

## WESTCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

### LIBRARY COMPUTER AND INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

#### INTRODUCTION

This document constitutes a library-wide policy for the management of computer data networks and the resources they make available, as well as stand-alone computers that are owned and administered by the Westchester Public Library. The policy reflects the ethical principles of the Westchester Public Library and indicates, in general, what the privileges and responsibilities are of persons using the library's computing equipment.

Additional policies and regulations of specific computers and networks may also be applicable.

#### GENERAL POLICIES

Computer use has become an integral part of many library activities. While much computing is now done on individual computing resources, most information and communications systems either reside on central computers or use networks. Procedures for gaining access to and making optimum use of these resources (including the steps to be taken in lodging complaints) are available to users.

#### EXTERNAL NETWORKS

Patrons and staff who use networks or facilities not owned by the library will adhere to the policies and procedures established by the administrators of these networks and facilities. (These can usually be obtained from the network information center of the network in question.) Use of library computing resources must follow the guidelines of all of the networks traversed.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the library will treat information stored on computers as confidential (whether or not that information is protected by the computer operating system).

Requests for disclosure of information will be honored only under one of the following conditions:

- when approved by the appropriate library administrator
- when authorized by the owners of the information
- when required by local, state or federal law

Except when prohibited by applicable state or federal laws or deemed inappropriate by library staff, computer users will receive prior notice of such disclosures. (Viewing of information in the course of normal system maintenance does not constitute disclosure.)

**Warning:** Users of electronic mail systems should be aware that electronic mail in its present form cannot be secured and is, therefore, extremely vulnerable to unauthorized access and modification.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF USERS**

The user is responsible for correct and sufficient use of the tools available for maintaining the security of information stored on each computer system. The following precautions are strongly recommended:

- Computer accounts, passwords and other types of authorization that are assigned to individual users should not be shared with others
- The user should assign an obscure account password and change it frequently
- The user should understand the level of protection each computer system automatically applies to files and supplement it, if necessary for sensitive information.
- The microcomputer user should be aware of computer viruses and other destructive computer programs, and take steps to avoid being a victim or unwitting distributor of these processes.

Ultimate responsibility for resolution of problems related to the invasion of the user's privacy or loss of data rests with the user. The library assumes no liability for loss or damage to the user's data or for any damage or injury arising from invasion of the user's privacy.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSES**

Library computing resources are to be used to advance the library's mission. Staff may use them only for purposes related to the discharge of their duties as employees, their official business with the library, and other library-sanctioned activities.

## **LEGAL USE**

Computing resources may only be used for legal purposes by the public and staff. Examples of unacceptable purposes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Harassment of other users
- Libeling of slandering other users
- Destruction of or damage to equipment, software, or data belonging to the library or other users
- Disruption or unauthorized monitoring of electronic communications
- Unauthorized copying of copyright-protected material

## **ETHICAL USE**

Computing resources should be used in accordance with the ethical standards of the library. Examples of unacceptable use (some of which may also have legal consequences) include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Unauthorized use of computer accounts, access codes, or network identification numbers assigned to others
- Use of computer communications facilities in ways that unnecessarily impede the computing activities of others (such as randomly initiating interactive electronic communications or email exchanges, overuse of interactive network utilities, and so forth)

- Violation of network usage policies and regulations
- Violation of another user's privacy

## **COOPERATIVE USE**

Computing resource users can facilitate computing at the library in many ways. The library endorses the practice of cooperative computing. It includes:

- Refraining from overuse of connect time, information storage space, printing facilities or processing capacity
- Refraining from use of sounds and visuals which might be disruptive to others
- Refraining from use of any computing resource in an irresponsible manner

## **INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE**

Internet providers strive to provide the widest possible freedom of expression for their users. However, because this is an online community, basic standards of conduct have been set to build an environment that encourages communication.

Communication that harms others is not allowed. Complaints received of threats or harassment of others will be grounds for denial of access to the Internet through the library. Illegal activities are not allowed. These include:

Suspicion of illegal activities will result in the suspension of a user's privileges - proof of wrongdoing will result in the termination of a user's privileges.

In addition, abuse of the library's computing resources - including using another's password or account, breaking into restricted areas of the system, accessing other user's private files or using the library's computing resources to distribute malevolent software like computer viruses - is grounds for immediate suspension or termination of a user's access privileges.

## **INTERNET SAFETY POLICY**

Because the Westchester Public Library receives federal funding for public Internet access, federal law known as the 'Children's Internet Protection Act' found in U.S.C. Title XVII Sec. 1701 et. seq. requires the library to install filtering software on the Library's Internet terminals for protecting against access through the library's Internet terminals to visual depictions that are I. Obscene, II. Child Pornography, or III. Harmful to Minors.

The blocking software, or filtering software is inherently imprecise and flawed, it will inevitably block access to a vast variety of constitutionally protected material available on the Internet. Patrons are warned that because of technological limitations of filtering software and constantly evolving Internet technology, filters are incapable of totally protecting against access to Internet material that is obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors.

The library will disable a filter upon request by an adult 18 years of age or older, and enable access for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

Patrons using filtered terminals who feel that a filtered website has been erroneously blocked by the filtering are encouraged to put the information on a comment card, so that the System Administrator

can review the operation of the filter. If an adult patron has a need to view that blocked website before the System Administrator can review the operation of the filter and make any necessary changes, the patron is encouraged to use an unfiltered terminal for the specific purpose of reaching the blocked website.

The library highly recommends that as part of its Internet Safety Policy that parents read [Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet](#). The library strongly recommends that parents use the Internet access services provided by the library with their children and that the parents provide appropriate supervision.

## **SEXUALLY EXPLICIT IMAGES**

Viewing sexually explicit images on computers in the library where the images might be seen by library staff and other library patrons is prohibited.

## **SANCTIONS**

Violators of computing resources use policies may lose library privileges. (Staff will be subject to normal disciplinary procedures as well.) Violations of the policies described above for legal and ethical use of computing resources will be dealt with in a serious and appropriate manner. For staff this may include the termination of employment. Illegal acts involving Library computing resources may also be subject to prosecution by local, state or federal authorities.

## **DISCLAIMER**

Since the Internet is a global electronic network, there is no state/county control of its users or content. The Internet and its available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The library cannot guarantee to censor access to material nor protect users from offensive information. Parents of minor children must assume ultimate responsibility for their children's use of the Internet through the library's connection. Parents and children are encouraged to read [Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet](#) from the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#).

Library staff cannot control the availability of information links which often change rapidly and unpredictably. Not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, complete or current information. Users need to be good information consumers, questioning the validity of the information.

Also, the Westchester Public Library assumes no responsibility for any damages, direct or indirect, arising from use of its WWW Server or from its connections to other Internet services.

## **LIMITATION OF LIABILITY**

All patrons who wish to use the library's microcomputer equipment are required to sign a Library & Computer User Agreement and agree to be responsible for any damages, alterations, or financial loss to the user suffered as a result of using the library's computer services. Parents or guardians must sign the agreement on behalf their minor children.

Furthermore, the library and its employees will attempt to assist patrons with their personal electronic equipment such as computers, cellular telephones, e-readers, GPS navigators and other devices when requested, but the library and its employees are not responsible for any damages or repairs to these devices or data.