

# After-Hours Wi-Fi Survey Report

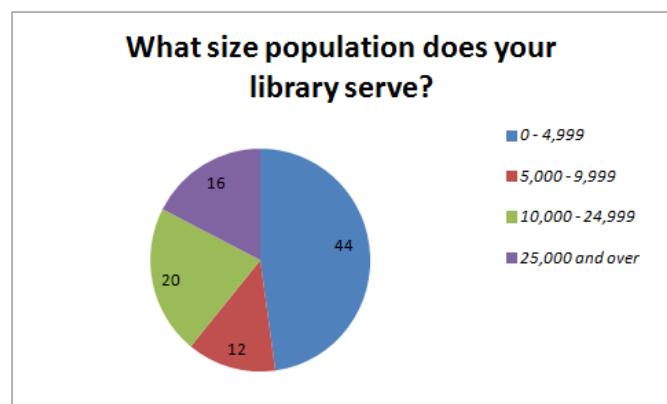
April 2017

In February and March of 2017, the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) of the Oregon Library Association conducted a survey of public libraries across the state of Oregon about their experiences with providing Wi-Fi access after library open hours. The IFC conducted this survey because several public library directors requested assistance in communicating with city officials about this issue. These library directors reported being committed to providing as extensive access to their community as possible, while law enforcement and city officials were concerned about this service attracting crime and vagrancy to library property. Very little guidance is currently available about how to balance these concerns, with almost nothing published in the library literature or on the ALA website. This survey is a first step toward filling this gap by collecting information about the experiences of libraries across the state of Oregon.

All open-ended comments to all questions are available in the appendix to this report.

## Survey respondents

The survey was distributed to public library directors in Oregon through the email list maintained by the Oregon State Library. 92 library directors (or another representative from that library) completed the survey. Most of the 92 libraries represented in the survey are small. 44 responding libraries (48%) serve a population under 4,999; 12 (13%) serve a population between 5,000 and 9,999; 20 (22%) serve a population between 10,000 and 24,999; and 16 (17%) serve a population over 25,000.

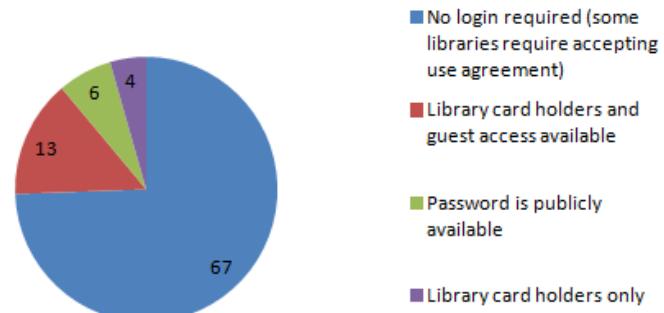


## Wi-Fi access during open hours

Virtually all of the libraries surveyed offer Wi-Fi services during library open hours. The majority of respondents (67 out of 90, or 74%) do not require a login to access Wi-Fi. Four of these respondents added that they do require users to accept a use agreement before gaining access.

Of the 23 libraries that require a login, 13 provide service to library card holders with guest access available, six use a publicly available password, and four provide service to library card holders only.

## Is a login required to access wi-fi?



## Wi-Fi access after hours

More than 80% (73 of 91 responses) offer Wi-Fi access when the library is closed, while almost 20% (18 of 91 responses) do not.

### Why does your library offer after hours Wi-Fi?

Survey respondents provided open-ended explanations about why they offered this service. The most common response (24 out of 60, or 40%) was that after-hours Wi-Fi extends library service. Some examples:

- *"We have limited open hours and want to support patrons who might work standard work hours and who do not have home internet access."*
- *"It is useful for high school and college students during hours we are not open. Many community members don't have wi-fi either and can park in front of city hall/library or use bench in front for access."*
- *"We are the only location with after hours access in our community. The industries in our community run shift schedules, so many people are not able to visit while the library is open."*

Numerous respondents, especially from rural areas, expressed concern about the limited number of open hours available to their patrons.

The next most common answer (22 out of 60, or 37%) focused on the need for access. For example:

- *"We felt it was an important service to offer people as many in our area don't have access to or can't afford internet at their homes, if they even have permanent homes."*
- *"We are in a rural area where the only internet service available is via satellite. Many of our patrons cannot afford to pay for this. We want them to have access to educational or emergency information."*
- *"To provide access to information and to help bridge the digital divide that exists in our rural area."*

Some respondents noted practical issues, such as constant access being easier than scheduling shut off times.

