

Morrisson-Reeves Library **Internet Use and Safety Policy**

Purpose

Morrisson-Reeves Library recognizes that the community it serves is composed of individuals with a wide range of beliefs, interests, backgrounds and needs. The Library also recognizes and emphasizes that the public library is an institution of a democratic society and was established to serve the needs of all people in a community.

Electronic information and networking is a new and rapidly developing area of public and private activity. The Library recognizes that these developments pose new challenges as well as opportunities for the Library Board, staff and library users and their families. The Library believes that these challenges and opportunities are best addressed by adherence to the fundamental principles of traditional library use and the principles of a free society. New methods of receiving and disseminating information do not change the mission of Morrisson-Reeves Library, which is: *“MRL serves as the primary information resource for service area residents...”*

Information Disclaimer

Except for web pages produced by the Library, MRL does not control Internet content and makes no general effort to limit Internet access beyond the usage rules set forth by the Library Board of Trustees. However, when informed of a violation of the Library’s Internet Use Agreement, library staff will enforce the legal, ethical and cooperative responsibilities outlined in this document.

MRL cannot insure the availability or the accuracy of external electronic resources. Like print materials, not all electronic resources provide accurate, complete or current information. Users need to be good information consumers, questioning the validity of information.

Access

Morrisson-Reeves Library cannot control content on the Internet. The Library does not use software that filters information on the Internet as it usually filters valuable and useful information and violates the Library Bill of Rights (previously adopted by the MRL Library Board). The Library seeks to protect the First Amendment rights of its customers and their individual right to privacy. However, Internet users must be sensitive to the fact that workstations are in public areas and, therefore, images on the computer screen are subject to view by a wide audience.

Computer workstations owned by MRL are owned and operated for educational, informational and recreational purposes only; they may not be used for unauthorized, illegal or unethical purposes. Customers may not send, receive or display text or graphics that may be construed as obscene or pornographic.

MRL does not provide e-mail accounts for library patrons.

After careful consideration of the community that it serves, the MRL Library Board of Trustees has determined that the following rules apply for computer use age limits.

- ✓ Users age twelve and younger shall have access to Internet stations at MRL in Children's Services when accompanied by a parent/guardian or an individual age eighteen or over appointed by the parent/guardian (parental appointment must be verified in writing).
- ✓ Users over the age of twelve shall have access to the Internet via stations in Audio-Visual Services.

Anyone wishing to use MRL computers must comply with all rules set forth including the completion and signing of an *Internet Use Agreement*. The Library reserves the right to set rules as needed to promote equitable computer use (i.e.: time and/or use limits) and to revise this policy in response to changes in, or concerns about, the computing environment at Morriison-Reeves Library.

Confidentiality

In order to protect the privacy of the user and the interests of other library patrons, the Library will manage access to the Internet by the consistent enforcement of the *Internet Use Agreement* and other appropriate means. Absolute privacy by computer users cannot be guaranteed. All provisions of the Library's *Confidentiality of Records Policy* apply to those individuals using computers at MRL.

In keeping with general library policies, MRL will protect patrons' right to privacy and confidentiality. MRL keeps any communications that reside on its computer network confidential. However, in general, electronic communication is not secure and networks are sometimes susceptible to outside intervention. As part of the normal system maintenance, network administrators do monitor system activity, but the library does not reveal information about an individual's use of computer resources unless compelled to do so by court order per the Library's *Confidentiality of Records Policy*.

Responsibilities of the Library

There is no single entity or organization that governs controls or selects information for the Internet. Because of this freedom of information, the breadth of information on the Internet, the unstructured and unregulated nature of the Internet and the unreliable state of filtering software, Morrisson-Reeves Library cannot control the content of resources found on the Internet.

The Library's homepage provides easy, convenient access to valuable local, national and international sources for information. Library staff is specifically trained in searching the Internet to locate reliable, accurate and useful information. Staff is committed to assisting library users when they need to find information via the Internet.

Morrisson-Reeves Library, unlike schools, does not serve *in loco parentis* (in place of parents). Librarians cannot act in the place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet. The responsibility for what minors read or view on the Internet rests with the parent or guardian. This sentiment is affirmed in the usage age requirements set forth in the Access section of the policy.

