

Computer Use and Internet Policy

The Internet contains a wide variety of materials and opinions from various points of view. Not all sources provide information that is accurate, complete, or current, and some information may be considered offensive or inappropriate for certain age groups. While the Russell Library is sensitive to the concerns of customers about Internet content, no one, including the Library, can control the information available on the Internet. It is the goal of Russell Library to provide a comfortable and welcoming environment for all ages. Each individual is responsible for his or her own appropriate use of the Internet in a public place.

Customers' Responsibility

In order to ensure a positive library experience for everyone the Library requires that all customers shall:

- Use computers only for lawful purposes.
- Refrain from viewing pornographic visual materials or content that by contemporary community standards would be considered obscene.
- Observe the established computer time limits.
- Leave computer monitor privacy screens in place.
- Respect the security of the network.
- Respect the configuration of computer equipment at the Library. Downloading or installing nonstandard software programs is prohibited.
- Keep virus protection software up-to-date on personal laptops or other mobile devices using the Library's wireless Internet connection.

The Russell Library's Role

Russell Library makes Internet resources accessible to all customers. The staff of the Russell Library helps customers navigate, identify, and access resources on the Internet. The staff reviews and recommends good sources of information on the Internet. The staff and technology professionals also conduct classes for adults and children to instruct them in the effective and safe use of the Internet.

The Library's goal is to make the public computers available to as many customers as possible. To accomplish this, the Russell Library controls the amount of time a customer can use the public computers on a given day. There are a variety of services available on Library computers; however, not all services are available at every computer and some computers may be dedicated for particular services.

Internet Filters

Filtering software is designed to block images and videos that depict pornography, child pornography, or obscenity. Of course, no filtering software is totally accurate. Filters may falsely block material that is appropriate in a public library setting or they may fail to block access to illegal or objectionable material. For these reasons, the Library will respond to questions and concerns regarding a filter's accuracy by communicating with the filtering software vendor about improving its product. In addition, customers may ask the Library to block or unblock a specific site and may also file a written appeal to Library administration within 48 hours of what they consider to be an erroneous decision regarding a specific filter.

Regardless of these aforementioned imperfections of filtering, we feel that accessing pornography in a public place is inconsistent with the welcoming and comfortable environment we seek to provide. In addition, to be eligible for federal funds to maintain durable and fast Internet connectivity, the law requires that public libraries adopt and enforce reasonable policies of Internet safety that are consistent with the federal "Children's Internet Protection Act," as amended, ([P.L. No. 106-554](#) - PDF).

Confidentiality and Privacy

Russell Library follows state and federal law regarding privacy of library users' records and information. (Please see ***Privacy, Confidentiality, and Law-Enforcement Policy***)

It is the Library's practice to erase all customer use records, except those essential for library business operations. The Library will release records, including those relating to Internet usage, only as required by law.

The Library does not retrieve any information, including websites visited, passwords, credit card numbers, or any other information a customer has entered. At the end of the business day, all computer use and reservation records are erased.

Inappropriate Network Usage

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of Russell Library's 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.

Children and the Internet - Education, Supervision, and Monitoring

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 Internet information selected and/or accessed by their children. Children, defined as individuals under 18 years of age by Connecticut State Statute, 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 these family members' use of the Internet.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to read and follow these tips for "Internet-wise" parents:

- Take time to learn about the Internet.
- Take individual or group Internet classes, online or at the Library when scheduled.
- Explore cyberspace with your children.
- Provide clear guidelines - let your children know if there are subjects that are off limits.
- Learn how to evaluate the Internet - read books and magazines and take a class offered by the Library.
- Teach your children safety rules for dealing with strangers online and appropriate ways to deal with online businesses.

To assist parents, the Library has available on-line and in print the pamphlet [Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet](#), published by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Parents are encouraged to review this information with their children. Parents can also get more information on www.netsmartz411.org.

Disclaimer: Russell Library makes no warranty, expressed or implied, for the timeliness, accuracy, or usefulness for particular purpose of information accessed via the Internet.

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