

Introduction

Skynet Junior Scholars allows youth to capture and analyze astronomical data and interact with scientists, SJS staff, informal science educators, and peers via 2 Skynet web sites (skynet.unc.edu/s and skynet.unc.edu/afterglow) and the Skynet Junior Scholars (SJS) web portal (skynetjuniorscholars.org). We are dedicated to safeguarding any personal information collected through these 3 web sites and have taken steps to ensure that our information practices adhere to the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”).

Scope of this Policy

COPPA requires that we inform parents and legal guardians about how we collect, use, and disclose personal information from children under the age of 13. COPPA also requires that we obtain consent from a parent or guardian before we allow children under the age of 13 to use and post content on our Skynet web portal. Our Privacy Policy explains how we comply with these requirements.

Parental Consent

COPPA requires that we use reasonable efforts to ensure that a parent or legal guardian receives notice of and consents to our information practices before we collect any personal information from a child. If a child is under age 13, we must have “verifiable parental consent” before we collect and use a child’s personal information. Prior to providing a child with access to our website, we must receive consent from a parent or other legal guardian.

As part of such consent, we may ask the applicable parent or guardian to provide an email address, telephone number, or other contact information. We will use this information in the event we need to contact the parent or guardian or to verify his or her identity.

Skynet Junior Scholars Activities and Interactions

SJS participant youth are members of informal learning groups associated with organizations such as 4-H, museum programs, afterschool clubs or other out of school time projects.

SJS staff members include educators and scientists from the University of Chicago, National Radio Astronomy Observatory, University of North Carolina, and the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. SJS staff members provide oversight for all activities on the SJS and Skynet websites to assure that all comply with proper usage standards.

SJS group leaders are 4-H leaders or scout masters, museum/park/science center educators and volunteers who conduct out-of-school time programs affiliated with youth organizations, or recognized community organizations.

SJS scientists are active or retired astronomers and engineers, or graduate students associated with recognized universities, observatories and research centers.

A child participates in SJS as part of a group managed by a group leader. Participating SJS youth complete astronomical investigations that include: requesting astronomical images from Skynet

telescopes, naming those images and accessing images online, sharing images in a gallery open to all SJS participants, creating online notes accessible by child's login, and interacting with other SJS youth, SJS staff, and SJS scientists in an online forum open to all SJS participants.

Information We Collect and How We Collect It

SJS group leaders will create Skynet accounts for their group members. These accounts will ask for username, first name, last name, birthdate, password, parent or guardian email. Skynet Junior Scholars will not condition a child's participation on that child disclosing more personally identifiable information than is reasonably necessary to administer the website. The parent or guardian must approve of the Skynet account by responding with consent.

The username and password is all that is needed by the child to login to Skynet, Skynet Afterglow, or the SJS web portal. The portal and the two Skynet sites will track usage by the youth through their username and email associated with the account.

We will collect information about the child's use of the websites. This information may include information about how often the child accesses the websites, how he or she uses the features of the websites (including the website's forum), the IP addresses from which he or she accesses the websites, and other information about his or her activities in connection with the websites. We collect this information by either actively soliciting this information from the child or passively monitoring his or her use of the websites.

Parents will be given a link to a survey, located on a secure survey site, that will ask for further demographic information helpful to the project leaders, researchers and the evaluator to be able to anonymously report the effectiveness of the project across a wide range of variables. Though helpful to the project reporting, this survey is not a requirement for participation. The survey questions may ask additional information about the child such as gender, race, ethnicity, school name and address, and in a voluntary comment area, information about how to make the experience most effective for their child. We may also ask about disabilities such whether the child is blind or has low vision, is deaf or hard of hearing because we are striving to meet the needs of all children.

How We Use Personal Information

We use the information that we collect from a child for two basic purposes. First, we use the information to administer the website and otherwise in connection with the SJS program. Second, we use the information in connection with our ongoing research into the short and long term impact of the SJS program.

Administration of the Website and the Skynet Junior Scholars Program

We use a child's personal information in a variety of ways in connection with the operation of the website and the SJS program. For example, a child's user name and password are necessary to create an account on the website through which the child can access its features. We may use a parent's email address or other contact information in the event the child loses his or her password or otherwise needs assistance accessing or using the website. If a child participates in

SJS as part of a group (such as a school club or group extracurricular activity), we may disclose the child's personal information and information about the child's use of the website to the adult leaders of that group. By allowing their child to participate as part of a group, parents or guardians consent to Skynet Junior Scholars' disclosure of such information to group leaders. The website also includes a moderated forum where a child may interact with other participants in the SJS program as well as scientists and informal science educators. The child's username will be used to identify the child on the forum if he or she posts anything. SJS staff members monitor the forum, gallery, and notebooks; if they detect that a child has disclosed personally identifiable information, they will take steps to remove the applicable post. The forum and gallery are open to all SJS participants and will be monitored by SJS staff members who have undergone a suitable background check.

