

## Computer and Internet Use & Safety Policy

Revised 1/18/2023

The North Valley Public Library provides free access to the internet for the purpose of research, conducting personal business, information, education, communication, and recreation. Public access PCs provide word processing and other software selections.

### **Confidentiality and Patron Responsibility**

The North Valley Public Library upholds the right of confidentiality and privacy for all library users. The library strives to balance the rights of users to access information resources with the rights of staff and patrons to work in a public environment free from offensive sounds and images. Users are expected to respect the sensibilities of others when accessing information. Public access computers are located in public areas that are shared by library users of all ages, sensibilities, and backgrounds. Patrons are asked to consider this when accessing potentially controversial information or images. The library reserves the right to ask computer users to terminate the displays of screens that may be offensive to others.

### **Equitable Access & Limits**

Use of the public access computers is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Login sessions are 120 minutes and can be ended early. Patrons are allowed multiple sessions during slow times. Computer use may not be extended during high demand times. If all computers are in use, staff will look at who had been on the longest and not allow them to extend their session. Patrons using computers for school or business are granted special exceptions not allowed for recreation, such as gaming etc. If a patron requests an extension for school or business needs, such as a test, or application, that cannot be saved or interrupted, the library will extend the time to allow the patron to finish the task.

### **Computer and Internet Use Guidelines**

- **Respect others' privacy** by not attempting to observe or comment on what others are viewing. Remain sensitive to the fact that you are working in a public environment shared by people of all ages.
- **Keep it Quiet.**
  - Do not gather around computers when doing so may obstruct others or create noise that distracts others.
  - Headphones or earbuds must be used to listen to any sound coming from either the public access computers or a personal laptop or device. If sound is either too loud through a listening device or is coming directly from a computer or device, staff may ask you to turn the volume down or off so as not to disturb other patrons.
  - When using public access computers, please avoid loud or boisterous conversation that may disturb others. Patrons may not use sounds (i.e. singing, talking, etc) that might be disruptive to others.
  - As a courtesy to others, avoid conducting phone conversations while at the computers.
- **Log out**
  - As a courtesy to others, log off completely when you are finished with your session.

- The Library does not assure the security or confidentiality of data, including email, when using any of the public computers. Computer users are responsible for ensuring that they are transacting with secure websites when transmitting personal data over the Internet.
- **No food or drink is allowed at the computer stations.**

## **Desktop Computers**

There is one computer workstation available for people with low vision, blindness or low dexterity. There is one adjustable-height computer workstation for people in wheelchairs. Patrons requiring these accommodations are given priority to use these workstations. Patrons who do not require accommodations may be asked to give up an accessible workstation for someone who does.

There are two computers in the children's room that are for patrons 12 and younger.

A maximum of two persons may sit/work together on one computer.

There is a per page charge for printing from public computers.

The public internet terminals are programmed to shut down prior to library closure.

**Wireless Internet (Wi-Fi)** access is provided free of charge for patrons with wireless enabled laptops or devices. As with any public Wi-Fi, the secure connection is still vulnerable and should be used with caution as the password is shared with multiple users. The Library does not assure the security of data when using any of the public access computers or wireless networks. All activity that violates this policy with regard to library owned computers is also prohibited on equipment connected to the library's wireless networks.

## **Staff Computers**

User's storage devices and wireless devices may not be connected directly to staff computers.

## **Misuse of Library Computers**

Illegal activities and activities that interfere with, or disrupt, the network, users, services, or equipment, are prohibited, and not protected by the library's privacy policy. The library does not routinely monitor public computers, but reserves the right to do so when a violation of this policy or illegal activity is suspected. Staff is authorized to take immediate action to protect the security of computers and the network and to enforce the following rules. This includes confiscating any removable media, requiring a user to leave a computer or the premises, and contacting law enforcement authorities.

Internet users are responsible for complying with copyright law, licensing agreements and the policies of individual web sites that they view. The library takes copyright infringement and illegal downloading seriously and has filters to block pornographic material. The library takes appropriate measures to prevent misuse such as changing the Wi-Fi password, tracking IPs as necessary, and blocking proxy servers. Misuse of computer equipment or software may result in loss of computer privileges, loss of library privileges and prosecution. Violators will be asked to leave and may be

denied use of the equipment for a length of time, dependent on the severity of the violation. Violators will also be held responsible for damages resulting from their actions.