### **What problems have arisen?**

In response to the open-ended question, “*What problems have arisen from this service, if any?*” 46% (32 out of 69) reported no problems, while 54% (37 out of 69) listed some sort of problem. The most commonly listed problems include

- **cars/parking:** “People late at night running their car engines waking neighbors up at late at night.” “ Limited parking spots being taken up by wi-fi users”
- **loitering/lingering:** “Some questionable people hanging around.” “We have homeless on our porch at all hours that are using the wifi and the porch to stay out of the weather.”
- **vandalism/drugs/crime/trash:** “An abundance of cigarette butts and trash being left in the area.” “Police had problems with drug sellers saying they were using the wifi.” “We have had two branches report loitering, vandalism and noise.” “The local police are concerned that some of the after hours users are well-known to them from previous encounters with the law.”
- **hacking/copyright issues:** “Occasional digital rights management/copyright infringement notices from our ISPs (which also occur during library operating hours)”

Several respondents reported initially offering 24-hour access, but decided to offer more limited hours as a response to late-night problems. For example: “*We opted to turn off the wifi service from 12 midnight to 5 a.m. as we were having issues with vandalism and the police were reporting drug deals taking place.*”

### **What feedback have you received?**

**From libraries offering after-hours access:** Almost half of respondents to the question, “*What feedback have you received about this service, if any?*” reported positive feedback (30 out of 62 comments, or 48%), with frequent references to appreciation or gratitude. “*Positive, everyone is very grateful. Hometown and people traveling through.*” 18 respondents reported receiving no feedback. Another seven reported receiving mixed reviews. “*We have positive feedback from users. We also have negative feedback from law enforcement who claim that it encourages loitering and the possibility of vandalism.*” “*People love to have the service, but dislike seeing some of the people taking advantage of it misbehaving.*” Eight respondents reported concerns from police. “*The Sheriff dept has had complaints from business owners about people loitering on our porch.*” A few respondents received requests for more extended service.

**From libraries not offering after-hours access:** Of the 16 libraries responding to the question, “*What feedback have you received about the lack of this service, if any?*” 11 reported receiving no feedback, four received complaints that the service was not available, and one reported support from neighbors for not offering after hours Wi-Fi.

### **Why libraries don’t offer after hours Wi-Fi**

For libraries *not* offering after hours Wi-Fi, 17 respondents explained why their library does not offer this service. A number of respondents indicated that they previously provided the service, then discontinued or limited hours because of problems. Examples of responses:

- “*Because of vandalism, inappropriate behavior and using the library area as a garbage disposal.*”
- “*Beer and drug parties while watching porn, excessive littering and vandalism.*”

- “We recently stopped doing so at the recommendation of our police, plus complaints from patrons returning items after hours and not feeling safe.”

A few respondents listed practical issues, such as the inability to offer customer assistance.

## Is after hours Wi-Fi access an intellectual freedom issue?

72 respondents provided answers to this question: “*The ALA statement on Intellectual Freedom states: ‘A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community’. In your view, is this relevant to the after-hours Wi-Fi access issue?*” 50 of the 72 open-ended responses (69%) were positive, that after hours Wi-Fi is definitely or somewhat of an intellectual freedom issue. Some examples:

- “*Absolutely. What could be more equitable than providing access to wi-fi at any time that a person's schedule dictates that they need it?*”
- “*Yes. Just because the library is closed doesn't mean people don't need information.*”
- “*I think it is relevant, at least until home internet access is within the reach of all patrons.*”

Another 17 out of 72 (24%) responded that this was definitely not or probably not an intellectual freedom issue:

- “*No. After-hours wi-fi is a privilege, if problems arise it should be shut down.*”
- “*No. When libraries are required to provide equipment to all persons wishing to access them 24/7, then providing unlimited wi-fi would be expected. Wi-fi is an equipment issue.*”
- “*You can read that to be that libraries should be open 24/7 and we're not.*”

Another five respondents provided miscellaneous replies.

## Additional open-ended comments

In the final question soliciting open-ended comments, some respondents provided additional support for providing this service:

- “*Free wi-fi at all hours is an essential service in the 21st century.*”
- “*I have heard that other libraries have turned off their after hours wifi because of illegal activities (vandalism, etc). I have 2 comments on that: 1) how do you know that the illegal activity was directly related to the wi-fi and 2) we have MANY stolen DVDs throughout the year - should we discontinue the purchase of these items in order to stop the illegal activity? Should we punish the many that are using the service in a responsible way because of the few?*”
- “*Communities need to address issues of vagrancy, vandalism, and homelessness directly - wifi availability doesn't cause these.*”

Others reiterated or raised additional concerns:

- “*Forgot to mention we also get multiple reports from our Internet provider that the public is illegally downloading movies for resale after hours by sitting in our parking lot. All these activities have ceased once we turned off the WiFi after hours.*”

Many took the opportunity to acknowledge the complications and nuances surrounding this issue:

