



Using Public Computer Services in Somerset Libraries

Somerset Library Service will ensure all staff and users are aware of the computer services provided and the terms and conditions of their use to which all computer users must agree.

Key Messages

- Computer services are available to personal members of the Somerset Library Service, LibrariesWest and library visitors.
- Services available include filtered internet access including web mail services, Microsoft Office software and selected open source applications.
- Somerset Library Service provides up to 120 minutes a day free computer use subject to availability and individual library opening hours.
- Children aged 10-15 require signed consent to use the full internet service and children under-10 must be accompanied by an adult.
- Computers can be booked up to 7 days in advance.
- Printing is available at a standard rate per sheet.
- Files can be downloaded from or saved to a portable device (rewritable CD or data stick) or an on-line file share.
- Users of the service must not download program files, visit illegal information or web-sites, access or transmit offensive or illegal material.
- Access to the computer will be withdrawn if illegal or offensive activities, or the viewing or distribution of illegal materials are undertaken or if any library terms and conditions are contravened.
- The library service cannot guarantee that computer services will always be available during library hours or guarantee network speeds or internet availability.
- Computer Services are provided on a self-help basis. Library staff will help within time constraints and the limits of personal knowledge.

This “policy on a page” is a summary of the detailed policy document please ensure you read, understand and comply with the full policy.

Policy on the use of Public Computer Services in Somerset Libraries

Policy statement

Somerset County Council provides public computers with internet access in libraries for use by customers. This service is provided to support customers' information, education and recreational needs.

Somerset Library Service will ensure all staff and users are aware of the computer services provided and the terms and conditions of their use.

All customers are required to agree and follow the terms and conditions, below, each time they use a Somerset Libraries computer.

Terms and conditions

1. What we offer

- 1.1 Somerset Library Services provide free public access computers which can be used by library members for up to 120 minutes each day. We do this to support the information, educational and recreational needs of our communities.
- 1.2 We offer access to the internet and software applications such as word-processing, spread sheets and email. The internet access that we provide is a filtered service. Web filtering software is used to block a range of websites that are not appropriate for a public library environment (including pornography, illegal download sites, violent and offensive material). However, Somerset County Council cannot guarantee that all illegal and offensive sites will be blocked. We will consider unblocking specific filtered sites on request; however, Somerset County Council will retain the final decision.
- 1.3 Somerset County Council cannot guarantee that a web site will be available when you wish to view it. There are many reasons why a website may be unavailable or why it may not be possible to download / save information from a web site. The speed at which information is downloaded is beyond our control. We cannot guarantee that a particular site will be available or that information will transmit quickly.
- 1.4 The software applications available on our PCs include Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access and Publisher) and Libre Office (an open source alternative to Microsoft Office). Web based email services can be accessed via the internet.
- 1.5 We also have Supernova Access Suite available on all PCs. This is software to assist users with visual impairments. It has many features including magnification, text reading and the ability to change the colours shown on screen.
- 1.6 We do not provide data storage and all our PCs are set to delete local user files and web history automatically on log-out to protect your privacy and data security. This means you will need to save your work to a portable data storage device (a CD-ROM or data stick) or to your cloud storage area. You can bring in your own portable storage device to use on any library public access computer. However the library service cannot guarantee that all devices will be compatible with library computers. Somerset County

Council does not accept any liability for the loss of, or damage to, any data saved by you. CDs and data sticks can be purchased from most libraries.

- 1.7 Regularly updated virus checking software runs constantly on library computers and checks files for computer viruses as they are opened.
- 1.8 Printing is available and printouts are charged at a standard rate per sheet. Current charges are on display in all libraries and are available via the web site. This includes any wastage other than caused by a malfunction of the printer, computer or software.
- 1.9 In no event will Somerset County Council be liable for any loss or damage including, without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage, or loss or damages whatsoever arising from use of our computer services

2. Support available

- 2.1 Computer services are provided on a self-help basis. Library staff can assist within time constraints and the limits of their personal knowledge. Staff may not be able to help with every IT enquiry and will explain this to IT users if they are unable to help. Library staff will not assist users with online financial transactions, including banking and purchasing due to the sensitivity of the data involved.
- 2.2 Library staff can direct you towards computer training both within and outside the library service and suggest books and web sites which may assist you.

