

Internet Use Policy East Bonner County Free Library District

POLICY STATEMENTS

In fulfillment of its role as a public library in American society, it is the mission of the East Bonner County Library District to provide free and open access to information for educational, recreational and cultural uses by library patrons of all ages and backgrounds. The Library will provide access to the Internet as an integral part of this mission.

The same standards of intellectual freedom, privacy and confidentiality endorsed by the Library District for traditional resources and services also apply to electronic media, including usage of the Internet.

The East Bonner County Free Library District will comply with provisions of State of Idaho and federal law as it applies to use of library computers and access to information through the Internet.

Library employees are authorized to take prompt and appropriate actions to enforce the Internet Use Policy as stated or implied herein, and/or other provisions of the Library Code of Conduct.

ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT

Use of a public access computer at any facility owned or operated by the East Bonner County Free Library District is considered acceptance of its Internet Use Policy. Patrons will reaffirm the agreement each time they use the public access computer.

BACKGROUND

The Internet is a worldwide computer network that links users to a massive body of information. The resources that are available on the Internet expand the library's information services well beyond traditional collections and enhance its existing collection in size and depth.

The Internet is, however, largely unstructured and unregulated. Users must be aware that the content they access may not necessarily be verified as accurate, current, appropriate or legal, and that they are solely and personally responsible for their use of this resource.

It is understood that the Library District and its patrons each have separate and unique responsibilities regarding access to, and use of, the Internet.

LIBRARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Library District seeks to protect the First Amendment rights of its patrons and their individual right to privacy. The Library avoids collecting or maintaining records that could compromise the privacy of patrons.

The East Bonner County Free Library District supports as many Internet protocols as it can, balancing library security, patron safety and access. The Library will assist in educating its patrons about the risks, as well as the benefits of communicating through electronic mail and encourage the safe and wise use of this resource.

Library staff is prepared to recommend specific resources that have been found to be reliable and can offer advice on how to evaluate content. Staff is also available to assist with situations that may arise related to computer hardware or software and Internet content.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIBRARY PATRONS

It is the individual user's responsibility to demonstrate good judgment, respect for others, and appropriate conduct while using the public library and its resources, including use of the Internet.

Internet users must be sensitive to the fact that workstations are in public areas, especially when accessing information that may reasonably be offensive to someone else, and that images on the screen may be subject to view by a wide audience. Not all content on the Internet is appropriate for viewing by all library patrons or on all public access computers.

The nature of the Internet requires patrons to exercise critical thinking skills to determine if content is truthful, relevant and appropriate. Parents may need to supplement the inexperience of youth with guidance for their own children, being willing and available to explain their family values.

USE BY MINORS

Public access computer use will not be granted to a minor without consent from a parent or legal guardian. Unlike schools, the public library does not serve *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent). Librarians do not provide supervision of children as they explore the Internet. The responsibility for what minors read, view and share on the Internet rests with the parents or legal guardians who grant permission for use.

LEGAL AND POLICY RESTRAINTS

The First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution does not protect all content. No Library District public access computer may be used to view or display obscenity, child pornography, or other illegal content.

No minor may view materials harmful to juveniles in violation of federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.

[The legal status of any particular content can be determined only by a court of law with proper jurisdiction.]

A work protected by copyright law may not be copied without permission of the copyright owner unless the proposed use falls within the definition of “fair use.” Patrons are responsible for compliance with all state, national and international laws governing copyrighted materials.

Other prohibited behaviors include, but may not be limited to:

- Circumventing or attempting to circumvent library time management software on public access computers;
- changing the settings and configurations of public access computers;
- use of library computers for unauthorized access, including so-called “hacking,” or other unlawful activities;
- failure to pay printing charges incurred by the user;
- behavior that intrudes upon the rights of others.

Patrons are not permitted to invade the privacy of other library patrons, to harass library staff or patrons, to damage or disrupt library computer resources, or to send “spam” in violation of federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.

RESPONSE TO PROHIBITED BEHAVIORS AND CONTENT

Misuse of a public access computer will result in the loss of computer privileges, potential loss of library privileges and possible prosecution.

An individual whose behavior violates library policy will be warned about the specific behavior that is prohibited. If the violation continues after a warning, or if other inappropriate behavior is demonstrated, he or she may be asked to leave the library. An incident report will be prepared and filed with the library director.

If a patron, or staff member, observes behavior or content that may be illegal, either the patron or the staff may report it to a library official. The Library will not judge the legality of content. It

will help a patron refer a concern about illegal conduct or content to the prosecuting attorney or appropriate department of law enforcement.

INDEMNIFICATION

The availability of information does not constitute endorsement of the content by the East Bonner County Free Library District. Patrons who choose to use the Internet as an information resource do so at their own risk.

The East Bonner County Free Library District does not monitor, and has no control over the information accessed through the Internet and is not responsible for its content. The Library has no means, or statutory authority, to assure that only constitutionally protected material is available on the Internet. The authority to determine what is legal, and what is illegal, rests with others.

All library computers are filtered. Although content filtering programs are in place, no known filtering program is one hundred percent (100%) effective. Words, images or sounds that may be considered inappropriate or offensive by a library patron may not be blocked. The same filter may block other constitutionally protected information that a patron may wish to access.

Because the patron is the selector in using the Internet by making individual choices and decisions, patrons shall comply with all age restrictions governing access to specific sites, as limited by the content provider, to usage by persons 18 or 21 years of age or older. Some commercial databases on the Internet require a fee. These fees are the responsibility of the library patron; they are not the responsibility of the Library District.

In no event shall the East Bonner County Free Library District have any liability for lost profits or for any direct or indirect, special, punitive, or consequential damages, or any liability to any third party, even if the library is advised of the possibility of such damages arising from the use of its connection to the Internet.

Adopted circa 1995.

Amended November 13, 2000.

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Board of Trustees

East Bonner County Free Library District