

# Recommended Specifications for Public Library Computers

## Patron computer

### Hardware

#### Hard Drive and RAM

Minimum 80GB hard drive; Suggested 120 GB or more depending on how much software you plan to have on patron computers

Minimum 2 GB RAM ; Suggested 3 GB RAM

#### Networking

Ethernet Network card (NIC) or wireless card

#### Operating System

**DO NOT purchase Vista Home Basic**

Vista Home Premium: minimum recommendation. This will be suitable for most small libraries.

**Note: Vista Home Premium will not work if you have a domain set up on your network.**

Vista Business or Vista Ultimate are also suitable but more expensive.

See this article for more info:

[http://www.winsupersite.com/reviews/winvista\\_02.asp](http://www.winsupersite.com/reviews/winvista_02.asp)

You may still find offers to purchase Windows XP. If you do, make sure you purchase **XP Professional**.

#### Optical drive

DVD (just a DVD/CD player) - minimum recommendation

DVD/CD-RW combo (DVD Player/CD player and burner/writer - Recommended

DVD/RW Drive (DVD and CD burner) - Purchase only if you want patrons to be able to burn CDs and/or DVDs; or if you do not have this capability on existing staff computers so you have this available for library staff use)

New Blue Ray

#### Video/graphics card

Integrated cards should be fine for patron computers

Dedicated cards are a step up and would be needed for a computer for complex video games. If you plan to offer gaming on this patron computer get a dedicated card.

#### Sound/Speakers

Make sure there is a sound card

Headphones and/or speakers for patron computers.

Internal or external speakers

#### Keyboard and Mouse

PS/2 or USB Keyboard (makes sure you have enough USB ports if choosing USB)

#### Surge Protector

Recommend Tripp Lite and APC (American Power Conversion).

### Software

Word processing, spreadsheet, presentation software (also called a "productivity suite")

- Microsoft Office (versions and prices vary from \$120 - \$325) Purchase from TechSoup Stock <http://www.techsoup.org/stock/> for significant discounts.
- Open Office (Open Source) - free download - <http://www.openoffice.org/>
- iWork (Mac) - For Mac OS X - \$79
- Google Docs - free

Adobe Acrobat Reader - free

Anti-virus Software (Norton, Trend Micro, AVG, McAfee) Malware protection (prices vary) ClamWin (Free Open Source)

Security (Deep Freeze, Centurion, Clean Slate, Windows Steady State) (prices vary)

Browser - Internet Explorer (comes with Windows), Firefox, Safari (comes with Mac OS X) - free with OS or download

Players - Windows Media Player, QuickTime, Real Player, Shockwave and Flash players (all free)

## Warranty

3 year, parts/service/on-site

## Considerations for Patron Computers

- Size of the space you have to locate the computer.
- Will the computer's "box" be on the floor or on the desk?
- Is the "box" Vertical or horizontal? See examples below:



Vertical



Horizontal



Flat panel display  
Flat panel screens are lighter  
Consider size and space  
available.



Apple computers are a bit more expensive but the new iMac doesn't have a "box" so the screen "is" the computer.



PS/2 ports for keyboard  
and mouse (on the back of  
the computer)



USB Ports in front for easy  
access. (This ensures a  
patron can easily get to a  
USB port.)

Consider purchasing a Card reader for cameras if your policy allows that use.

# Staff computer

## Hardware

### Hard Drive and RAM

120 GB or more depending on how much software you plan to install as well as pictures, instructional videos, pdf files, etc.

Minimum 2 GB RAM ; Suggested 3 GB RAM

### Networking

Ethernet Network card (NIC) or wireless card

### Operating System

#### **DO NOT purchase Vista Home Basic**

Vista Home Premium: minimum recommendation. This will be suitable for most small libraries.

**Note: Vista Home Premium will not work if you have a domain set up on your network.**

Vista Business or Vista Ultimate are also suitable but more expensive.

See this article for more info:

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You may still find offers to purchase Windows XP. If you do, make sure you purchase **XP Professional**.

### Optical drive

DVD/RW Drive (DVD and CD burner) - minimum

BD-ROM - I think it would be a good idea to have a drive with the new Blue Ray format on one computer in the library

### Video/graphics card

Integrated cards should be fine for a staff computer.

### WebCam

For distance learning and video-conferencing for meetings

### Sound/Speakers

Make sure there is a sound card

Headset with microphone for webinars and video conferencing

Internal or external speakers

### Keyboard and Mouse

PS/2 or USB Keyboard (makes sure you have enough USB ports if choosing USB)

### Surge Protector

Recommend Tripp Lite and APC (American Power Conversion).

## Software

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## Warranty

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## Purchasing Tips

Make sure when you configure online that you are in the correct area. Dell won't sell a library a computer from the "Home" area so you need to configure as a small business or local government.

Vendors treat public libraries differently. You may find one company will give an educational discount whereas others plop you into a non-profit area, or state and local government.

Stay away from Best Buy and Circuit City unless you can get operating system and the configuration that meets your needs. The computers are pre-configured and it's harder to find the right one.