

welcome to your Saskatchewan e-library services and resources



## Evaluating a website

- Determine what you are looking for first
  - Are you looking for researched and reviewed quality information?
  - Are you looking for in-depth research, or a basic overview of a topic?
  - What format do you want the information in: video, published articles, websites, etc.?
  - Are you looking to purchase something or find information supporting a particular viewpoint?
- Depth of information
  - Is the content of the website heavily reliant upon images, links and brief descriptions? If so, is this the type of information and format you are searching for?
  - Is there a variety of formats available with which to find information ex) images, video, audio as well as text.
  - Does the content offer any conclusions, theories or hypotheses or is it a presentation of facts and information?
  - How large is the website? Note: length is not always a reliable indication of accuracy or in-depth information.
  - Does the website provide links to similar websites dedicated to the topic?
- Authorship
  - Who wrote/published the website?
  - Is the author(s) name posted on the website? Sites with no claim to authorship can create a problem regarding reliability of the information. However, there are some excellent websites without listed authors as well, such as government websites.
  - Does the author have any credentials, training or special expertise regarding the topic?
  - Is there an e-mail address that the author can be contacted at?
  - Has the author published any books, articles, papers, etc. regarding the topic? Other publications may produce other sources for the topic being researched as well as increase the reliability of the information on the website.

- Publication date
  - Is a recent publication date or year for the website offered?
  - Does discussion of the topic incorporate recent developments related to the field?
  
- Origins of the website
  - From what country does the website originate and would someone from that country be considered a reliable source of information regarding the topic?
  - Is the website linked to, or sponsored by, any particular company, network, educational institution, etc. If so, this may provide some confirmation of the reliability of the content. Note: affiliation or sponsorship may also indicate that the website supports a particular viewpoint or agenda.
  
- Updates
  - Have there been recent updates to the information on the website?
  - How often is the website updated?
  
- The intent of the website
  - Does the website offer opinions or facts?
  - Is the website intent on selling you something or convincing you of the worthiness of a particular viewpoint?
  - Is there a fair, or one-sided, presentation of the topic? i.e. are both sides of an argument presented?
  
- References/bibliography
  - Is there a list of sources cited or a bibliography?
  - Are the sources reliable published information, or just links to similar websites?
  - Not only will a bibliography add a sense of accuracy and reliability to the content of a website, it also allows the reader to “double check” the content. A bibliography may also provide other resources not previously known.

## **In-Library Computer Use Guidelines**

### **Library users may use public computers to:**

1. access the Internet regardless of age;
2. read and/or view material on the Internet;
3. read and send e-mail from a personal e-mail account;
4. participate in chat lines and forums;
5. save and download content to a floppy disk;
6. create and/or print documents using library-provided software;
7. play games\*;
8. view video content and/or listen to audio content\*; and
9. conduct personal and/or financial transactions.

\* ear phones may be required

### **Library users shall not use public computers:**

1. to create, access, or transmit material that is prohibited by federal or provincial legislation, or limited by Southeast Regional Library by-laws or policies;
2. to print/copy copyrighted materials without permission from the copyright owner;
3. in a way that will slow down or disrupt the library computer network;
4. for sexual voyeurism;
5. to add, change, or delete computer settings, security, or programs;
6. to save or download anything to the hard drive, or run programs from a floppy disk;
7. while exhibiting behavior that is contrary to Southeast Regional Library Safe Use and Conduct By-Law (i.e. behaving in a rude or disorderly manner, vandalizing or destroying library property, etc.);

8. to attach peripheral equipment to (head phones/ear phones are acceptable);
9. for commercial activities; or
10. in such a way that will result in financial obligations for the library.

Note: Southeast Regional Library does not recommend using public computers for the sharing of personal information and does not take responsibility for the security of any information shared through public computers provided in the branches.

**Branch staff may:**

1. deny a patron the immediate use of the library or its services on the basis of due cause. The library director and branch supervisor must be notified of such an action. Only the library director has the authority to ban patrons from receiving library services for more than the first day. The branch librarian may submit a request for patron suspension to the director if he/she feels the action is warranted;

Due cause includes actions such as failure to return items for an extended period of time, failure to pay penalties, the destruction of library property, a history of computer-related misconduct, and objectionable conduct on library premises.

