

New Brunswick Library Service POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL	312
Policy - (Public Services - Programs & Services)	
INTERNET ACCESS	

POLICY

In accordance with our mandate to meet the educational, informational, cultural and recreational needs of New Brunswickers, the New Brunswick public library system will provide access to the Internet wherever possible.

PREAMBLE

The Internet has become a primary source of information on many topics. Public Libraries in New Brunswick, and across the country, are leading the charge to ensure that technology does not create two classes - the information rich and the information poor, the technology “haves” and “have nots”. Internet access is being offered routinely in public libraries across North America thereby serving those who cannot afford a computer and an Internet connection in their homes.

There are, however, concerns about the appropriateness and quality of information available on the Internet. This policy has been formulated to address those concerns and should be posted in a highly visible area at all Internet workstations available for public use.

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

“Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

(a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association”

Part 1, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

“It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.”

Canadian Library Association, Intellectual Freedom Position Statement

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USAGE GUIDELINES

The Internet is a vast storehouse of valuable information on a seemingly infinite variety of topics. Reference information such as news, weather, sports, stock quotes, travel, movie reviews, encyclopedias and airline fares are readily available. However, the Internet is a largely unregulated medium and is under the control of no governing body. As such, it is not possible for anyone to accurately control what information is accessible on the Internet.

Therefore, the New Brunswick public library system has established the following guidelines governing the use of the Internet in New Brunswick Public Libraries:

Internet Content

The New Brunswick public library system has no control over the information accessed through the Internet and cannot be held responsible for its content. No guarantee can be made as to the quality of Internet content. Information retrieved may be inaccurate, out of date or incomplete. Users are encouraged to carefully evaluate the validity of any information retrieved from the Internet.

Information found on the Internet may be controversial, offensive or inflammatory.

Users are asked to be considerate of the values of other library patrons when displaying content that may be considered controversial.

Children's use of the Internet

As is consistent with the New Brunswick public library system's open access policy, responsibility for a child's use of the Internet rests solely with his or her parents or legal guardian. "The best way to ensure that your children are having positive online experiences is to stay in touch with what they are doing." *National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Interactive Services Association. "Child Safety on the Information Super Highway".*

The policy on Library Membership (# 301) states that "The membership card for a child under 13 years of age must be signed by a parent/guardian. By signing the card, the parent/guardian authorizes the child to use the services and the

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collections provided by the library.” Based on this, children under 13 are entitled to use the Internet.

Since a child of 13 years and up can get his/her own library card, he/is entitled to full access to the Internet without restriction.

Filters

Filtering software will not be installed in the New Brunswick public library system. Filters are expensive, difficult to install, troubleshoot and maintain. More importantly, they produce inconsistent results, often blocking access to useful information while allowing access to information that the user wishes to filter out. It is also often the case that site developers who produce sites that may be blocked by filters, actively try to circumvent blockage through such methods as changing their URL (address) and using synonyms of words that have been blocked.

Training

Staff cannot provide training on Internet use but the New Brunswick Library Service website provides links to Internet training tutorials in both French and English.

Usage warnings:

Users are cautioned that security in an electronic environment cannot be guaranteed and all information sent out over the Internet should be considered public.

The library is not responsible for any damages or loss of data experienced by library patrons while using library equipment, programs or materials.

Usage Restrictions:

Users are warned against:

(a) Making unauthorized copies of data protected by copyright or digital property laws,

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(b) Intentionally damaging library equipment or altering the setup of computers in use at the library; (c) Illegal or unethical use of the Internet; (d) Invading the privacy of others by attempting to modify or gain access to files, passwords, or data belonging to others; (e) Seeking access to any computer system via the Internet.

These restrictions are examples of misuse. Library staff reserve the right to restrict any behaviour they feel is inappropriate.

Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in the loss of computer privileges.

BRANCH LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Branches may regulate, at the local level and in consultation with their Regional Librarian, the issues of scheduling and provision of services such as printing, email, downloading of information to disk or hard drive, chat lines, virus protection and the use of personal software and disks.

While charging fees for Internet access is not encouraged, in cases where in the absence of fees no access could be provided, fees may be charged. All decisions regarding fees should be discussed with the Regional Librarian.

REFERENCES

1. American Library Association. *Resolution on the use of Filtering Software in libraries*
2. Burt, David. "Policies for the use of Public Internet Workstations in Public Libraries". *Public Libraries*. V.36, N.3. May/June 1997. 156-9
3. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. *Fundamental Freedoms*
4. Canadian Library Association. (a) *Statement on Internet Access*; (b) *Information and Telecommunications Access Principles*; (c) *Intellectual Freedom Position Statement*.
5. *Internet Filter Assessment Project* (<http://www.bluehighways.com/tifap/>)
6. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children & the Interactive Services Association. *Child Safety on the Information Super Highway*.
7. United States Supreme Court. *Sweeping re-affirmation of core First Amendment principles*. June 26, 1997.

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Sample Internet Polices Consulted:

Berkely Public Library, Cape Breton Regional Library, Chicago Public Library, Detroit Public Library, Greater Victoria Public Library, Hamilton Public Library, Jacksonville Public Library, Niagara Falls Public Library, Nova Scotia Regional Libraries, Vancouver Public Library, and Westmount Public Library.