3. Who can use our public computer services?

Adult members

- 3.1 If you are a personal member of the library service and over 15 years of age you can use our full range of computer services. Somerset is part of LibrariesWest. Members of the 7 Library Services in the LibrariesWest partnership: Somerset, Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, Dorset, Poole and South Gloucestershire can use the Somerset public access computers.
- 3.2 You need to know your personal library card number and your PIN (Personal Identification Number). You are advised to bring your library card with you each time you use the library and to keep your PIN securely. You should not let anyone else use your personal library card and are responsible for any use of library services made with your card.
- 3.3 You are only entitled to use one library card within Somerset, even if you have more than one card from the LibrariesWest area.
- 3.4 To use the Internet, your card should be registered for Internet Access with the library service.

Visitors

3.5 Visitors to Somerset Libraries can book public access PCs for up to 60 minute sessions and up to a maximum of 120 minutes per day, subject to availability and opening hours. Temporary visitor accounts are issued by library staff.

Children and Young People

3.6 All children and young people are able to use public computers in the library for word-processing and other Microsoft Office applications and to access a range of selected web sites.

3.7 Children under the age of 10 years must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian when using computers in the library.

3.8 All 10-15 year olds may only use the full Internet service if a parent or legal guardian has signed an Internet Consent form in the presence of library staff. Library staff cannot be held responsible for the information that children aged 10-15 access via the Internet.

3.9 See our separate document [“Policy on acceptable use for parents and children \(including consent form\)”](#) for further information.

4. Booking computers

4.1 We use an automated computer booking system. This is configured to allow members to book up to 60 minutes sessions up to a maximum of 120 minutes a day, dependant on availability. Time cannot be banked and carried over to other days. All computers are set to shut down 10 minutes before the library is due to close. If there is availability on the day session length may be extended at the discretion of library staff.

4.2 Computers can be booked up to 7 days in advance, or a few minutes in advance. There are currently 3 ways to book a computer;

1. If you are in a library, ask library staff to reserve a session for you.
2. If you are logged onto a computer, use the ‘Book a Computer’ facility to self-book another session
3. From home, reserve by telephone with Somerset Direct (0300 1232224)

4.3 See our [“How do I use a computer?”](#) web page or help sheet for full instructions.

5. Conditions of use; customer responsibilities

5.1 You must act in a responsible, ethical and legal way at all times, displaying behaviour appropriate to a public library setting. We ask that all library users are considerate towards one another, do not disrupt others and follow library byelaws.

5.2 You must not alter the desktop display or any computer settings. The desktop has been designed for public use and is not intended to be customised for individuals, although it can be adjusted for visually impaired users.

- 5.3 You must not download / run / play program files which are not supported by the Somerset Library Service. Some file types are blocked and cannot be downloaded, in order to prevent the spread of viruses and malicious software.
- 5.4 You must not look at illegal information / web sites.
- 5.5 You must not use the computers to view, read, download, upload, distribute, circulate or sell any material which is pornographic, obscene, racist, sexist, offensive or intended to cause harassment, alarm, distress, to stir up or cause racial hatred. It is illegal to discriminate against others or to harass others by publishing or circulating discriminatory information.
- 5.6 You must have the consent of individuals featured before publishing information online, including photographs and video files. It is unlawful to publish untrue information which damages the reputation of a person or organisation, or holds them up to hatred, ridicule or contempt.
- 5.7 You must not break copyright law. All information on the Internet is subject to copyright unless specifically stated otherwise, including images, text, video, audio and all file types. Illegal download web sites which break copyright are blocked by the web filter.
- 5.8 You must not use our computers for any illegal activity including computer hacking, maliciously changing software, writing and publishing computer viruses.