- *"I think the question of whether or not an individual library branch can/should provide free open wi-fi access after library hours depends on many factors, including the location of the branch, whether the exterior of the branch is safe for people to sit in cars, on the porch, etc. accessing wi-fi, and if there are other sources of access to wi-fi easily available in the vicinity."*
- *"We live in an ever-changing, highly complex, world. Sometimes it is very hard to actually dig deep enough to discover the complexities of a problem. And, though I don't like to think it, some problems are situational."*
- *"While I know for a fact that not all people in my service area have internet or access to the internet, it also follows they do not have the tools in which to access wifi. Would it be nice to be a 24/7 wifi hot spot? Yes, it would. However, we have a large drug culture in our community which relies on wifi for their deals. While we cannot stop the drug trade, limiting wifi access to our open hour helps keep our facility more secure at night although deals still happen. I'm not sure there are any \*good\* answers to this. I argue both for and against."*

## Conclusion and next steps

The survey answers provide a snapshot of how the service of after-hours Wi-Fi is being delivered and received across the state of Oregon. The responses present some of the factors that surround this service, as well as the complexity involved in balancing the commitment to maximizing access for the community served by the library with the requirement of preserving a safe environment and maintaining a good relationship with neighbors and law enforcement. On one hand, responses show that a clear majority of librarians support this service, many passionately. After hours Wi-Fi is described as an “essential service in the 21st century” and a component of the intellectual freedom commitment to providing ‘access for all members of the community’. Respondents provided details about the very real need for this service in their community, and articulated the value of after-hours access as a way to extend service beyond sometimes limited library open hours.

On the other hand, the responses indicated that concerns about crime, vandalism, litter and other social problems are not hypothetical. While 46% of respondents reported no problems at all, 54% listed some sort of problem. Some of these problems were the sort of routine things that libraries also encounter during open hours, and several respondents made a point of noting that libraries do not make a habit of curtailing service to all because of problems with a few; for example, libraries continue to check out DVDs although those are often stolen. A few others noted that the social issues of homelessness, drug dealing, etc. need to be dealt with directly, as Wi-Fi access did not cause these problems. A number of answers reflected frustration with how much was being demanded of public libraries on shoestring budgets, and implied that they would be pushed beyond their limits to also manage the social problems brought onto library property by after-hours Wi-Fi access.

Overall, the answers reflect a wide variation in how this service is experienced in different communities across Oregon. In some communities, providing this service has been uniformly positive and perceived as an essential and deeply valued library service, while in others it was so problematic that it was curtailed. Some of the factors mentioned in the open-ended comments that contribute to this variation include:

- availability of library open hours
- availability of Wi-Fi in other locations in the community
- physical location and layout of library property

- demographics of the community being served
- relationship with law enforcement and city officials
- library budgets and staffing

The answers also included some practical strategies for responding to problems, such as installing security cameras, developing a working relationship with law enforcement, and providing some after-hours access, but not 24/7.

While the results of the survey raised more questions than it answered, those questions point to some clear directions for further study:

- What factors mitigate the sorts of problems often associated with after-hours access? 46% of respondents reported no problems at all. What can be learned from these successful cases? Are there factors (location? lighting? security cameras? police presence? community demographics?) that help explain this success?
- Of the libraries that have experienced problems, are there data that show that these problems increased *overall* in the community with the addition of after-hours Wi-Fi, as opposed to only being relocated to library property?
- Do libraries that offer extended after hours Wi-Fi (for example, 6 a.m. to midnight) have significantly fewer issues than libraries that provide 24/7 service?
- What is the impact of after-hours Wi-Fi access on a community? Librarians made reference to the positive benefits for students, shift workers, travelers and other users. Is there any documentation of this impact?
- How significant is the need for affordable Wi-Fi access around the state? Many respondents indicated that substantial parts of the communities they serve rely on the library for internet access, and that library open hours don't come close to meeting that need. What data, if any, are available to document the size of that gap?

The information collected in this survey does not provide any clear answers, but it does reflect the importance of finding strategies and solutions for balancing the goals of maximizing access to information with the need to maintain a safe and secure environment. The OLA IFC is considering next steps in collecting information and communicating about this issue. Contact Roberta Richards ([rrichard@pcc.edu](mailto:rrichard@pcc.edu)) to participate in the conversation.

## Appendix

Includes all answers to open-ended questions. Similar answers have been grouped. (Small typos were corrected, and personal information removed.)

