

# Internet and Public Computer Use Policy

Rice Public Library provides materials and services to help community residents of all ages meet their educational, recreational and professional needs. The Library serves as a lifelong learning center for all members of the community. In response to advances in technology and the growing availability of information in electronic formats, Rice Public Library provides access to the Internet and other publicly available information systems.

Internet and public computer use shall be managed in a manner consistent with other Rice Public Library service policies, including its Rules of Conduct. Misuse of the electronic resources of the Library or use of the Internet shall result in the loss of computer privileges for the user. Such misuse includes, but is not limited to:

1. using computers for illegal activities;
2. viewing obscene or sexually explicit images or videos;
3. hacking into the Library's computer system or any other computer system;
4. downloading malicious files, applications or programs to public computers;
5. sending harassing communications to other computer users;
6. violating copyright and/or software licensing agreements.

The Library shall maintain a set of publicly-accessible web pages on the Internet for the purposes of:

1. providing information about Library services, policies, collections and programs;
2. facilitating citizen communication with the library staff;
3. directing users to quality information and resources.

## Staff Proficiency and Levels of Service

Rice Public Library staff has developed a familiarity with electronic resources and can use this knowledge to assist library users in locating information to meet their needs. Among the staff, experience with the Internet and web-based applications varies, so please be advised that the assistance that any one person can provide may be limited. Library staff will provide varying levels of assistance in the use of library computers, with the greatest time and emphasis placed on research and information retrieval activities and employment-related activities. For those needing additional or remedial assistance, library staff may provide one-on-one assistance by appointment, as time allows.

**Limited Assistance:** The productivity applications and online services available through the Internet are numerous, varied and, in many cases, extremely complex. Individual library staff members cannot become expert in all of them. Therefore, the library staff members are not expected to provide in-depth assistance in the use of various productivity applications (such as OpenOffice or Microsoft Office), nor in the various online services (such as e-commerce sites, blogging sites, web-based productivity sites, etc.). Patrons needing in-depth assistance with basic computing skills will generally be referred to sources of additional information or instruction such as online tutorials or local adult education classes.

**Basic Assistance:** Library staff will provide patrons with brief “tutorials” on how to navigate the Internet using web browsers, how to print materials, how to use word processing software and how to set up a free, web-based email account.

**In-depth Assistance:** Library staff will provide in-depth assistance as needed and as time allows, to patrons in the use of standard sources of online information, such as the library catalogs, online databases such as MARVEL, online training and tutorials such as Learning Express, and search engines.

Patrons using their own laptop or tablet computers are responsible for configuring their own access to the library’s wireless Internet service. Library staff is not trained and is not expected to engage in technical troubleshooting of patrons’ computers, when for some reason those computers are unable to connect to the wireless Internet service. Staff may troubleshoot the wireless access point or router, if connection problems are reported.

**Additional Assistance:** The staff computer assistance is restricted to within the library buildings. Staff is **Not** permitted to render computer assistance off site at any time.

## Privacy

All library records regarding a patron’s use of the Internet shall be kept confidential. Those records may only be released with the express written permission of the patron involved or per order of a court. Rice Public Library endorses the Library Bill of Rights, including the new interpretation on electronic access, as adopted by the American Library Association, and supports the democratic principle of every citizen’s right to free access to information.

## Content

Rice Public Library has no control over the information accessed through the Internet and cannot be held responsible for its content. The Internet is a global entity, with a highly diverse user population. While much of the information available is of a high quality, the Internet also

contains information that is inaccurate, outdated or personally offensive. The availability of information does not constitute endorsement of the content by the Rice Public Library and library patrons should use it at their own risk. Access, use or dissemination of information via the Internet in the library is the responsibility of the user. In the case of minors, it is a joint responsibility of the user and the parent or guardian. The Rice Library *does not* use internet filters on public computers or the wireless Internet access point.

### **Minors and Internet Use**

Rice Public Library, unlike schools, does not serve in loco parentis (in place of a parent). Library staff cannot act in place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet. The responsibility of what minors read or view on the Internet rests with parents or guardians.

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