

## HOUSTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ON-LINE USE POLICY – Effective July 9, 2009

Welcome to the Houston County Public Library's Public Access to databases including Internet. This access enables us to fulfill our mission to serve as a major information center for the community by providing educational, recreational, and informational materials, programs, and services.

The Internet is an important resource enabling library users to access information beyond the system's own collection. In addition to the library's homepage that highlights general information about the library, other links give patrons access to Internet sites of current and ongoing interest. Information links on the Internet change rapidly and unpredictably, so sites may become unavailable without notice. Because not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, complete, or current information, patrons are advised to use information from the Internet at their own risk. The library does not warrant or guarantee the reliability or truthfulness of information obtained from the Internet. The library shall have no liability for direct, indirect, or consequential damages related to use of information accessed via the Internet from library equipment.

In the Nola Brantley Memorial Library there are eight (8) Internet computers provided and maintained by Macon State College solely for the exclusive use of their students.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF USERS

All Internet resources accessible through the library are provided equally to all users. There is no age limit for use of any material via our Internet services. Patrons under 18 whose parents have given them signed permission have access to the same resources as adults. It is the library's policy that parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for deciding what resources are appropriate for their children.

Since the Internet is an unregulated and rapidly changing medium, it is possible to intentionally or inadvertently find material that is offensive or disturbing to some users. All public and staff computers are equipped with software that is designed to block access to sites that contain visual depictions and/or information which is unlawful, which may reasonably be construed as being obscene, child pornography or materials "harmful to minors" as currently defined by law or outside the scope of the library's collection. CIPA and the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act (NCIPA) were passed on December 15, 2000. CIPA places restrictions on the use of funding available to public and school libraries through the Library Services and Technology Act, Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the E-rate Universal Service discount programs. The Act requires Internet safety policies and technology protection measures which block or filter certain materials from being accessed through the internet. Our filtering system meets the requirements for CIPA, and our filtering hardware/software is supplied and administered by the Georgia Public Library Services through the Board of Regents. Despite these provisions, customers may still encounter sites they find personally offensive. For this reason, patrons must assume responsibility for their own use of the Internet.

There will be some resources that are inappropriate for children. Parents should let their children know if there are materials that they do not want them to use. Parents should supervise their child's Internet sessions. Parents are urged to read Child Safety on the Information Highway at [http://www.safekids.com/child\\_safety.htm](http://www.safekids.com/child_safety.htm), (1-800-843-5678) that was jointly produced by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Interactive Services Association.

Public library computers are neither private nor secure. Users should exercise extreme caution about revealing any personal identification information (such as name, address, telephone number, email, social security number, age, or credit card number.) The library's access to the Internet does not have encryption capabilities. Therefore, any information that you send via the Internet at the library is not encoded or secure. Minors should NEVER disclose any personal identification information over the Internet. Users are financially responsible for any charges that they may incur from their use of the Internet.

Library staff will attempt to assist patrons in the proper use of the Internet but the staff may not always be able to give assistance to patrons. The staff will not be available for more than five (5) minutes to assist a user. The expertise of the staff will vary from person to person. Although the library does not provide direct links to sources known to contain computer viruses, this will not completely protect users' computers from viruses. Software downloaded from the Internet may contain a virus and users should have virus-checking software on their computers.

As with all library materials, the library may not agree with all of the content found in the various sites on the Internet. Responsible use of the Internet includes the following: using resources for educational, informational and recreational purposes only, not for unauthorized, illegal or unethical purposes; 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; by not seeking unauthorized access to any computer system, or damaging or altering software components of any network or database; by making only authorized copies of copyrighted or licensed software or data.

## RULES

The Internet stations at the Houston County Library are solely designed to access the resources known as the World Wide Web. The library will not provide electronic mail accounts; however, a user may access his e-mail account from another source. All Internet computer use will cease 15 minutes before the library closes.

Individual use of the Internet computers will be limited to one (1) hour per day per patron. If no one is waiting, patrons may extend their Internet session to a maximum of three (3) hours per day. A person must relinquish his or her right at the computer after an hour if others are waiting. Patrons who are taking a timed online exam that exceeds one hour should notify a staff member before beginning the exam. No more than two people may be at a library computer. However, because of space limitations, it is not always possible for more than one individual to be seated at a computer at a time.

Internet stations may not be used for chat rooms or the playing of games.

Downloading of material from the World Wide Web must be made to a floppy disk or USB drive. Library computers do not have CD burners. Downloading anything directly to one of the library's computers is forbidden. Printing material from the Internet carries a charge of 15 cents per page.

Attaching any foreign device other than a flash drive or USB storage device to a library computer is forbidden.

Children under the age of 18 MUST have written parental permission to use any Internet station. Parents must stay with children under the age of 12 who are using an Internet computer. Parents and/or guardians are responsible for monitoring the use of email by their minor children. Children under the age of 18 who do not have written parental permission to use the Internet may not sit at an Internet station with another Internet user.

Parents, guardians, or caregivers using the Internet may not leave children under the age of 12 unattended in other parts of the library.

Users should not use internet services to acquire, display or print pornographic materials. Georgia law prohibits display of materials harmful to minors in places frequented by minors. This also includes the use of profanity, obscenity, or other language that may be offensive to another user.

## VIOLATIONS

Violation of the Houston County Public Library Internet policy will result in the following:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Offense – “Inappropriate Use of the Internet – 1<sup>st</sup> Warning” note on patron record.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense – “Inappropriate Use of the Internet – 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense” note on patron record. Patron’s Internet privileges suspended for 90 days.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense – “Inappropriate Use of the Internet – 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense” note on patron record. Patron’s Internet privileges suspended permanently.

### **Definitions:**

1. **“Minor” is a person under 18 years of age. O. C. G. A. x16-12-102(3).**
2. **“Harmful to minors” is defined as per current Georgia law, O.C.G.A. x 16-12-102.**
3. **“Obscene” is defined under Georgia law, O.C.G.A.x 16-12-80.**
4. **“Child pornography” is defined under federal and/or state law (18 U.S.C.x2256; O.C.G.A.x16-12-100)**