### **Q11 - Why do you offer after hours Wi-Fi service?**

#### **To provide service beyond library hours. (24 comments)**

- This helps extend the library service hours and a lot of people do not have wi-fi at home.
- It is useful for High School and college students during hours we are not open. Many community members don't have wi-fi either and can park in front of city hall/library or use bench in front for access
- For people who cannot get to our library during our open hours.
- We are a very rural library and are only open 2 days a week
- We offer from 8 am to 8 pm - to provide some service to those who can't come to the library when we are open.
- I feel that people should be able to access the internet more than the 4 hours a day that I am open.
- Our library is only open 26 hours a week. The Wi-Fi access is available during daylight hours / seven days a week.
- We are open 1-5 Mon Tues Wed and Fri So with limited hrs. open its needed
- Because our hours of operation are so short.
- We have very limited hours and this helps to serve our people.
- Our library is only open 24 hours a week, with wi-fi available outside the building we can expand our service to the public.
- Our patrons often come on days we are closed or not open and need access.
- Some of our more rural library branches are open very few hours. Many of the people working in these communities work swing and graveyard and only have access to the wi-fi after hours, from their cars. Also, few folks in these areas have internet because of its expense.
- Library hours not always convenient for everyone. Internet service in this county is poor.
- Because folks need access even when the library is closed. We offer our catalog and electronic databases over the Internet 24/7, why not Internet?
- We are hoping to serve people even though our hours are few
- To provide service to community members who find our operating hours inconvenient.
- For the people that can't get here during business hours.
- To give access to patrons who work during the day and cannot afford internet service at home
- Our library has very limited hours, so we offer it on the days/hours we are not open.
- Our community is based on tourism and we have a lot of visitors passing through the area that use our wifi including hours we are not open.
- As service to patrons and visitors whose Internet access needs don't match our open hours
- Because there is a large percentage of the population with no internet access at home. We are the only location with after hours access in our community. The industries in our community run shift schedules, so many people are not able to visit while the library is open.
- We have limited open hours and want to support patrons who might work standard work hours and who do not have home internet access

## To provide access to those who need it. (22 comments)

- To provide access to information and to help bridge the digital divide that exists in our rural area.
- Many in the community do not have access to wi-fi/Internet. Some are tourists, some are homeless, some live in underserved areas and may need access to important information/services outside of library hours
- It's a convenience for our patrons and we're the only source in our town.
- Because we do not have fast internet connections in many parts of our county
- We are in a rural area where the only internet service available is via satellite. Many of our patrons cannot afford to pay for this. We want them to have access to educational or emergency information.
- Because we live in a remote area where many do not have access to internet services.
- Because many in our community do not have internet at home and this gives them a dependable way to access the internet 24/7.
- To extend access to the Internet to as many users as possible, especially given our low average income in our county. And to serve users who are otherwise unserved by the library.
- Rural community with many not having access to wifi at home. We also have a large number of tourists who pass through at all hours
- We live in a rural community and internet access is limited
- Best service to our residents at NO added cost to the District
- Because not everyone can afford wi-fi and access to it
- We actually recently changed to provide it. WE felt it was an important service to offer people as many in our area don't have access to or can't afford internet at their homes, if they even have permanent homes.
- We know that many people in our community cannot afford internet service in their homes.
- Convenience. There are many who will do school work or business in their vehicles, early am or late pm.
- Convenience of patrons
- We live in a small community and are one of two access points in town so we are allowing it for now.
- Because we have a population with limited internet connectivity.
- We are the only free wifi in town. We have lots of people travelling through who need access at all hours.
- Access
- Access for the community
- As a service to the community, visitors, etc.

## No need to turn it off/easier to keep it on

- The City has had no reason to limit hours.
- It's a very small town and we just don't shut it down. People sit in the park in front of the library and access the wifi
- Don't want to set it up to be otherwise. Library hours differ enough on certain days it would be an annoyance to do otherwise
- We do not need to shut it off.
- do not turn the system off each day

- For a time we shut down wi-fi from 7 pm - 7 am, but difficulty with scheduling software led us to leave it connected 24/7.
- we do not turn our wi-fi on or off- it is always on
- It's of benefit to the community, and it's easier than turning it off and turning it back on again.

### **Wi-Fi is provided by the city or other entity**

- Because our library is a room in the city hall and so the wi-fi serves the library as well as the City. Sometimes there are evening meetings for which the wi-fi is needed.
- Our Wi-Fi is part of the City's free broadband service at City buildings and in Old Town.
- network is controlled by school district
- Service is provided free of charge by WAVE and there is no way to control the accessible times.

### **Only offer Wi-Fi for limited hours**

- After hours service is limited. Monday through Saturday, available 7am to 10pm. Not available at all on Sunday, the one day the library is not open.
- We only offer for a few hours after closing.
- We have, but are going to turn off from 11:00 pm until 5:30 am.

