

## **Bogota Public Library: Internet Use Policy**

Bogota Public Library attempts to provide materials of the highest quality for use by all members of the community. The Internet provides access to a vast amount of information that can be enriching and enlightening. The Internet is accessible on each public computer in support of the Library's mission to meet the educational, informational, cultural and recreational needs of the community. The provision of access is granted in order to encourage lifelong learning. The Library does not endorse the content or information that may be found on the Internet.

The Library upholds the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights. As stated in that document, all users are to be provided with equal access to all library resources. An adopted interpretation by the New Jersey Library Association is appended to this policy.

The Internet is available on a first come first serve basis. The Library reserves the right to establish procedures for implementing time limits and/or sign-ups. **The Library reserves the right to end Internet sessions at any time.**

Patrons utilizing the Internet computers to play games, watch videos for the purpose of entertainment, or use chat rooms, and who have been on the computer for a minimum of ½ hour, may be asked by the Library staff to end their session if another patron needs to conduct research and no other computers are available. The search for materials and information takes precedence over all other activities.

### **DISCLAIMER**

Library Patrons are cautioned that the Internet is currently an unregulated medium and the content and images may be inaccurate, biased, or offensive. Each individual must determine the appropriateness and usefulness of the information found. The Library is not responsible nor has any control over content found on the Internet. Further, patrons should be aware that all security in electronic environments cannot be guaranteed and therefore transactions, files, and communications are vulnerable to unauthorized use and should be considered public. The Library will not be responsible for direct, indirect, or consequential damages related to the use of information found throughout the Library's Internet service.

As with all other library materials, parents or guardians should be aware that they are responsible for what their children access via the Internet. The Library affirms parents rights to direct and/or oversee their children's Internet activity. Families are encouraged to discuss guidelines and limitations of Internet use in accordance with their own family values.

### **PATRON RESPONSIBILITIES**

All patrons are expected to comply with the Internet use guidelines described here. As with all library resources the Internet is to be used respectfully and appropriately. Patrons are prohibited from modifying any computer settings even for temporary use. The use of the Internet on library computers to conduct commercial or business enterprises is permitted only so long as time on the computers is not excessive (Library staff reserves judgement on what constitutes excessive). The sending of threatening, harassing, offensive messages or images via the Internet or deliberately transmitting computer viruses is a crime. Failure to comply with the policies described here may result in the suspension of library privileges.

Patrons may download information onto external drives, but not onto the computers themselves. Patrons are encouraged to bring USB/Flash Drives. Users must adhere to copyright laws and licensing agreements when downloading material found on the Internet.

Any problems with the computers should be immediately reported to a Library staff member.

## **CHILD SAFETY**

Parents or guardians are solely responsible for what their children access via the Internet. As stated above, no filtering software has been installed on any library computers. Parents are particularly cautioned that unsupervised children may see things that the parent finds objectionable. Children should either be accompanied by a parent/caregiver or provided with guidelines for Internet use. The Library staff cannot be responsible for screening what is acceptable to children.

## **OFFENSIVE MATERIAL**

The Internet computers are located in a public space and patrons of all ages and sensibilities can easily view the screens. Library staff reserves the right to request that a patron exit a website if another patron finds the content to be offensive and inappropriate for public viewing. Patrons who fail to abide by this policy will be subject to suspension of their library privileges. Individuals who become argumentative or refuse to log-off when asked to do so by Library staff will have Internet access privileges suspended.

The Library staff is confident that individuals will use sound judgment as to what is acceptable to fellow community members.

The Library reserves the right to modify the policies as necessary to ensure the fair and reasonable use of the Internet.

The Library maintains no record of individuals using the Internet. The Library may keep a record of patrons violating the Internet Use Policy.

Consistent with the library's mission and with professional principles of public librarianship, this Internet Use Policy affirms the safeguarding of First Amendment rights, intellectual freedom, equity of access, confidentiality of information about users and their use of all library resources including electronic and individual responsibility. The Library affirms the following principles and user rights as delineated in the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights in Cyberspace.

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## **Restrictions of Internet Access and Use of Filtering Software in Libraries**

NJLA affirms the right of all users, regardless of age, to have unrestricted access to the Internet. The policy of the New Jersey Library Association is that people should be able to read whatever they want in a public library, so long as it is legal. Libraries may provide software filters for individuals who want tools to limit their own personal access to materials on the Internet, but NJLA opposes the deployment of filtering software for the sake of restricting general access to the Internet.

Libraries empower users by offering opportunities both for accessing the broadest range of information created by others and for creating and sharing information. Digital resources enhance the ability of libraries to fulfill this responsibility. Even when budgetary constraints limit their ability to purchase materials, libraries can provide access to everything available on the Internet.

Internet filtering is not analogous to collection development. Libraries are limited by budgetary and other constraints from acquiring published materials, thus collection development becomes an exercise in allocating limited resources. Filtering, by contrast, requires allocating limited resources for the specific purpose of blocking access to certain Internet resources.

NJLA takes the protection of children online very seriously. While voluntary use of Internet filters can assist parents in guiding their child, such technological “quick fixes” cannot teach critical reasoning skills to children, help children develop effective coping skills or foster an ethic of responsible use of the Internet. Only parents, librarians and educators working together can teach children the skills they need to navigate this essential source of information.

Federal courts have recognized a constitutional right to receive information in public libraries. The First Amendment protects materials that are controversial and even offensive. NJLA affirms that its support of this right and protection does not constitute condoning illegal activity in the library or through the Internet on library computers. Some library users, not wishing to infringe upon the rights of others, wish to shield themselves and their own children from unintentional exposure to texts and images they deem offensive. Libraries may accommodate these users by making filtering software available. This would not constitute restriction of the right to read, so long as the default setting for the filter is “off” and the users must deliberately turn it on.

Despite its opposition to default Internet filtering in libraries, NJLA acknowledges that libraries accepting certain types of federal funding must employ filtering in order to meet the requirements of the Children’s Internet Protection Act and that such filters must by law be turned “on.” NJLA urges libraries in such situations to make it clear to library patrons that filters may be turned “off” upon request.

Libraries making filtering software available should be aware that no software manufacturer can guarantee that its Internet filter will operate adequately to permit only desired materials while blocking undesired sites. They are therefore urged to develop and provide to their users an Internet filtering policy with information about their use of filters, how they are employed (e.g., whether the default setting is “on” or “off,” the procedure for turning off the filter), the limitations of filtering software, and about the possible unforeseen consequences of their use. Alternative strategies available to libraries include the use of privacy screens or arranging terminals away from public view.

Adopted by the NJLA Executive Board Jan. 21, 2014