

## **INF-1 Internet Use and Safety Policy**

Approved May 26, 2004

- **Policy Statement:** The purpose of this Internet Use and Safety Policy is to ensure the best use of and access to the Internet for the greatest number of our customers. The Hingham Public Library [hereafter Library] has chosen to make the Internet available to the public because of its value as a research and educational tool. The Library considers use of its public access computers and/or use of its Internet services to constitute acceptance of the Library's Internet Use and Safety Policy.

This policy may be revised from time to time by the Library Board of Trustees.

- **Disclaimers & Disclosures:** The Internet is a global computing network that provides access to a wide range of educational, recreational and reference resources, many of which are not available in print. The Internet does not fall under the control or governance of any single agency, government or organization and therefore sites often change and sometimes disappear without notice. The Library makes no guarantees, implied or otherwise, regarding the factual reliability or authenticity of the information users acquire through the Internet. Provision of this service does not constitute endorsement of Internet content by the Library or the Town of Hingham.

In no event shall the Library or the Town of Hingham have any liability for lost profits or for any direct or indirect special, punitive or consequential damages or liability to any third party, even if the Library is advised of the possibility of such damages, arising from use of its connection to the Internet. Users of the Library's computers and Internet access agree to assume full liability (legal, financial, or otherwise) for actions.

Internet access in all areas of the Library, except the Children's and Young Adult locations, is unfiltered and therefore allows access to ideas, information, images, and commentary beyond the scope of the Library's collections, selection criteria and collection development policy. Some of the ideas, points of view and images may be controversial and inflammatory. They may even offend the sensibilities of certain individuals. Court decisions over the years have interpreted the Library to be a "limited public forum" and as such, the Library may not discriminate against constitutionally protected content or viewpoints. The one exception to the "limited public forum" doctrine is the federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Under CIPA, it is not acceptable for a minor to receive any material that is deemed harmful to minors through a website, email, chat room or other direct electronic communication. CIPA defines harmful as "any picture, image, graphic image file, or other visual depiction that, with respect to minors (1.) taken as a whole, appeals to a prurient interest in nudity, sex, or excretion; (2.) depicts, describes, or represents, in a patently offensive way, an actual or simulated sexual act or sexual conduct, actual or simulated normal or perverted sexual acts, or a lewd exhibition of the genitals; and (3.) taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

To offer some safeguards for children, the Library provides filtered access for individuals under fifteen years of age. A filter is a third-party software or hardware appliance that blocks or restricts access to predetermined words or websites. Parents and caregivers should understand that filters limit but cannot eliminate a child's exposure to potentially harmful or undesirable

information. It should be noted, too, that filters may block useful and non-objectionable material and impede legitimate research. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of parents and adult caregivers to guide the Internet activities of their children. Advice to parents and caregivers on Internet use and safety is provided in the “Guidelines” section of this document.

Information on user privacy and Library Internet access is contained in the Library’s Privacy Policy. Users, however, are advised that they have no expectations of privacy while using the Library’s computers, and additionally are cautioned that the Internet is not a secure environment by its very nature, making personal information included in transactions, files and communications subject to potential unauthorized access by third parties. The Library reserves the right to inspect and remove unauthorized user data saved on its computers.

The Library’s computers also are subject to access by law enforcement authorities acting through federal or state law. The Library and the Town of Hingham will cooperate in the prosecution of violations arising out of use of its computers for illegal purposes and activities.

