

Kent County Public Library Internet Policy

To fulfill its mission of providing public access to information of all types in a wide range of formats, The Kent County Public 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.

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:

1. Develops and maintains special web sites for children and teens;
2. Encourages staff to guide minors away from materials that may be inappropriate; and,
3. Distribute a publication entitled *Child Safety on the Information Highway*.
4. Filters or Blocks Internet Sites that are obscene, contain child pornography, or that harmful to minors. Filters may be turned off for adults by a Librarian to enable access for bona fide research and other lawful purposes.

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 urges minors to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:

1. Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone number.
2. Let parents or guardians decide whether personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
3. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parents' or guardians' approval.
4. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make one uncomfortable.
5. 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.
6. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
7. Remember that everything one reads may not be true.
8. Patrons are not permitted to use instant communication software.

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.

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.

Public Users' 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 Kent County Public 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.

Guidelines on Access to Information

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

- The Library Bill of Rights
- Freedom to Read Statement

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.

Policy Subject to Revision¹

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

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on May 24th, 2004

¹ Originally created May 18, 2000.