



LONGMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTERNET & COMPUTER USE POLICY

The Internet: a useful and challenging resource

Use of the Internet in public libraries has grown remarkably in just a few years. It's not hard to understand why this has occurred. Providing information is at the heart of the mission of libraries. The Internet contains a vast ocean of information, with the potential to update information quickly. As the City's Library, we are pleased to be able to make this service available to the community.

At the same time, almost every improvement or advancement includes some challenges as well. The Internet is no different. To name just a few of these challenges: the Internet is an unregulated network – there is no entity that controls the information on the Internet. Not all of the information on the Internet is accurate, complete, or current. Some people will find some of the subject matter offensive. What may be suitable for adults may not be for children. The computer resources available may not always be able to meet the demand.

We believe it is possible to deal with these challenges, if library patrons and staff work together in taking responsibility for how they use the Internet. This policy is intended to convey the principles and responsibilities involved in providing and using these services.

Principles

In developing a policy for Internet and computer use for the Longmont Public Library, we have attempted to follow these principles:

- That the mission of the library is to serve our community by providing equal access to information and resources for education, enrichment and enjoyment.
- That as it relates to public access computers, the providing of information has the highest priority in our mission.
- To allow patrons some choices in the level of Internet and computer use, according to what most suits their needs at any given time.
- To allow as much access to information as possible, while respecting the right of everyone to enjoy their visit to the library.
- To acknowledge that materials appropriate for adults may not be appropriate for minors and vice versa.

Library and Patron Responsibilities

The library has three distinct areas with computers for public use. Each area has a different focus, audience and resources.

Adult Computer Lab

Intended audience. This lab is primarily for patrons who are **age 18 or older**. Patrons under age 18 may be in the lab only when accompanied by a parent or guardian and may not access the computers in this area.

Activities. Web-based email, chatting and games are permitted in this area. Downloading to *floppy* disks is permitted; disks are available for purchase at the Computer Lab desk. Downloading of software to the *hard disk* is not allowed because some of these programs modify the library's software configurations. Additionally, some programs may expose a patron's personal information to others. Word-processing on IBM-compatible computers is available. Headphones are also available

The purpose of computers throughout the library is primarily for information and research. Internet filtering software is used in this area. It is contrary to library rules to access materials that are obscene, pornographic, or otherwise sexually explicit.

Resources. The Adult Computer lab includes a total of 17 IBM-compatible computers. Of these, 8 are for Internet and word processing use and limited to one hour per day. Seven Internet and word processing computers are designated for 30-minute use per day (express computers). Two computers are for word-processing use only and limited to two hours per day.

The express computers are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Reservations may be made in person or by phone for all computers with one and two-hour limits. Patrons are strongly encouraged to make a reservation due to the level of demand. Reservations are made on the hour, and are held for 10 minutes after the appointment time. There is a limit of a total of two hours per day (one of which may be for Internet use) for all computers in this area.

Assistance. Library staff will provide informal assistance (typically 10-15 minutes) to individuals unfamiliar with the Internet, word-processing and email. The library does not provide classes on Internet or word processing. However, the library will serve as an outlet for information about classes or training offered in the community and library staff will refer individuals to those opportunities.

Children's and Teen Computer Lab

Intended audience. This area is primarily for individuals **age 17 and under**. In accordance with other library policies, all children **age 7 and under** must be accompanied by an adult (ages 18 or over) or share a computer with a responsible caregiver. There is no parental permission required to use this area. Adults (ages 18 and over) may use this area under these conditions: (1) if they are working with their child on a project at the computer or (2) adults need access to a computer, but are accompanied by children under age 8 who are apt to cause a disturbance if in the adult computer lab.

Activities. Activities and content in this area are limited to materials that are appropriate to the ages being served. Internet-filtering software as well as guidance toward age-appropriate search engines is used. **Web**-based email is permitted. Chatting is not allowed, except in situations in which the activity is under staff supervision or sponsorship. Games are allowed on a limited basis, dependent upon circumstances and at the discretion of the librarian on duty. Word-processing on IBM-compatible computers is available.

Resources. This area has eleven IBM-compatible computers which have access to Internet, word-processing, and some CD-ROM software programs for children of all ages. There is a time limit of one hour per day on all computers in this area. No reservations will be taken for these computers; they will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Three additional computers are available in the children's area with CD-ROM software for preschool and elementary age children. Time limits on these CD-ROM computers are 30 minutes. Headphones are available on all the computers.

Assistance. Library staff will provide informal assistance (10-15 minutes) to individuals unfamiliar with Internet or word processing.

Reference and Periodicals Computer Labs

Intended audience. The use of these computers is primarily intended for adults, but is also available to individuals under age 18. Parental permission is not required to use these computers.

Activities. Internet access is available but activities and content on these computers are limited to materials of a reference nature including magazine and newspaper web sites. Internet-filtering software is used, with access mainly to sites that are (1) subscriptions paid from the library budget or (2) web sites that have been selected by the library staff. Word-processing, e-mail, chatting and games are not permitted on these computers.

Resources. There are a total of eight Internet computers in the reference area and two in the periodicals area. One reference computer includes software for Internet, word processing and CD-ROM reference programs written in Spanish. These computers are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and the time limit on all computers in this area is 30 minutes if the lab is full. There is some latitude, at the discretion of library staff, when the lab is not full.

Assistance. It is expected that patrons using computers in this area have some degree of familiarity with using the Internet. Library staff will provide informal assistance to help individuals locate the information they are seeking. Individuals who seem to be unfamiliar with the Internet or in using computers will be referred to the Adult Computer Lab where a greater degree of assistance is available.

General rules

Charges for printing. Throughout the library, the first five pages may be printed free; it is 10 cents per page after the first five pages.

Acceptable use agreement. By using the computers of the library, the patron agrees to comply with the policies contained here. This acceptable use agreement is posted on the city website and will be available for handout.

Violations. When library staff observe activities which are of a disruptive nature, the patron will be directed to discontinue these activities. Failure to comply with these policies may result in revocation of computer privileges or eviction from the library for a period of one to 90 days or more in extreme circumstances.

Activities prohibited under this policy include but are not limited to:

Accessing websites that are obscene, pornographic, or otherwise sexually explicit.

False representation as another user

Copyright infringement

Acts of a threatening, harassing, or obscene nature

Unreasonable noise or disorderly conduct

Tampering with computer hardware

Activities that infiltrate a computer or computing system and/or damage or alter the software components of a local or remote computer or computing system

Attempting to violate system security

Abuse of equipment

Installing software or running programs that have not been installed by the library

Violation of any federal or state law or regulation