Public-Access Computer Policy

Please come to the library staff with questions.
Computer technology changes constantly.
We are happy to help you.

Windows-based personal computers with printing capabilities are available for public use at both the Central and Hurlock Branch Libraries. Catalog computers are available in the library for catalog use only.

In compliance with the State of Maryland's law on "Public Libraries--Internet Access by Minors--Obscene Materials," the Dorchester County Public Library has incorporated in this computer policy "procedures to prevent minors from obtaining access through the library, by means of the Internet, the World Wide Web, Usenet, or any other interactive computer service to materials that are obscene or constitute child pornography."

The Dorchester County Public Library has no control over the information on the Internet, and cannot be held responsible for its content. Parents should note that there may be things on the Internet that you do not wish your children to view.

All patrons under the age of 17 years of age will be provided literature on safe social networking, including cyber bullying awareness and response.

Due to the rapid change in technology, computer policies are subject to change without notice.

Who can use

Anyone is eligible to use the public-access computers, subject to the following conditions: All patrons need to have their library card or visitor's pass present to access the Internet or to print documents.

Library staff may at any time request computer users to present their library card and/or other ID to verify that the user is utilizing his or her own account. **The use of anyone else's account to access the computers is prohibited.**

The reasons for this policy are:

1. State law requires libraries to protect children under 17 from unfiltered access to the Internet and any messaging program.
2. The library supports the parent or guardian's right to restrict his or her child's access to the Internet.
3. This policy protects funds deposited on account for printing purposes.
4. This policy assures that computer users are in compliance with other library policies that state that computers may not be used by those owing fines or penalties of over $5.00.

Staff may limit the number of patrons using a computer depending upon space availability and noise level. Normally, two patrons may work at a computer terminal at one time.

Access to social networking sites, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, is not allowed on library computers for patrons 12 years of age or younger. The library card application form allows parents to restrict all Internet access for a child. Please see staff if you have any questions.

Patrons over 17 years of age may ask the library staff to remove the filter from library computers. Anyone under 17 may only use a filtered computer.

Any child under six may use a children's Internet computer only if a responsible adult is seated with the child.

Central Branch Only:

The reservation computers assign each patron to a public access computer, and must be used even when a computer is available. Patrons 12 years of age and younger are to use the Children's Department reservation station to use those computers. Patrons 13 and over are to use the adult reservation computer to access the computers in the young adult/adult section. To use the Maryland Room computer or microfilm reader, for unfiltered access, or an extended session, the patron must come to the Information Desk to make a reservation.

How

A Maryland public library card or a visitor's pass will be needed to use the computers. A resident of a county in Maryland which is not part of the Eastern Shore Library Consortium may need a visitor's pass to use the computers. Out-of-state visitors, or Maryland visitors who do not have a library card, aged 17 years or older, may present a photo ID with date of birth to obtain a visitor's pass. A visitor's pass is good for one day only (up to 4 hours of computer time), and the visiting patron should ask for assistance if printing.

Time is allocated for the computers in 30 minute (Children's Computers) or hour-long (Adult Computers) sessions. Patrons may sign on for a maximum of four hours each day.

Patrons may reserve the next available computer by using the bar code scanner at the appropriate reservation computer. The next available computer will be reserved for the patron. When it becomes available, the patron has five minutes to sign in for his/her

session. Failure to sign in during this five minute period may result in the patron having to get back in line. If a different computer becomes available during the patron's wait, the patron's reservation does not change to the newly available computer.

Computer sessions are automatically timed. The timer is visible at all times so the patron knows how much more time is available in the session. When other computers are available for other patrons, the computer session may be extended. The computer will give a warning near the end of the session. This gives the patron opportunity to print or save his work. **Any work not saved to a disk or USB flash drive will be erased when the session ends.**

Warning: The library does not recommend printing in the last five minutes of your session. There is a risk of the document not printing, as the system needs time to communicate with the printer, and yet the patron may be charged.

