



Computer and Internet Policy

Western Allegheny Community Library is committed to providing access to informational, educational, recreational and cultural resources for library users of all ages and backgrounds. Throughout its history, the Western Allegheny Community Library has made information available in a variety of formats, from print materials and audiovisual materials to presentations. The library's computer system provides the opportunity to integrate electronic resources from information networks around the world with the library's other resources and significantly supplements the library's existing collection. However, the Internet presents a number of significant challenges to both WACL and our patrons in understanding and evaluating both the benefits and the risks it offers. This policy represents WACL's best judgment about the most effective way to offer patrons access to this valuable but controversial resource.

WACL provides access to Internet resources equally to all library users and upholds and affirms the right of each individual to have access to constitutionally protected material. We strive to balance the rights of users to access information resources with the rights of users to work in a public environment free from sounds and images intended to harass other library users or library staff. Our staff are happy to assist patrons and other users who have computer software and/or internet usage questions.

Computer Use

Any patron may access a computer with their library card, regardless of fines owed. When logging in to a computer, the system will request the patron's library card number. If the patron does not have a library card, guest passes are available at the Circulation Desk.

Computer sessions are limited to one-hour intervals. If no one is waiting to use a computer, an extension may be granted. Extension requests should be made while there are at least 5 minutes remaining in the original session. If the extension is made after the system has already closed, all material will be lost.

Updated and approved by the Board of Trustees 10/19/2020

Updated and approved by the Board of Trustees 08/15/2022

Use of the computers will be on a first come, first served basis. Reservations are not accepted.

Printing and Downloading

Printing is available on all terminals. Patrons will be prompted to select what pages and copies they want printed. Staff is not able to alter print jobs once they are sent. The system will ask for the patron's name and inform them of the payment amount required to release the print job. Patrons are responsible to pay for all pages printed.

Saving to the computer's C: (hard) drive is not permitted. When computers restart, all information, files, and settings are erased. Compact discs (CDs), flash drives, and memory cards (SD cards) may be used to save work.

Internet Use

In response to advances in technology and the changing informational needs of our community, WACL endeavors to develop collections, resources, and services that meet the cultural, informational, educational, and recreational needs of our diverse community. It is within this context that WACL offers access to the Internet. The Internet is a global communication network and information resource.

Internet use will be managed in a manner consistent with the library's policy on acceptable use: The Internet workstation must be used in a responsible manner, respecting the rights of other users. Users may not make any attempt to damage computer equipment or software. Computer and Internet settings may not be changed. Users may not use the network to make unauthorized entry into other computational, informational or communication services or resources. Users may not invade the privacy of others or engage in any activity that is harassing or defamatory. Users may not jeopardize the security of access of the computer network or other networks on the Internet.

WACL does not monitor information on the web and has no control over the information accessed through this resource. The library does not assume responsibility for the accuracy, quality, or current nature of Internet information.

Updated and approved by the Board of Trustees 10/19/2020

Updated and approved by the Board of Trustees 08/15/2022

User Responsibilities

WACL expressly prohibits any use of library computers or its wireless services to conduct illegal activities or to access material that is obscene, contains or makes reference to explicit sexual materials as defined by PA law (18 PA. C.S. § 5903), contains child pornography or is harmful to minors. Patrons should not access sites that are inappropriate for viewing within a public setting. Patrons are responsible for complying with copyright laws and licensing agreements, for paying any fee-based service charges and for securing wireless devices from physical or digital theft.

Internet Filtering

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law that requires all computers in a public library to be filtered if that library accepts any federal funds for Internet access or computers used for Internet access. (U.S. Supreme Court decision: United States v. American Library Association, Inc., 539 U.S. 194 (2003)). The Electronic Information Network (eiNetwork), the countywide consortium which provides WACL's Internet access, receives such funding, and, therefore, as a member, WACL complies with the requirements of CIPA.

Web sites are filtered to prevent minors from viewing material that 1) is obscene, 2) contains child pornography or 3) is harmful to minors. The term "harmful to minors" is defined by the Communications Act of 1934 (47 USC § 254 (h)(7)(G)), as meaning any picture, image, graphic image file or other visual depiction that:

- Taken as a whole and with respect to minors, appeals to a prurient interest in nudity, sex or excretion;
- Depicts, describes or represents, in a patently offensive way with respect to what is suitable for minors, an actual or simulated sexual act or sexual contact, actual or simulated normal or perverted sexual acts or a lewd exhibition of the genitals;
- Taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value as to minors.

As necessary for bona fide research or other lawful purposes, any adult (18-years or older, as defined by CIPA) may have filtering disabled on library computers by a library staff member. Computers located in the Children's and Teens' areas of the library or those using the wireless internet service cannot be unfiltered.

Children's Use (Age 17 & Younger)

WACL complies with federal laws requiring internet access to be filtered for all minors age 17 and younger. Federal law also requires internet filtering even if a child is accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Filters are not foolproof. They can give people a false sense of security that they are protected from harmful material. In addition, filters can block access to sites that could be inoffensive or useful.

WACL requires that parents or guardians, just as with books, videos, and other formats, assume responsibility for monitoring their children's use of and access to information. A signature of a parent or legal guardian for a child's library card indicates and pledges that parents or guardians take, and will continue to take, responsibility for monitoring that child's access to all library materials and services, including the Internet. Parents are fully responsible for the activities of their children at the library. WACL does not act "in loco parentis" and acknowledges the exclusive responsibility of parents and guardians to guide their children's reading and computer use.

Not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, age-appropriate, complete or current information. WACL cannot and does not make any promise, commitment or guarantee, either expressed or implied, with respect to the quality or content of the information available.

Internet users, especially children and their parents, need to be good information consumers, questioning, evaluating and judging the validity of the information. Users are cautioned that articles, ideas, points of view and images can be found on the Internet that may be controversial, troubling, disturbing, upsetting, divergent, false, misleading and/or inflammatory.

Disclaimers

WACL has no liability for direct, indirect or consequential loss or damages related to the use of information or services accessed through the library's computer equipment or Wi-Fi service. The library is not responsible for the loss of personal data or damage to personal property.

WACL has installed and enforced the operation of filtering software in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act and has no liability for damages related to the operation of,

Updated and approved by the Board of Trustees 10/19/2020

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or failure of, the filtering technology or for its possible circumvention by users. Only parents and guardians can guide their children's use of the library and its resources.

Penalties for Misuse

Patrons or users who misuse computer equipment, attempt to harm data or networks, inappropriately share account information or passwords, attempt to circumvent normal log in procedures, bypass internet filters or otherwise irresponsibly use WACL's computers will be subject to the immediate suspension of user privileges and, where applicable, criminal prosecution. The user or parent/guardian of children aged 17 and younger will be responsible for any misuse and/or monetary damages resulting from such acts.

Further, the ability to post (including storage) or link to copyrighted material is governed by United States copyright law. WACL reserves the right to delete or disable access to any post or link if, in its judgment, the post or link involves violation of copyright law. Repeat infringers of copyright law may lose computer or library privileges.