Policy on Blogging and Other Public Internet Communications  
Date on Which This Policy Was Last Modified: September 25, 2009

In an effort to promote a broader understanding of the Library’s collections and resources, the Library has decided to encourage appropriate employees to engage, while at work, in Internet communications with the public via blogs, wikis, discussion forums, social networking sites and related fora (these communications are referred to below as “Public Internet Communications”). The following policy governs such communications during working and non-working hours by all Library employees. This policy will be modified from time to time; all employees who engage in Public Internet Communications are asked to refer to it on a regular basis to make sure that they are complying with the terms of the current version of the policy.

Related Policies:

The Library has previously adopted several policies that cover a broad range of topics that may, at times, overlap with issues raised by this policy. This “Policy on Blogging and Other Public Internet Communications” is meant to supplement, and not to supersede, those related policies. Links to some of these policies appear here:

- Communication and Computer Systems Policy Statement
- Anti-Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy
- Ethics and Conflicts Policy for Employees

General Guidelines:

In general, employees may only use Library resources (including computers) in order to advance Library purposes. During working hours, employees whose jobs involve working with Library collections or conducting Library outreach may engage in blogging and other Public Internet Communications unless expressly prohibited by their supervisor, so long as such activities advance Library purposes and further the Library’s mission.

Employees should make sure that such activities do not interfere with their other professional duties. In addition, each employee should periodically discuss his/her blogging activities, as well as other activities related to Public Internet Communications (such as the use of social networking sites for Library purposes), with his/her supervisor so that the supervisor is aware of the amount of time being spent on such activities and the nature of the activities being undertaken. In the event that an employee’s supervisor asks him/her to limit the amount of time being spent on such activities or to stop undertaking such activities altogether, the employee must comply with such request.

While engaging in Public Internet Communications, each employee is expected to:

- Clearly identify him/herself as a Library employee, explain his/her position and role within the Library on any user profiles he/she creates for public interaction; and
• Link back to NYPL resources wherever possible.

**Blogging/Public Internet Communications Outside of Work:**

This policy does not intend to limit or restrict an employee’s right to engage in blogging or other Public Internet Communications outside of work, though all employees are required to comply with the following guidelines at all times:

• In the event that an employee indicates that he/she is affiliated with the Library, such employee should strive to ensure that the employee’s postings do not reflect poorly on the Library (e.g., through the use of crass language, offensive comments, etc.) In addition, if an employee expresses opinions that are political or potentially controversial, he/she should make it clear that such opinions are personal and that he/she is not speaking on behalf of the Library.

• Employees should remember to hold in confidence all information gained from their employment that may be confidential or otherwise sensitive.

**Blogging/Public Internet Communications at Work:**

In general, employees who engage in Public Internet Communication at work should do so in order to educate the public about the Library’s collections and services and to answer questions related to their areas of professional expertise. Employees should limit the subject matter of their online communications to the Library’s collections and services and to their areas of professional expertise. In general, employees should not blog/engage in Public Internet Communications about other topics; if a member of the public raises an issue outside of the employee’s areas of professional expertise, the employee should politely decline to engage in further discussion of the topic in question.

Employees who engage in Public Internet Communications at work are trusted to do so as part of their professional identity as staff of the Library. As in the case of face-to-face interactions with members of the public, they will be asked to demonstrate good judgment and to conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner. In cases where challenging situations present themselves, employees should seek the advice of their supervisor with respect to an appropriate written response.

**Ownership of Blogs/Public Internet Communications:**

Public Internet Communications written at work and/or residing on Library servers is the property of the Library and may be edited or deleted by Library officials. Out of respect for authorship, individuals are granted a non-exclusive license to reprint their work at their discretion. In the unlikely event that the Library uses an employee’s communications (e.g., his/her blog) commercially, the Library will pass along a portion of its proceeds to the employee who authored the work.

**Compliance:**
Failure to follow this policy may result in disciplinary action, including possible termination.

Rules of Thumb:

1. Use common sense and good judgment. Edit your postings carefully to make sure that they do not contain illegal, obscene, defamatory, or threatening material. Blogs/Public Internet Communications should not be used to discuss personal issues about oneself or others. Remember, in each of your postings you are serving as an ambassador of the Library. Think carefully about material you post in your blog/Public Internet Communications; if you aren’t sure whether something is appropriate or whether something might be offensive, leave it out.

2. Post only non-confidential information.

3. Do not endorse or promote any product or political cause. Do not use Public Internet Communications for covert marketing or public relations.

4. Do not refer to Library staff or Trustees by name or identifiable position unless you have obtained prior permission to do so.

5. Be accurate. If you make an error, correct it quickly. If you must modify an earlier post, state that you have done so.

6. Make it clear that opinions you express are your own. Use the first person. Make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the Library. If you publish a blog or post to a blog not hosted by the Library, use a disclaimer such as: “The postings on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent the opinions of NYPL.” Keep in mind that postings on Library blogs may be mistaken for official Library communications even when you are speaking only for yourself. Exercise discretion and good judgment at all times.

7. Disclose your name and your affiliation with the Library, but be smart about protecting your privacy. What you publish may be around for a long time, so be careful about disclosing personal details.

8. When linking to other blogs take care to link to established blogs that focus on professional and not personal topics; do not link to personal web sites.

9. If you include photos or other materials owned by third parties in your blog, make sure that you have secured the necessary permissions. Never quote more than short excerpts of someone else’s work unless you have secured permission to do so.

10. Don’t provide advice to patrons about legal, financial, investment or other similar matters (e.g., the value of a collectible item).

11. When moderating comments written by patrons, think critically. The decision to post comments written by patrons should be made carefully. Patron comments should not be posted if they contain the following:

   - irrelevant or off-topic material
   - obscene, defamatory, profane or otherwise offensive or inappropriate language
   - political messages
   - endorsements of products
• copyright infringement
• confidential or proprietary information
• private information about third parties
• personal information that identifies the commenter as a minor and that could be used to identify them (for example: “I am a 2nd grader at X middle school and ….”).

Comments may not be removed on the basis of your disagreement with their content or viewpoint. Do not edit comments; post them in their entirety or do not post them at all.