

PUBLIC-ACCESS COMPUTER POLICY*

Please come to the library staff with any questions or if any assistance is needed. As computer technology changes constantly, we expect members of the library to have questions.

We are happy to help you.

Windows-based personal computers with printing capabilities are available for public use at both the Central and Hurlock Branch Libraries. Through these computers patrons can access the Internet/World Wide Web, commercial software, and other electronic resources. Catalog computers are available in the library for catalog use only.

In compliance with the State of Maryland's law on "Public Libraries--Internet Access by Minors--Obscene Materials," the Dorchester County Public Library has incorporated in this computer use policy "procedures to prevent minors from obtaining access through the library, by means of the Internet, the World Wide Web, Usenet, or any other interactive computer service to materials that are obscene or constitute child pornography."

The Internet is an unregulated medium. Not all sources on the Internet provide information that is current, accurate, or complete. The Dorchester County Public Library has no control over the information on the Internet, and cannot be held responsible for its content. Parents should note that there may be things on the Internet that you do not wish your children to view.

Children under 17 years of age will have filtered access to the Internet only. As is the case with other library materials and collections, the library supports the parent or legal guardian's right to restrict his or her child's access to the Internet. A parent or guardian can arrange for a child to be allowed to use the computers for word processing, etc. without the Internet. Please see staff.

Due to the rapid change in technology computer policies are subject to change.

WHO CAN USE

Anyone is eligible to use the public-access computers, subject to the following conditions:

All patrons need to have their library card present to access the Internet. The card or visitor's pass is necessary to put money on account for printing.

Library staff may at any time request computer users to present their library card and/or other ID to verify that the user is utilizing only his or her own account. **The use of anyone else's account to access the computers is prohibited.**

The reasons for this policy are: 1) state law requires libraries to protect children under 17 from unfiltered access to the Internet and utilization of chat rooms; 2) the library supports the parent or legal guardian's right to restrict his or her child's access to the Internet; 3) this policy protects moneys deposited on account for printing purposes; and 4) this policy assures that computer users are in compliance with other library policies that state that computers may not be used by those owing fines or penalties of \$5 or more.

Normally, no more than two patrons may work at a computer terminal at one time. An accompanying computer user must have the same or higher level of access as the primary computer user. Staff may limit the number of patrons using a computer depending upon space availability and noise level.

Any child under six may use a children's computer only if a responsible adult is seated with the child.

All computer terminals are adapted for use by special populations. Please see library staff for information.

Central Branch only:

The reservation computers assign each patron to a public access computer, and must be used even when a computer is available. Patrons 13 years of age and younger are to use the Children's Department reservation station to use those computers. Patrons 14 and over are to use the Adult Services Department computers, beginning with that reservation computer. To use the word processor, Maryland Room computer or for unfiltered computer access, the patron must come to the information desk to make a reservation.

How

A Maryland public library card (from any county) or a visitor's pass will be needed to use the computers. A resident of a county in Maryland which is not part of the Lower Shore Library Consortium may need a visitor's pass to use the computers. Out-of-state visitors, or Maryland visitors who do not have a library card, aged 17 years or older, may present a photo ID with date of birth to obtain a visitor's pass. A visitor's pass is good for one day only, and the visiting patron should ask for assistance if printing.

Persons living out-of-state who work in Dorchester County may receive a computer use only card, one without borrowing privileges. A driver's license and work ID or pay stub with work address will be required.

Time is allocated for the Adult Services computers in 30 minute (Central) or hour-long (Hurlock) sessions.

The computers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Patrons may reserve the next available computer by using the bar code scanner at the appropriate reservation computer. The next available computer will be reserved for that patron. When it becomes available, the patron has five minutes to sign in for his session. Failure to sign in during this five minutes may result in the patron having to get back in line. If a different computer becomes available during the patron's wait, the patron's reservation does not change to the newly available computer.

Patrons may sign on for a maximum of four hours each day.

Computer sessions are automatically timed. The computer will give a 10 minute warning. This gives the patron opportunity to print or save work to a disk, as otherwise all work will be lost when the session is ended. If no one is waiting for that computer when there are 5 minutes left on a session, the computer will ask if the patron wants the session extended. The timer is visible at all times so the patron knows how much more time is available in the session.

Warning: The library does not recommend printing in the last 5 minutes of your session. There is a risk of the document not printing, as the system needs time to communicate with the printer, and yet the patron may be charged.

A patron may lock his computer if he needs to leave it briefly for any reason. Locking the computer will protect the privacy of the work, and prevent others from being able to access the computer while he is away. The time for the session is not extended, and will still expire 30 or 60 minutes after the patron logged on, depending on the location.

