

Laurel Public Library Internet Use Policy

Mission

In accordance with its mission to support the cultural, educational, and recreational needs of the community, the Laurel Public Library (LPL) offers Internet access to all patrons. Under age users not accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other responsible party (i.e. older siblings, babysitter, care takes, etc.) **MUST** follow library patron rules.

Consistent with our mission and the professional principles of public librarianship, this Internet Use Policy affirms intellectual freedom, equity of access and individual responsibility. LPL also strives to assure confidentiality of information about users and their use of all library resources and to safeguard First Amendment rights. The Library affirms the following principles and user rights as delineated by the American Library Association.

- Electronic information, services, and networks provided by libraries should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users.
- Libraries and librarians should not deny or limit access to information available via electronic resources because of its controversial content or because of personal beliefs or fears of confrontation.
- Information retrieved or utilized electronically should be considered constitutionally protected unless determined otherwise by a court with appropriate jurisdiction.
- Responsibility for a child's use of the Internet rests solely with his or her parents or legal guardians. Restriction of a child's use of the Internet rests primarily with parents, but library staff may intervene if a child is accessing inappropriate websites.

The LPL's Role

The Internet offers access to a wealth of information that can be personally, professionally and culturally enriching. Library staff has attempted to identify on the Library's home page specific starting points for searches and links to sources on the Internet which may be helpful to many users. Because the Internet is a vast and unregulated information network, it enables access to ideas, information, images and commentary beyond the confines of the Library's selection criteria and collection development policies.

Users are cautioned that ideas, points of view, and images can be found on the Internet which is controversial, divergent and inflammatory. The provision of access does not mean

or imply that the Library endorses or sanctions the content or point of view of any of the information or commentary which may be found on the Internet. Furthermore, because access points on the Internet change often, rapidly and unpredictably, the Library cannot protect individuals from information and images which they might find offensive or disturbing.

Computers available to the public which can be used to access the Internet must be shared by library users of all ages, background and sensibilities. Since staff cannot consistently and effectively monitor the public's use of the Internet, individuals are asked to be sensitive of other's values and beliefs when displaying potentially controversial information or images on public computer screens. Users are also cautioned that, because security in an electronic environment such as the Internet cannot be guaranteed, all transaction, files and communications are vulnerable to unauthorized access and use and, therefore, should be considered public.

The Library assumes no responsibility for any damages, direct or indirect, arising from its connections to the Internet. The Library makes no guarantees, either expressed or implied, with respect to the quality or content of the information available on the Internet. Not all the information available via the Internet is accurate, current or complete. Users are encouraged to be good information consumers by evaluating the validity of information accessed via the Internet.

Filtering, U.S.F. and C.I.P.A.

The Library receives funding for telecommunications and Internet access from the Universal Service Fund. In order to receive this federal funding, as of July 1, 2004, the library must follow the guidelines in the Children's Internet Protection Act. Therefore, we have installed filtering software on our computers with Internet access. However, library users age 17 and over may request that a staff member disable the filtering software for bona fide research, or other lawful purposes.

Staff Assistance

Staff will assist library users in getting started on the Internet at reference or information service points. Staff will try to answer specific questions about the Internet and offer suggestions for effective searching. Staff can also provide information about Internet training opportunities and Internet books and manuals. More extensive training will be available at designated training centers.

User Responsibilities

All users of the Internet are expected to use this library resource in a responsible and courteous way, consistent with the purposes for which it is provided, and to follow all Internet-related rules, regulations and procedures established for its use including, but not limited to, those of the Library. Responsible, courteous use of the Internet includes:

- Recognizing that the Internet, like all of the Library's information sources, must be shared and used in a manner which respects the rights of others and refrains from activities that prevent others from using it.
- Refraining from illegal use of the LPL's Internet resources, including using such resources to engage in harassment or defamation.
- Respecting intellectual property rights by making only authorized copies of copyrighted, licensed or otherwise-controlled software or data residing on the Internet.
- Respecting the privacy of others by not misrepresenting oneself as another user; by not attempting to modify or gain access to files, passwords, or data belonging to others; and by not seeking disallowed access to any computer system via the Internet.
- Refraining from damaging equipment or altering the setup of computers used to access the Internet at the Library.
- Refraining from installing or running personal software on a LPL computer.
- Refraining from altering or damaging software or data stored on Internet-accessible computers.
- Refraining from the deliberate propagation of computer worms and/or viruses.
- Respecting posted time limits.

Netiquette

The term netiquette is used to refer to an emerging set of guidelines and norms for the use of Internet services and communication tools that help to ensure courteous and effective communication. The Library encourages computer users to learn and practice proper netiquette.

Compliance with the Library Policy and Guidelines

In addition to this specified policy, general guidelines for the use of all public-access computers govern the use of the Internet in the Library. Violation of the policies and regulations that govern the use of the Library's Internet resources may result in suspension or loss of the privilege to use these resources. Illegal activity involving the Library's Internet resources will be subject to prosecution by the appropriate authorities.

Child Safety on the Internet

Parents or guardians are responsible for the internet information selected and/or accessed by their children. Children who use the Internet unsupervised may be exposed to inappropriate or disturbing information and images. Parents are encouraged to discuss the use of the internet in relation to family values and boundaries with their children and to monitor their children's use of the Internet.

Sexual Images on the Internet

Occasionally, Library patrons may be observed viewing explicit sexual images on an Internet computer. We request library patrons refrain from using websites that show graphic and/or sexual content. However, if this behavior is observed please inform a Library staff member, who will ask the patron to stop and/or leave the computer. The Laurel Public Library is committed to providing an environment free from sexual harassment for all patrons and employees.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns

The Library wants to know what you think of its Internet service. Please feel free to ask a question or raise a concern at any time. A Comments & Suggestions Form, available at the Information Desk, may be used to communicate any message to the Library. If your concern cannot be resolved immediately by a staff member, please fill out the form so that the Library may continue to address the issue until it is resolved.