

## **Internet Acceptable Use Policy**

### **June 20, 2023**

In response to advances in technology and the changing needs of the community, the Otsego County Library endeavors to develop collections, resources and services that meet the informational, individual and educational needs of a diverse community. It is within this context that the Otsego County Library offers access to the Internet.

The Internet is a global entity and the Library has no control over its content. Library staff and patrons can access a wealth of useful material that is not available locally, and the Internet has made a huge impact in our ability to find the information we need at home, school or work. But not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, complete or current information. Internet users should always take into consideration the reliability of the content provider. Patrons may also encounter sites that they find offensive or may be offensive to other library users.

All computers available for use in the library are filtered. Filtering means that computer software and/or hardware is used to sift out inappropriate material when a request is made by a patron to access a particular web site on a terminal. Filtering software is not failsafe. Sometimes sites that seem very appropriate are blocked, and sometimes web sites that seem inappropriate are not blocked.

The Library is a public forum designed for public inquiry and, therefore, the library attempts to use an unobtrusive filtering method so as not to deny access to information protected under the first amendment. On the other hand, text or images that may be reasonably believed to be prohibited by state and federal law should not be displayed in the library even when allowed by the filter.

The library must also comply with federal and state laws that protect children from viewing materials that may be deemed as "harmful to a minor." The library will attempt through its policies to keep such materials from being accessed and displayed on library computers. Parents are still advised to supervise their children's Internet sessions. Content that is viewed on a library computer will be considered as public display; therefore, images and text that are legal may be inappropriate for viewing in a public setting if displayed in such a way that other patrons, particularly children, cannot avoid viewing it. Patrons should be mindful and respectful of other patrons when displaying content including images, videos and other media.

All citizens have equal access to Internet workstations. Cardholders will be allowed 4 hours of use per day; guests with passes will be allowed 2 hours of use per day. Additional time may be permitted if computers are available; however, priority will be given to persons with education-, information-, or employment-related needs and persons using a computer for other purposes may be bumped during busy times.

Wireless Internet access is available at all library locations. Wireless users must comply with both the library's Internet Acceptable Use Policy and agree to the Wireless

Terms and Conditions provided when connecting to the wireless network. Wireless access is also filtered.

## **Description of System**

In order to further comply with CIPA, the Otsego County Library has taken certain measures to assist in the safe and effective use of the Internet by individuals under the age of 18, as follows:

To address the issue of access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet, including material that is harmful to minors, the Library:

- a. Maintains the filtering program described above to block Internet access to visual depictions that are obscene, child pornography and, in the case of use by minors, harmful to minors.
- b. Allows adults to request that content filters be turned off.

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 unauthorized disclosure of, use, and dissemination of personal identification regarding minors, the Library urges minors to follow the safety guidelines below:

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 or financial information should be provided online.
3. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone through a computer without parent or guardian approval.
4. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, or threatening.
5. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.

To address the issue of unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking" and other unlawful activities by minors online, minors and all other Library Internet users are required to agree to an online policy that states that "Computer resources may only be used for legal purposes."

Examples of unacceptable purposes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Harassment of other users or library staff;
- Libeling or slandering other users;
- Destruction of or damage to equipment, software or data belonging to the Library or other users;
- Disruption or unauthorized monitoring of electronic communications;
- Unauthorized copying of copyright-protected material.

Each workstation is lettered.

Persons need to present a current Otsego County Library card or picture identification, such as a valid driver's license, state identification card, or school ID. If no identification is presented but the staff member is reasonably sure of the identity of the patron, access will be allowed.

The Otsego County Library currently uses PC management software to facilitate computer usage. Patrons with a valid Otsego County Library card may walk up to any available

computer and login using their barcode number and pin number.

The patron pin number is typically the last 4 digits of their main telephone number. A patron can request a different 4-digit number if he/she does not wish to use the phone number.

Any person who does not have an Otsego County Library card can request a guest pass for a one-time login using picture identification. The library staff will issue a temporary barcode/ID number. A pin number is not needed when using a temporary guest pass. Guest users will need to click on the guest login button after entering their temporary number.

- The staff makes random checks of the public computer area to check for compliance with rules and policy. Individual stations can be remotely monitored, but to respect the privacy of individuals this ability will be used only when a complaint about display of inappropriate content is entered by a patron or staff member or if any violation of this agreement is suspected. Any library staff member who observes a person disregarding computer rules and/or viewing inappropriate sites will direct that person to discontinue the behavior or remove the material from the computer screen and refrain from such action or viewing in the future. Any person who refuses to comply with staff directions will be asked to leave the library premises. Law enforcement personnel may be called to enforce compliance with such a request.
  1. First offense – Patron receives a verbal warning and the offense is noted and filed.
  2. Second offense – Patron receives a two-week suspension of computer privileges and must immediately leave workstation. The suspension is noted and filed.
  3. Third offense – Patron loses computer privileges. Privileges may be reinstated only by the library board. The patron is required to submit a written letter for reinstatement that shows an understanding of the infraction and agreement to adhere to Internet Acceptable Use and Computer Use Policies.

The Library Director may bypass these steps and immediately revoke computer privileges if, using best judgment, it is in the best interests of the library, its staff or its patrons.

The Library Board of Trustees has adopted this policy in a good faith effort to comply with state law and federal laws. Library staff will continue to evaluate Internet access in the library and ways to regulate its use. This policy will be reviewed every twelve months.

The Otsego County Library uses Merit as its Internet provider. Therefore, patrons using the Library's Internet must follow the Merit Acceptable Use Policies ([https://www.merit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Acceptable\\_Use\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.merit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Acceptable_Use_Policy.pdf))

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