



3612 Kutztown Rd • Reading PA 19605

Internet Policy

Purpose

The Muhlenberg Community Library is committed to the promotion of lifelong learning. As part of that commitment, the Muhlenberg Community Library will provide public access to the diverse and unique resources available via the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Children and the Internet

The *Children's Internet Protection Act* (pub.L. 106-554) requires that a library receiving federal funds must "have in place a policy of Internet safety for minors that includes the operation of a technology protection measure with respect to any computers with Internet access..." In compliance with this provision of federal law, the Berks County Public Libraries, of which the Muhlenberg Community Library is a member, have installed a filtering mechanism on all computers to prevent minors from accessing visual depictions that are (1) obscene, (2) child pornography, or (3) harmful to minors.

The term "harmful to minors" is defined by the Communications Act of 1934 (47 USC Section 254 [h][7]) 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.

Parents are reminded that filtering is not foolproof. It diminishes the likelihood that searchers will inadvertently retrieve text or images that they may find offensive, but does not completely eliminate that possibility. Filters also block access to sites that users would consider both inoffensive and useful. Parental supervision of young children searching the Internet is strongly advised.

The Muhlenberg Community Library, in combination with Berks County Public Libraries, having installed and enforced the operation of filtering software in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act, will have no liability for damages related to the operation of, or failure of, the filtering software, or for its circumvention by users.

Rights of Adults

Adults (those 18 and older) may request unfiltered access to the Internet for any purpose that does not violate the law or the policies of the Muhlenberg Community Library. The filter on an individual library-owned computer will be disabled in response to such a request. Library staff may not disable the filter on patron-owned laptops or other wireless access devices.

Right to Privacy

All library users have the right to expect that their information-seeking activities in the library are private and confidential. No records of Internet use by any identifiable minor or adult user are retained.

Conditions and Terms of Use

1. Because the Internet allows access to ideas, information and commentary from sources around the world, the libraries cannot control its content. The Internet is an unregulated medium. It also provides access to information that is inaccurate, illegal or that some may find offensive or disturbing. Therefore, individual users must accept responsibility for determining the validity and accuracy of information located on the Internet. The Muhlenberg Community Library is not responsible for any use made of information obtained from Internet resources.
2. The Internet and its available resources may contain material and ideas that are controversial and conflict with the personal beliefs of users. Parents or guardians, not library staff, are responsible for the information selected and/or accessed by their children.



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3. Viewing of certain materials in a public library may be considered improper in time, place or manner. The Muhlenberg Community Library reserves the right to terminate an Internet session that disrupts library services or involves user behavior that violates library policy.
4. Since software and information downloaded from the Internet may contain computer viruses, users are advised to utilize virus-checking software on their home computers. The Muhlenberg Community Library is not responsible for damage to user's disks or computers or for any loss of data, damage or liability that may occur from the use of the library's computers.
5. A cost recovery fee for printouts is charged. Black and white printouts cost 15 cents per page and color printouts cost 50 cents per page.

Unacceptable Uses of Computers

1. **Commercial or for-profit uses:** Patrons may not use public library Internet connections for any commercial or for-profit purpose.
2. **Uses that violate the law or encourage others to violate the law.** Transmitting of offensive or harassing messages; offering for sale or use any substance the possession of which is prohibited by law; viewing, transmitting or downloading pornographic materials or materials that encourage others to violate the law; downloading or transmitting confidential, trade secret information, or copyrighted materials. Even if materials on the networks are not marked with the copyright symbol, users should assume that all materials are protected unless there is explicit permission on the materials to use them.
3. **Uses that cause harm to others or damage to their property.** Engaging in defamation (harming another's reputation by lies); uploading a worm, virus, "Trojan horse," "time bomb" or other harmful form of programming or vandalism; participating in "hacking" activities or any form of unauthorized access to other computers, networks, or information systems.
4. **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.
5. **Uses that compromise the safety and security of minors when using e-mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications:** Minors under age 17: Giving private information about one's self 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.

User Responsibilities

1. Users will sign an Internet Agreement when registering for a library card and also will acknowledge the agreement on the sign-in sheet. Agreements for those under 18 years of age will require a parent/guardian signature on the juvenile application.
2. Patrons will need a Berks County library card with fines below \$10.00.
3. All users must sign-in and sign-out with the staff on a sheet provided at the Circulation Desk.
4. Patrons have a 60-minute access to Internet terminals; however, this period may be extended up to 60 more minutes if no patrons are waiting for a terminal. **No patron can have computer access for more than a total of 2 hours a day.**
5. Users are responsible for damage to equipment beyond what occurs with normal usage. Hardware and software may not be abused, modified or destroyed.

Staff Assistance

The staff of the Muhlenberg Community Library is trained and willing to assist with Internet searches. However, due to limited staffing and time constraints, patrons are encouraged to take the initiative and explore on their own.

Response to Violations

The user's access to the Muhlenberg Community Library's computer network and Internet is a **privilege**, not a right. Failure to comply with this policy and its procedures will result in the forfeiture of the user's right to access these computers.