### **Additional comments**

- Our wi-fi is on 24-7 for our patrons use. Many of our patrons come in the evenings to use it in our parking lot.
- Patrons use the service in the adjacent park after hours.
- always have
- It's only if they know the password they are able to access it, not really something I prefer.
- Many people want to use wifi, but don't care about library services. They park or sit in front of the library on their phones, tablets, etc.
- Because the service is on and the signal is strong enough they can access it outside of the library
- Primarily to enable staff to access WiFi if needed before open hours; Also to provide limited access to library users when Library is closed
- user convenience
- all hours, except for a 15 minute period at closing to encourage people to leave (wi-fi comes back on 5 minutes after close)

### **Q12 - What problems have arisen from this service, if any?**

#### **No problems (32)**

- None (19)
- None, so far (3)
- None (that we're aware of) (2)
- None (knock on wood....)
- Nothing really
- Not as strong of a signal as we would like. Otherwise no problems.
- We have not had any major issues
- None. Lots of cars in the parking lot during closed hours. Funny but not a problem

- We have had no problems with the open 24/7 wi-fi.
- none, although I don't think the signal carries very far outside the building.
- None resulting from wifi service, but we did have to lock off outside electrical outlets to discourage camping overnight

## **Some problems (37)**

### **Parking/cars**

- Loud cars waking people up at night
- limited parking spots being taken up by wi-fi users
- Initially some overcrowding in parking lot due to competition between WiFi users in their vehicles and patrons using other library services or attending library programs. No problems noted recently.
- Just annoyance that they don't come into the library, they sit outside in their cars.
- People late at night running their car engines waking neighbors up at late at night.

### **Vandalism/drugs/trash/crime**

- Lately, an abundance of cigarette butts and trash being left in the area
- Between the hours of midnight and 4 am there has been vandalism around the library. Wi-Fi is now available only between 8 am - 10 pm
- Our Library is located in a "park" which has hours from 6:00 a.m. - 12:00 midnight so our wifi is on during those hours. Police had problems with drug sellers saying they were using the wifi. We help the police anyway we can.
- Vandalism and overnight camping on property was a problem, so decision was made not to offer 24/7 service.
- A group of troublemakers were hanging out behind the library. People started to see visible drug dealing, etc. At the request of our police department, we reduced the number of hours the wifi is available. It is currently available 6am-10pm.
- Some vandalism.
- We have had two branches report loitering, vandalism and noise. We've worked with the individuals and with law enforcement. We also had a problem with an outside electrical outlet. We had to turn that off.
- We have a huge problem with littering and vandalism. We also had our library broken into twice by wifi users (caught because their phone automatically connected minutes before the alarm went off). City Hall is threatening to make us turn the wifi off when the library isn't open
- Police responding to after hours issues.
- We opted to turn off the wifi service from 12 midnight to 5 am as we were having issues with vandalism and the police were reporting drug deals taking place.
- The local police are concerned that some of the after hours users are well-known to them from previous encounters with the law.
- Some vandalism has occurred in the outdoor seating area at one branch. It is hard to determine if it was the result of wifi users.

## **Loitering/lingering**

- Some questionable people hanging around.
- People sometimes complain about people being outside the library at all hours. Sometimes people leave a mess, but I'm not sure whether those are wifi users or others.
- Just occasional people lingering in cars
- Due to the existence of a secluded area beside the library building, the perception has been that unsavory characters are hanging around with the excuse of using the wi-fi.
- For a while, we had youngish indiv hanging out on the porch. We were concerned about safety for them and worried about attracting vandals or creeps. wifi is now only 5am-10pm
- People hang around the library after hours to use the wi-fi.
- People hanging around in the very late/early morning hours.
- Camping in our parking lot.
- We have homeless on our porch at all hours that are using the wifi and the porch to stay out of the weather.
- We have occasionally received concerns that it encourages loitering.

## **Isolated incidents of hacking or copyright infringement**

- one tried to hack. we caught and block his mac address
- Occasional digital rights management/copyright infringement notices from our ISPs (which also occur during library operating hours)
- long ago, we had one abuser (who lived next door) who was downloading masses of info (we suspected pirated). After we dealt with this user, we have had no further issues
- We originally turned it off because of someone pirating a large amount of data (petabytes). However, we instituted other protections to prevent that so that we could turn it back on.
- We have had some copyright infringement issues that have been dealt with in ways other than shutting off the service

## **Internet speed**

- Sometimes very very slow internet
- We have had to increase our investment in bandwidth management technology in two locations.

## **Miscellaneous**

- Occasionally people will mistake the neighbor's unsecured wi-fi for ours (after 8 pm) and use it. A few folks in the parking lot after we close, but only until 8 pm.
- Every apt and some businesses abuse it
- Users in our parking lot who assume they are using library WiFi, but who are actually camped on a neighboring private, unsecured WiFi.

## **Q13 - What feedback have you received about this service, if any?**

### **Appreciation/gratitude (30 comments)**

- People have told us they value the service.

