

Internet Filtering FAQ

Russell Library values free and equal access to information, even when that information may be controversial, unorthodox or unacceptable to others. With its implementation of filtering software, the Library balances its commitment to customers' diverse interests and individual rights with the need to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for all ages.

Why do Russell Library computers have filtering software?

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). In addition, we feel that accessing pornography in a public place is inconsistent with the welcoming and comfortable environment we seek to provide.

How does the filtering software work?

The filtering software blocks sites that depict pornography, child pornography or obscenity.

Who decides which sites should be blocked?

In conjunction with Library staff, the filtering software vendor uses a process combining technological and human review to make decisions about which sites are blocked.

Will children be safer using filtered Internet access?

That is the goal. However, no filtering software is totally accurate, nor is it a substitute for parental judgment and oversight. Russell Library believes that the reading and viewing activity of children is ultimately the responsibility of parents who guide and oversee their own children's development. Russell Library does not intrude on that relationship, except when mandated by law.

Will objectionable material based on hate or violence be blocked?

No. The filtering software is designed to block content that is pornographic or obscene in nature.

Will information on health and sexuality be blocked?

The filtering software is designed to block images and videos that depict pornography, child pornography or obscenity, not medical information or images. However, there may be instances where information has been inappropriately blocked. If this happens, Library staff will evaluate the request and, if deemed appropriate, will unblock the site as soon as possible.

Does the Russell Library filter social networking sites and blogs?

Russell Library does not filter these sites because they cannot be reliably reviewed by filtering software, and because blocking these sites completely would unnecessarily block vast amounts of inoffensive materials.

The content of social networking sites has not been found to meet the Library's criteria for filtering. Most site vendors have policies regarding appropriate use and display of content.

Parents are encouraged to explore the Internet with their children, supervise them, provide clear guidelines regarding what sites and activities are off-limits and teach their children safety rules for dealing with strangers online.

Does the Russell Library block sites other than those with pornographic or obscene content?

Yes. The Library restricts access to some websites with automatic downloads built into the homepage. These sites are not specifically blocked by the Library, but the embedded downloads may be. If a downloaded file seeks to change the basic configuration of the computer or the browser, it will be blocked because it would render the computer unusable for the next customer.

How can customers request that a site be permanently blocked or unblocked?

Customers may ask to block or unblock a specific site. Russell Library staff will evaluate the request and if deemed appropriate, will forward the site to the filtering software vendor for unblocking. The customer will then be notified of the decision in a timely fashion.

Will customer wireless devices using Russell Library's wireless Internet connections be filtered?

Yes. Filtering software is deployed for both wired and wireless Internet access.

Will the Library keep records of my computer use?

Russell Library follows state and federal law regarding privacy of library users' records and information.

It is the Library's practice to erase all customer use records, except those essential for library business operations. When a computer session is ended, all information about that session is ordinarily deleted. 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. However, the Library will release records, including those relating to Internet usage, as required or authorized by law.



Internet Usage FAQs

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