2. require that children in the library be accompanied by an adult if, for example, the child is unable to use the computer appropriately without assistance;
3. limit the number of patrons allowed to gather at the computer terminal at one time (can be enforced if there are persistent problems with noise, etc.); and
4. limit the time that a patron is allowed to use the computer, for example:
  - one-hour sessions during slower periods
  - patrons are allowed to book only one day in advance (or for the next open day)
  - patrons are allowed to book only one session at a time (i.e. can't book for 3 sessions at once – must use up one session and then book a second, etc. if the computer is available

Branch staff shall:

1. enforce Southeast Regional Library policies and by-laws to the best of his or her ability;
2. provide the public with basic Internet/computer training upon request; including
  - explain the browser interface, various keyboard operations, and on-screen toolbar and menu operations

- demonstrate Internet searches, or help with a specific search
- answer specific questions, such as how to print, go back a site, etc.

If patrons at non-city branches are not able to find the information that they are looking for and branch staff have spent more than 5 or 10 minutes helping them (a discretionary length of time), branch staff should refer the question to Estevan or Weyburn as a formal reference question through the Ask Us! link on Southeast Regional Library's home page.

3. ensure that the Internet user either:

- (a) shows his or her Southeast Regional Library card (user may register for one if he/she does not already have a card, or may purchase a replacement card);
- (b) pays the \$100 refundable deposit to obtain a temporary Southeast Regional Library card that he/she can then show at each booking; or
- (c) uses the Internet without a card for a limit of 15 minutes and the library forgoes any usage statistics.

### **Spam**

1. Defined: Spam is unsolicited “junk mail” that arrives in your e-mail account.
2. Why its an issue:
  - Spam messages can carry viruses, opening infected Spam can transfer a virus to your computer.
  - Spam messages are often trying to sell you something, everything from magazine subscriptions to medication.
  - Spam messages can contain offensive content.
  - Spam messages, appeals, services and products may appear legitimate but many, in reality, are simply Internet scams or frauds.
3. What to do about it:
  - Never give your e-mail address to anyone you don't know or trust.
  - You may be able to create a filter on your e-mail account that only allows recognized messages to appear in your inbox. Anything suspicious is sent to a “junk mail” or “spam suspect” folder.
  - Never open any suspicious e-mail messages or messages from someone you don't know in case they contain a virus or content you may deem to be offensive.
  - Use a cryptic e-mail address. This means having a combination of letters and numbers in random sequence as an e-mail address. This is harder for potential “spammers” (those people/companies sending out spam) to find.

It is also safer and more private than using your complete name as the address.

- Never respond to Spam, not even to say, “Stop sending these!” Responding to spam only confirms to spammers your account is valid and active.
- Be very cautious as to who you reveal personal or financial information to. As a rule of thumb, most legitimate online vendors will not ask for personal information through an e-mail.

## **Viruses**

### 1. Defined:

- A virus is an application loaded onto a computer that can affect software performance.
- A worm is a type of virus that remains inside a computer’s memory and duplicates itself. It can attach itself to your e-mails and files.
- A Trojan Horse is not technically a virus as it does not seek to replicate itself. However, it appears as a benign application before conducting more destructive practices once it is in your computer.

### 2. Why it’s an issue:

- Viruses can seriously affect the performance of your computer. A virus may restrict the use of your computer or software, erase files or can crash the entire system.
- Viruses can be undetectable as they attach themselves to seemingly harmless files, e-mails, disks or documents.
- Viruses are easily distributed through the Internet and e-mails.

### 3. What to do:

- Ensure you have some sort of virus protection on your computer. These programs will scan incoming e-mails, websites and files for viruses and warn you about their security. Antivirus vendor: McAfee [www.mcafee.com](http://www.mcafee.com)
- Only open or accept e-mail from contacts you trust.
- Check for updates and new versions of antivirus software and use the most up-to-date version available.
- Save your work!

## **Blocking Software**

1. Defined: Blocking software is most often referred to as a filter. It operates on your computer to restrict access to websites by recognizing keywords or by keeping a list of websites that cannot be displayed on your computer.

