

Southern Tier Library System Internet Safety Policy

Introduction

The Southern Tier Library System, a member-driven regional consortium of public libraries, supports and strengthens its members through clearly defined, cost-effective services that make possible the coordination and sharing of resources, enabling all individuals in Allegany, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties to have equal access to excellent library service.

STLS assists system members to achieve and maintain electronic doorway library status through these actions:

- Assist member libraries in providing Internet access to their own information resources;
- Operate an integrated online library service for member libraries;
- Provide member libraries with technical assistance on the use of hardware, software and peripherals used to access the Southern Tier automated network.

In support of these goals, STLS maintains a wide-area network that 1) provides access to the Internet for libraries that have no other high-speed access; and 2) connects libraries to the regional integrated library system for resource sharing.

Privacy

The contents of the STLS wide-area network and integrated library system are confidential; unauthorized users are prohibited from attempting to gain access to the network or stored information. STLS uses firewall equipment, software, and other means to protect the confidentiality of library records as required in New York law. In addition records are maintained only as long as needed to conduct library business. However it is not possible to guarantee privacy of information stored on network servers or information and communications, including e-mail that travels across the wide-area network.

New York Civil Practice Law & Rules Section 4509 Library records.

Library records, which contain names or other personally identifying details regarding the users of public, free association, school, college and university libraries and library systems of this state, including but not limited to records related to the circulation of library materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, reference queries, requests for photocopies of library materials, title reserve requests, or the use of audio-visual materials, films or records, shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed except that such records may be disclosed to the extent necessary for the proper operation of such

library and shall be disclosed upon request or consent of the user or pursuant to subpoena, court order or where otherwise required by statute.

Internet Access

The Internet is a global electronic network, mostly unregulated, on which anyone may place any content or communicate any content. The Southern Tier Library System and member libraries do not endorse and do not assume responsibility for any content found or any communications made on the Internet.

Beginning July 1, 2004 the Southern Tier Library System will implement an Internet filtering mechanism for use on all computers in the STLS Service Center and in members libraries on the STLS wide-area network. The filtering mechanism will, at a minimum, block access to the three categories of visual depictions specified by the Federal Children's Internet Protection Act – visual depictions of material deemed child pornography, obscene, or any material deemed harmful to minors. The filtering mechanism will be able to be disabled for adults age 17 and older for bona fide research or other lawful purposes on request and, if appropriate, made less restrictive for minors. The Library System has evaluated various filtering mechanisms before choosing the most appropriate method, however the System does not warrant the effectiveness of Internet filtering.

It shall be the responsibility of member libraries on the STLS wide-area network to supervise and monitor usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy and the Children's Internet Protection Act.

Access by Minors

The valuable information, opportunities for learning and interactions available on this worldwide network far outweigh the possibility that users may obtain information that is not consistent with the educational and research goals of this service.

Parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for deciding which library resources are appropriate for their own children, guiding their children in use of the Internet and informing them about materials they should not use.

While Southern Tier Library System affirms and acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians to monitor and determine their children's access to materials and resources including those available through the Internet, the Library System has taken certain measures designed to assist in the safe and effective use of these resources by all minors.

1. To address the issue of access by minors to inappropriate material on the Internet, including material that is harmful to minors, the Southern Tier Library System
 - a. Develops and maintains special web sites for children;
 - b. Provides links to information on using the Internet safely (<http://www.stls.org/Kids/Adults%20who%20care%20about%20kids.htm>) available on the Internet

2. To address the issue of the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail and other forms of direct electronic communications, as well as the unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors, Southern Tier Library System urges minors and their parents or guardians to keep in mind the following safety guidelines:
 - a. Never give out identifying information such as home address, school name, or telephone number.
 - b. Let parents or guardians decide whether personal family information such as age, marital status, or financial information should be revealed.
 - c. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via the computer without parents' or guardians' approval.
 - d. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make one uncomfortable. Tell a parent, guardian, or library staff member if you receive such a message.
 - e. Have parents or guardians report an incident to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678 if one becomes aware of the transmission of child pornography.
 - f. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
 - g. Remember that everything one reads may not be true.
 - h. Don't open e-mail, files or website pages sent to you by people or organizations that you don't know or trust.
3. To address the issue of unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking" and other unlawful activities by minors online, minors and all other library users are hereby advised any unlawful activity is strictly prohibited.

Prohibited Library Activity

Any user of electronic Library System services in any location is strictly prohibited from any illegal activity or unlawful purpose, including but not limited to:

- a. hacking.
- b. harassing or invading the privacy of other users.
- c. attempting to degrade the network or disrupt its performance.
- d. using the network for commercial purposes.
- e. sending "spam" or unsolicited advertising of any kind.
- f. violating copyright law, including downloading copyrighted works without authorization by the copyright owner.

Adopted by the STLS Board of Trustees, May 14, 2003
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The Access by Minors section is based on the Suffolk Cooperative Library System Internet Access Policy.