

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

A Sample Library PC and Internet Use Policy

For your convenience, we provide a sample policy statement that you can adapt for your library. If you need assistance adopting or creating a "Library PC and Internet Use Policy" please [contact us](#).

There is no charge for this service. It is free to all members of the American Library Association as part of our commitment to the Library Champions Program.

The complete document is available as a [Microsoft® Word document](#), an [Adobe® PDF](#), or as an [HTML page](#) for use on your library related web site.

The document includes the following topics:

- The Library's Mission
- Choosing and Evaluating Sources
- Access by Minors
- Rules Governing Use
- Security
- Compliance
- Access to Information
- Public Access Software
- How Does It Work?
- Advantages
- More Equitable PC Sessions
- Accurate Statistical Data
- Patron Authentication
- All You Need is a Library Card
- Patron Confidentiality

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Explain Your Library Policies and Rationale

The document is designed to assist you in formulating and then explaining your Library Policies and Rationale to your patrons. Some of the issues covered require discussion and planning before you can set policies:

Explain Your Library Policies and Rationale:

- workstation location
- library card configuration
- time limits
- reservations
- printing
- minors
- parental guidance
- staff intervention
- statistics and monitoring
- privacy
- applicable state and local laws

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

A Sample Library PC and Internet Use Policy

The Library's Mission

To fulfill its mission of providing public access to information of all types in a wide range of formats, The Library provides access to Internet resources. The Internet offers access to many valuable local, national and international sources of information. However, some information found on the Internet may be inaccurate, incomplete, dated, or offensive to some individuals. A good information consumer must evaluate the validity and appropriateness of information found.

Choosing and Evaluating Sources

The Internet is a series of communication linkages leading to a highly diverse array of information content. Library patrons use it at their own risk. In choosing sources to link to from its home pages, the Library follows its materials selection guidelines. Beyond this, the Library is not responsible for the content of the Internet, changes in content of the sources to which the Library home pages link, or for the content of sources accessed through secondary links. In an effort to assist its users, the Library has created web sites for the general population, for teens and for children to help guide them to sources that are accurate, complete and current and that provide them with a wealth of information on the local, national and global level. In addition, the Library provides training for members of the public to assist them in using the Internet in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Access by Minors

Parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for deciding which library resources are appropriate for their own children. Parents or legal guardians should guide their children in use of the Internet and inform them about materials they should not use. While the Library affirms and acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians to monitor and determine their children's access to Library materials and resources, including those available through the Internet, the Library has taken certain measures designed to assist in the safe and effective use of these resources by all minors.

- a. To address the issue of access by minors to inappropriate material on the Internet, including material that is harmful to minors, the Library:
 - i. Develops and maintains special web sites for children and teens;
 - ii. Develops and provides training programs on safe and effective Internet use;
 - iii. Encourages staff to guide minors away from materials that may be inappropriate; and,
 - iv. Distributes a publication entitled "A Safety Net for the Internet: A Parent's Guide."
- b. To address the issue of the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications, as well as the unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors, the Library provides training programs and also urges minors to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:
 - i. Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone number.
 - ii. Let parents or guardians decide whether personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
 - iii. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parents' or guardians' approval.
 - iv. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make one uncomfortable.
 - v. Have parents or guardians report an incident to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678 if one becomes aware of the transmission of child pornography.
 - vi. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
 - vii. Remember that not everything one reads may be true.
- c. To address the issue of unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online, minors and all other Library users are hereby advised that use of the Library's computers for hacking or any other unlawful activity is strictly prohibited.

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Rules Governing Use

Due to the limited resources available for provision of public access to the Internet, the Library may set limits, for example, on use of large files of still or moving images or sound, or on downloading files in any medium. The Library also reserves the right to limit the amount of time an individual user can devote to a single session. The public must comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, including laws governing the transmission and dissemination of information while accessing the Internet.

Users may not:

- Use the network to make unauthorized entry into other computational, informational or communication services or resources.
- Distribute unsolicited advertising.
- Invade the privacy of others.
- Make any attempt to damage computer equipment or software.
- Engage in any activity that is harassing or defamatory.
- Use the Internet for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other rights of third parties, or in a manner inconsistent with the Library's tax-exempt status or its proper operation.

