



BILL OF RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES **FOR ELECTRONIC LEARNERS**

In order to protect the rights and recognize the responsibilities of individuals and institutions, we, the members of the educational community, propose this Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for the Electronic Community of Learners. These principles are based on a recognition that the electronic community is a complex subsystem of the educational community founded on the values espoused by that community. As new technology modifies the system and further empowers individuals, new values and responsibilities will change this culture. As technology assumes an integral role in education and lifelong learning, technological empowerment of individuals and organizations becomes a requirement and right for students, faculty, staff, and institutions, bringing with it new levels of responsibility that individuals and institutions have to themselves and to other members of the educational community.

Article I: Individual Rights

The original Bill of Rights explicitly recognized that all individuals have certain fundamental rights as members of the national community. In the same way, the citizens of the electronic community of learners have fundamental rights that empower them.

Section 1: A citizen's access to computing and information resources shall not be denied or removed without just cause.

Section 2: The right to access includes the right to appropriate training and tools required to effect access.

Section 3: All citizens shall have the right to be informed about personal information that is being and has been collected about them, and have the right to review and correct that information. Personal information about a citizen shall not be used for other than the express purpose of its collection without the explicit permission of that citizen.

Section 4: The constitutional concept of freedom of speech applies to citizens of electronic communities.

Section 5: All citizens of the electronic community of learners have the ownership rights over their own intellectual works.

Article II: Individual Responsibilities

Just as certain rights are given to each citizen of the electronic community of learners, each citizen is held accountable for his or her actions. The interplay of rights and responsibilities within each individual and within the community engenders the trust and intellectual freedom that form the heart of our society.

This trust and freedom are founded on each person's developing the skills necessary to be an active and contributing citizen of the electronic community. These skills include an awareness and knowledge about information technology and the uses of information and an understanding of the roles in the electronic community of learners.

Section 1: It shall be each citizen's personal responsibility to actively pursue needed resources: to recognize when information is needed, and to be able to find, evaluate, and effectively use information.

Section 2: It shall be each citizen's personal responsibility to recognize (attribute) and honor the intellectual property of others.

Section 3: Since the electronic community of learners is based upon the integrity and authenticity of information, it shall be each citizen's personal responsibility to be aware of the potential for and possible effects of manipulating electronic information: to understand the fungible nature of electronic information; and to verify the integrity and authenticity, and to assure the security of information that he or she compiles or uses.

Section 4: Each citizen, as a member of the electronic community of learners, is responsible to all other citizens in that community: to respect and value the right of privacy for all; to recognize and respect the diversity of the population and opinion in the community; to behave ethically; and to comply with legal restrictions regarding the use of information resources.

Section 5: Each citizen, as a member of the electronic community of learners, is responsible to the community as a whole to understand what information technology resources are available, to recognize that the members of the community share them, and to refrain from acts that waste resources or prevent others from using them.

Article III: Rights of Educational Institutions

Educational institutions have legal standing similar to that of individuals. Our society depends upon educational institutions to educate our citizens and advance the development of knowledge. However, in order to survive, educational institutions must attract financial and human resources and information necessary to accomplish their goals.

Section 1: The access of an educational institution to computing and information resources shall not be denied or removed without just cause.

Section 2: Educational institutions in the electronic community of learners have ownership rights over the intellectual works they create.

Section 3: Each educational institution has the authority to allocate resources in accordance with its unique institutional mission.

Article IV: Institutional Responsibilities

Just as certain rights are assured to educational institutions in the electronic community of learners, so too each is held accountable for the appropriate exercise of those rights to foster the values of society and to carry out each institution's mission. This interplay of rights and responsibilities within the community fosters the creation and maintenance of an environment wherein trust and intellectual freedom are the foundation for individual and institutional growth and success.

Section 1: The institutional members of the electronic community of learners have a responsibility to provide all members of their community with legally acquired computer resources (hardware, software, networks, data bases, etc.) in all instances where access to or use of the resources is an integral part of active participation in the electronic community of learners.

Section 2: Institutions have a responsibility to develop, implement and maintain security procedures to insure the integrity of individuals and institutional files.

Section 3: The institution shall treat electronically stored information as confidential. The institution shall treat all personal files as confidential, examining or disclosing the contents only when authorized by the owner of the information, approved by the appropriate institutional official, or required by local, state or federal law.

Section 4: Institutions in the electronic community of learners shall train and support faculty, staff, and students to effectively use information technology. Training includes skills to use the resources, to be aware of the existence of data repositories and techniques for using them, and to understand the ethical and legal uses of the resources.

Framers of the Bill: Greg Anderson (MIT), Dagrún Bennett (DePauw), Katharyn Clyde (Carnegie-Mellon), Frank Connolly (American), Stephen Curry (Trinity), Nancy Davis (Dartmouth), Larry Fincher (Oregon), Barbara Fischler (Indiana), Catherine Flum (South Dakota), Tim Foley (Lehigh), Lanny Greaves (Southern Louisiana), Richard Lacy (USC), Michael Lewis (Bard), Brendan McTague (Penn), Margaret Park (Georgia), Jean Armour Polly (NYSERNet), Janet Price (Kalamazoo), Chuck Schneebeck (CSU, Long Beach), Terrie Spetalnick (Vanderbilt), Sue Stager (Indiana), Mike Stevenson (USCB), Robert Tannenbaum (Kentucky), Marilyn VanBergen (Notre Dame), Sally Webster (SUNY/ESF), Bill Yundt (Stanford), Catherine Wendt-Bermi (Washington).