potential loss of library privileges and possible prosecution. Such misuse includes, but is not limited to, using the computer for illegal activities; illegal display of obscenity or child pornography; hacking into the library computer system or any other computer system; damaging or attempting to damage computer equipment or software; interfering with systems operations, integrity or security; gaining unauthorized access to another person's files; sending harassing messages to other computer users; altering or attempting to alter the library computer's settings; and violating copyright laws and software licensing agreements.