Best Practices for Wireless Statistics

The purpose of these guidelines is to suggest a generalized standard for wireless usage statistics that are uniform amongst public libraries. Varying from the guidelines may skew usage numbers across the board and create unrealistic counts of usage. A uniform usage standard ensures we’re all recording usage in the same fashion despite varying methods of providing the wireless service.

The processes and rules defined below will ensure that all public libraries are reporting the same basic information to the appropriate reporting entity.

STATE AID REPORT – WIRELESS USAGE STATISTICS;
Section X: Library Services, Question 19
19. Uses of Wireless Logins per Year

Report the total number of wireless logins in the library during the last year. If the data element is collected as a weekly figure, multiple that figure by 50 to annualize it.

Best Practices Guidelines

1. Present a splash screen with your wireless and/or Internet usage guideline(s).
   a. The splash screen exists both to inform and to count. Patrons will be required to accept the page before accessing the wireless network.
   b. Systems without a splash screen will have issues with accurate counting.
      i. Can cause system to count “passerbys” who never use the system.

2. Ensure that your wireless solution allows creation of at least 1 public SSID, and 1 secured staff SSID.
   a. SSID is defined as Service Set Identifier, or the name provided to a wireless network.
   b. The State of Michigan does not differentiate between Staff or Public usage. They want to know how often your wireless connection is used.

3. Set any system to count by “unique user”.
   a. Unique Users are defined by MAC address.
   b. Counting by (Internet Protocol) IP addresses issued will result in skewed results (higher or lower, depending on use/abuse)

4. Set counting mechanisms for your chosen system to store login information for 12 hrs minimum and 24 hrs maximum.
   a. Increasing this to shorter time intervals (example: 2 hrs) will result in an inflated usage count.
   b. Many products default to 24 hours

5. Ensure that the main Internet connection has a static IP address or use a Dynamic DNS service. Otherwise, it can be very difficult or impossible to get accurate usage statistics.