Responsibilities of Users

Access, use, or dissemination of information via the Internet in the Library is the responsibility of the user. In the case of minors, it is a joint responsibility of the user and the parent or guardian.

MRL computer users have the following responsibilities as set forth in the Library's *Internet Use Agreement*...

- ✓ Users must hold a valid MRL library card or for those who wish to use the MRL computers but do not reside in the Library's service area, he/she must possess valid identification and meet the age requirements set forth by the Library Board of Trustees.
- ✓ MRL library cardholders must meet existing MRL requirements for checking out materials and/or equipment
- ✓ Sexually explicit materials or sexually suggestive (obscene or pornographic) material access and/or viewing are prohibited
- ✓ Use of chat rooms is prohibited
- ✓ Time limits will be enforced
- ✓ Attempts to reconfigure or change hardware will be grounds for revocation of Internet privileges

Additionally, computers users will be required to pay for any copies they produce via MRL owned printers (black and white and color). Copy prices are set by the Library Board of Trustees and may be subject to change.

Computer users have legal responsibilities. Examples of *illegal* use of MRL owned computers include, but are not limited to the following...

- ✓ Attempting to alter or damage computer equipment, software configurations, or files belonging to MRL, other users, or external networks
- ✓ Attempting unauthorized entry to MRL's network or external networks
- ✓ Intentional propagation of computer viruses
- ✓ Violation of copyright or communications laws
- ✓ Violation of software license agreements
- ✓ Transmission of speech not protected by the First Amendment, such as libel or obscenity

Computer users have ethical responsibilities. Examples of *unethical* use of MRL owned computers (some of which may 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 tie-up, interfere with, or impede computer use of others
- ✓ Violation of external networks' regulations and policies
- ✓ Violation of another user's privacy

Cooperative Responsibilities

MRL attempts to balance the rights of users to access different information resources via computers with the rights of other computer users to work in a public environment free from harassing sounds and visuals. When using software that emits sounds, the user will be asked and expected to use headphones provided by the library.

One person will be assigned per computer in the computer labs in Audio-Visual Services. Others who accompany someone using a computer will be encouraged to wait outside the computer lab due to space limitations in the lab area itself and to respect the privacy of others working at computers in the lab at the same time. Only those persons registered for a computer class will be allowed access to the computer lab while the class is being conducted. Time limits for usage will be enforced when waiting lists occur.

In Children's Services, a parent/guardian or person appointed by a parent/guardian in accordance with MRL requirements may sit with the child at the computer to guide the child. Children are not to be left alone while using a computer in Children's Services.

A parent/guardian who has children with him/her and wishes to use a computer for his/her use (not the child's use) will be required to use computers in Audio-Visual Services in a specifically designated computer lab area. (Note: this area may not always be available for parents with children to use due to class scheduling, computer availability, etc... Availability of this area will be the sole decision of library staff on duty in Audio-Visual Services at the time the parent requests a computer in that area).

Parents/guardians who wish to use a MRL computer while a child younger than age thirteen uses a computer at the same time will be assigned computers to use in the specifically designated computer lab area if computers are available. (Note: this area may not always be available for parents with children to use due to class scheduling, computer availability, etc... Availability of this area will be the sole decision of library staff on duty in Audio-Visual Services at the time the parent requests computers in that area).

Sanctions

The cooperation of everyone using the Library's resources is requested. If individuals break acceptable use rules set forth by Morrisson-Reeves Library, their privilege to use MRL Internet computers and computer resources will be revoked. Depending upon the severity of the rules violation the sanction by the Library could be up to and including permanent revocation of the use of computers and Internet access via the Library.

Limitation of Liability

MRL assumes no liability for any loss or damage to user's data, disks or documents, nor for personal damage or injury incurred as a result of MRL's computing resources. This includes damage or injury sustained from invasions of the user's privacy.

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees of Morrisson-Reeves Library
June 21, 2002

MRL thanks public libraries across the country that have shared information and made their policies accessible.