

Burnham Memorial Library
Colchester, VT

POLICY ON PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

Burnham Memorial Library provides public computer workstations and open access to the internet to the public as an integral part of its mission to (1) provide information resources and services; (2) offer public access to current technology; and (3) foster information and computer literacy. Burnham Library computer users will have access to the internet, library subscription online databases, and basic office software applications.

The resources available on the internet expand the library's information services well beyond the traditional book and audio-visual collections and other electronic resources. In providing community access to the internet, the Burnham Library enhances its existing collections in size and depth and provides the opportunity for any citizen to utilize the wealth of resources on the internet.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the best use of the internet and other computer resources by the greatest number of library patrons. This policy and the *Terms and Conditions of Use of Burnham Library Public Computers* will be reviewed regularly by the Library Board of Trustees. This policy is subject to change as necessity dictates.

Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Privacy

The same standards of access, intellectual freedom, privacy and confidentiality endorsed by the Burnham Memorial Library for traditional resources and services also apply to electronic media, including use of the internet. The library affirms and upholds the *Library Bill of Rights* and its interpretation on *Access to Digital Resources and Services* adopted by the American Library Association.

The library seeks to protect the First Amendment rights of its patrons and their individual rights to privacy. However, computer users must be sensitive to the fact that workstations are in public areas and, therefore, images and text on the screen and at public printers are subject to view by a wider audience.

The library supports the laws of Vermont, which protect library and patron records as confidential information. However, computer users should be aware that if the library is presented with a legal and valid subpoena, search warrant or a court order, it will provide information to law enforcement personnel, which could include information that is stored on library computers.

The library's computer workstations may not be used for illegal activity or to access illegal materials or content. Accepted use must be legal and respectful of intellectual property and data ownership, system security, and privacy rights. The same holds true when using the library's Wi-Fi service.

Information Disclaimer

The internet offers open access to information, ideas, and commentary from around the world and provides a vast array of tools and resources. However, not all internet resources offer information that is accurate, complete, current or legal. The Burnham Library does not endorse viewpoints or vouch for the accuracy of information obtained via the Internet. The library does not monitor and has no control over the information accessed through the internet and cannot be held responsible for its content. Some resources and destinations contain content that some patrons may find personally offensive or disturbing. In keeping with its mission to provide free and open access to information, the Burnham Library does not use content filtering software on any of its computers.

The library recommends useful and reputable destinations and resources for patron use. Library staff will be happy to direct patrons to reputable sources and teach them the basics of information literacy.

All library patrons should take care to protect personal information, such as names, telephone numbers, and credit card information when using library computers or Wi-Fi. The Burnham Memorial Library is not responsible for protecting personal information gathered by outside Web sites.

Use of the Internet by Children and Teens

As with all library resources, the library affirms the right and responsibility of parents/guardians, *not* Burnham Memorial Library staff, to determine and monitor their minor children's use of the internet and computer software. (Minors are defined in this policy as children and young people under the age of 18 years.) Parents/guardians are responsible for their minor children's use of the library's resources and facilities. Parents/guardians who believe that their children cannot responsibly use the library's computers and/or internet access are requested to monitor their children's computer use. The library also encourages parents/guardians to visit www.connectsafely.org for helpful guides for online safety.

Use of Library Computers

Computers are available at no cost to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. Computer users may call ahead to reserve computer time, subject to the approval of a library staff member. Computer users are responsible for paying for all of their printing costs. Patrons should notify library staff immediately if they experience any problems with computer equipment or software. Library staff members are available to give basic help for those who use library computers. Staff will devote a *reasonable* amount of time assisting individuals, as is needed, but cannot devote large amounts of time for individual patron needs. Patrons should not expect expert knowledge or answers to anything other than general questions about computer use and the internet, including information about downloads or the specifics of individual e-mail programs and accounts. Library staff members *are* available to assist with the use of our subscription online databases, the library online catalog, and basic internet searching. Staff are not allowed to assist with the completion of online applications or forms due to possible liability issues.

The library offers a limited schedule of one-on-one computer use and instruction. Please call to make an appointment.

Unacceptable Uses of Library Computers and Wi-Fi

Among the uses that are considered unacceptable and which constitute a violation of this policy are the following:

1. Uses that violate the law. Transmitting of offensive or harassing messages; offering for sale or use any substance the possession or use of which is prohibited by law; viewing, transmitting or downloading illegal materials or content; downloading or transmitting confidential, trade secret information, or copyrighted materials.
2. Uses that cause harm to others or damage to their property. Engaging in defamation (harming another's reputation by lies); uploading a worm, virus, or other harmful form of programming or vandalism; participating in "hacking" activities, propagating SPAM, or any form of unauthorized access to library or other computers, networks, or information systems.
3. Uses that jeopardize the security of access of the computer network or other networks on the Internet. Disclosing or sharing the user's password with others; impersonating another user; using one's own software programs on the library's computers; altering the library's computer settings; damaging or modifying computer equipment or software. Other than personal portable USB storage devices or headphones, patrons may not use their own equipment on library computers.
4. Uses that compromise the safety and security of minors when using e-mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications. For minors under age 18: giving others private information about oneself or others, including credit card numbers and social security numbers; arranging a face-to-face meeting with someone one has "met" on the computer network or Internet without a parent's permission.

Downloading

Patrons may download information from the internet to their own personal portable USB storage devices, or to their own e-mail accounts. Under no circumstances may a patron download or save anything to the hard drive of any library computer or to a network drive, unless specifically designated to do so by a library staff member. The library assumes no responsibility for damage to personal portable USB storage devices that may result or for the loss of data. Please note that some downloads take longer than 30 minutes and downloads in progress may be cut short if others are waiting to use a computer.

Copyright

Materials obtained on or copied from the internet may be subject to laws that govern making reproductions of copyrighted works. A work protected by copyright may not be copied without the permission of the copyright owner unless use falls within the definition of "Fair Use."

Patrons are responsible for compliance with all international, national and state laws governing copyrighted materials. Even if materials on the Internet are not marked with the copyright

symbol, users should assume that all content is protected unless there is explicit permission on the materials to use them.

Indemnification

While the library endeavors to provide access to information of the highest quality, the library specifically disclaims any warrant as to the information's accuracy, timeliness, authoritativeness, usefulness, or fitness for a particular purpose. Internet resources may contain material of a controversial nature. Library patrons choose which electronic resources and internet sites they access on the library computers. The library cannot protect them from information that might be considered offensive or inaccurate. It remains the responsibility of the user--or the user's parent/guardian in the case of minors--to determine what is appropriate.

Some commercial databases or internet functions require a fee or the use of a personal credit card. Any fees or other financial risks are the responsibility of the individual user and not the responsibility of the library. In no event shall the Burnham Memorial Library have any liability for lost profits or for any direct or indirect, special, punitive, or consequential damage or any liability to any third party related to the use of information accessed through the library's internet service, even if the library is advised of the possibility of damages arising from use of its connection to the internet.

The library reserves the right to take prompt and appropriate action, including termination of computer access, to enforce this policy, the *Terms and Conditions of Use of Burnham Library Public Computers* and the *Library Code of Conduct*.

Approved by the Burnham Library Board of Trustees: January 19, 2006

Revised: December 19, 2024

Reviewed: May 25, 2017