



# BERKSHIRE ATHENAEUM

1 WENDELL AVENUE • PITTSFIELD, MA 01201-6385

Pittsfield's Public Library Since 1872

## SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY COMPUTER SERVICES POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The Berkshire Athenaeum exists to initiate, nurture and feed a passion for knowledge and learning, and as one of its primary goals, “People of all ages will have their questions answered or have the necessary resources provided to them to discover answers for themselves.” To fulfill this goal, the Athenaeum provides and promotes access to materials and services that support the community's need for self-education, information, culture and recreation through access to computers, and participates in various “social software” applications whereby library staff and community members may interact through virtual (internet) communication. These applications, outlined below, allow members of the community access to the resources of the Berkshire Athenaeum without necessitating a visit to the physical library. The Berkshire Athenaeum regards online social software applications in the same way as its other information resources in accordance with its mission of serving Pittsfield’s needs for informational, educational, cultural and recreational pursuits.

### 2. SOCIAL SOFTWARE DEFINED:

Social software is defined as any website or application which allows users to share information, and may include, but is not limited to, blogging, instant messaging, social networking sites, and wikis. Many social networking sites allow users of those sites to become a “friend”, “fan” or otherwise associate their own “profiles” or virtual presences with the library’s profile on these sites. Examples of such sites are Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, and various blogging sites like Blogger and Wordpress.

### 3. POLICY:

- 3.1. As with more traditional resources, the Berkshire Athenaeum does not act in place of or in the absence of a parent and is not responsible for enforcing any restrictions which a parent or guardian may place on a minor’s use of this resource.
- 3.2. The Athenaeum’s use of social networking sites may include program promotion, volunteer opportunities, reference help, or other similar activities.
- 3.3. Users may remove themselves at any time from the Library’s “friends” or “fan” lists or by following established procedures of the site owner. Those requiring assistance or instruction may ask at the Reference Desk.
- 3.4. Users should be aware that third party websites have their own privacy policies and should proceed accordingly.
- 3.5. Comments, posts, and messages are welcome on Berkshire Athenaeum social networking sites.
- 3.6. While the Berkshire Athenaeum recognizes and respects differences in opinion, all such interactions will be regularly monitored and reviewed for content and relevancy (before publishing when possible).

- 3.7. All postings which contain any of the following will be removed and the poster barred from posting any subsequent messages to Athenaeum social networking sites:
  - 3.7.1. Obscene or racist content
  - 3.7.2. Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
  - 3.7.3. Potentially libelous statements
  - 3.7.4. Plagiarized or copy-written material
  - 3.7.5. Private, personal information published without consent
  - 3.7.6. Comments totally unrelated to the content of the forum
  - 3.7.7. Hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion
  - 3.7.8. Commercial promotions or spam
  - 3.7.9. Organized political activity
  - 3.7.10. Photos or other images that fall in any of the above categories
- 3.8. The Berkshire Athenaeum reserves the right to edit or modify any postings or comments for space or content, while retaining the intent of the original post.
- 3.9. The Berkshire Athenaeum shall also be granted the right to reproduce comments, posts, and messages in other public venues. For example, a response to a YouTube book review may be quoted in a newspaper or on the library website. Identifying information, other than first name, will be removed unless prior approval is granted by the user.
- 3.10. The Berkshire Athenaeum assumes no liability regarding any event or interaction that takes place by any participant in any library-sponsored social networking service, and does not endorse or review content outside the pages created by Athenaeum staff.
- 3.11. Participation in The Berkshire Athenaeum social networking services implies agreement with all library policies, including its “Computer Services Policies” and “Social Networking Policy,” and the terms of service of each individual third-party service. If a user does not agree to these terms, they are not to use the services provided.
- 3.12. The role and utility of social networking sites will be evaluated periodically by library staff, and may be terminated at any time without notice to subscribers.
4. GUIDELINES FOR STAFF:
  - 4.1. Use a Disclaimer: Include a disclaimer on your personal blog and other social sites in which you state that your opinions are yours alone and not the Berkshire Athenaeum’s.
  - 4.2. Be Discrete: Be careful not to disclose sensitive or proprietary information, including financial details or any other internal matter. Disclosing private information about specific patrons, coworkers, or any other person affiliated with the library is a violation of Athenaeum policy.
  - 4.3. Be Yourself: If you’re posting about matters related to the Berkshire Athenaeum, be candid about who you are and who you work for. Although some bloggers post anonymously, it’s recommended that you use your real name on social media sites and are up front about your professional role.
  - 4.4. Respect Copyright: Understanding copyright and fair use laws with regard to republishing protected content and referencing sources is your responsibility. It’s customary in the blogosphere to cite sources by linking to them within blog posts, and it’s recommended that you do so.
  - 4.5. Respect Others: Consider the privacy of your coworkers and avoid posting full names, videos, or internal conversations without their permission. Staff should realize, however, that photos of library events, library staff events, and/or library staff doing their jobs will

be taken and posted routinely. Such images are an important part of what gives the Athenaeum social network tools personality, identity and interest to those patrons who access the library profile.

- 4.6. **Avoid Conflict:** If you have a difference of opinion with someone online or wish to post about a controversial matter, please take care to do so in a professional manner. Voice your opinion, but don't use social media for personal attacks or inflammatory arguments, and remember that what you post is not private and may impact the organization.
- 4.7. **Be Accurate:** You are responsible for checking the accuracy of the information you post online. Be diligent in your research to ensure that your posts are factually correct and, if possible, provide supporting sources.
- 4.8. **Follow the Rules:** Be aware that all existing policies and employee behavior guidelines extend to the online arena as well as the workplace.
- 4.9. **Use Good Judgment:** Think about the type of image that you want to convey on behalf of the Berkshire Athenaeum when you're posting to social networks and social media sites. Remember that what you post will be viewed and archived permanently online once you hit the "publish" button. On sites where you publicize your professional affiliation, make sure that your profile adheres to established criteria, especially if you're a new hire.
- 4.10. **Provide Value:** Think about what you have to offer the community, whether it's thoughtful, relevant blog posts, newsy tweets, or homework help, and focus on providing that consistently. Look for opportunities on these social sites to offer recommendations or services to engage patrons and provide value to your community.
- 4.11. **Accept Responsibility:** If you're wrong about something, admit it and move on. It's not the end of the world to have made a mistake, and in the long run it's better to be honest about it and apologize than to deny it or cover it up.