Dear interested GISA member,

Enclosed is a packet of information on the GALILEO consortia of databases. The information can be very helpful if one understands how GALILEO works. It can be very frustrating if one doesn’t! Allow me to provide some background, and walk you through the handouts enclosed.

GALILEO is a portal of databases (over 200 at last count) provided to all Georgia citizens via access points. The access points are all libraries that serve the population of Georgia: public libraries, university libraries, public and private k-12 libraries. Each entity pays for GALILEO through its specific fiduciary group. The 30 schools participating in the private k-12 group make up the GISA/GALILEO group, representing about 13,000 GISA students. A school must be a GISA member in good standing in order to be a GISA/GALILEO participant. One may find out more about being a GISA member by contacting Robin Aylor at robin@gisa-schools.org.

Participating in GALILEO is similar to building the old “one room school-house”; everyone brings what they have available, be it labor or supplies, and the sum ends up larger than the individual parts. All of us joining together allow us to gain access to databases at a significantly reduced cost. It is a commitment, because while we have a general idea what the cost will be each year, we do not have the firm amount at the time of commitment. For the last several years it has been about $10.65 / student / year.

The BIG QUESTION always asked is “Why does my school have to pay for GALILEO? Why can’t we just use the public library password?” Allow me to answer as best I can. All groups, public and private, are paying for GALILEO access. Sometimes it appears as if it is "free", because at institutions that are taxpayer supported (such as the public library or the public school) the end user does not pay for it individually. Part of the state Public library budget is GALILEO, with an allocation per patron at each public library. The same is true at the
University System of Georgia and the Georgia State Board of Education - it is paid by the Board of Regents and GA BOE based on the number of students enrolled in each university or district. If you want to access GALILEO via the public library or the University System of Georgia, your tax dollars are being spent in Atlanta to allow you to do so. Some of the access points are taxpayer supported facilities, and some are not. All access points are libraries. Originally it was only public entities that were access points, but it soon became apparent that did not service all the needs; we are all citizens of the state of Georgia, and GALILEO is for all citizens. That is why the AMPALS (Atlanta Metro Private Academic Library System) and GPALS (Georgia Private Academic Library System) are also part of the consortia. They each have a fiduciary body, just like we have GISA, that bills each institution and forwards the payment to GALILEO, the same as the PLS (Public Library System) and the BOR and BOE.

Your school could actually choose to have students access via the public library. However, to be sure that the school is acting in a morally and ethically correct manner per the GALILEO contracts this would involve making sure each student had a public library card, and that they knew the password (and what it changed to four times per year). Teachers would not be able to pass out the password, because by contract with the various vendors (EBSCO, ProQuest, Gale, etc.) only employees at access points may do that. Passwords also would not be able to be posted in classrooms, libraries, sent home in Friday folders, or put on the password protected portion of the website. Access would have to be by individual log-in from each student, instead of auto-populating to the IP address on campus. The deep discounts GALILEO receives are based on a certain volume of usage, and patronage at the institutions is used to determine the usage. If students from a school are using the public library password, but never darken the door of that library, then the patron statics are terribly skewed, which will eventually cause us to lose the ability to negotiate for the deep discounts. An oft-forgotten benefit of not using the public password is your students do not have to navigate through the databases not intended for k-12 users (i.e. geneology or auto-mechanics!!).

While this is just a very brief introduction to the benefits of GALILEO, we hope it will be
enough to cause you to want to dig a little further. As I tell the students, get “click happy!” If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact either Robin Aylor or myself, Kirsten Pylant, at Kirsten.pylant@augustaprep.org. I look forward to hearing from you!

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