- People tell us they really appreciate it!
- Thank you (2)
- people love it
- Great! Surprised a library our size has it.
- People traveling through are thrilled and of course patron in the area are thrilled.
- most love it !!!
- people love it!
- It is appreciated.
- Some people really appreciate it. We heard more than usual after many in the area had a prolonged power outage. Many people who might have questioned the service were suddenly grateful for it.
- I regularly see people recommending the service to others in community message groups (on Facebook).
- a majority of the community and visitors like the availability of the wifi we provide
- It is appreciated
- People appreciate it
- Our patrons love it.
- Most people like this service.
- Patrons and visitors have been VERY appreciative.
- Just occasional comments about how they were able to connect and appreciated it.
- people appreciate the service and many don't have access to the internet in our small community.
- Most people love it. We continue to work hard to prevent a few bad apples from spoiling it for everyone. We hope we can maintain this, especially as there are very few wifi hotspots in our county and none rurally, except for the libraries.
- Appreciation from users.
- People have expressed appreciation. People also think it's funny to see so many people using the library even though we are closed.
- Some users have thanked us for having this service. I think more would comment positively, but users include people on vacation that are in our city briefly.
- wi-fi use has surpassed the use of library computers, so it is very popular and appreciated.
- Along with the above concerns, I am also told by patrons that they use the service after hours and appreciate it.
- Patrons are grateful.
- Lots of gratitude
- Gratitude.
- Positive, everyone is very grateful. Hometown and people traveling through.

## No feedback (18 comments)

- None (12)
- Not much - the only feedback is that we see people using it in the parking lot.
- other than hard to hookup to it, none
- Little feedback, but the service is noticeably used by patrons in the library on a continual basis.
- We don't receive many comments but certainly see several people using the service after hours. It's also used by meeting room users who hold their events when the library is closed.
- Not much.

- No formal feedback, but we've observed a fair number of people using it in the parking lot and on the porch.

## **Concern from police (8 comments)**

- Deputy Sheriff wondering why people are in our parking lot all hours of the night.
- Well, the chief of police and the city manager requested that our wi-fi not be on 24/7, so now it's on from 8 AM to 8 PM. The public really likes this service, though.
- In the past, complaints from law enforcement about creating a situation that is difficult to monitor. Very little positive feedback has been received.
- The city police would like us to turn off after-hours wi-fi, so they can more easily enforce non-camping ordinances. Generally speaking, the public loves the service.
- See police feedback, above.
- Mostly positive for the people that can't come in during business hours. Sheriff deputy wondering why there are people sitting outside the library all hours of the day and night.
- The Sheriff dept has had complaints from business owners about people loitering on our porch and asked us to turn off the wifi when we are closed.
- We have positive feedback from users. We also have negative feedback from law enforcement who claim that it encourages loitering and the possibility of vandalism.

## **Miscellaneous**

- Most community members appreciate the availability, but not the trash around the building.
- People wish we could offer it free in their homes, after all you check out books to take home.....
- Some disappointment that 24/7 is not offered but not too many complaints. Service is available elsewhere in town during the off hours.
- This is a great service for people who don't have internet at home. It overcomes a huge barrier for those who'd otherwise be in the tech gap. I only get feedback to extend the hours and distance from the library--they have to park very close to be within range.
- People love to have the service, but dislike seeing some of the people taking advantage of it misbehaving.
- Several cars parked around library at various times of day!
- Our WiFi is only available 1-2 hours before we open and 1 hour after we are closed; it must be accessed close to the building. For those have slow or no Internet access at their homes, it has been helpful for the few who use it.

## **Q14 - Why does your library not offer after hours Wi-Fi service?**

- We had it for over a year, then the City changed it to open hours only, because they felt it attracted the wrong crowd to hang out.
- We offer it for an hour after the library closes. We have a problem in town with overnight parking and congregating in parking lots and parks for criminal activity.
- street bums, drinking parties, litter and human feces left from nightly movie watching using our wi-fi
- Now: tradition. History: Don't know.