A patron may lock his computer if he needs to leave it briefly for any reason. Locking the computer will protect the privacy of the work, and prevent others from being able to access the computer while he is away. The time for the session is not extended and will still expire 30 or 60 minutes after the patron logged on, depending on computer.

Wireless Internet Connection

The Dorchester County Public Library will provide library users with wireless Internet access at its Central Library in Cambridge and at its Branch Library in Hurlock. We provide an electrical outlet when convenient for use with laptop computers.

The user's wireless Internet connection is filtered using Barracuda filtering software. Adults 17 or older who wish to obtain unfiltered access will have to use a library computer during business hours.

A user must provide his/her own wireless-enabled device. In brief, the user should go to Wireless Manager on their device, which will show available connections. The user should choose the unsecured connection labeled "Library".

Because of liability issues, the library staff is not authorized to assist the user with setting up his/her device to make a wireless connection nor with the operation of his/her device or its programs except for helping to locate the connection, unless the patron gives explicit permission.

Printers

All Computers in the library print to a central printer located behind the circulation desk. A patron wishing to print must bring his/her library card or visitor's pass to thecirculation desk and pay, either before or after printing. The cost is $0.15 per page for black-and -white or $0.25 per page for color prints. Library card holders may place a maximum of $20 on deposit for printing. Money deposited on account may be left in the account for future use or refunded upon request. If your card needs to be replaced and there is money on your account, a staff member must be alerted to transfer the balance to a new card at the time of replacement.

Filtering Software

The computers used by children under 17 years of age are filtered with Barracuda software. For those children whose parents do not allow access, the staff will direct the children to a non-Internet computer with access to certain games.

Computer patrons 17 years old or more may request unfiltered access by coming to the Information Desk to reserve a computer. This is advised if the patron is filling in an online form, such as a job application. Web chat may also be blocked when filter is active. The filter provides some protection against viruses and spam, sites promoting use or manufacture of illegal drugs, sexually explicit websites, and horror websites.

However, no filtering software product is 100% reliable. Filtering software products may fail to block inappropriate Internet sites. They may also block access to sites that you would deem appropriate.

Restrictions

Only library staff members are authorized to turn the computers on or off. Please ask for assistance.

Computer users are not to attempt to make any changes or modifications to system files that affect the configuration of the computer or alter the operation of that computer or network. Any computer user who does not observe this rule will be barred from using all Dorchester County Public Library computers.

Please note the security system on public access computers may prevent software loading. Occasionally this interferes with some functions such as: images being loaded from some digital cameras, certain game sites or from some CDs or DVDs a patron may bring in.

Library users who damage computer equipment or software will be held financially responsible for any costs incurred by the library for repairs or replacement.

Improper use of computer hardware, disturbance of other patrons, or display of obscene or offensive material will result in the suspension of computer user's time and may result in the long term suspension of computer privileges.

Warnings

Library users are required to let library staff know immediately if inappropriate or obscene material appears on the computer screen. Staff will check for the presence of the filter, then inform the filtering software company of the incident. If a staff member

observes such material without notification by the patron, the patron will be held at fault, and may be suspended for up to three months immediately.

If equipment is abused or computer policies are violated, patron will be:

1. Given written warning after the first occurrence. Depending on the offense, the staff member may also suspend the patron from using a library computer for periods ranging up to one month.
2. Suspended from using library computers for three months after the second occurrence.
3. If a computer user has twice been barred fro three months from using a computer, his/her next offense will result in losing computer privileges for one year.

Responsibilities

Users are responsible for reading and abiding by the library's rules regarding computer use.

Users are responsible for the correct use and handling of all computer equipment and software.

Users agree that they will not utilize library computers or internet access for illegal purpose, including violation of copyright and licensing laws.

Questions

If you have questions, please ask the staff at the Information Desk. We'll be happy to help you.

Questions or concern that library users have regarding this policy and its implementation should be brought respectively to the head of the reference or children's

department for review. If the library patron is not satisfied with that review, he/she subsequently should speak to the library director, who may refer the matter to the Board of Trustees if ti remains unresolved.

*This policy applies to all public access computers, including those computers designated for catalog use only.