

# The Merrimac Public Library

## Policy on Internet Access and Service

To fulfill its mission of providing public access to information of all types in a wide range of formats, the Merrimac Public Library provides access to Internet resources. The Internet offers access to global<sup>1</sup> sources of information. However, some information found on the Internet may be inaccurate, incomplete, dated, or offensive to some individuals. Users must evaluate the authority and suitability of information found.

### Choosing and Evaluating Sources

The Library is not responsible for the content of the Internet, changes in content of the sources to which the Library home pages link, or for the content of sources accessed through secondary links. The library staff is always available to provide suggestions and strategies to help patrons with their searches. As always, your ideas, comments, and sharing of knowledge with us are welcomed.

### Rules Governing Use

The Library may set limits, for example, on use of large files of still or moving images or sound, or on downloading files in any medium. The Library also reserves the right to limit the amount of time an individual user can devote to a single session. The Library's electronic resources are to be used in a responsible manner consistent with the educational and informational purposes for which they are provided. The following purposeful, illegal activities by adults or minors online constitute unacceptable use.

Users may not:

- Use Library workstations for any illegal or criminal purpose that violates local, state or federal laws, including committing fraud, violating copyright law or software licenses or in a manner inconsistent with the Library's tax-exempt status or its proper operation.
- Attempt to gain unauthorized access to the resources of the library's network or attempt to gain unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," to the resources of other networks.
- Attempt to make unauthorized downloads of programs or software from the Internet onto Library computers or onto disks.
- Deliberately display obscene<sup>2</sup> materials or child pornography<sup>3</sup> which is prohibited as a violation of Massachusetts General Law.<sup>4</sup> (See Obscene Materials section below.)
- Distribute unsolicited advertising.
- Make any attempt to damage computer equipment or software.

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<sup>1</sup> URL for internet information: <http://www.pbs.org/uti/guide/overview.html>

<sup>2</sup> The standard for "obscenity" was set forth in *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15 (1973).

<sup>3</sup> The term "child pornography" has the meaning given such term in section 2256 of Title 18, United States Code.

<sup>4</sup> MGL. Chapter 272, Section 29: Crimes Against Morality, Good Order – Dissemination or Possession of Obscene Matter; and Chapter 272, Section 31: Crimes Against Morality, Good Order – Definitions.

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Violations may result in loss of access. Unlawful activities will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

**Obscene Materials:** The Library strives to balance the rights of patrons to access all types of information resources with the rights of patrons and staff to work in a public setting free from disruptive sounds and visuals. Patrons are reminded that the Library's computers are located in public areas which are shared with library users of all ages and backgrounds. Individuals are expected to consider this diversity and respect the sensibilities of others when accessing potentially offensive materials.

### Access by Minors

Parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for deciding which library resources are appropriate for their own children. Parents or legal guardians should guide their children in use of the Internet and inform them about materials they should not use. The Library affirms and acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians to monitor and determine their children's access to Library materials and resources, including those available through the Internet.

To address the issue of **access by minors** to inappropriate material on the Internet, including material that is harmful to minors, the Library:

- Makes Internet access available whenever the Library is open
- Encourages staff to guide minors away from materials that may be inappropriate
- Maintains that users cannot use someone else's personal information without authorization. This is illegal, and will result in revocation of computer privileges.
- Requires users to cooperate with librarians as requested to ensure equitable computer use and a safe computing environment.
- Allow users to plug any appropriate device into the front ports on our computers, but does not allow them to remove anything from the back of the computers.

To address the issue of the **safety and security of minors** when using electronic mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications, as well as the unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors, the Library provides suggestions on how to use the Internet and also urges minors to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:

- Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone number.
- Let parents or guardians decide whether personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parents' or guardians' approval.
- Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make one uncomfortable.

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- Have parents or guardians report an incident to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.<sup>5</sup>
- Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
- Remember that everything one reads may not be true.

### **Guidelines on Access**

The Merrimac Public Library is guided by the following American Library Association statements on access to information:

- The Library Bill of Rights
- Freedom to Read Statement
- Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights: Free Access to Libraries for Minors and Access to Electronic Information Services and Resources

In general, the Library is guided by a commitment to access to information policies that provide appropriate protections to its patrons while being consistent with the Library's longstanding commitment to the principles of free expression as set forth in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

### **Policy Approval**

Revised and approved by the MPL Board of Trustees on March 14, 2007.

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<sup>5</sup> National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678 if one becomes aware of the transmission of child pornography.