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Internet Use Policies of Medical Libraries in North Carolina

This paper will examine Internet use policies of medical libraries in North Carolina. North Carolina is on the east coast of the United States. Before I concentrate on my corner of the world, I want to discuss some general issues related to Internet policies in libraries.

Libraries of all types worldwide are increasingly obtaining Internet access. Both the librarians and the library users are eager for Internet access. For librarians, Internet can literally change the way the library does business. Some examples are, once a library obtains access to Internet and e-mail,

- 1) the librarians may place fewer telephone calls because they can ask questions through listservs and one-mail,
- 2) librarians may change collection development practices and purchase fewer books because such a wealth of information is available on the Internet,
- 3) the library may purchase more computers,
- 4) librarians may change the layout of the physical library to provide more floor space for computers, and 5) librarians may offer many more Internet and computer training to the library users. The list goes on and on.

And yet, one never knows what might appear on Internet. Totally unexpected images appear!

With all the wonderful enhancements Internet brings to a library, it also brings with it dilemmas, problems, ethical choices; questions of when the rights of one person violate the rights of another person.

Here are some Internet situations that have happened in libraries:

1. A library employee operates a side business of selling child pornography. He downloads pornographic images from the Internet during work time at the library. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation asks for the full cooperation of the library to gather enough evidence to bring the library employee to court in hopes of sending him to jail.

2. A high ranking health administrator brings several dignitaries to the medical library to demonstrate the Internet to obtain better funding for

the library's microcomputer lab. The health administrator presses the enter key to eliminate the screen saver from view, and a pornographic image appears on the screen. The previous library user had left the image on the screen.

3. A mother brings her young son to the University Library to search Internet. As they walk into the microcomputer lab, the mother and boy see college students looking at pornographic images. She is highly offended and complains bitterly to the University President and its Board, as well as to the local newspaper.

4. The March/April 1995 issue of Educom Review reported the case of a student, bored with his assignments, developed a method for loading a sound segment onto machines in a public computing site. He placed the faked orgasm sound segment from the movie *When Harry Met Sally* on all the computers. When a user switched on a machine, the entire sound segment played without having a method for stopping it. *L. Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal* in the movie.

5. A student changed a screen saver in a University Health Sciences Library to one that mentioned racist remarks and the Ku Klux Klan. (A U.S. Civil War secret society advocating white supremacy)

(All of these situations except for one happened in North Carolina libraries.)

6. Also, people in libraries have:

- a. used someone else's e-mail password and sent messages fraudulently.
- b. placed computer viruses on library computers.
- c. sent harassing e-mail messages.
- d. broken federal law using Internet.
- e. operated a business and made personal money on the library's computers.

f. used Internet for long time periods while others waited.

g. not followed proper Internet etiquette or UNetiquetteL by flaming, writing e-mail in all capital letters, etc.

How can libraries be proactive and plan what to do in these and other tense and embarrassing circumstances? Most libraries now are writing Internet policies that address these issues. Hundreds of library Internet use policies can be found on Internet. The Medical Library Association publishes MLA Docket #7, UWWW and other Internet information services in the Health Sciences.L Also, MEDLIB-L (the listserv) frequently contains questions and answers on Internet use policies.

Many libraries develop their Internet policies using the American Library Association's Bill of Rights as a guide. This famous document has stood for the principle of UNo CensorshipL for many years, and now it also applies to electronic information. In essence it says that all people of all ages should have access to all information. To solve the problem of one library user becoming offended by the Internet image of a person sitting next to him, ALA suggests that libraries should provide environments that facilitate use privacy. It clearly points out that using filters (such as Net Nannie) to block pornographic images is actually censorship and therefore not endorsed by ALA.

The American library community strongly objected to a recent U.S. law.

The law was the Communications Decency Act. This Act was actually a portion of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. The Act made it unlawful for obscene material to be viewed on the Internet by persons under 18 years of age.

