



## 86 PUBLIC INTERNET USAGE

### 1. Preamble

The Berrigan Shire Library Service provides a range of resources and services to meet the information, education, cultural, literacy and recreation needs of the Berrigan Shire Communities.

The Internet is a global network of thousands of interconnected computer networks, which provide access to public information from all over the world. It is facilitating a publishing revolution, being at the same time both a publishing and distribution medium for electronic publication and information services. The Internet is allowing public libraries to expand their collections beyond the physical confines of their buildings and to develop and offer new services.

These guidelines have been formulated with reference to the professional statements issued by Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). These statements define the values of, and the philosophical basis for, the library profession and public library services. They include:

- UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994: A Living Force.
- Statement on Freedom to Read (ALIA)
- Statement on Libraries and Literacy (ALIA)
- Statement on Professional Ethics (ALIA)
- Statement on Free Library Service to All (ALIA)
- Draft Statement on Public Library Services (ALIA)
- Freedom of Collection and Access for Local Government Libraries.

### 2. Aim

The Aim of this policy is to give library staff clear direction to better manage the provision of public access services to the Internet. To have a reference which encourages uniformity and consistency in policy formulation across our Service.

## Freedom to Read and Censorship

### 3.1 Professional Values

Council acknowledges the democratic rights of individuals to freely pursue their own information interests. This view is reflected in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto that states that 'constructive participation and the development of democracy depends on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought and culture and information.'

Council acknowledges that the content of some materials in libraries may offend some members of the public. The Internet provides access to a wealth of information from around the world. It is an unregulated medium and as such, some users may find some materials offensive and disturbing. However, powers of censorship are vested in state and federal governments and it is not the role of libraries to practice censorship.

The Library Council of NSW Freedom of Collection and Access for Local Government Libraries states that libraries have 'a role as an unbiased source of recorded knowledge and ideas. It must be accept responsibility for providing



free access to materials and information presenting, as far as possible, all points of view on current and historical issues including controversial issues.

### **3.1 Internet Access - General**

- The Berrigan Shire Library Service has no control over information available through the Internet and therefore cannot be held responsible for all its contents and use.
- Users are asked to be sensitive to other users when displaying potentially controversial or offensive material or images on computer screens located in public areas. If the material is deemed offensive by Library staff the user shall be asked to remove it from the screen.
- Users are asked not to print any offensive material.

### **3.2 Internet Access - Juniors**

- Parents and guardians are responsible for their children's access to library resources including online access. Junior library users (under the age of 16) must have the consent of their parents/guardians before using the Internet. This is in line with the ALIA interim Statement on Use of Online Information in Libraries, which states, 'parents and guardians must be responsible for their children's access to library resources including online information' and encourages them to supervise their children's Internet experience.
- These guidelines endorse the recommendations of 'Child Safety' documents such as, Houston Public Library's Rules for online safety. ([www.hpl.lib.tx.us/youth/kids](http://www.hpl.lib.tx.us/youth/kids)) which are:
- I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents' number or the name and location of my school without my parents permission.
- I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- I will never agree to get together with someone I 'meet' online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
- I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents
- I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the online services.
- I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules to going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break the rules without their permission.

The above list of guidelines for children and parents will be presented to each child under the age of 16 years in a letter for their parents to sign before Internet access permission is granted. (See attachment)  
(This has been done in the past but these guidelines were not emphasised)



The child's library membership card will then have a special colour coded spot attached to enable immediate identification of permission upon presentation to library staff.

### **3.3 Filtering**

The Berrigan Shire Library Service does not support the use of filtering or censorship technologies that block access to information, in line with the ALIA Interim Statement on Use of Online Information in Libraries, which states that while it is important to protect minors from illegal and inappropriate online content, librarians also have a duty to serve the broad and diverse interests of all individuals in the community. The Association does not advocate the use of filtering technologies because they cannot provide guarantees that all objectionable online information can be blocked. Their use introduces a false sense of security for parents, guardians and Internet users.

## **Legal Issues**

### **4.1 Legislation and Professional Position**

The Broadcasting Services Act 1992 was amended by the Commonwealth to regulate Internet Service Providers (ISP's) and Internet Content Hosts (ICH's) in an effort to prevent users gaining access to objectionable material. This regulation proceeds on the basis that responsibility for prohibited material lies with the creator of that material. The States and Territories are expected to create offences for the supply or making available of objectionable material online. NSW has drafted an amendment for inclusion in the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1995. The ALIA Interim Statement on Use of Online Information in Libraries states that 'libraries have a role in educating Internet users that the responsibility for online content rests primarily with the content provider and Internet user.

The ALIA Interim Statement on Use of Online Information in Libraries states that, 'access providers such as libraries, cannot be held responsible for any illegal material which might be transmitted or accessed through the Internet.

