

Bucks County Library System

Information Services

COMPUTER AND ACCEPTABLE INTERNET USE POLICY

Policy Statement

The Bucks County Free Library (BCFL) provides 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.

In establishing and enforcing this policy, BCFL 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 BCFL's Behavior Policy. Copies of these documents are posted in each branch and on the library's website.

All BCFL employees are authorized to enforce the policy. Violators generally will be reminded of the policy, given a warning, and then asked to stop using the equipment if the behavior does not stop. 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.

BCFL shares its network with ten independent public libraries that are part of the BCFL district and system. The Regulations section of this policy applies to all member libraries.

Separately, BCFL 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. All BCFL branches follow the same guidelines. Guidelines at member libraries may vary.

BCFL and member libraries have reciprocity agreements regarding banning. Banning at a member library applies to all BCFL branches, and banning at a BCFL branch applies to all member libraries.

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

Internet Use and Filtering

BCFL receives federal funding for public Internet access and complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). CIPA and the Pennsylvania Child Internet Protection Act require the library to install filters that block access to information and images that are defined as "obscene," "child pornography," or "harmful to minors." All BCFL 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 library 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 children's use of all library resources. The library strongly encourages parents and legal guardians to closely supervise their children's Internet use and assist them in selecting sites consistent with personal and family values.

An adult is defined by CIPA as a library user age 17 or older. Per CIPA laws library staff will disable the filter for a session for any user age 17 or older upon request so they 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 age 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 “obscene,” “child pornography,” or “harmful to minors.”

Internet Safety

- Minors accessing the Internet should not reveal any personal information, such as name, address, or phone number.
- Minors should not disclose or use any information that may allow a person to locate them without first obtaining the parent or legal guardian’s permission.
- Minors should not arrange face-to-face meetings with someone they met on the Internet without first obtaining the parent’s or legal guardian’s permission.

General Provisions

By using a computer or device on the library’s wireless network, the 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. The library 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.

Library users 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.
- Library users may not access any items prohibited by CIPA.

Harmful, disruptive, or destructive behavior by anyone, including minors, is prohibited. This includes:

- Downloading, installing, and modifying software
- Gaining or attempting to gain access to restricted files or networks
- Damaging or modifying settings or software
- 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
- Disregarding the reasonable direction of library staff members

By using the library's equipment and wireless network, users agree to comply with all library regulations and all laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States. Illegal activities are prohibited. Library staff may capture an Internet browsing history to aid in the investigation of suspected crimes and will call law enforcement to handle violations of federal or state laws and local ordinances. This includes:

- 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

Bucks County Free Library Computer and Internet Use Guidelines

BCFL 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 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 must 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.

Adopted by the BCFL Board of Directors December 15, 2009

Revised September 18, 2018

Bucks County Free Library Computer and Internet Use Procedures Questionable Content

Members of the public are encouraged to alert staff when someone may be accessing something inappropriate on a library computer. 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.

The staff member will ask the complainant for a detailed description of what was witnessed, as well as their name and telephone number. Library staff will determine whether the content in question is inappropriate under the circumstances. In making this determination, staff will refer to the legal definitions of "child pornography," "obscene," and "harmful to minors."

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.

Library users who violate the regulations are subject to banning. Any library staff member may ban someone from equipment use or the library for the remainder of a day. Banning library users for a greater length of time is handled by a manager. Repeat violations will be handled in consultation with a manager. Notice of banning beyond the remainder of the day will be sent by certified mail to the person's last known address.