**Misuse** includes but is not limited to:

- Failing to pay for printing
- Viewing material that violates federal, state or local laws or regulations, including those regarding accessing, viewing, printing and distributing obscenity or child pornography
- Hacking into the library computer system or any other computer system
- Mishandling, damaging or attempting to damage computer equipment or software
- Tampering with computer settings
- Interfering with system operations, integrity or security
- Attempting to gain or gaining access to another person's files
- Engaging in any activity that is deliberately offensive or creates an intimidating or hostile environment
- Violating copyright laws and software licensing agreements or the policies of the individual web sites that you view
- Failing to comply with a staff person's request to give up a computer
- Any other violation of the Computer and Internet Use Policy

### **Caveats**

The internet is a global entity with a wide variety of content. Though it can provide access to excellent information, it also contains information that may be inaccurate, outdated, or offensive to individuals. Library patrons use it at their own risk. The use of Internet resources carries with it the responsibility to evaluate the quality of information accessed. The availability of information on the internet does not constitute endorsement of the content by the North Valley Public Library.

The library does not select the material on the internet and has no means or statutory authority to assure that only constitutionally protected material is available on the internet. The authority to determine what illegal (obscene) content rests with the Ravalli County Attorney and the Montana Attorney General.

Files may be downloaded using supported media. Software and other files downloaded from the internet may contain viruses or spyware that may infect other computers. The library is not responsible for damage to media or corruption of data, including that caused by mechanical malfunction caused by virus or spyware infection while using library computers.

### **Internet Safety Introduction**

It is the policy of the North Valley Public Library to:

- (a) prevent user access over its computer network to, or transmission of, inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications;
- (b) prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity;
- (c) prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information of minors; and
- (d) comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)].

### **Definitions**

Key terms are as defined in the [Children's Internet Protection Act](#).

### **Access to Inappropriate Material**

To the extent practical, technology protection measures (or “Internet filters”) shall be used to block or filter Internet, or other forms of electronic communications, access to inappropriate information.

Specifically, as required by the Children’s Internet Protection Act, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene or child pornography, or to any material deemed harmful to minors.

### **Inappropriate Network Usage**

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the North Valley Public Library online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications.

Specifically, as required by the Children’s Internet Protection Act, prevention of inappropriate network usage includes: (a) unauthorized access, including so-called ‘hacking,’ and other unlawful activities; and (b) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors.

### **Education, Supervision and Monitoring**

It shall be the responsibility of all members of the North Valley Public Library staff to educate, supervise and monitor appropriate usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy, the Children’s Internet Protection Act, the Neighborhood Children’s Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

Procedures for modifying any technology protection measures shall be the responsibility of the library director or designated representatives.

### **Supervising Children’s Use**

The public library, unlike schools, does not serve in loco parentis (in place of a parent). Librarians cannot act in the place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet or other library resources. The responsibility for what minors read or view rests with parents or guardians. Parents or legal guardians should personally supervise such use if they are concerned that a minor will not responsibly use the Internet.

The following are recommended guidelines for parents and guardians to ensure that children have positive online experiences, whether at home or in the library.

- Use the internet as a family. Join your children in internet exploration.
- Explore the wide range of available information and tell your children about sites you consider inappropriate for them.
- Encourage children to use sites you recommend and counsel them to avoid sites you consider unsuitable.
- Provide guidelines for your children on the amount of time they spend online, just as for television viewing.
- Instruct children NEVER to give out personal information (name, address, password, telephone number, credit card number) online.
- Teach children to be good online consumers. As with print information, consider the source, date, and accuracy of online information.

- Teach your children not to bully other children or how to handle bullies.
- Talk about social media with your children.

Library staff will assist users with basic computer and printer functions. As it does with other library resources, the library can provide training on electronic resources and more in depth training at classes or by appointment. The library will make information available to help parents and guardians in their efforts to exercise their rights and responsibilities regarding their own children's use of electronic resources.

**Adoption**

An Internet Safety Policy was first adopted by the Board of the North Valley Public Library at a public meeting, following normal public notice, on January 16, 2014.

The policy is reviewed every few years at a public meeting following public notice. The latest review was January 18, 2023.