- **Regulations:** All users of the Library’s computers are expected to avail themselves of these resources in a responsible and courteous way, consistent with the purposes for which they are provided, and to follow these specific regulations:
  1. Users must cooperate with Library staff as requested to ensure equitable use and a safe computing environment.
  2. Except for free email services offered by third-party providers, electronic mail is not available using software on the Library’s computers. Free services on the Internet may be accessed through the Library’s computers.
  3. User-created files may not be saved on the Library’s computers. Files that are saved will be removed by the Library. Users may store files on personal removable storage media.
  4. User-supplied software may not be installed on the Library’s computers, and users may not modify or reconfigure software installed by the Library on its computers.
  5. Any person who damages library equipment will be responsible for the cost of repairs or replacement of that equipment.
  6. The Library’s public access computers may not be used to violate or to circumvent copyright or licensing agreements in violation of applicable federal, state or local laws or ordinances, including, but not limited to, Title 17 of the United States Code.
  7. The Library’s computers may not be used to conduct a business or commercial enterprise from the Library. The Library’s computers and Internet resources are for research, education, and personal communication uses only.
  8. Use of the Library’s computers to play electronic games is deemed by this policy to be a lower priority use than research, education or personal communication uses. A user engaged in playing electronic games may be asked to relinquish use of his/her computer if another user with a designated higher priority use is waiting for a computer and no others are available.

9. Users may not engage in illegal or unethical use of the Internet. Electronic gambling via the Library's computers is strictly prohibited by this policy.
10. Persons using computers other than those provided by the Library to connect to the Library's Internet resources are subject to applicable regulations, laws and procedures set forth in this document.
11. Use of the Library's resources to gain unauthorized access to local or remote computers or to impair or damage the Library's network, workstations or peripherals is prohibited. This prohibition includes but is not limited to conducting bandwidth-intensive downloads/uploads, running, installing or sharing computer programs which infiltrate a computer system, or damage to or alteration of the software components of a local or remote system.
12. Use of the Library's computers to transmit threatening, harassing or abusive language and images or libelous statements is prohibited.
13. Posting, transmitting, accessing, or displaying of obscene and illegal material, as defined by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 272, Section 31, and U.S. Code Title 18 is prohibited.
14. Prompt payment is required by users who incur charges for printing or other authorized fees.
15. Users will end their session and leave the computer when asked to do so by Library staff, even if they have not completed their work.
16. By mutual agreement, two people may share a computer as long as their behavior or conversation does not disturb other users or Library staff.
17. The Librarian in charge may set additional limits on user sessions in order to assure equitable access for the majority of users.

**Termination or Prohibition of User Access:**

- Library staff are authorized to terminate any user's session, or to suspend a user's access to the Library's computers if a user fails to comply with this policy and its regulations. Staff shall follow the procedures in the Library's "Unacceptable Behavior, Conduct, and Acts in the Hingham Public Library" policy to address compliance failures. Illegal acts involving Library computing resources may also be subject to prosecution by local, state or federal authorities.
- A suspension or revocation of privileges may be reviewed upon written request to the Library Director.

**Guidelines:** The following recommendations apply to use of the Library's Internet access for children and teens.

- The Library has installed software designed to filter sexually explicit content on the Internet workstations located in the Children's and Young Adult areas of the Library. The Library also has taken the following additional measures to assist in the safe and effective use of this resource by minors:

1. Staff may guide minors away from sites that may be inappropriate.
2. Staff develops and provides training programs on safe and effective Internet use.
3. Staff distributes various publications to assist parents and minors with wise and safe choices while using the Internet.

Notwithstanding the above safety measures, the Library cannot guarantee that either filtering software or staff vigilance will entirely eliminate minors' exposure to inappropriate Internet websites. Therefore, parents or other designated caregivers ultimately must be responsible for monitoring their minor children's use of the Internet.

- To address the issue of safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications, and to prevent the unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal identification, the Library urges minors to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:
  1. Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone numbers.
  2. Let your parents or guardians decide whether personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
  3. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parental or guardian approval.
  4. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make you uncomfortable.
  5. Have your parents or guardians report the transmission of child pornography to the Hingham Police (781-749-1212) or to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (1-800-843-5678).
  6. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
  7. Remember that everything you read on line may not be true.
  8. Remember always to let Library staff know if you encounter anything or anyone online that makes you feel uncomfortable.