### **4.2 Illegal and Inappropriate Use**

Users of the Berrigan Shire Library Service must not use Internet Access and /or email to transmit material and statements which are:

- Illegal or fraudulent or part of an unlawful activity
- Slanderous, libellous and/or defamatory
- Offensive, obscene, pornographic, or in bad taste.
- Abusive and/or threatening of violence
- Incitement to break the law
- Harassment based on sex, race, disability or other protected status
- Anonymous or repeated messages designed to annoy, threaten, abuse or torment.

Email shall not be used to harass any other person. Harassment means to intentionally annoy, intimidate, demean or threaten another person or group or to contact them repeatedly in a way that annoys them.



### **4.3 Copyright**

Librarians and library technicians, under their code of professional ethics, 'recognise and respect intellectual property rights'. Information on the Internet is protected by copyright. Users are responsible for complying with all applicable international and federal laws governing copyrighted materials accessed through the Internet. Public libraries have no liability or responsibility resulting from copyright infringement by users. All Branches have copyright statements placed beside each Internet workstation. When making copies, users should refer and comply with any copying directives given by the author of the material.

### **5.1 Privacy**

Librarians and library technicians, under their code of professional ethics, are committed to protecting each user's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received and materials consulted, or borrowed. 'Public libraries respect users right to privacy and therefore do not monitor the information accessed by users'.

However, a public library maybe required to provide Internet logs to officers legally empowered to investigate into a user's use of the Internet where there are reasonable grounds for that officer to suspect illegal use.

## **User Assistance and Training**

### **6.1 User Assistance**

As with other parts of the collection, a user may ask for assistance to locate information using the Internet. The assistance of a trained information professional is one of the key things that distinguish a library from other services that provide access to the Internet.

### **6.2 Training**

The Berrigan Shire Library Service offer informal teaching sessions to individuals and may in future enter into partnerships with other trained professionals to offer formal Internet training courses.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto emphasises that one of the key missions of a public library is to facilitate the development of information and computer literacy skills. 'The ALIA Statement on Libraries and Literacy also states that public libraries recognise that 'literacy is an essential instrument for effective participation in society' The statement further states that the traditional functions of a librarian imply 'concern for those who lack the skills necessary to make appropriate use of communication resources.'

### **7.1 Security**

Security cannot be guaranteed in an electronic environment and therefore users are warned that all communications and transactions are vulnerable to unauthorised use. Berrigan Shire Library Services does not assume any responsibility for damages arising from a user's use of public Internet access services provided.



## Conditions of Use

The following conditions of use apply to using public Internet access services

### **8.1 Membership and Internet Registration**

- Regular Internet users are encouraged to become library members.
- Temporary users are subject to the Berrigan Shire Library Service Internet policies and should indicate acceptance of Policy conditions
- A standard age limit of 16 years is set for Internet use. Users under this age require the signed permission of a parent or guardian.

### **8.2 Using information**

Users may print, save or distribute information mindful of copyright requirements providing that it is not considered offensive by Library Staff.

The saving of information or files to disk is subject to the disk being virus free. Berrigan Shire Library Service also sell new disks to patrons

Users are able to send information via their personal email address using Berrigan Shire Library Service Internet workstations

### **8.3 Email**

The Berrigan Shire Library service allows the sending and receiving of email. This is not subject to fees and charges and is treated as a core service.

### **8.4 Hacking or Misuse of Resources**

- It is illegal for users to use the Internet to gain unauthorised access to other computers or databases that are not in the public domain.
- Users must not alter the set up of computers used to access the Internet
- Users must not damage workstations or any associated equipment
- Users must not knowingly create or propagate a virus or any form of malicious software.
- Users should notify staff if they experience any problems with the equipment or with access to the Internet

## **Fees**

### **9.1 User Access**

Berrigan Shire Library Service provides free access to the Internet as part of our mission in meeting the widely acknowledged role of libraries to meet the information needs of our community. This is in line with Section 10 of the Library Act 1939, as amended guidelines relating to Section 10 state that: 'any person (whether or not a member of the library) is entitled free of charge to access of any book of the library and to any information forming part of the information service of the library (other than information excepted from free access by guidelines issued by the Council) for use on the library premises.

The ALIA Draft Statement on Public Library Services identifies as a core service 'access to the library's information resources, regardless of the format in which the material is held, including print, tape, disk, CD-Rom and networked electronic resources.



### **10.1 Advanced Bookings**

Advanced bookings for Internet use, are encouraged for customer satisfaction in time management and but not mandatory. No fees are charged for booking the use of any Internet workstation.

### **10.2 Other fees**

- If formal Internet training courses are provided in the future, they will be fee based.
- Generating community advertising revenue by allowing local businesses to advertise/sponsor the Council/Library home page.
- Printing
- Disks for downloading information

### **11.1 Infringement of guidelines**

Users who do not comply with the guidelines contained in this Policy may have their sessions terminated or may be denied future access to the service.

(Adopted by Council 20/11/02)