

*Somerset County Library System*  
**INTERNET, WIRELESS NETWORK  
AND PC USE STATEMENT**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Somerset County Library Commission has adopted this statement as an expression of the library system's practices and policies with regard to public use of library PCs, wireless network and Internet services.

Electronic databases and the Internet are important tools for providing information, materials and library services. The Somerset County Library System (SCLs) maintains a library home page as a starting point for patron access to the Internet. The SCLs home page includes links to selected websites on common research topics and links to age-appropriate websites for young people. Links from the library's home page also lead to the library's electronic databases, the online catalog and pages with information about library services and programs. Sites are selected for linking based on criteria established in the library's Collection Management Plan.

SCLs provides unfiltered access to the Internet. The Commission believes that it is the responsibility of library users to make decisions about what kind of information they and/or their children will access. The Internet contains a vast amount of data and while it is a valuable resource for timely, accurate and unique information it can also contain outdated, inaccurate, incomplete and/or misleading information. You must evaluate the information you receive carefully and you need to accept the risk that you may come across material you will find inappropriate or offensive.

Parents are encouraged to communicate with their children about the Internet and to establish family guidelines for its use. A pamphlet called *Child Safety on the Information Highway*, published by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children may help with this. This document is available online at [http://www.safekids.com/child\\_safety.htm](http://www.safekids.com/child_safety.htm) and copies are also available at the library.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

### **What are the guidelines for public use of the Internet and library PCs?**

The library is a public place and privacy is not guaranteed. Since people may observe each other's activities, you may inadvertently see the material other people are viewing. You need to accept the risk that you may come across material that you will find inappropriate or offensive.

Computers in the library's Youth Services Departments are for children and/or young adults. Adults may use these computers only if they are accompanying a young person.

Depending on the library, your time on the Internet may be limited. Please check on time limits before you start and observe them. You may be required to sign in so that time may be monitored.

You must use the library's computers and the Internet responsibly. Access to the PCs' operating systems is not permitted. You may not do anything to damage equipment, change computer or printer settings or alter programming. You may not use the library's PCs or wireless network to prepare or transmit destructive computer codes, access other computers without authorization or do anything illegal. Violation of these guidelines will jeopardize your use of the library's networks and/or its computers in the future.

If you wish to print, the cost is 10 cents per page. If you would like to save your work you may use your own storage device or you may purchase a disk from the library.

## **INTERNET ACCESS**

### **Who can use the library's PCs ?**

All visitors to any of the libraries in the Somerset County Library System are welcome to use the library's PCs provided they comply with the guidelines for use as described in this statement. You do not have to have a library card, or be eligible to get a library card, in order to use the library's PCs.

### **What are the guidelines for children and young people?**

Young people under the age of 15 must have permission from a parent or guardian to use the Internet. A parent must read and sign the "Youth Internet Access Form for Patrons Under 15 Years of Age" and then the parent or the child needs to present the signed form to a librarian. If the child has a library card an Internet access note will be added to his/her library account and a label will be put on his/her library card. If the child does not have a library card, he/she will be given an Internet Access Card to display at the PC. Young people who wish to use the Internet need to be sure to bring their library cards or Internet Access Cards with them each time they visit the library.

Parents may also choose to stay with their children for the entire time they use the Internet, rather than providing them with an Internet Access Card. (The Policy on Unattended Children requires parents and caregivers to stay with children under six at all times during their library visit.)

As with all materials the library offers, parents are responsible for assisting their children in making good decisions about which Internet resources are appropriate for them.

### **What are the guidelines for older teens?**

Young adults between the ages of 15 and 17 must sign the "Young Adult Internet Access Form for Patrons 15, 16, or 17 Years Old", to indicate that they have read and will comply with the library's Internet guidelines as described in this statement. The form also indicates that the teen understands the Internet is not filtered and may contain material that he/she may find inappropriate. The teen presents

the signed form to a librarian. If the teen has a library card, an Internet access note will be added to his/her library account and a label will be put on the library card. If the teen does not have a library card, he/she will receive an Internet Access Card to display at the PC. Teens who plan to use the Internet need to be sure to bring their library cards or Internet Access Cards with them each time they visit the library.

### **What happens if a child or young person doesn't have permission to use the Internet and has a school assignment that requires Internet access?**

Library staff may use websites to answer questions for young people who do not have parental permission to access the Internet independently. When deemed necessary by a staff member, he/she may show young people the information on the screen of an appropriate website.

## **INTERNET SAFETY**

### **Is the Internet Safe?**

Yes, the Internet is safe if you take certain precautions. These precautions apply to use of the library's wireless network and its hard-wired network:

- Never give out personal information, such as your address, telephone number, social security number or information about members of your family. You need to remember that the people or websites you contact over the Internet may not be who or what they claim to be. Internet identity theft has become an important issue and you should take precautions to protect your identity.
- If a website seems to offer more than it can deliver, be careful – fraud is not uncommon. Also, remember that the information you receive over the web may not be accurate, especially medical or legal information. If you are unsure about a website's credibility, ask for assistance from a librarian. The websites you see on our homepage have been evaluated and determined to be reliable sources of information.
- Finally, be certain to close all of the applications you have used before you leave the computer so future users will not easily be able to see what you have viewed. (You may wish to use the start/shut down/restart option as a further safeguard. )

The library staff will comply with the New Jersey law regarding the confidentiality of library records (NJSA 18 A:73-43.1-43.2) so as not to disclose or track your Internet use.

## **TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION**

### **Does the library provide help with using library PCs or the Internet?**

The Commission believes education is the key to responsible, safe and intelligent Internet use. To help educate users, the Library provides assistance, training, and handouts in using the Internet, navigating

the library's website and using electronic databases. Time available for individual instruction will vary depending on how busy the library is. If you would like in-depth instruction you are encouraged to sign up for the formal training programs offered by the library.

## **DISCLAIMER**

SCLS does not endorse the viewpoints of sites linked to its homepage or guarantee that information accessed via the Internet is accurate, current, etc. The Library is not responsible for sites that contain material library users may find offensive and/or inappropriate. Library patrons are responsible for safeguarding their personal information when using the Internet.

Library users accept all risk when they use data or programs from the Internet. Patrons who use SCLS facilities, equipment and/or our wireless networks to access the Internet agree to hold SCLS harmless from any liability arising from inaccurate or misleading information or from concurrent or subsequent damage caused to the patron's equipment, operating systems or files or from any other direct or consequential injury caused to them through their use of the Internet. The Library is not liable for injury or damage caused by patrons' inability to make full use of their allotted time because of technical difficulties. Library users are responsible for payment of any fees required by commercial Internet sites.

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