

# INTERNET ACCESS AND SERVICES

## LIBRARY MISSION:

The Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield's public library, provides for people of all ages the materials and services necessary to satisfy an appetite for information about popular cultural and social trends and their desire for enjoyable recreational experiences; enables older children and adults to explore personal, historical and cultural heritage; provides the sophisticated information services needed to answer their questions; supplies the means for any person to continue to learn throughout their lives; and assists students and teachers engaged in a formal program of education through high school or homeschoolers pursuing their educational goals. Our reason for existence is to initiate, nurture and feed a passion for knowledge and learning.

## INTRODUCTION:

The Internet, a global collection of distinct national, regional and local computer networks capable of communicating with each other through a telecommunications network, is one of the resource options the Athenaeum has in securing the needed information. While the Internet is an immense informational storehouse, it is not always what a user might expect. Because it consists of a collection of independent networks it is not centrally organized. There is no table of contents or index to help a user find what is needed. The Internet is a powerful tool for finding information, but it is not a substitute for other library resources. In many cases it will be easier to use reference books, magazines or more established computer databases to do research. Users should seek the assistance of reference librarians to help find the best sources for the needed information.

## MISCELLANEOUS POLICY AND PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS:

**ACCEPTABLE USE:** Access to and use of the Internet is a privilege and should be treated as such by all users of the system. The Athenaeum's electronic information 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 and/or criminal activities constitute unacceptable use:

- X Using library workstations for any illegal or criminal purpose that violates local, state or federal laws, including (but not limited to) committing fraud, or violating copyright law or software licenses;
- X Disrupting the intended use of the library Internet computers;
- X Damaging the integrity of computer-based information on the library Internet computers by attempting to install, delete or modify library software, or attempting to install or run any programs that have not been installed by the library;
- X Moving or changing the arrangement of library computers and attached equipment;
- X Unauthorized downloading software from the Internet onto library computers or onto disks;
- X Attempting to gain unauthorized access to the resources of the library's network or to cause degradation of system performance; attempting to gain unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," to the resources of other networks; and/or developing

- computer programs which infiltrate a computer or computer system and/or damage or alter the software components of a local or remote computer or computer system;
- X Deliberately displaying and/or viewing obscene images (see OBSCENE MATERIALS section below);
- X Engaging in communications which are libelous or slanderous;
- X Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors, or otherwise compromising the privacy of any users (see PRIVACY section below);
- X Wasting resources (staff time, equipment capacity, supplies) through such actions.

ACCESS: Both long and short-term Internet workstations are available at the Berkshire Athenaeum. Users must sign in at the Reference Desk before accessing long-term workstations and may be routinely asked to present identification, preferably a valid library card in good standing. Persons with outstanding debt may be denied Internet use at the discretion of library personnel.

#### CHILDREN'S USE OF THE INTERNET:

The Athenaeum is aware of public concerns about child safety on the Internet and cares deeply about children in our community. Policies and procedures have been put in place to ensure children have an enriching and safe online experience.

Children and their caregivers are encouraged to use the Internet workstation in the Children's Library. Children's librarians can instruct children in the use of the Internet computers and offer assistance in locating helpful web sites to find information or search engines that are appropriate and useful for children. The library makes available printed materials intended for parents and caregivers as guides to help adults direct children's use of the Internet.

While the Athenaeum does provide instruction and assistance on using the Internet, librarians cannot monitor individual use of this resource. Access to the Internet carries with it the potential to deliberately or accidentally access inaccurate, inappropriate or offensive material. Therefore, parents and guardians are encouraged to take an active role in their children's use of the Internet, and talk to their children about their personal values, expectations and rules for safe behavior when using this resource. Parents should encourage their children to speak to the librarian if they get to a web site that makes them feel uncomfortable.

The Athenaeum affirms the right and responsibility of parents and legal guardians to guide their children's use of all library resources, including the Internet, and especially their children's access to electronic mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications. As is the case with all other library materials, any restriction of a child's access to the Internet is the responsibility of the child's parent or legal guardian (see WAIVER OF RESPONSIBILITY section below).

DOWNLOADING: As a protection against viruses there will be no downloading of information from the library's short term public Internet work stations to a disk or hard drive, however the downloading of information from the long term Internet work stations is acceptable, and floppy

disks and CD-RW disks for this purpose are available for purchase from the Reference Department. Patrons are encouraged to save their work on these computers to a removable medium, as work may not be saved to the workstations' hard drive.

E-MAIL: The library does not establish, maintain and/or actively facilitate the use of e-mail accounts, news groups, list-serves or chat-rooms for its users. [See also the section on "TRAINING" that follows.]

**FILTERING OR BLOCKING SOFTWARE:** The American Library Association's (ALA) policies oppose anything and anyone that prevents access to constitutionally protected speech in libraries. Because filtering software cannot distinguish between protected and unprotected speech, ALA opposes the use of filters in libraries. Despite the Supreme Court ruling on the Children's and Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which permits the government to require libraries receiving certain kinds of federal funding to filter Internet content, ALA does not recommend the use in libraries of filtering technology that blocks constitutionally protected information. The Trustees of the Berkshire Athenaeum supports the position adopted by the American Library Association that sees the use of filtering software as an abridgement of the Library Bill of Rights, and does not use filtering software on library Internet workstations.

**HEADPHONES:** Some of the programs available at the long-term computers include audio (sound) effects and/or narration. Patrons wishing to use these programs are directed to the Circulation Department where headphones are available to be checked out using a valid library card in good standing.

