

My request for information on making a library wi-fi. - Summary
(7/2005)

We have had free wifi for about eight months. We don't advertise it heavily but it is used. IT set it up, then we got a new network administrator who made it better. Our legal research products - Westpack, Loislaw, Heinonline, etc - are available on 6 terminals that are in the court's network, have a filter to keep people from email, and can print. We have four wifi terminals that are not in the network and cannot print. People can go anywhere they want as far as I know. The clerk of court took away internet from his people so some come check mail and surf at lunch time. Generally, it works well and people who find out about it like it.

Our Chief asked IT to do it, which of course is more like an Order ;-) It was installed specifically for the Supreme Court clerks' laptops, and we do not allow other patrons to use it b/c of virus and other security considerations.

We have made our reference and main reading area wireless. We informed the Court's IT people, but we did it by ourselves with the assistance of the State Admin's IT people.

Our library went wireless just about one year ago. We have about 2500 square feet and I bought two wireless access points just to be safe. This ended up being my biggest battle w/ IT. They said it was pointless and we're going to authorize it. I had to "remind" them that my library has final say over what the library does or does not purchase - so we went w/ 2. The judge above me is very happy w/ that decision b/c he has access in his chambers. Also, the benches right outside my window have access.

The patrons absolutely love it. They bring their laptops in and work all day. I have a handful of attorneys who spend at least one day a week here as opposed to their office. We also networked a computer to work with the wireless network, so they can print from their laptops as well. We just went through a major renovation and by far a majority of our users say their favorite part is the wireless.

We have had about 10 days in the last two months when I come in and the wireless is down (not sure why) and I call IT and it is usually fixed w/in an hour. Let me know if you want any more info.

We have wireless access for our patrons in our space now. We had to buy a few of the necessary items for connection purposes, but the county was considering putting in wireless access in the jury rooms and other court room locations after the earthquake retrofit. So we became the first spot for wireless, as we were willing to be the guinea pigs and buy the necessary hardware if they provided the bandwidth. It took a little longer than we hoped to get it up and running - the problem was actually on the county side with a router problem, but now it usually works just fine. Has increased our traffic too as summer interns working in the courthouse come in to use their laptops - as do other attorneys. And as the wireless is working fairly well, we have switched our public pcs in our branch library to use the wireless service. Has enabled us to have internet for all our terminals when we used to only have two dial up modem connections in our branch. And much faster!

Although when it is down it can be a problem. Our staff pcs are still wired of course through the county. So we didn't actually have to sell it to IT but rather be willing to be the first.

We (informally) already have wireless, but will officially open it up to all users in 2006.

It's wonderful. Have had it at home for some years, and one becomes dependent on it once one gets used to it.

We're fortunate in that our county IT supports the move to wireless--partly to obviate stringing all the wire up four floors and to every desk--and partly because, thankfully, the PD is also pushing for it. (We share the same building.)

The only concern was the savvy non-county employee library patron who might attempt to hack into the county's network, but IT has an adequate firewall and other protections in place. Wireless has been in demand by our users for a little while, now--we've had patrons request it. It's coming just in time to meet the growing demand.

The net effect will be to make the library a more research-friendly place to visit.

The Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library makes available a wireless connection. We didn't have to sell IT (Info Systems) at all because the whole building was going wireless. I should say that we are not in a court house, but the State House, and many legislators use laptops. For a while we were not allowed to promote wireless access to outsiders, but now we can let people know about it. I'm not aware of any major difficulties, although people have said that in some locations in the building (not in the library) the signal seems to be weak. Our public computer network with five computer stations also runs from the wireless connection, and we haven't had any problems at all with it. Of course, the wireless connection does not allow a patron to access all the resources that are available at our public network, but people have been pretty happy to have internet access.