- Because of vandalism, inappropriate behavior and using the library area as a garbage disposal.
- Our IT person asks us not to because we could not control what is being accessed.
- Issues with transients hanging out around the library causing issues in the neighborhood
- created a negative environment around the library when we were closed. particularly at night.
- Security and customer assistance
- We recently stopped doing so at the recommendation of our police, plus complaints from patrons returning items after hours and not feeling safe.
- Vandalism, drug use, and vagrancy interrupt patron use of the return drop box and create additional costs for clean up around the buildings, including feces.
- We have 11 locations in 11 municipalities. Three have chosen not to offer such service citing safety concerns.
- There has yet to be a demand and the building location does not encourage after hours. Also if there is an issue with the connection no staff would be available to assist the patron to resolve the issue.
- Vandalism, drug use/selling observed via our security cameras.
- People caught masturbating on steps next to library while watching porn. Beer and drug parties while watching porn, excessive littering and vandalism.
- Security issues
- Vandalism and an instance of illegal downloading

## **Q15 - What feedback have you received about the lack of this service, if any?**

### **No feedback about lack of service**

- Neither complaints or positive feedback
- None (7)
- No comments as of yet. Our wifi goes on at 8am to 15 minutes after closing seven days a week.
- No feedback or requests for the wi-fi to be available after hours. It is available approx. 12 hours a day M-F and approx. 9 hours each weekend day. the building location does not as of yet favor extended hours of wi-fi when the building is not open to the public.
- very little feedback: patrons were frustrated at first but understood the reasonings



### **Support for not providing after-hours access**

- Yes, all the neighbors like the idea that we do not have the access after hours.

### **Complaints about not providing after-hours access**

- People traveling through would like Wifi available after hours. There are other resources in town such as Safeway and McDonalds where they can connect.
- One person calls anonymously once a year or so, saying we are discriminating against him.
- We live in a 24/7 society. People use it at night and were disappointed when it was shut off. (All 11 started with 24 hour wi-fi.)
- Numerous patrons have complained at the library, but I'm unsure if they went to complain at City Hall.

**Q16 - The ALA statement on Intellectual Freedom states: “A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community.” In your view, is this relevant to the after-hours Wi-Fi access issue?**

**Yes (40 comments)**

- Yes Yes Yes!!!
- YES!!
- Yes (24)
- yes, many of our residents wouldn't have access to the internet if it wasn't for our wi-fi.
- Absolutely! (3)
- Absolutely. What could be more equitable than providing access to wi-fi at any time that a person's schedule dictates that they need it?
- yes, especially in poor rural communities
- yes it is. There are some who are uncomfortable with using the wifi during regular hours and so we provide after hours use. In this way we serve all of our patrons
- yes, if it is going to be provided, these are the best terms
- Yes, but it's a community-wide issue not just a library issue. Access to wi-fi has to be a shared responsibility with the municipalities so that the library is not the only location or access point.
- Yes. Just because the library is closed doesn't mean people don't need information.
- Definitely (2)
- Precisely.
- In a way, yes, because the night shift worker who is only awake during closed hours is "all people of its community."

**Relevant, somewhat of an intellectual freedom issue (10 comments)**

- It is relevant to us. It is part of the reason we leave it on until 10. It's a hard balancing act to provide it and to also control what was happening to and around our building as well.
- I suppose free, open wi-fi access both during and after library hours could be viewed as part of this statement.
- It is relevant but also we have a responsibility to what happens to everyone that is on the library property and the neighbors around the library
- somewhat- having available during working hours is adequate
- I believe it is relevant, but open to interpretation.
- I feel this is relevant. The decision to limit access came from City management. I would prefer to offer wi-fi services to the community especially since our service hours have been drastically cut back due to funding.
- somewhat
- Probably.
- I think it is relevant, at least until home internet access is within the reach of all patrons.
- It could be depending on the argument it is used for as our library is open seven days a week and four nights until 8 pm and we are liberal with guest passes.

## No (23 comments)

- No (10)
- No, I think it is a privilege for the wifi to be on during closed hours.
- Not for us.
- No--we fulfill that statement during open hours
- No. It is not our responsibility to provide wi-fi service 24/7. We provide the catalog and its resources 24/7. There are other commercial establishments that provide internet access most hours of the day and night.
- they can't come in to the library to check out books after hours or use our internet terminals.  
When we're open they get all our services. ALA doesn't have to live with the realities of running a public library.
- not necessarily (2)
- Not really but it costs us nothing and provides a needed service to the community
- No. When libraries are required to provide equipment to all persons wishing to access them 24/7, then providing unlimited wi-fi would be expected. Wi-fi is an equipment issue.
- NO. Our website is available 24/7 and there is free WiFi in many restaurants and businesses.  
We offer WiFi, along with many other services, primarily when the library is open and few libraries can afford to keep the doors open 24/7.
- Not if vandalism increases.
- No. We don't provide access to any other services when we are closed except through our website and are not obligated to provide 24X7 wifi.
- No. After-hours wi-fi is a privilege, if problems arise it should be shut down.
- Nope Not at All

## Probably not relevant

- They can't get to books after hours, except online.....
- You can read that to be that libraries should be open 24/7 and we're not.
- I think that can be conditional. Are there other avenues and outlets? For instance, in a larger city, there are more opportunities for hotspots than rurally. There is a balance. We go for optimum access and will only curb it if it becomes absolutely necessary.

