Policy on Information Access through Computer Networks

Approved by President's Cabinet
September 8, 1994
Edited to remove references to outdated networks, May 23, 2001

It is the policy of the University of Virginia that the same standards and principles of intellectual and academic freedom used in university classrooms, libraries, and other aspects of university life be applied to access for the University community to resources available through computer networks. While the resources and discussions on such networks are not truly analogous to classrooms or libraries, the standards of academic freedom used in those settings should be applied. The University's overall principle is that information shall not be censored.

This policy is in keeping with the University's commitment to academic freedom, as described in the "Standards of Conduct" for students: "The University of Virginia is a community of scholars in which the ideals of freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and freedom of the individual are sustained." The commitment is also expressed in the faculty handbook, which endorses the "Statement on Academic Freedom in the 1940 Statement of Principles of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)." The University's commitment parallels the national "Library Bill of Rights," which affirms the importance of making information and ideas available in an environment free from censorship.

It is also the policy of the University that the same standards of intellectual and academic freedom developed for faculty, student, and staff publication in traditional media be applied to distribution of ideas and information in electronic media.

This policy statement on information access through computer networks complements the University's overall "Policy on Ethics in Computer Usage," which describes the responsibilities of the University community to use computer resources in an ethical, professional and legal manner.

There may be some instances in which resources on the University's computer network will be made available on a limited basis. The potential reasons for limited dissemination include licensing agreements that define the audience of a given resource, cost factors, and technological constraints.

[Outdated references removed 5/23/01 by R. F. German Jr., policy director, Office of Information Technologies, U.Va.]