



whatcom county  
**library system**

## INTERNET USE AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES POLICY

**POLICY NUMBER: 4.06**

**SCOPE:** Users of Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) provided Internet access and WCLS Social Networking Services.

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### I. DEFINITIONS:

- **Internet:** a network that links computer networks all over the world, connecting users with service networks including email and the World Wide Web, a global information system.
- **Illegal Material:** Images which fall under the definitions of child pornography as stated in Washington Statute, RCW 9.68A.011 (3)
- **Obscene matter:** matter, taken as a whole, that to the average person, applying contemporary statewide standards, appeals to the prurient interest, that, taken as a whole, depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way, and that, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. (*The Library's Legal Answer Book*, Mary Minow & Tomas A. Lipinski, American Library Association, 2003, p. 134).
- **Sexually explicit material:** Images which fall under the definitions of sexually explicit material as stated in Washington Statute, RCW 9.68.130(2). The definition of "sexually explicit material" and other operative definitions demarcate a line between protected and prohibited material and **should not** inhibit legitimate scientific, medical or educational activities. RCW 9.68A.001
- **Social networking services:** any web application, site or account created and maintained by WCLS.

### II. INTERNET USE

Whatcom County Library System makes Internet resources available to its patrons, together with its collection of library materials and electronic databases, as part of its mission to provide information. WCLS is not responsible for information found on the Internet through computers in its branches or via the website, [wcls.org](http://wcls.org).

WCLS prohibits accessing, viewing, or printing any illegal, obscene or sexually explicit material using any WCLS resource.

Library users are responsible for determining whether information found on the Internet is appropriate to their needs. It is WCLS's policy to provide technology that allows Library users the choice of blocking their access and that of their minor children to adult-oriented, sexually explicit web sites, email and/ or chat with the understanding that no technology is fully effective in blocking intended sites and may inadvertently block unintended sites.

Parents and guardians are responsible for minors' internet access, on library computers and over branch wireless networks. WCLS does not provide any level of filtering on wireless Internet access.

WCLS's Conduct Policy (6.01) applies to patron use of the Internet. Disruptive users include those who misuse or abuse access, or whose activities online are an impediment to others' Internet access. Violating any WCLS rule may result in computer/Internet access being revoked.

### III. SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES

Whatcom County Library System offers social networking services for educational, cultural, civic and recreational purposes. WCLS's social networking services are intended to create a welcoming and inviting online space for library staff and library users to share ideas, opinions and information about library related subjects and issues.

WCLS recognizes and respects differences in opinion. Comments, posts and messages are welcome and will be reviewed. The following will be removed:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Plagiarized material
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Comments unrelated to the content of the forum
- Hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion
- Commercial promotions or spam

By posting content, the user agrees to indemnify WCLS and its officers and employees from and against all liabilities, judgments, damages, and costs (including attorney's fees) incurred by any of them which arise out of or are related to the posted content. Forums and messaging may not be used for commercial purposes or for organized political activity.

Social media is a public forum. Users should protect their identity or other personal information and are solely responsible for taking measures to ensure their privacy. Such measures include: using aliases instead of full names; never posting your location; and being aware of the risks involved in use of social networking.

WCLS reserves the right to monitor content before and after it is posted on all its social networking web sites and accounts, and to modify or remove any messages or postings that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be abusive, defamatory, in violation of the copyright, trademark right, or other intellectual property right of any third party, or otherwise inappropriate for the service. WCLS also reserves the right to edit or modify any submissions in response to requests for feedback or other commentary. Notwithstanding the foregoing, WCLS is not obligated to take any such actions, and will not be responsible or liable for content posted by any subscriber in any forum, message board, or other area within the service.

Use of WCLS resources constitutes the users' agreement to these terms. Users who do not agree to these terms may not use WCLS resources.

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**RELATED POLICIES:** Conduct Policy 6.01; Staff Social Networking Policy 12.09; Harassment Policy 12.28; Staff Use of WCLS Computers & Other Information Technology Resources Policy 12.37.

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**STATUTORY REFERENCE:** RCW 9.68A.001 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN—Legislative findings, intent; RCW 9.68A.011 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN—Definitions; RCW 9.68.130 OBSCENITY AND PORNOGRAPHY—"Sexually explicit material"—Defined—Unlawful display.

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Legal review by attorney Deborra Garrett August 16, 2011.

ADOPTED by the Whatcom County Library System Board of Trustees July 22, 1997.

**REVISED: July 19, 2016;** August 20, 2013; October 18, 2011; March 15, 2011; September 18, 2007; June 20, 2006; October 18, 2005; July 15, 2003; May 20, 2003; November 19, 2002; July 20, 1999.