PUBLIC USE COMPUTERS/INTERNET POLICY*

Computer Use and Internet Policies

1. The Flint Public Library will provide access to the Internet and public use computers during regular library hours.
2. The use of the computers is on a first-come, first-served basis. Users are entitled to a minimum of a ½- hour period and must relinquish use of the computer after ½ hour, if other patrons are waiting.
3. Users must make the computer available at the request of the staff.
4. All computer users must check in and check out at the circulation desk and will be encouraged to become registered borrowers.
5. Black and white printing costs 10 cents per page and color printing costs 25 cents per page.
6. Under no circumstances may patrons use their personal software on library computers.
7. Patron misuse of the computer or Internet access will result in the loss of computer privileges.

The Flint's Philosophy Regarding Internet Use

The Internet offers access to a wealth of information that can be personally, professionally, and culturally enriching. Library staff members have attempted to identify on the Flint's Home Page (www.flintlibrary.org) some specific starting points for searches and links to sources on the Internet which are consistent with the Library's mission and organizational values. But, because the Internet is a vast and unregulated information network, it also enables access to ideas, information, images and commentary beyond the confines of the Library's collection, mission, selection criteria, and collection development policies. Given the size and constantly evolving nature of the Internet, there may be occasions when information of a controversial nature is accessed. Some sites may contain material that is considered by some to be defamatory, offensive, or even illegal. The Library recognizes that tastes vary widely in any community, and material which is acceptable to one person may be unacceptable to another. The Flint Public Library does not endorse the viewpoints or vouch for the accuracy of information obtained online.

Providing Internet access at public terminals involves adapting what is ordinarily a private instrument, the personal computer, to a public setting. When using a Library computer, complete privacy cannot be guaranteed. Users are cautioned that the Library public access computers are located in public areas shared by library users of all ages, backgrounds, and sensibilities. Individuals are asked to consider the sensibilities of others. Use of library terminals for viewing or disseminating illegal images is not permitted.

Users must understand that, because security in an electronic environment such as the Internet cannot be guaranteed, all transactions, files, and communications are vulnerable to unauthorized access and use and, therefore, should be considered public.

Children's Use of the Internet

The Flint Public Library supports parents and guardians in their efforts to guide their children's access to print, non-print, and electronic information. As with access to all other materials in the library's collections, children's access to the Internet is not limited in any way. Any restriction of a child's access to the Internet is the sole responsibility of the child's parent, guardian, or caregiver. Parents are encouraged to discuss the use of the Internet with their children in relation to family values and boundaries and to monitor their children's use of the Internet.

The Library seeks to provide equal access to information for persons of all ages, preserving minors' status as full members of the Internet community. To assist parents, the Library has available Internet links that are appealing and appropriate for children's recreational, cultural, and educational pursuits. We believe that electronic information skills are fundamental to the preparation of citizens and future employees.

To address the issue of safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications, as well as the unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors, the Library urges minors to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:
- Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone number.
- Let parents or guardians decide whether personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parents' or guardians' approval.
- Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make one uncomfortable.
- Have parents or guardians report an incident to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678, if one becomes aware of the transmission of child pornography.
- Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
- Remember that everything one reads may not be true.

To address the issue of unauthorized access, including "hacking" and other unlawful activities by minors online, minors and all other Library users are hereby advised that use of the Library's computers for hacking or any other unlawful activity is strictly prohibited.

User Responsibilities

All users of the Internet at the Library are expected to use this resource in a responsible and courteous manner, consistent with the purposes for which it is provided. Responsible use of the Internet at the Library includes:

- Using the Library's Internet resources for cultural, educational, and informational purposes.
- Refraining from illegal or unethical use of the Internet -- including, but not limited to:
    - distributing unsolicited advertising;
    - engaging in any activity that is harassing or defamatory;
    - making unauthorized entry into other computational, informational, or communication services or resources;
- Refraining from displaying disturbing visual content such as sexual or violent content.
- Displaying content which is appropriate for the general public to view.
- Respecting intellectual property rights by making only authorized copies of copyrighted data residing on the Internet.
- Respecting the privacy of others by not misrepresenting oneself as another user; by not attempting to modify or gain access to files, passwords, or data belonging to others; and by not seeking disallowed access to any computer system via the Internet.
- Refraining from damaging or altering the configuration of the equipment used to access the Internet at the Library.
- Refraining from altering or damaging software or data residing on the Internet.
- Complying with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, including laws governing the transmission and dissemination of information while accessing the Internet.
- Maintaining a quiet environment by using headphones when accessing sound
- Skyping is not allowed on library computers, but patrons may Skype using their own laptops in the quiet study rooms.

Violation of the policies and regulations that govern the use of the Library's Internet resources may result in suspension or loss of the privilege to use these resources. Any illegal activity involving the Library's Internet resources will be subject to prosecution by the appropriate authorities.

* (with thanks to the Haverhill Public Library, the Lincoln Public Library, the New York Public Library, and the Seattle Public Library)