**MISUSE:** Violators of library policy, including these policies for Internet Access and Service, may lose library privileges. Anyone discovered attempting to damage the library's equipment or software, attempting to change files or reset configurations, or otherwise violating this policy will immediately lose the right to use those resources. Violations of the policies for legal and ethical use of computing resources will be dealt with in a serious and appropriate manner. Illegal acts involving library computing resources may also be subject to prosecution by local, state or federal authorities. Users are responsible for any damage to hardware, software, data, furniture or equipment. A librarian may check the workstations after each use.

**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 computer terminals are located in public areas which are shared with library users and staff of all ages, backgrounds and sensibilities. Individuals are expected to consider this diversity and respect the sensibilities of others when accessing potentially offensive information or images. The deliberate display of

obscene<sup>1</sup> materials or child pornography<sup>2</sup> is prohibited as a violation of Massachusetts General Law.<sup>3</sup>

**PRINTING:** Printouts are available from the long-term Internet workstations only. The first five pages printed are free. Any pages or partial pages in excess of five pages are at a cost of \$.10 per page which is payable when the user signs out from the service. This is a printing charge and not a paper charge, so that double-sided printing - using two sides of a single sheet of paper - will be credited as two copies.

**PRIVACY:** In accordance with Massachusetts General Law<sup>4</sup>, the Athenaeum respects a user's right to both confidentiality and privacy. Users are cautioned, however, that the Internet is not a secure medium. All transactions, files and communications, including the transmission of personal financial information, may be subject to access by third parties, whether legal or illegal. The library will not release information on the use of its electronic resources by the public except as required by law. Unless there is a clear violation of this policy or the law, each user is requested to respect the privacy of other computer users.

**RESERVATIONS:** While walk-ins are welcomed on both short-term and long-term Internet workstations, patrons may reserve up to one (1) hour of computer time on the long-term Internet computers only, either in person or by phone. These reservations may be made no more than 48 hours in advance. All reservations are handled by the Reference Department. Users arriving more than five minutes late for their reserved time may forfeit their reservation if another person wishes to use the computer.

**SHUT DOWN:** To facilitate lock up procedures, library personnel will begin to shut down workstations not in use fifteen minutes before the library closes.

**TIME ALLOWED:** Short-term Internet workstations are available for thirty (30) minutes at a time with a maximum of no more than one (1) hour if no one else is waiting to use a workstation. Library staff will assure that all interested patrons have an opportunity to search the Internet by enforcing, as necessary, the time limits that may be posted at the Internet work stations. Because the short-term Internet workstations are also the library's OPAC (Online Public Access Computer) workstations, library staff will be enforcing this time restriction to ensure access to the library's catalog as well. Users of the long-term Internet workstations may sign up for one (1) hour of computer time by the method described under "Reservations" above.

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<sup>1</sup>The standard for "obscenity" was set forth in Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15 (1973).

<sup>2</sup>The term "child pornography" has the meaning given such term in section 2256 of Title 18, United States Code.

<sup>3</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.

<sup>4</sup>M.G.L., Chapter 78, section 7: Public Libraries - Establishment by Cities and Towns; Records

**TRAINING:** Internet beginners may be interested in attending an “Internet Basics” or “E-Mail for Beginners”<sup>5</sup> training scheduled periodically by the library. Interested users should ask at the Reference Department to see if one has been or may be scheduled. The Internet is a new frontier of information resources and the Athenaeum requests the cooperation and patience of Internet users as we learn about this ever-changing electronic world. While library staff may be happy to try, they cannot guarantee either sufficient time or knowledge to solve Internet-related questions.

**USER LIMITS:** Except for parents or adult caregivers with small children, users may be accompanied by only one other person at a workstation.

**VALIDITY:** Internet users are cautioned to examine carefully the authority, currency and accuracy of any information obtained over the Internet as well as the validity of its source.

**WAIVER OF RESPONSIBILITY:**

The Berkshire Athenaeum does not actively monitor and has no control over the information accessed through the Internet and cannot be held responsible for its content, authority, reliability, currency or use. Neither the Board of trustees of the Berkshire Athenaeum, the Athenaeum staff, nor the City of Pittsfield is liable for any negative consequences that may occur as a result of using the library’s Internet connection.

The Berkshire Athenaeum is a strong advocate for free speech and free expression so long as it is not at odds with applicable state and/or federal law. As with other library materials, the library affirms the parent’s or legal guardian’s right and responsibility for monitoring their children’s use of electronic resources. The Athenaeum rejects attempts to censor electronic communications. It is not possible for library staff to control specific information library users may locate on the Internet because the resources available are constantly changing. Just as libraries do not vouch for or endorse the viewpoints of written material in their collections, they do not do so for electronic information. Selection policies, which serve the more traditional library materials, may not apply to material accessed electronically. It is the responsibility of the user (or parent, guardian or caregiver) to determine what is appropriate. The Athenaeum expects parents who are concerned about their children’s use of electronic resources to provide guidance to their own children.

The Berkshire Athenaeum has a responsibility to provide material and information presenting all points of view, and the Athenaeum supports access to all formats of material to meet the user’s informational needs, regardless of the user’s age or the content of the material. Parents concerned about their children’s use of electronic resources are ultimately responsible for setting standards and establishing guidelines, and may wish to spend time on-line with their children to discuss the wealth of information available.

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<sup>5</sup> “E-Mail for Beginners” teaches participants how to set up their own e-mail account on available web sites.