The ALA was the primary U.S. force in a lawsuit to overturn the Act. On June 26, 1997 the Act was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Some libraries also look to the U.S. Library of Congress for guidance in writing an Internet policy. The Library of CongressA Internet policy says:

librarians and employees are encouraged to use the Internet for professional activities, career development, and to accomplish job responsibilities.

the library administration respects the computer privacy of its employees.

librarians should not use Internet to lobby congress.

and librarians should not use Internet for:

- a. Performing unlawful activities
- b. Sending abusive language
- c. Misrepresenting themselves
- d. Sending chain letters

Now I want to turn your attention to Internet policies at medical libraries in North Carolina. As I mentioned before, North Carolina is a state bordering the Atlantic Ocean and considered in the South. It measures 200 miles north to south and 525 miles east to west. Seven million people live in North Carolina and the size of an average city is 40,000 people. North Carolina contains four medical schools, each containing an excellent medical library, eight AHEC (Area Health Education Center) libraries, and approximately 100 hospital libraries. I want to provide you with a sampling of Internet use policies at some of these libraries:

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is located in the center of the State and is an old (by American standards) and respected campus. It is a university supported by government tax dollars and not affiliated with a church. It is considered one of the most liberal of the Universities in North Carolina. The Health Sciences Library adopted a liberal Internet policy. Their Uoverall goal is to make information needed by the UniversityAs various constituencies as accessible and as useful as possible.L Anyone can use the libraryAs computers to access Internet. Faculty, staff, and students can dial in by modem and access e-mail. There is no time limit for Internet use placed on library users.

E-mail is considered private and students and employees do not need to worry about e-mail being read by the libraryAs administration. There is no censorship of the Internet. The library has had complaints from persons offended by seeing the pornographic images on the Internet screen next to their work spaces. The University is trying to write policies to deal with this issue. In the future if a person says he/she is offended by the computer screen image of another library user, the librarian will offer the offended user another computer out of the view of the offensive image. Here the responsibility to protest is clearly on the one who is offended. This library

does not practice censorship. At UNC-CH, there are also a few policies concerning the use of the Internet by librarians and library staff. The University encourages its faculty, staff, and students to acquire information literacy skills and use Internet and e-mail. The limited use of Internet for non-official purposes by employees and students is a benefit of working and studying at the University. There are, however, some limits to the use of Internet and e-mail at this University. Using e-mail or Internet for commercial purposes or financial gain is prohibited. Also, using another person's password to send fraudulent messages is not allowed.

Now I want you to look at the Internet policy of a private, originally Baptist, religious University in North Carolina. This is Carpenter Library at Bowman Gray School of Medicine at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. All librarians, physicians, students and others who want to use Internet must sign a confidentiality agreement. The medical center insists on the right to audit employee's e-mail. Additionally, fraudulent, harassing, indecent, or obscene materials may not be displayed on the University's computers. Users cannot send solicitations, viruses, nor political materials on the computers. Users cannot share passwords. Copying licensed software is prohibited. These two Universities have very different policies.

Most of the AHEC library directors have not written Internet policies for the libraries yet. But here is what they are doing:

- 1) Anyone can come in the libraries and use Internet and there is no censorship,
- 2) There is no time limit on the length of time a user can be on the Internet. I am the library director for the Coastal AHEC Library in Wilmington, N.C. Even though some individuals at my institution tried to force a censorship policy, we did not adopt one. At our library, any person may enter the library and use the computers to access the Internet. However, health professionals seeking health information on the Internet have first priority. Three other Internet policies at Coastal AHEC are:
 - 1) illegal activity is not permitted,
 - 2) using another person's password is not permitted, and
 - 3) altering the computer system is not permitted.

I have an example of an Internet policy at one North Carolina hospital, Wilson Memorial Hospital. Some of the highlights of this policy include:

- 1 . Employees should use Internet to accomplish job responsibilities
2. Employees may use Internet on personal time if it does not interfere with work.
3. Employees should not do illegal activities, nor commercial activities on the Internet.
4. Employees should not access obscene nor vulgar images.
5. Employees must adhere to confidentiality of patient information.

Now I want to provide you with some common sense guidelines for computer use. These are the Ten Commandments for Computer Ethics. This was adopted from the Net: Guidelines and Netiquette by Arlene H. Rinaldi.

The Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

1. Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people.
2. Thou shalt not interfere with other people's computer work.
3. Thou shalt not snoop around in other people's files.
4. Thou shalt not use a computer to steal.
5. Thou shalt not use a computer to bear false witness.
6. Thou shalt not use or copy software for which you have not paid.
7. Thou shalt not use other people's computer resources without authorization.
8. Thou shalt not appropriate other people's intellectual output.
9. Thou shalt think about the social consequences of the program you write.
10. Thou shalt use a computer in ways that show consideration and respect.

In conclusion, I want to encourage you to create an Internet use policy for your library if you have not yet created one. Some excellent reference guides and model Internet use policies exist to help you.. Many of these are on the Internet.