Violations may result in loss of access.

Unlawful activities will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Security

Users should be aware that the Internet is not a secure medium and that third parties may be able to obtain information regarding users' activities. However, The Library will not release information on the use of specific Internet resources by members of the public except as required by law or necessary for the proper operation of the Library.

Compliance

The Library reserves the right to take appropriate action to insure compliance with this policy.

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Access to Information

The Library is guided by the following American Library Association statements on access to information:

- The Library Bill of Rights
- Freedom to Read Statement
- Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights: Free Access to Libraries for Minors and Access to Electronic Information Services and Resources

In general, the Library is guided by a commitment to access to information policies that provide appropriate protections to its patrons while being consistent with the Library's longstanding commitment to the principles of free expression as set forth in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

How Does It Work?

CybraryN™ Software is a PC and Internet Registration product that runs on public access computers in academic and public libraries.

For each computer session, the software prompts the user to type in her library barcode number to uniquely identify herself. The software validates the barcode number against a database of authorized users.

Advantages

There are many benefits to using a registration software product for both the staff and the PC users.

More Equitable PC Sessions

PC and Internet users will be allowed to register two (2) one-hour sessions per day. These one-hour sessions cannot be consecutive, but may be reserved in advance. During the one-hour session, the patron will be reminded several times that the session is coming to an end, by having pop-up boxes appear on the screen.

Currently, our policy allows patrons to sign up for only one half- hour session per user, per day.

Public PCs located in the Children's Area are primarily for the use of children and will have 30-minute time limits.

Accurate Statistical Data

CybraryN software will allow the library to keep accurate statistical data on the usage of our public access computers, which is very important to us in applying for state funding and grant opportunities. It will also allow us to keep track of PC printing costs. The software will also allow us to assist law enforcement agencies to prevent and track criminal use of our public Internet PCs, in accordance with the USA Patriot Act. This software will not track site visits or record your Internet activity; this software acts only as a statistical and registration tool.

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Patron Authentication

As you may have noticed, our staff has already begun to ask for your birth date at checkout. This is because CybraryN will automatically check against our patron accounts to allow our PC users over the age of 18 unfiltered access to the Internet and our users under the age of 18 filtered access. The public Internet PCs located in the Children's Area of the branch will continue to be filtered regardless of the age of the user, to ensure a comfortable and safe environment for children and parents using those areas.

All you need is a Library Card

- **If you have a library card:**
 - You're all set to use this new procedure!
 - Simply type in your library barcode for Internet access.
- **If you do not have a library card:**
 - You will be required to obtain a temporary 30-day Internet Only Card at the Circulation Desk.
 - This card will only allow you to use the PC stations;
 - you will not be able to check out library materials.
 - These cards will be free of charge during this evaluation period.
 - Beginning on September 3, 2002, there will be a \$2.00 annual card fee, per card, to obtain an Internet Only Library Card for our non-patrons.
- **If you are here only for a one-time use of our PCs:**
 - Please obtain a Day Guest Card at the Reference Desk.
 - You will be required to register and leave some form of identification with the staff.
 - The identification will be returned to you when you are finished with your session.
 - You may register for a Guest Card three times in a six-month period during one calendar year.

Please Update Your Birth Date At The Circulation Desk

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Patron Confidentiality

The Library is committed to the confidentiality of our patrons. We do not use your personal information for any other reason other than to statistically monitor the use of our resources.

We do act in accordance with the USA Patriot Act, which was created by President Bush and Congressional leaders to respond to the legitimate concerns of national security.

Library PC Use Policy Subject to Revision

The Library's "Policy on Public Use of the Internet" may be revised from time to time.

Creating Library Policies Governing PC Use

Copyright 2003. Computers By Design, Inc.

You may copy, modify, and distribute this file, if you include this notice and do not charge for the distribution.

This file is provided "AS-IS" without warranties of any kind, including any implied warranties.