Computer Usage Policy

As the use of computers has expanded, the legal liabilities to individual users and institutions associated with such use have and become more complex and difficult to manage. Financial and other liability relating to privacy, copyright infringement and harassment, among others, are very real, ever more complex, and are being more strictly enforced against both institutional and individual computer users. This Computer Usage Policy has been established to notify the users of the Laboratory Computer Systems of the acceptable and unacceptable uses of the system, to protect lab employees and students from harassment or inappropriate invasion of privacy, to help assure the appropriate use of Laboratory resources and to reduce the legal and financial liabilities of the Laboratory, it’s staff and students.

Acceptable Uses of Computer Systems, Internet and E-Mail:
All employees and students of the Laboratory benefit from the use of the Laboratory computers but it must be kept in mind that all such use reflects on the Lab. CSHL employees and students need to take that into account when using Laboratory computers. The Laboratory-provided Computer Systems, Internet, Intranet and e-mail access (herein known as “Laboratory Computer Systems”) are Laboratory property and are primarily intended for Scientific and Laboratory business use. The Laboratory encourages the use of Laboratory Computer Systems to make communication more efficient and effective. The Laboratory further recognizes that from time to time employees and students may send or receive a limited amount of personal – non-commercial only – e-mail messages from their Laboratory e-mail addresses. These guidelines have been established to help ensure the responsible use of Laboratory Computer Systems. As defined below, the improper use of Laboratory Computer Systems is not permitted.

Unacceptable Uses of the Internet and Laboratory E-Mail:
The Laboratory wants to have a positive working environment and certain uses of the computer system do not contribute to that goal or potentially harm the Laboratory and/or its employees and students. The Laboratory’s Computer Systems may not be used for printing, viewing, transmitting, retrieving or storage of any communications or materials that are obscene. Using the Laboratory Computer Systems for harassment of any kind is strictly prohibited. No profane or defamatory messages or messages with derogatory or inflammatory remarks about an individual’s race, age, disability, religion, national origin, physical attributes or sexual preference shall be transmitted using the Laboratory Computer Systems.

The Laboratory Computer Systems may not be used for any other purpose which is illegal, or against Laboratory policy. Solicitation of non-Laboratory business through the use of the Laboratory Computer Systems is also prohibited.

Communications:
All communications sent by employees via the Laboratory Computer Systems must comply with the law as well as other Laboratory policies. Each Laboratory employee and student is responsible for the content of all text, audio or images that they place or send over the Laboratory’s Computer Systems. No e-mail or other electronic communications may be sent which hides the identity of the sender or represents the sender as someone else or someone other than themselves. All messages communicated on the Laboratory’s e-mail/Internet system (including those communications that are outside of the scope of an employee’s
job/employment) should contain the employee’s or student’s name. Any messages or information sent by an employee or student to another individual outside the Laboratory via an electronic network (e.g., bulletin board, online service or Internet) are statements that reflect on the Laboratory. While some users may include personal “disclaimers” in electronic messages, there is still a connection to the Laboratory. Statements damaging to the Laboratory and its reputation are not permitted.

Software:
Infringement of software copyrights subjects the Laboratory and individual Laboratory Computer Systems users to substantial financial liability and damages. The Laboratory licenses the use of computer software from a variety of outside companies and does not own such software. Unless authorized by the software developer, the Laboratory does not have the right to reproduce such software except for backup purposes. Laboratory employees and students shall not download or upload unauthorized software over the Internet, nor shall they install software on any machine other than the one the license was originally purchased for, unless the software is completely removed from the original machine and the software company allows this transfer.

To be sure all software is properly licensed, employees should give advance notification to the Information Technology Department before installing new software. All software installed must be registered to the Laboratory. Employees should contact the Information Technology Department if they have any questions.

Copyrights:
Copyrights promote the dissemination of information by protecting author’s and publisher’s rights. This promotes publication and avoids excessive secrecy. Employees and students may not transmit copyrighted material on the Laboratory’s e-mail/Internet system that belongs to entities other than the Laboratory. All employees and students obtaining access to other firms’ or individuals’ materials must respect all copyrights and may not copy, retrieve, modify or forward copyrighted materials, except with permission, or as a single copy, to reference only.

Security:
The Laboratory does not routinely monitor the contents of e-mails and files of its Computer System. To ensure privacy of its employees and students, all Laboratory employees and students are prohibited from the reading of personal e-mails and files of other employees and students without their express prior approval. The Laboratory does track and monitor patterns of use (and potential abuse) to determine cost and usage of its Laboratory Computer Systems. Also, under very infrequent circumstances, there may be reasons or requirements for the Laboratory to read and monitor certain e-mails or files more closely. For example, the Laboratory may be required to allow such monitoring in response to a court order or other legal requirement. Such monitoring is not permitted without the prior authorization of the Director, Information Technology and the Vice President, Human Resources or the Director of Research. Abuse of this section will result in serious disciplinary action including possible termination of employment or student status.

IT Staff access to private emails and files:
Members of the Information Technology Department (IT) may from time to time be exposed to and need to work on, copy, retrieve, modify or read portions of others personal emails and files as required by their job (for example, IT may conduct searches for viruses or “spamming” problems, etc.). Members of the IT staff will not read or pry into the personal e-mail of others beyond that which is reasonably necessary to perform their job related duties. Abuse of this section of this policy by members of the IT staff will result in serious disciplinary action, including discharge of employment.
Violations:
According to applicable copyright law, persons involved in the illegal reproduction of software can be subject to civil damages and criminal penalties. Any employee or student who violates the terms of this policy or abuses the privilege of Laboratory-facilitated access to Computer Systems, as defined in this policy, will also be subject to corrective action.

Contacts:

Computer Systems:
Vice President, Chief Information Officer
Hans-Erik Aronson

Computer Security:
Vice President, Chief Information Officer
Hans-Erik Aronson

Software License Issues:
User Services Manager
Bobbie Peters

Harassment:
Vice President, Human Resources
Katie Raftery

Legal Issues:
Vice President, General Counsel
Charles Ryan
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Computer Systems User Agreement

I have read the aforementioned policy and agree to follow all of the terms and procedures that are set forth therein.

As an employee/student of the Laboratory and user of the Laboratory’s Computer Systems, gateway to the Internet and e-mail system, I understand that this policy applies to me.

I am aware that violations of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Computer Systems Usage policy may subject me to disciplinary action.

I further understand that my communications on the Internet and e-mail reflect upon the Laboratory to its clients, colleagues, competitors, the judiciary and the public. Furthermore, I understand that this policy can be amended by the Laboratory at any time and you will be notified of any such changes.

I have read and accept the terms of this policy.

_________________________________
Signature

_________________________________
Printed Name

_________________________________
Date