## Confidentiality is also an intellectual freedom issue

- Free and equitable sure, but if you're on a public wi-fi connection I'm not sure about the confidential expectation.
- Well an open Wifi is not confidential access because it is not secure. The idea of equity is another issue but I'm going to restate that this service is provided by other businesses in town

## Other

- Due to our limited hours, we feel we could better serve the community with wi-fi access 24/7
- we comply
- We have always provided after hours and weekend access.

## **Q17 - Please share any additional questions or thoughts you have on this issue.**

### **Support for after hours Wi-Fi**

- Free wi-fi at all hours is an essential service in the 21st century.
- Not everyone can access the library during open hours and not everyone can access internet at home, or even has a home. Free wi-fi should not be bound by open hours just as we do not close our website, e-books, or databases when we shut the doors for the night.
- I have heard that other libraries have turned off their after hours wifi because of illegal activities (vandalism, etc). I have 2 comments on that: 1) how do you know that the illegal activity was directly related to the wi-fi and 2) we have MANY stolen DVDs throughout the year - should we discontinue the purchase of these items in order to stop the illegal activity? Should we punish the many that are using the service in a responsible way because of the few?
- This is a tough and important issue. It's one I really care about.
- Communities need to address issues of vagrancy, vandalism, and homelessness directly - wifi availability doesn't cause these.
- It should be made as available as possible.

### **Concerns about after hours wi-fi**

- We did not want to create a 'parking-lot' culture by providing 24/7 wi-fi, for security reasons. Also because we are located next to a residential area and did not want to create disturbances for the neighbors.
- You may also wish to consider issues around loitering.
- People hanging around the library after hours leave trash, cigarette butts, etc. and are using our wifi on their smart phones or laptops. Many are not library patrons but are just folks hanging out. This does cause a mess.
- We have NOT made WiFi accessible 24/7 because we did not want to create a "parking lot culture" in our small town. The library is located next to many residences and we did not want to create a 'gathering place' outside the library that could encourage noise and disturb those around us late at night.
- Forgot to mention we also get multiple reports from our Internet provider that the public is illegally downloading movies for resale after hours by sitting in our parking lot. All these activities have ceased once we turned off the WiFi after hours.

### **Complicated issue**

- I think the question of whether or not an individual library branch can/should provide free open wi-fi access after library hours depends on many factors, including the location of the branch, whether the exterior of the branch is safe for people to sit in cars, on the porch, etc. accessing wi-fi, and if there are other sources of access to wi-fi easily available in the vicinity
- This is a hard one.....Some people do need it.....
- We live in an ever-changing, highly complex, world. Sometimes it is very hard to actually dig deep enough to discover the complexities of a problem. And, though I don't like to think it, some problems are situational. After hours wifi is a privilege, not a right.
- In an ideal world 24/7 access would be available. Unfortunately other issues come into play.
- Thanks for addressing this difficult issue.

- We would love to be able to offer wifi 24/7, but only if it does not lead to safety issues for people.
- Wi-fi access is often dictated by the governing municipality. Smaller, especially rural, libraries would have difficulties meeting this kind of a mandate.
- Create/maintain working relationships with Police.
- While I know for a fact that not all people in my service area have internet or access to the internet, it also follows they do not have the tools in which to access wifi. Would it be nice to be a 24/7 wifi hot spot? Yes, it would. However, we have a large drug culture in our community which relies on wifi for their deals. While we cannot stop the drug trade, limiting wifi access to our open hour helps keep our facility more secure at night although deals still happen. I'm not sure there are any \*good\* answers to this. I argue both for and against. I'm not going to fight for 24/7 access here because of our broad spectrum of hours.

## **Library specific issues**

- At this time, the property owner is installing security cameras, hopefully we won't need them to address the issues.
- We are a very small town 150 pop. and isolated area. People appreciate the service.
- It is available when all of our other resources are available during our open hours.
- I wish there were an easy, affordable way to monitor/limit access without bogging down the staff with connection problems, etc.
- Our after hours Wi-fi access is limited to 6am to 6pm / 7 days a week. Router is on a timer and shuts down to discourage loitering and vandalism at night. We also feel it is a staff safety issue to encourage 24 hour access.
- People want everything for free without having an increase in taxes for increase in services. We do a lot with a penny and a shoestring, and try hard to do it all.
- Note that we've never had a complaint about offering after hours wifi at our library.
- there are plenty of other 24-hour wi-fi access points in my town. I have no problem cutting the internet off when we close.
- As long as this doesn't become a larger issue with people loitering or vandalism, we will continue to leave the wifi on after hours.
- We also utilize security cameras on our property, which is extremely useful for addressing security incidents and issues during on and off hours.
- We would like statistics to back up the offering of free 24 hour access wifi. This would help when we get negative feedback.