



## Policy on Public Use of the Internet and Computers

To fulfill its mission of providing public access to information of all types in a wide range of formats, the Niagara Falls Public Library (NFPL) 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. In addition, the Library provides training for members of the public to assist them in using the Internet in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

### **General Policies**

To use the library's computers other than those reserved for the public catalog, individuals must present a valid Niagara Falls Public Library card or a card from any NIOGA Library System member library. Out of town visitors can be issued a temporary "guest pass."

The library reserves the right to set time limits for the use of various computers in the building.

PC's in the Children's Room are reserved for children.

As with all users, patrons who use the computers are subject to the [Library's Code of Conduct](#).

Internet access is on a first come, first served basis.

Unless staff approval has been given, there is a maximum of one person at a computer at a time.

Library staff's availability to help users with basic computer use or with Internet access is limited. We cannot offer personal instruction.

Downloading and saving to the hard drive is prohibited. The library is not responsible for any loss of data that may occur.

Users will be charged for printouts.

### **Access by Minors**

The Niagara Falls Public Library (NFPL) provides public access to the Internet and personal computing resources. Parental consent is required before the NFPL will provide Internet access to any youth under the age of 13. To comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act and restrict access to online content that may be considered harmful to minors, the NFPL employs technology protection measures (filters) on all computers with Internet access. Users must be cautioned that filters are not foolproof and due to technological limitations cannot obstruct access to all potentially harmful or offensive content.

Parents/legal guardians have the sole right and responsibility to decide what is appropriate for their child. The NFPL does not act in loco parentis (i.e., in the place or role of the parent). Parents/legal 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. Parents must be aware of their child's use of the Internet and discuss what information is acceptable for him/her to view or read.

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

- i. Develops and maintains special web sites for children and teens;
- ii. Develops and provides training programs on safe and effective Internet use; and
- iii. Encourages staff to guide minors away from materials that may be inappropriate.

B. To address the issues 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 provides training programs and also urges minors to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:

- i. Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone number.
- ii. Let parents or guardians decide whether personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
- iii. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parent or guardians' approval.
- iv. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make one uncomfortable.

v. 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.

vi. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.

vii Remember that everything one reads may not be true.

C. To address the issue of unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minor's 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 operations.

**Violations may result in loss of access to Internet and computer use and/or library privileges. Unlawful activities will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.**

### **Public User's 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 Niagara Falls 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 Niagara Falls Public Library is guided by the following American Library Association statements on access to information:

- The Library Bill of Rights
- Freedom to Read Statement
- Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights: Free Access to Libraries for Minors and Access to Electronic Information Services and Resources.

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.

*Source: Policy adopted by NFPL Board of Trustees on 6-27-2002*