



### Meal Plan 3

## The Four Seasons or Flo's Diner: How Much Help Should You Provide Laptop Patrons?

*You've decided to allow wireless access in your library. Now you have to decide what type of service to provide. Is this a full-service restaurant, where every customer request is satisfied immediately? "Yes, sir! Right away, sir! More bread for table 15!" Or will you provide the food and let patrons serve themselves? Will every staff person in the library become a highly polished, highly skilled wireless waiter (or waitress)? Keep in mind: Your tips come in the form of smiles and warm fuzzies, so you may be better off setting up the Flo's Diner of wireless hotspots rather than the Four Seasons.*

This section deals with the subject of laptop patron assistance and library wireless service. It takes a closer look at what's reasonable and feasible ... and what's not.

#### TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

- A Help Desk for Patron Laptops?
- All-Night Diners—Providing Network Access After Hours



## A Help Desk for Patron Laptops?

Most laptop owners know how to configure their wireless adapter and hook into your network without much trouble. But the less knowledgeable patrons may eat up a lot of your precious time if you decide to help them with their laptops. Why? Because each laptop has a slightly different personality. Today's wide array of operating systems and brands of wireless adapters mean that no two laptops are exactly alike. For librarians who work with wireless on a regular basis, it's not too hard to navigate these differences. But librarians with less experience may be reluctant to act as wireless troubleshooters. Furthermore, from a liability standpoint, it's not wise to monkey with someone else's expensive computer. If you do need to touch someone's laptop, be sure to get their explicit permission, preferably in written form. Or, better yet, provide the directions to the patron while they do the actual work. You should also ask the patron to save any valuable data before you start troubleshooting.

A lot of libraries choose to help patrons in spite of the difficulties mentioned above. Others make it clear in their wireless AUP that laptop users are completely on their own. Some libraries go a third route. They partner with hotspot providers and pay them to provide telephone support for patrons with laptops.



Notes from  
a Chef

### To Troubleshoot or Not Troubleshoot Patron Computers?

*"So the public is bringing in their laptops, and most of them really do know what they're doing. But there are some that aren't sure how to hook up to your wireless network and we're not allowed to touch them. And that's frustrating for the public. But if we were to do something and then they came back later and said, 'You messed up my computer,' then we'd be liable."*

*Shaw Simonsen  
Barnesville Library, Barnesville, MN*

Occasionally, certain wireless adapters are just incompatible with certain access points, and nothing you or the laptop owner does will fix that. For \$30 or \$40 you can buy a wireless adapter and let patrons check it out. If you buy an adapter made by the same company that produced your access point, you shouldn't have any compatibility problems. However, there's a slim possibility that the adapter could damage the patron's laptop, so use your best judgment. If you decide to go in this direction, ask the laptop owner to sign a waiver.



Notes from  
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### On-the-Spot Logon Support for Patrons

*"We have these cute little coasters, and we have them all over the building area. And all they have to do is follow the directions on the coaster to log on."*

*Annie Adamson  
Caldwell Public Library, Caldwell, ID*



## All-Night Diners – Providing Network Access After Hours

The kitchen's closed, but the customers won't go away! Will you provide a vending machine or a drive-through window for the night owls and the early birds? Should you leave your wireless network on after all the staff has gone home? Is it dangerous or costly to let patrons sit in your parking lot and surf the Web?

Thousands of libraries with wireless just leave the connection on 24/7. It's easy to do, cheap and provides an extra service to community members, especially those who can't afford a high-speed connection. However, think carefully before you leave your access point on all the time. Most ISPs charge you a flat rate per month, regardless of how much you upload or download. However, this isn't universally true, so be sure to double-check. You may wind up paying extra if your patrons spend all night downloading huge files on your network. If this is the case, you might want to find another ISP. Also, as discussed earlier, there could be clauses in your ISP service agreement about who can use your Internet connection and how they can use it. Be sure to read through it carefully.



Notes from  
a Chef

### A 24/7 Connection

*"In fact, people can get on it if we're closed. They just pull up in the parking lot or they sit on the steps"*

*Carolyn Paradise  
Casco Public Library*

If you decide to leave your wireless connection on all night, consider how you'll publicize your AUP (see Meal Plan 4 for additional information on Acceptable Use Policies). The only surefire way to be certain that patrons outside the library building have read and accepted your wireless policy is to use a splash page that appears immediately when patrons using your wireless connection open their Web browser. The best way to create a splash page for your network is to use a wireless gateway or partner with a hotspot provider. You can usually configure these splash pages so that patrons are forced to click somewhere indicating that they've accepted the terms of your wireless policy. Also, if you put a password on your wireless network and change it daily, patrons won't be able to use the Internet at night, unless they've been to the library during the day.