6. What happens if I break the terms and conditions or misuse the computer services in the library?

- 6.1 Depending on the circumstances and the type of misuse, library staff may:
- Ask you to stop your inappropriate behaviour.
 - End your session and ask you to leave the library.
 - Write to issue a warning that services may be withdrawn if you continue to misuse the service.
 - Write to inform you that services have been withdrawn due to misuse.
 - Inform the police and instigate an investigation.
- 6.2 In addition, if you owe £10 or more to the Library Service, you will be unable to use our computers until you reduce your debt and if your borrowing rights have been suspended, you will be unable to use the People's Network computers until you resolve your situation.

7. Health and Safety

- 7.1 You are responsible for you own health and safety. Advice on using computers safely is provided via posters in libraries, and on our ["Computer Health and safety"](#) web section and help sheet.

Appendix 1: Computers and the Law

The following provides a brief summary of the legislation that applies to computer use and the Internet:

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and Obscene Publications Act

1959 and 1964

Use of Library computer equipment for viewing, reading, downloading, uploading, distributing, circulating or selling any material which is pornographic, obscene, racist, sexist, grossly offensive, violent, intended to cause harassment, alarm or distress or intended or likely to stir up racial hatred is strictly forbidden. This is irrespective of the legality of material in the country of origin.

The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

You must obtain permission of the owner of all types of creations, including text, graphics and sounds by an author or an artist before copying or making use of it. You should assume that all material on the Internet is subject to copyright unless a specific notice states otherwise. Any unloading, downloading or printing of information through on-line technologies, which is not authorised by the copyright owner, will be deemed to be an infringement of his/her rights.

Computer Misuse Act 1990

It is an offence to:

- Gain unauthorised access to a computer (known as computer hacking). This applies to anyone who causes a computer to perform any function, with intent to secure access to any program or data held in any computer.
- Use hacking skills to commit other crimes.
- Alter data or cause changes to any software without authority and with malevolent intent. This includes the writing or intentional introduction of computer viruses.

Data Protection Act 1998

This Act gives individuals the right to know what information is held about them. It provides a framework to ensure that personal information is handled properly. The Act works in two ways. Firstly, it states that anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that information is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept for longer than is necessary
- Processed in line with your rights
- Secure
- Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection

The second area covered by the Act provides individuals with important rights, including the right to find out what personal information is held on computer and most paper records.

Should an individual or organisation feel they're being denied access to personal information they're entitled to, or feel their information has not been handled according to the eight principles they can contact the Information Commissioner's Office for help. Complaints are usually dealt with informally, but if this isn't possible enforcement action can be taken.

Further information is available from the Information Commissioner's web site:

<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

Defamation Act 1996

Defamation consists of the publication of an untrue statement (which can include an opinion), which adversely affects the reputation of a person or a group of persons or holds them up to hatred, ridicule or contempt. If such a statement is published on the Internet, including messages transmitted by email, an action for libel may be brought against those responsible. Facts concerning individuals or organisations must be accurate and verifiable and views or opinions must not portray their subjects in any way that could damage their reputation.

Discrimination

Discrimination means treating some people differently from others. You cannot be discriminated because of your gender, marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, sexual orientation, disability, race, colour, ethnic background, nationality, religion, belief or age.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 make it an offence to discriminate on the grounds of sex, race or disability (or perceived disability). In addition the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 make it an offence to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation, religion and belief and age.

Material located or disseminated through the People's Network which may be considered discriminatory or may encourage discrimination on grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnic origin may be unlawful.

International Law and the Internet

Since there is no international convention on Internet regulation, caution is necessary in considering what law may be applicable. As a basic rule, all users of the People's Network must note that although certain materials may be considered legal in their places of origin that does not prevent the application of UK law if those materials are considered to be illegal under the law in this country. Similarly, material transmitted worldwide is subject to the law of whichever country it is viewed in.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

As required by UK legislation, Somerset County Council draws to the attention of all users of the County's Data and Telephones Networks the fact that their communications may be intercepted as permitted by legislation.

The legislation allows an employer and or organization to intercept without consent for purposes such as recording evidence of transactions, ensuring regulatory compliance, detecting crime or unauthorized use, and ensuring the operation of their telecoms systems. The employer and/or organization does not need to gain consent before intercepting for these purposes, although it does need to inform systems users that interceptions may take place.