Computer and Internet Use Policy

Approved by the Joint Board of Library Trustees February 9, 2024

Purpose:

The Hamilton-Wenham Public Library is dedicated to encouraging patrons in lifelong learning and makes available technology resources, such as computers with internet access and free WIFI, designated by the Library for use by patrons in accordance with this policy. The purpose of this policy is to outline acceptable use of these technology resources. This policy is to be used in conjunction with other Library policies, and all federal, state, and local laws and regulations concerning the use of property and computing resources. Use of the technology resources constitutes acceptance of this Policy.

Computer and Internet Access:

The Hamilton-Wenham Public Library provides Library patrons with technology resources consisting of free access to the internet through its public internet workstations and WIFI network access as an informational and educational resource. These workstations also have some popular word processing and office software installed on them for use by the public. The Library may place limitations on time and manner of computer use to allocate computer and internet access as equitably as possible.

Library staff will provide help and advice on using the workstations, as appropriate and as time allows. Staff are prohibited from filling out online forms or entering any patron's private information into any website or database. Patrons are encouraged to make an appointment with a reference staff member or to visit during a technology help session if they need in depth help with a device or service.

The internet is an unmoderated medium and includes information that may be erroneous, out-of-date, controversial or sexually explicit. The provision of internet access does not imply that the Library endorses the content or point of view of any of the information or commentary that may be found on the internet. The user is responsible for identifying and/or avoiding such information. Public internet workstations are located in public areas, which are shared by patrons of all ages and backgrounds. Patrons are expected to refrain from displaying graphics which are inappropriate for public viewing, or playing audio that could disturb other patrons. The Library reserves the right for staff members to require an individual to discontinue the display of material that could be considered inappropriate in time, place or manner. Patrons who have been repeatedly warned about the display of such material will not be given further access to the Library's technology resources.

Internet resources are to be used in a responsible manner consistent with educational, informational, and recreational purposes. The Library will not tolerate use of its workstations and network in any way that violates local, state, and/or federal law. Unacceptable use, as outlined below, of the Library's internet and WIFI is prohibited and will result in the loss of computer privileges. Illegal acts may be subject to prosecution by local, state or federal officials.

Users are cautioned that security in an electronic environment such as the internet cannot be guaranteed and that all transactions, files, and communications are vulnerable to unauthorized access and should therefore be considered public. The Library assumes no responsibility for any damages, direct or indirect, arising from its connections to the internet.

Usage Guidelines:
- Public workstations are available on a first come, first serve basis.
- Black and white and color printing is available for a fee.
- Headphones are required throughout the library except the study rooms. Patrons may bring their own headphones or they are available to purchase at the Reference Desk for a nominal fee. Any use of audio should be at a volume not to disturb other patrons.
- Users must cooperate with library staff as requested to ensure equitable computer use and a safe computing environment.
- Users may plug appropriate devices into the front ports of the public workstations (headphones, storage devices, etc.). Patrons may not remove anything from the back of the public workstations.
- Materials that have been downloaded or saved to the computer are automatically purged in the event of a power outage or the manual shutdown or restart of public computers. This is to protect patron privacy and to prevent the proliferation of personal files and extraneous or malicious software on our computers.

Unacceptable Use:
Among the uses that are considered unacceptable, and which constitute a violation of this policy include the following:
- Changing the configuration of the hardware or software (including changing screen savers or desktop settings) or downloading to the hard drive
- Destroying or damaging equipment
- Violating copyright law or software licenses
- Attempting to gain unauthorized access to library equipment, computers or resources
- Obstructing or disturbing the work of others
- Engaging in any activity that is deliberately and maliciously offensive, libelous, or slanderous
- Using the internet for illegal purposes that violate local, state or federal laws
- Viewing pornographic materials and other graphic images considered inappropriate for a public setting
- Transmission of threatening, harassing, defamatory or obscene materials

Use of the Internet by Minors:

Parents and guardians are responsible for what their minor children view on the internet. Parents/guardians who wish to limit or restrict their minors' access to the internet must accompany minors while they are using the internet at the Library. Parents are encouraged to share this learning experience with their minor children. The library does not censor or filter the internet. Be aware that there are images and information that might be personally offensive, controversial or inappropriate to you, to minors, Library staff, or other patrons. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to advise their minors concerning the danger of providing names, addresses and telephone numbers through chat rooms, instant messaging, emails, gaming and other social media.

The children's room provides internet access to children through sixth grade/age 12 and their parent/caregiver. Adults and teens unaccompanied by children are not permitted to use the computers in the Children's Room.

WIFI Access:

The Library permits patrons to connect their own equipment to the internet via a free wireless network. Users of the Library's free WIFI on their personal device are expected to abide by all rules and procedures in a responsible and courteous manner and must abide by the terms of this policy. The library's wireless network is unencrypted; data transferred on unencrypted networks can make connected devices vulnerable to security attacks. Patrons using the library's wireless network accept this risk and the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library accepts no responsibility for damage or loss resulting from use of its wireless network. Some devices may not be compatible with the library's wireless network. Patrons who have difficulty connecting are encouraged to seek help at the reference desk, however, library staff are not responsible for troubleshooting patron's devices.

Copyright

U.S. Copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code) prohibits unauthorized reproduction or distribution of copyrighted materials except when permitted by "fair use" principles. Users may not copy or distribute electronic materials, including text, images, programs, e-mail, or data, without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. Responsibility for the consequences of copyright infringement lies solely with the user, as the Library expressly disclaims any liability or responsibility resulting from such use.

Disclaimer / Liability:

While the Library endeavors to provide access to technology resources, the Library specifically disclaims any warranty as to the availability to, or the accuracy of the information obtained through, these technology resources. Software and information from any source, including the internet, may contain computer viruses. The Library is not responsible for any damage to a user's own resources or for any loss of data, damage or liability that may occur from the use of the Library's technology resources. All personal devices should be on one's person or within one's sight at all times. The Library is not responsible for the loss, damage or theft of personal property.

Violations/Suspension of User Privileges:

Patron access to the Library technology resources is a privilege, not a right. Violation of the policies and regulations that govern the use of the Library's technology resources may result in suspension or loss of the privilege to use these resources. Library staff are authorized to take immediate action to protect the security of computers and the network. Library staff are authorized to terminate a user's ongoing session and refer repeated violations to the Library Director. This may result in the revocation of a user's computer privileges. Illegal acts involving Library resources may also be reported to local authorities and subject to prosecution by local, state or federal authorities. The Library reserves the right to take appropriate action to ensure compliance with this policy. Decisions regarding the appropriate response to violations will be made by the Library Director. Appeals should be made in writing and submitted to the Library Board of Trustees.