If you decide to turn your connection off at night, most wireless gateways can be configured to turn off and on automatically, but for the most part, simple access points lack this feature.



Notes from  
a Chef

### When the Library Closes ... So Does the Wireless Access

*The Brattleboro Public Library has a wireless connection where anyone can access it outside the building, and they report, "We haven't heard of any problems. The router can be configured to close down after the library closes. We have it doing that."*

*Jerry Carbone  
Brattleboro Public Library*



## MOOD AND AMBIENCE – MAKING YOUR LIBRARY COMFORTABLE FOR COMPUTER USERS

When you let patrons use computers in your libraries, you need to consider layout, furniture, lighting and space. The questions to consider are a bit different when it comes to desktop computers and laptop computers.

- What sort of furniture do you need for computer users?
- How much space should you set aside for each desktop computer in the library?
- What sorts of chairs and desks are best suited to desktop computers?
- How do you estimate the number of laptop users you'll have in the library on an average day, and what sorts of furniture and space needs will they have?
- What sort of lighting is best suited to computer use?
- Should you make all or some of your workstations accessible for people with disabilities, and how do you go about doing that?

Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this book; however, for a list of useful resources, please refer to “Other Tasty Recipes” at the end of this section.



Notes from  
a Chef

### Wireless Printing

*We're looking into getting a wireless printer because when we get new computers, my director wants them to be wireless so we don't have to worry about paying for somebody to come in and figure out how to get new wiring to the middle of the floor. Right now, they're in an alcove. So they're either against the wall or very near one. So wiring's not that big of a problem. But if we're able to move them out in the middle of the main floor — what we call the main reading room — then wiring might be an issue. We do have the wireless network, so I think it would — in the end — be cheaper to do that instead of paying money to put wiring on the floor. They wouldn't be laptops. They would be the sturdier desktop PCs with the big monitors, but they would be wireless-enabled. They'd actually be on a wireless network. So we're exploring the wireless printing that way. As far as people coming in now, they can't print from the wireless.*

*Valerie Stroylis  
Lake Blackshear Regional Library, GA*



Notes from  
a Chef

### Printer Information Sheets and Aids

*“We found out how to add a new printer to the computer from our Internet Services Department. And one library printed up this information sheet for patrons on how to add and connect to a printer wirelessly. Last night at dog training class — this is an advantage of small towns — one of the people attending the class also has a show on the radio about Apple Computers. He's coming by this afternoon to explain to me what I need to know to tell people with Apple Computers on how to add a printer.” (To see the instructions a patron created, see Appendix G).*

*Eliza Wingate  
Mendocino County Library, CA*



## WHAT CAN PATRONS DO ON YOUR WIRELESS NETWORK?

Anytime two programs want to communicate with each other over the Internet, they need to agree on which “port” they plan to use. A port is a number (usually determined by conventions or standards) that networked devices use to establish a temporary connection on a network. For example, when a Web browser, such as Internet Explorer or Firefox, requests a page from a Web server, the browser software and the server software will use port 80 and/or port 443. Routers and firewalls can usually be configured to block particular ports, and many libraries choose to block all ports on their wireless network, except for ports 80 and 443. This simplified configuration makes your network more secure and easier to maintain.

However, some patrons may ask you why they can’t play World of Warcraft (a popular online game) or why they can’t download new email to their email program (e.g., Outlook or Thunderbird). Well, you could go into an explanation of ports, routers and firewalls, but it’ll be much easier if you’ve included language in your wireless AUP about what types of software can access the wireless network. For more information about Acceptable Use Policies, see the next chapter. For more information about ports, massive multiplayer online games and desktop email, check out the “Online Gaming” resources located in “Other Tasty Recipes” at the end of this section.