We may use usage information and other non-personally identifiable information in the aggregate to analyze online traffic and website efficacy, but we will never use such information to identify an individual user unless we feel that there are safety or security issues or we must comply with legal requirements.

Research. In addition to operating the website, we use a child's personally identifiable information, as well as the information we collect about his or her use of the website, for the purpose of conducting research. We hope this research will (1) help us understand and improve the project as it progresses, (2) allow us to determine whether the project is effective, and (3) help us understand how to improve STEM education more generally.

1. *Improving the project as it progresses.* Studying how different youth participants use Skynet and the SJS website will enable us to identify areas where youth participation diverges from expectations and, hopefully, to suggest ways of improving the project so that it will be more engaging to a larger percentage of participants. By identifying use patterns we lay the groundwork for understanding how the project impacts different groups of youth participants.
2. *Determine whether the project is effective.* Our research will help our funders to understand whether their investment in the project has resulted in positive outcomes, how those outcomes have come about, and the degree to which we can expect all youth participants to benefit from such outcomes. It may also help those in STEM education fields better understand how to conduct similar STEM learning projects during out of school time.
3. *Understand how to improve STEM education more generally.* As part of the above research we will learn whether the program is engaging or enjoyable to youth participants, whether it helps them develop a sense of self-efficacy, and what parts of the program appear to help youth participants develop identities as scientists. Knowing this will help those working to improve STEM education.

We may use your child's personal information to contact your child in the future about his or her experiences with SJS. We may use the information we collect from and about your child to conduct research designed to better understand or improve science education. However, we will never identify your child in any published research without your prior written consent. In order to properly conduct our research, a small group of our researchers will have access to a master list of participating students' names and their corresponding usernames. This list will be kept indefinitely for the purpose of facilitating long-term studies. If a parent wishes us to delete

the information we maintain about their child, they can request that we do so by contacting us as provided below. By consenting to a child's use of the website, the child's parent consents to our use and storage of the child's information in connection with our research. A child's data will be stored by user names and child names; identifiable information will never be used in the reporting of research results.

Other Information. In addition to your child's personal information, we may use the contact information provided by parents to contact them in connection with their child's use of the website or participation in SJS. We may also contact parents if we need to verify their identity. In addition, parents may be contacted if their child forgets or misplaces his or her username or password.

Security of Information Collected

The Skynet website portal is accessible to children only after logging in with a username and password, both of which are provided to participants only after we obtain verifiable parental consent. Any comments or questions posted by participants cannot be viewed via public search engines. If at any time a parent wishes us to disable their child's access to the website or the website's forum, the parent may request that we do so by contacting us as provided below. Skynet Junior Scholars ensures that all personally and non-personally identifiable information it receives through the Skynet website portal is secure against unauthorized access. This information is kept in a safe and secure system, and we have adopted reasonable technical, administrative, and physical procedures to help protect this information from loss, misuse, and alteration.

Sharing with Third Parties

We will not sell, rent, or trade your child's personal information. Skynet Junior Scholars is a program run collaboratively among the University of Chicago, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (the "SJS Group"). Each member of the SJS Group may access participants' personal information, but they will do so only for the purposes stated herein. In addition, where a child participates in Skynet Junior Scholars as part of a group, group leaders may have access to his or her personal information. We may also disclose a child's or a parent's personal information to the extent necessary to comply with applicable laws, regulations, or court orders.

How to Review Your Child's Personal Information

For any personal information that we collect from children, parents and guardians may request information on the type of data being collected, view their child's information, and, if they choose, prohibit us from making further use of the information. Parents also always retain the ability to have us destroy any information we have collected about their child. Parents and guardians should feel free to contact us if they wish to review, update, or delete the information collected by the SJS web portal.

Changes to Our Privacy Policy

We may revise this Privacy Policy, for example, to reflect changes in the law, our practices, or the features of the Skynet website portal. These changes will be effective immediately upon posting. Should we make changes to our Privacy Policy, we will notify parents or guardians' by email.

Contact Us

Parents or guardians with questions or comments regarding this Privacy Policy may contact us at astrosjs.staff@gmail.com. In addition, parents and guardians should feel free to contact us if they wish to review, update, or delete the information collected by the Skynet or the SJS web portal.