

UMM Computing Ethics Policy

*Approved by UMM Campus Assembly
November 18, 1996*

Computers, networks, and electronic information systems are essential resources for all educational and academic pursuits at UMM. Access to UMM's systems will not be denied to any user without cause. It is the responsibility of all UMM computer users to use computer technology and electronic information resources in an effective, efficient, ethical, responsible and lawful manner. This Computing Ethics Policy applies to all users of UMM systems, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

All UMM users have the right to privacy in computer files, data, and network communications. All files and all data belong to somebody. It is up to the owner to determine whether a file should be private or public. Gaining access to private files without the owner's permission is a violation of this policy. It is the responsibility of UMM to take reasonable security measures to protect confidential files and information, and it is the responsibility of each user not to subvert those security measures. Users are responsible for keeping their passwords secure and private, for taking reasonable security measures to protect their own accounts, and for maintaining protection on files.

UMM computing resources may only be used in a manner that is consistent with the instructional, administrative, research and outreach objectives of the University of Minnesota. All use of UMM's networked computers must comply with the Corporation for Research and Educational Networking's Acceptable Use Policy. This policy includes the following requirements:

- Irresponsible uses which cause network congestion, such as chain letters and transmission of large files, are not permitted.
- Users must avoid interfering with the work of other network users, disrupting network services, spreading viruses, or interfering with normal operation of systems on the network.
- The network is not to be used for commercial purposes, such as marketing, advertising, or business transactions between commercial organizations. Private, for-profit activity is not an acceptable use of UMM's network and systems.

UMM computing users have the constitutional right to freedom of speech in electronic communications. However, all users bear responsibility for the content and consequences of their own communications. Federal, state, and local laws apply to all electronic interactions and publicly-presented online information, whether local to UMM or

disseminated to one or more distant users via the Internet. Among the most important of these are laws prohibiting:

- harassment, verbal assault, threats, slander, libel, and sexual harassment;
- address forging and delivery of anonymous messages with intent to harass or defraud;
- unauthorized access to systems;
- software piracy, copyright and trademark violation, and any unauthorized use of programs, databases, and privately-owned files; and
- distribution or presentation of materials deemed by community standards to be obscene.

UMM's World-Wide Web site, Gopher server, and other institutional information systems are considered to be University publications and so are governed by more restrictive University policies on content. Unrestricted access to place material on these systems is not a guaranteed right for any UMM user.

UMM Computing Services is the administrative unit in charge of setting specific usage policies and guidelines at UMM under the scope of this overall Computing Ethics Policy. Computing Services has the responsibility to create and disseminate enforceable rules, to manage and monitor system use, to investigate problems, and to respond to violations. During investigation of a potential violation, Computing Services has the right to temporarily block a user's access to systems. Permanent revocation of access requires the involvement of appropriate UMM committees and disciplinary procedures, and will only be contemplated for serious violations.

A person in violation of this policy may be subject to administrative action, supervisory review, and/or Student Behavior Committee action. Such actions may result in penalties including reprimand, fines, restitution for services used, or loss of system access, depending on the severity and frequency of the offense. Some actions covered by this policy are also covered by University regulations or all-University policies, violation of which can lead to academic judicial proceedings. In addition, some actions discussed in this policy are also covered by Federal, state, or local law, and violations may lead to civil or criminal prosecution.