

West Virginia University Libraries Electronic Information Policy for Library Users

The primary purpose of this policy is to detail the rights and responsibilities of consumers of electronic information in the West Virginia University Libraries.

Given the rapid rate of change within the field of electronic information this document must be regarded as a work in progress. Revision will not only be necessary but desirable.

Underlying Principles

The principles of academic freedom apply in full to the electronic communications and information environment. The WVU Libraries are committed to The Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, the American Library Association Code of Ethics, and ALA Policies on Confidentiality.

The WVU Libraries Electronic Information Policy is part of the University's overall policy structure and should be interpreted in conjunction with other existing policies. Use of the Library's computing and networking services is governed by the policy statement provided in this document, other relevant University policies, and all applicable laws. Individuals using these services should be particularly aware of the policies which apply to discrimination, harassment and equal opportunity and those which apply to the appropriate use of university resources.

The use of all WVU Information Technology resources, including those of the Libraries, is subject to the usual requirements of legal and ethical behavior within the WVU community. Users of WVU IT resources must comply with all federal, West Virginia, and other applicable law; all generally applicable rules of the University System of West Virginia Board of Trustees and all generally applicable WVU policies; and all applicable contracts, and licenses. Examples of such laws, rules, policies, contracts and licenses include the laws of libel, privacy, copyright, trademark, obscenity, and child pornography; the Electronic Communications Privacy Act and the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act; the West Virginia Governmental Ethics Act; the WVU Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities; the WVU policy on sexual harassment; and all applicable software licenses.

The conventions of courtesy and etiquette which govern vocal and written communications shall extend to electronic communications as well.

The use of computing and network services provided by the Library shall be subject to all State and Federal laws.

The WVU Libraries have developed certain procedures to assist patrons in the use of electronic information resources. These procedures are based on the following principles:

Library workstations are to be used for course-related activity, scholarly research, and other activities directly related to the educational, research and public service mission of the University.

Use of library workstations to access electronic services offered by the Library takes precedence over other activities.

Patrons may not install software for personal use on library workstations.

Definitions

Our primary user base is the WVU community (faculty, students, and staff). This policy recognizes that there is a larger user community that is defined by University policy, consortium and cooperative agreements and contractual obligations.

For the purposes of this policy electronic information is any electronic resource that is made available by the WVU Libraries or that is accessible through library workstations.

A Library workstation is a workstation that is physically located in and/or maintained by the WVU Libraries.

Content of Internet Resources

The WVU Libraries urge library patrons to be informed consumers and carefully evaluate information obtained via the Internet.

Library staff may be available to assist patrons in making judgments about the reliability or currency of certain types of Internet information sources, but may not be able to provide definitive analysis of particular sources due to the extremely large variety and volume of information available via the Internet.

Most resources available via the Internet and other electronic information networks are "global" rather than "local" resources. The WVU Libraries do not and can not control the information content available through global resources such as information obtained from outside sources via the Internet. Internet resources enhance and supplement resources that are available locally within a library. The following should be kept in mind when evaluating information obtained via the Internet:

Information obtained via the Internet may or may not be accurate and reliable and may or may not be obtained from a reliable source.

Links to information on the Internet may not always be valid, and particular information sites on the Internet may sometimes be unavailable and this unavailability often occurs unpredictably.

Certain information obtained via the Internet may be considered controversial by some library patrons.

The WVU Libraries are not responsible for damages, indirect or direct, arising from a library patron's use of electronic information resources.

Library Patron's Rights

Library patrons have the right to confidentiality and privacy in the use of electronic information to the extent possible, given certain constraints such as proximity of other patrons and staff in public settings, security weaknesses inherent in electronic communications, and the library's need to conduct periodic use studies.

Library patrons have the right of equitable access to electronic information networks in support of the educational, research, and public service mission of the University, subject to the constraints of equipment availability.

Library Patrons' Responsibilities

Library electronic resources are distributed via the campus network. Therefore, all use of library-provided network connections falls under the campus-wide policy of computing, network access and use.

The WVU Libraries require that library patrons using electronic information networks such as the Internet do so within the guidelines of acceptable and responsible use.

Acceptable and responsible use of Library computing and communications facilities and services requires that all users:

Respect the legal protection provided by copyright and license to programs and data.

Respect the rights of others by complying with all University policies regarding intellectual property.

Respect the rights of others by complying with all University policies regarding sexual,

racial and other forms of harassment, and by preserving the privacy of personal data to which you have access. Users shall take full responsibility for messages that they transmit through the Library's computers and network facilities.

Respect the privacy of others by not tampering with their files, passwords, or accounts, and by not representing others when messaging or conferencing.

Demonstrate common courtesy by not disrupting others or overusing system resources or equipment.

Use only computer IDs or accounts and communication facilities which you are duly authorized to use, and use them for the purposes for which they were intended.

Respect the integrity of computing systems and data; for example, by not intentionally developing programs or making use of already existing programs that harass other users, or infiltrate a computer or computing system, or damage or alter the software components of a computer or computing system, or gain unauthorized access to other facilities accessible via the network.

Use Library computing and communications facilities in a manner which is consistent with the ethical principles set forth by the University and with accepted community standards.

Respect and adhere to any State of West Virginia or Federal laws which may govern use of these computing and communication facilities.

Breach of Policy

Violations of any aspect of this policy may result in the temporary or permanent loss of privileges.

For questions about the Electronic Information Policy for Library Users, contact the Dean of Libraries.

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