2. Parents may wish to install blocking software on their PC's for their children's safety. Blocking software is sometimes useful for increasing the speed of your Internet connection as many ads and "pop-up" messages are contained.

### **Online purchasing**

1. Defined: many businesses offer shopping and purchasing transactions for their products online.
2. Why it's an issue:
  - Elements required to conduct transactions online include credit card, shipping, billing and personal information.
  - The reputation of the online vendor may be unknown, especially if dealing with foreign companies.  
Product information may be incomplete or misleading.
3. What to do:
  - Know the merchant you intend to conduct business with. Try searching a database such as *General Business File*, *Canadian Almanac Directory* or *Business and Company Resource Center* at the library for further information and verification of the merchant.
  - Read, understand and retain the terms and conditions of use of the website. This will include important information such as licenses, copyrights, patents, privacy, personal account information, complaint procedures, deliveries, payment options, etc.
  - Look for an approval certificate. This will verify that the business exists; its contact information is current and correct and may include audit information as well.
  - Read the privacy policy.
  - Know how to cancel your order or subscription.
  - Gain as much product information as possible. This is especially important when ordering from outside of Canada as safety, product and materials guidelines and standards may differ.
  - Control your personal information and who has access to it.
  - Many online vendors will e-mail or display your receipt. Be sure to retain receipts in case a problem arises.
  - Look for a security icon: sometimes appears as a small "padlock" icon indicating if the information you are sending is secure or not.

## Privacy Policies

1. Defined: Privacy concerns your right to maintain control over personal information as well as what, where and who you may connect with online.
2. Why it's an issue:
  - Reputable and questionable websites will request or require personal information online.
  - Personal information posted on a public website is accessible to anyone willing to read it.
3. What to do about it:
  - Never post or submit personal information online, unless you fully trust the website.
  - Keep track of where you have posted personal information and who may have access to it.
  - Is there a privacy policy posted and does it explain how the website will protect your personal information?
  - Consider how the website intends on using your personal information.

## The Internet in Libraries

1. Intellectual Freedom: free and open access to the world's information resources is a defining principle of public libraries. Filters or other blocking software is not used in Southeast Regional Library in accordance with this belief. Refer to CLA's Statement of Intellectual Freedom:

"All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the law, is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

2. Privacy: patron privacy is another core belief of public libraries, including access to online information services. Refer to the *Public Libraries Act* (1996) article 76.

3. Protection: for the safe and fair use of the Internet in Southeast Regional Library, Internet acceptable use guidelines and Bylaw #2 have been created for the protection of both library staff and patrons.

### **Online addictions**

1. Gambling:
  - Online gambling has soared in popularity. Poker rooms, online casinos and other online games can be addictive and dangerous.
  - Some gaming sites offer the chance for players to participate without gambling with “real” money, but the experience can be just as addictive.
  - It is very easy to spend/lose a lot of money participating in online gaming and gambling. Credit histories and finances can be seriously affected.
  - Online gambling is illegal in Canada for minors, but monitoring and enforcing these laws can be difficult.
2. Compulsive behaviour:
  - It is important to maintain a balance between time spent online and other activities.
  - Be aware if your time online is interfering with work, school, relationships, sleep patterns or is creating health concerns such as dry eyes, headaches or carpal tunnel syndrome.
3. What to do:
  - Take up other interests in the subjects you enjoy online. Ex) If you search for news online, try browsing a newspaper or weekly magazine as a change of pace.
  - Encourage someone you suspect of having compulsive behaviour to pursue similar interests offline. Ex) If a child enjoys online gaming suggest reading a Sci-Fi or Fantasy novel.

### **Links**

1. For further information regarding this topic:
  - [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)  
An excellent site offering information about online media, its impact, future and how to interpret what we see.
  - [www.bewebaware.ca](http://www.bewebaware.ca)  
Another excellent site offering tips on web safety with special emphasis on providing tips for parents.
  - <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/engdoc/main.html>  
The Government of Canada’s website dedicated to online consumer affairs. It offers information and tips regarding online shopping, spending habits as well special pages for seniors and businesses.

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