Orange Public Libraries' Acceptable Computer Use and Internet Safety Policy

Introduction

The Orange Public Libraries offers free public access to the Internet as a service to allow its patrons to retrieve information in electronic format from sources around the world. The Library has a responsibility to provide a wide range of informational resources and points of view in a variety of formats for all of its users. However, the Internet is only one tool to be considered in searching for information. It is not always accurate, up-to-date, unbiased, or all-inclusive. Other Library material such as books, periodicals, and reference databases may be more appropriate and accurate.

This Internet Safety Policy is designed to promote access to the Internet while protecting children from exposure to inappropriate material, as well as the public from unlawful access to and use or disclosure of personal information, and unauthorized access to legally restricted areas.

The Library's Internet Safety Policy's purpose is to prevent user access over its computer network to, or transmission of, inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications; to prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity; to prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information; and to comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)]. This is being accomplished with the guidance of our regional library consortium, Central-Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CW MARS).

Library users access the Internet at their own discretion and are solely responsible for any material they may retrieve. The Orange Public Libraries cannot be held responsible for the Internet's content or the quality of its information. The Library's selection policies, which serve to guide the Library's purchase of materials, are not applicable to material accessed electronically via the Internet.

Filtering

In compliance with CIPA, the Library filters all its computers, and all access to the Internet through its network, to protect against access to obscene visual depictions, child pornography, and/or other material harmful to minors, as required by law. The filter may unintentionally block sites that have legitimate research value and fail to block objectionable content. Users should be aware that Internet filtering software installed for CIPA compliance should not substitute for individual judgment and/or parental involvement and oversight. As the law requires, the Library will allow access to an unfiltered computer to persons 18 or older who request it for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

Inappropriate Network Usage

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the Orange Public Libraries' online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications.

Specifically, as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, prevention of inappropriate network usage includes: (a) unauthorized access, including so-called 'hacking,' and other unlawful activities; (b) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors; and (c) dissemination and viewing of obscene visual depictions, child pornography, and/or other materials harmful to minors.

CIPA does not require the tracking of Internet use by minors or adults.

Acceptable Use

Access to and use of the Internet is a service offered by the Library which should be used in a responsible and ethical manner consistent with the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational purposes for which it is provided. Users are cautioned 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.

Internet access in the library is available on computers that are located in open public areas and are subject to supervision. Staff is available to assist patrons who need help finding information on the Internet. The Library reserves the right to engage in monitoring activities, both electronic and non-electronic, at its sole discretion and without further notice unless otherwise restricted by law. Such practices may include, but are not limited to, those for the purpose of monitoring the nature and quality of our services, and the security and the conduct of people on our premises.

The following purposeful, illegal and/or criminal activities constitute unacceptable use:

- Using Library computer workstations for any illegal or criminal purpose that violates local, state, or federal laws (including, but not limited to, committing fraud; hacking; or engaging in communications which are libelous or slanderous)
- Viewing child pornography
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors
- Deliberately sending, receiving, or displaying obscene images
- Violating copyright law or software licenses
- Compromising the privacy of users
- Attempting to interfere with or disrupt users, services or equipment
- Attempting to install, delete, or modify Library software; attempting to install or

run any programs that have not been installed by the Library.

Children's Use of the Internet

The Library affirms and acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of parents and caregivers to monitor and determine their children's access to library materials and resources, including those available through the Internet.

Parents or caregivers are responsible for the information selected and/or accessed by their children via the Internet. Individuals under 18 years of age who use the Internet unsupervised may be exposed to inappropriate or disturbing information and images. Parents are encouraged to discuss the use of the Internet in relation to family values and boundaries with their children and teens and to monitor their children/teen's use of the Internet. The Library recommends reviewing the information provided at NetSmartz by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for assistance.

Violations

Violations of any part of this policy may result in the loss of Library privileges. Persons violating the Library's Internet Use policy will be notified in writing that their behavior has violated the Library's policy. If such behavior occurs a second time, penalties will be Imposed. Penalties may include suspending or terminating the patron's access to Library computers or rescinding their Library card, [which could prevent use of any C/W MARS Library]. Users will be held responsible for any damage to hardware, software, data, furniture or equipment. Illegal acts involving Library computing resources may also be subject to prosecution by local, state, or federal authorities.

Approved by the Orange Public Libraries' Board of Trustees on December 16, 2024.