

## **Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy**

*This policy is a system-wide policy for application to all libraries within the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System.*

### **I. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

1. As part of its mission, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System provides Internet access and personal computing resources for public use.
2. Internet access at all libraries of the B&ECPL is provided by B&ECPL and is subject to the terms of this policy.
3. The B&ECPL provides wireless access at all locations, enabling patrons who visit local libraries to use their privately owned computer equipment or wifi enabled devices to access the Internet. Wireless access does require user acceptance of the B&ECPL's *Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy*. All wireless access at any B&ECPL location is filtered.
4. Consistent with B&ECPL Circulation Policy, with the exception of the United States Government Printing Office (GPO), parental permission for Internet access using Library equipment is required for individuals who have not attained the age of 17. Individuals who have not attained the age of 17 may access the GPO website, and materials available on this site, from all B&ECPL public access computers. Restrictions have been put in place to prevent further access to the Internet.
5. The B&ECPL assumes no responsibility for any loss or damages, direct, indirect, incidental, or consequential, arising from patrons use of the Library's Internet connections or any other use of its personal computing resources.
6. The B&ECPL does not monitor and has no control over the information on the Internet and does not warrant or guarantee the reliability or truthfulness of information obtained from the Internet. As with all Library resources, patrons are advised to exercise their own critical judgment when evaluating the validity and appropriateness of information found on the Internet. Certain information may be inaccurate, misleading or offensive to some individuals.
7. As a limited public forum under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, the B&ECPL enforces reasonable "time, place and manner" restrictions on the public display of content, to ensure constitutionally protected access to information (including images) by users, while limiting unwanted exposure of that information to others.

8. Unauthorized access to B&ECPL's computer resources, including hacking and all other unlawful computer activity, is strictly prohibited.
9. To comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act and restrict access to online content that may be considered harmful to minors or offensive to adults, the B&ECPL employs technology protection measures (filters) on all computers with Internet access. As required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed to be obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors. Users are cautioned that filters are not foolproof and due to technological limitations cannot obstruct access to all potentially harmful or offensive content. In addition, filters may block access to some legitimate or constitutionally protected material found on the Internet. By law, individuals who have attained the age of 17 have the right to unfiltered Internet access for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

## II. CHILDREN, PARENTS AND THE INTERNET

1. Parents/guardians have the sole right and responsibility to decide what is appropriate for their child. The B&ECPL does not act *in loco parentis* (i.e., in the place or role of the parent). Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of their child's Internet activity. Children who use the Internet unsupervised may be exposed to inappropriate or disturbing information and images.
2. The B&ECPL has taken the following measures designed to assist in the safe and effective use of these resources by all minors (individuals who have not attained the age of 17). The B&ECPL:
  - a. Employs technology protection measures (filters) on all computers offering Internet access;
  - b. Develops and maintains special web pages for children and teens;
  - c. Develops and provides training programs on safe and effective Internet use; and
  - d. Provides online and printed information about child safety and information on educational or recreational uses of the Internet.
3. To address the issue of the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, social networking sites, or other forms of direct electronic communications, the B&ECPL advises parents and guardians to encourage minors to:
  - a. Never give out identifying information such as their full name, address, telephone number, or school name;
  - b. Let parents/guardians decide if personal information such as first name or age should be revealed;

- c. Always tell their parents or another adult they trust if they see something online that is frightening or that they do not understand, or if they observe or experience something that might be cyberbullying;
- d. Never respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable or uneasy;
- e. Never arrange to meet in person someone they have met online unless they discuss it with their parents/guardians and an adult accompanies them;
- f. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are; and
- g. Remember some things they read on the Internet may not be true.

### III. USER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. All patrons must abide by the Library's Rules of Conduct and are expected to use Internet and/or personal computing resources in a responsible and orderly manner. Failure to comply with the policies and regulations that govern the use of the Library's Internet access and personal computing resources may result in immediate suspension of Library privileges including but not limited to eviction from library buildings and notification of disciplinary process and, where necessary, civil liability and/or criminal prosecution. The following are prohibited:
  - a. Damaging equipment, software, or data;
  - b. Violating system security;
  - c. Violating any legal agreement (e.g., software licenses);
  - d. Using the Internet for any illegal activity, criminal purposes or violating any federal, state or local law (e.g., copyright, child pornography);
  - e. Using or installing personal software on Library equipment;
  - f. Engaging in any activity that is cyberbullying, harassing or defamatory; and
  - g. Engaging in activities that may be judged as disruptive by Library staff or patrons.

User responsibilities are not limited to the above and may be subject to change.

Adopted by the B&ECPL Board of Trustees at a public meeting, following normal public notice, on June 20, 2002.

Amended, July 18, 2002, December 18, 2003, February 16, 2006, September 28, 2006, July 19, 2012, May 21, 2015 and December 17, 2015.

Reviewed by Policy Committee September 22, 2016 - no changes.

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