### Same-Service Expectations for Public PC and Wireless

*“Since it’s going to be a part of our library network, our plan is to offer it with all the features that we offer on our public-use PCs. They will authenticate, they’ll sign on when they enter the library to get into the network and it will give them access to printing, let’s see, so that means the expectation is they’ll get the same services on wireless that we offer to our other public-use PCs.”*

*Deborah Janzen  
Fresno Public Library, CA*



## OTHER TASTY RECIPES

### Network Access

- *Anchorage Daily News*  
*Palmer Man’s Computer Forays May Bring Charges*  
As the story indicates, it’s a good idea to let the police and any night-time janitors know that you’ll be leaving your wireless on. Otherwise, they might get spooked by the folks spending so much time in your parking lot!  
<http://www.adn.com/news/alaska/story/8679625p-8574795c.html>



## Space Planning and Furniture

- *WebJunction's Focus on Space Planning for Libraries*  
*WebJunction*  
A detailed look at some space-planning strategies, as well as many links to other resources and real-library examples  
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=12748>
- *Library Space Planning Guide*  
*WebJunction*  
The Connecticut State Library's comprehensive, step-by-step guide to help you plan your library's lay of the land (requires Adobe Acrobat Reader  
<http://www.adobe.com/downloads>).  
<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=6181>
- *Public Library Space Needs: A Planning Outline*  
*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*  
This Wisconsin educational resource's detailed guidelines for planning space.  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/plspace.html>
- *Planning Documentation*  
*Libris Design*  
Libris Design provides software to help with and training on library planning. This page on their site links to an array of articles on planning.  
<http://www.librisdesign.org/docs/index.html>

## Accessibility

- *Accessibility Resources*  
*AbilityNet*  
This assistive technology advocacy group's site contains a wealth of information about tools and techniques to help you make technology more accessible.  
<http://www.abilitynet.org.uk>
- *Increasing the Accessibility of Public Computers*  
*TechSoup*  
The goal of this paper is to help libraries and other public access computing facilities develop, plan for and/or expand the accessibility of their public access computers to patrons with disabilities.  
<http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/access/page5373.cfm>
- *Equal Access: Universal Design of Computer Labs*  
*University of Washington*  
A checklist of things you can do to make a computer lab more accessible.  
<http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Technology/comp.access.html>



## Gaming in Libraries

- *Multiplayer/Online Games*

*TechSoup*

This article defines a port, a multiplayer online game, a browser-based game and a few other networking terms. The article also considers the effect of these services on your library's security and bandwidth

[http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/page6759.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=online\\_game](http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/page6759.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=online_game)

- *A Quick Guide to Gaming in Libraries*

*iLibrarian*

Links to resources related to gaming in libraries.

<http://oedb.org/blogs/ilibrarian/2007/a-quick-guide-to-gaming-in-libraries>

- *Success Stories, Tips and Other Information About Library Gaming Programs*

*Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki*

This Web site's community-created content on gaming. Read, then share your experience with gaming in your library on this wiki. (What's a wiki? Take a look:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>)

<http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Gaming>

- *Game On: Games in Libraries*

"Game On strives to keep librarians up to date on gaming with convenient one-stop shopping for all your gaming news and information."

<http://libgaming.blogspot.com>



## Fast Food — Meal Plan 3 Summary

- Certain wireless adapters are incompatible with certain access points. For \$30 or \$40 you can buy a wireless adapter and let patrons check it out. Should you opt to offer wireless adapters for checkout, be sure to ask the laptop owner to sign a waiver indicating you are not responsible for any possible damage to the laptop.
- If you decide to leave your wireless connection on all night, consider how you'll publicize your AUP.
- If you decide to turn your connection off at night, most wireless gateways can be configured to turn off and on automatically; however, for the most part, simple access points lack this feature.

### MENU 3 CHECKLIST

- Consider allowing all browser-based services (any service that runs in a Web browser over port 80 or port 443), unless those services violate any obscenity and criminal behavior rules.
- To make sure that patrons outside the library building have read and accepted your wireless policy, use a splash page:
  - Use a wireless gateway or partner with a hotspot provider to create the splash page.
  - Configure your splash page so that patrons are forced to click somewhere indicating that they've accepted the terms of your wireless policy.
- If you need to touch someone's laptop while assisting with a problem, get their permission, preferably in written form. Better yet, provide directions to the patron while he or she does the actual work.
- Always ask the patron to save any valuable data before you start troubleshooting.
- Put a password on your wireless network and change it daily, so patrons won't be able to use the Internet at night unless they've been to the library during the day.