

Computer Use Policy

Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Lake County Public Library - 7/24/97

Revised - 6/27/02

Computers, networks, and computer-based resources at the Lake County Public Library are used to help fulfill the Library's mission.

This policy covers 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 Lake County Public Library. The policy reflects the ethical principles of the Lake County Public Library and indicates, in general, the privileges and responsibilities of persons using the Library's computing resources.

Specific procedures and regulations for using standalone computers, networked computers, and computer-based resources are in writing and available for all users.

External Networks

Staff and patrons who use networks or facilities not owned by the Library will adhere to the policies and procedures established by the administrators of those networks and facilities. (The policies and procedures 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

Except for databases made available for general public use, 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 authorized by the owners of the information;
- when approved by the appropriate Library administrator;
- when required by local, state or federal law.

Except when inappropriate, 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 to be used.

- Computer accounts, passwords and other types of authorization that are assigned to individual users may 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. Patrons may use standalone computers and network workstations only for the purposes designated at each location. Staff may use Library computing resources 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 or 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.
- unauthorized purchasing in the name of the library.

Ethical Use

Computing resources should be used in accordance with 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:

- violation of computer system security;
- 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 e-mail exchanges, overuse of interactive network utilities, and so forth);
- violation of software license agreements;
- 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:

- regular deletion of unneeded files from one's accounts on shared computing resources;
- refraining from overuse of connect time, information storage space, printing facilities or processing capacity;
- refraining from overuse of interactive network utilities;
- refraining from use of sounds and visuals which might be disruptive to others;
- refraining from use of any computing resource in an irresponsible manner.

The library reserves the right to place reasonable limits on the use of its computing resources by the public

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 termination of employment. Illegal acts involving Library computing resources may also be subject to prosecution by local, state or federal authorities.

Limitations of Liability

All patrons who wish to use the Library's microcomputer equipment are required to sign and date the library's Computer Use Form which includes a limitation of liability

statement.

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 other users is not allowed. Complaints received of threats or harassment of other users will be grounds for denial of access to the Internet through the Library's computing resources.

Illegal activities are not allowed. This includes

- violating copyright restrictions;
- conspiring to commit crimes;
- maliciously slandering or libeling an individual;
- conducting illicit transactions;
- using Library computing resources to break into other computer systems.

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 users' 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.

Computer Use by Children

The Library does not serve *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent) like public schools do. Library staff do not act in place of parents providing constant care and supervision of children using library computers. The responsibility for minors' use of computers and the Internet rests with their parents or guardians.

The Library provides training on computer basics and the Internet and recommends sites suitable for children, which are included on the Children's Department pages of the Library web site.

The Library recommends that parents discuss the following rules for online safety with their children before permitting them to use the Internet.

Rules for Internet Use by Children Recommended by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

- I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number,

parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.

- I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
- I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
- I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the online service.
- I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.

This section of policy was adapted from other sources, including the St. Joseph County Public Library, Ames Public Library, and LakeNet.

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 censor access to material nor protect users from offensive information. Parents of minor children must assume responsibility for their children's use of the Internet through the Library's connection.

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 Lake County Public Library assumes no responsibility for any damages, direct or indirect, arising from use of its connections to Internet services.

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