WIRELESS INTERNET CONNECTION

The Dorchester County Public Library will provide library users with wireless Internet access at its Central Library in Cambridge and at its Branch Library in Hurlock. We provide an electrical outlet when convenient, but not a phone line, for use with laptop computers.

The user's wireless Internet connection will be filtered using WebSense filtering software. Printing services are not currently provided through the wireless connection, so the user should be sure to save his data. Patrons may then use the public computers to print.

A user must provide his own wireless-enabled notebook/computer. In brief, the user should go to Wireless Manager on their device, which will show available connections. The user should choose the one labeled "Library."

Because of liability issues, the library staff is not authorized to assist the user with setting up his notebook/computer to make a wireless connection nor with the operation of his notebook/computer or its programs beyond what is written here.

PRINTERS

All computers in the library print to a central printer located behind the circulation desk. A patron wishing to print must bring his library card to the circulation desk and deposit money into his account before printing. The cost is 15 cents per page. Money deposited on account may be left in the account for future use or refunded if requested. A maximum amount of \$20 may be placed on deposit for printing.

Patrons with visitor passes should bring their pass to the circulation desk after selecting print and pay for their copies at that time.

FILTERING SOFTWARE

The computers used by children under 17 years of age are filtered with Web Sense software. For those children whose parents do not allow Internet access, the staff will direct the children to a non-Internet computer with access to certain games, and word processing, Excel and Power Point software for homework.

Computer patrons 17 years old or more may request unfiltered access by coming to the information desk to reserve a computer. This is advised if the patron is filling in an online form, such as a job application. Web chat may also be blocked when filter is active.

The following are filtered by WebSense:

Adult material, except for sites that offer information about sex and sexuality with no pornographic intent, web chat, tasteless sites with content that is gratuitously offensive or shocking, and violence. WebSense also has a security feature that blocks spyware, sites counterfeiting legitimate business sites for the purpose of eliciting financial information from users, and sites that may intentionally modify end-user systems and cause harm. However, no filtering software product is 100% reliable. Filtering software products may fail to block inappropriate Internet sites. They may also block access to sites that you would deem appropriate.

RESTRICTIONS

Only library staff are authorized to turn the computers on or off. Please ask for assistance.

Computer users are not to attempt to make any changes or modifications to system files that affect the configuration of the computer or alter the operation of the network. Any computer user who does not observe this rule will be barred from using all Dorchester County Public Library computers.

Attempts to use the catalog computers to access the Internet or other uses will result in the loss of computer privileges for one to three months.

Please note the security system on public access computers prevents software from being loaded. This can interfere with some functions, such as: images being loaded from some digital cameras, certain game sites or from some tutorial CDs or DVDs the patron may bring in.

Library users who damage computer equipment or software will be held financially responsible for any costs incurred by the library for repairs or replacement.

Improper use of computer hardware, disturbance of other patrons, or display of obscene or offensive material will result in the suspension of a computer user's time and may result in the long term suspension of computer privileges.

Chat group use is prohibited for patrons under the age of 17 years.

WARNINGS

In accepting the computer policy when logging on, you have received a first warning regarding computer abuse.

Library users are required to let library staff know immediately if inappropriate or obscene material appears on the computer screen. Staff will check for the presence of the filter, then inform the filtering software company of the incident. If staff observe such material without notification by the patron, the patron will be held at fault, and may be suspended for three months immediately.

If equipment is abused or computer policies are violated, patron will be:

1. Given written warning after the first occurrence. Depending on the offense, the staff member may also suspend the patron from using a library computer for periods ranging up to one month at this time.
2. Suspended from using library computers for three months after the second occurrence.
3. If a computer user has twice been barred for three months from using a computer, his/her next offense will result in losing computer privileges for one year.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Users are responsible for reading and abiding by the library's rules regarding computer use.

Users are responsible for the correct use and handling of all computer equipment and software.

Users are responsible for reading all documentation and directions for operating the computer, printer and software.

Users may not use their own software, but may use their own files in conjunction with the library's software.

Users may not load anything onto the hard drive of library computers. Any material loaded to the library's hard drive by users will be erased.

Users may download from the Internet to a disk or other memory device.

Users must abide by copyright and licensing laws.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions, please ask the staff at the Information Desk. We'll be happy to help you.

Questions or concerns that library users have regarding this policy and its implementation should be brought respectively to the head of the reference or children's department for review. If the library patron is not satisfied with that review, he subsequently should speak to the library director, who may refer the matter to the Board of Trustees if it remains unresolved.

*This policy applies to all public access computers, including those computers designated for catalog use only.

September 2009