No, our IT staff was pretty supportive and had been looking for a test case. Actually, it was just our network staff. We installed the access points ourselves and configured the network (good documentation!). I'd highly recommend buying a bit more expensive hardware that will work as a single unit; we have Cisco and I can control all security settings from one of the three access points and have it affect the entire network. Linksys (or any consumer access points) will not typically link together very well. County IT arranged our wireless network separately from our wired network, with a direct connection to the Internet, for security reasons. We used 3 access points to cover about 10,000 square feet and access is not blocked by shelves, although we have some concrete walled conference rooms that only get good reception when the door is left open. We use DHCP for computer addressing, because it makes the experience invisible to us and the user. We bought 2 extra cards, and bar coded them, to be checked out by users who don't have wireless laptops or whose wireless laptops have problems accessing our network (a Windows "feature" sometimes will block the user from receiving the IP address they need to get to the Internet). We have had Macs and Windows PCs access without any hitch.

It's been a great tool and has brought lawyers upstairs who could "see" our network but not access it. We're a membership library, and have secured it for members-only access to ensure we knew who was on it. We don't otherwise use any encryption. We have been able to make some of our internal databases available over the wireless, because they are IP-based and the wireless users look as though they come from the same network as our PCs. Because our wired and wireless are separate, we have not found a good way to enable wireless printing (our printers, on the wired side, have coin boxes which we'd want to use!) and that would be the one thing I would re-engineer, to bring all of our public PCs, wired and wireless, out onto the same network.

We have public wi-fi in both our Seattle and RJC branch libraries. We were able to convince the county that we should be a site in their wi-fi network. We had to pay for some of the "pieces" to

make the connection, but the county ITS worked really hard to make this work. In our branch we were able to cancel our internet service provider contract we'd been using for our public lexis and Westlaw PC's and now rely on the wireless which is faster! Only problem is when the network goes down, we're out of luck until the county makes it a priority to get service running again. The library users with wi-fi cards love being connected to their email and office this way.

Our library is wireless, but it took a lot of coordination. We are in the County courthouse, and we are also a member of CLEVNET, a consortium through which we receive our internet and email service, among other things. All I had to do was ask CLEVNET, and they said yes. However, I had to convince the County IT department and get permission from the County architect to install the wiring and net devices. That took some doing, and I had to agree in writing to disable it if it conflict with any systems the County has or installs in the future. So far, there have not been any problems. My IT guy went along with the game plan, but he was not all that interested, so I had to do all of the coordination.

After getting it installed, (which took the county about 9 months to approve and then install) it has worked great. We don't use it for staff or patron terminals yet, but anyone who brings in a laptop (like the judges, county staff, and private members) can sign on. There is no key or password access required. We have a T-1 line under contract so we are going to continue using that for staff computers and patron fixed terminals. However, I do have a wireless laptop and hand-held PC for work that I use on the wireless network. People have no trouble getting on and using our wireless network, but not a lot of people have taken advantage of the service. It has not caused any problems with our County WAN or our private network for specialty databases and staff, the latter of which is still separate and must be accessed from patron terminals or remotely with special passwords behind our "Members' Only" page. For clarification, anyone using the wireless network can go to our "Members' Only" page on the web, sign in, and then access the remote resources they could from their home or desktop. We had to specially configure the system to allow that, and access to some of the CD products that way is still a little problematic.

We have wireless at the Main Library in Oakland as part of the County's IT support. We are happy with it. Library patrons can bring in the laptops to the library and login.

King County Law Library offers free WI-FI in both of our branches. It was set up by the County's IT department. We paid for the access points that were installed in our ceilings and for maintenance contracts for them. County IT is responsible for all other maintenance and security. It did take us a while to get County IT on board, in part because we're not officially a County department and in part because the concept of WI-FI is still new to the County and they were moving very cautiously. We sold it to them as an access to justice issue; fortunately for us, they were already working on setting up WI-FI in other public spaces in our building so the concept wasn't hard to convey. The only downside--and it's a minor one--is that public WI-FI is not at the top of the IT department's project list so when service is interrupted--about once a month for approximately 8-10 hours--it takes them a while to respond to service calls. Supporting users who are trying to connect can be time-consuming so you will definitely want to clearly delineate what tech support your staff will and won't provide. It used to be safe to assume that anyone with WI-FI equipment automatically had some tech savvy but not so any more since every laptop and cell phone that's sold out there these days has WI-FI built in.

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