

Principles and Ethics for Librarians



John DeSantis

Ethics Day – UMass Amherst Libraries

October 8, 2010

john.desantis@dartmouth.edu



JOY IN THE
MORNING

BETTY SMITH

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



Overview

- Library Bill of Rights
- Codes of Ethics
- Video on ethics in libraries
- Case studies

ALA Library Bill of Rights

- Adopted by ALA in 1939
- Amended in 1944, 1948, 1961, 1967, 1980
- Interpretation included in 7th ed. of ALA's *Intellectual Freedom Manual* in 2006
- Libraries expected to support these rights

Library Bill of Rights

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

Library Bill of Rights

- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas

Library Bill of Rights

- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Library Codes of Ethics

- IFLA Professional Codes of Ethics for Librarians

<http://www.ifla.org/en/faife/professional-codes-of-ethics-for-librarians>

- 35 countries listed
- Codes of ethics new to library profession:
 - Canada (1976)
 - United Kingdom, Australia, Japan (1980s)

2005 study by Pnina Shachaf
(Indiana University):



Analyzed English versions of 28
codes of ethics of library professional associations

SHACHAF, P (2005). "A global perspective on library association codes of ethics". *Library & information science research (0740-8188)*, 27 (4), p. 513.

Shachaf study (2005)

Most frequently identified principles:

- Confidentiality & Privacy
- Integrity
- Equal Access to Information
- Professional Development

Shachaf study (2005)

Less frequently identified principles:

- Democracy
- Copyright and Intellectual Property
- Responsibility toward Society

Integrity

“...obligations for the maintenance of the highest level of personal integrity...”

Accuracy

“Must provide ... accurate and unbiased responses to all legitimate requests for assistance...”

Free and equal access to information

“...explicitly committed to ... the
freedom of access to information...”

Conflict of interest and personal gain

“Must avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or financial benefits gained at the expense of library users, colleagues or the employing institution.”

Intellectual freedom

“...explicitly committed to intellectual freedom ...”

High level of service

“Must provide the highest level of service”

Cooperation among libraries

“Librarians should make it their aim to develop and maintain understanding and cooperation among libraries of all kinds.”

Collection development

“A Librarian should collect, organize, preserve and proffer library materials on the basis of professional knowledge and judgment...”

Censorship

“Should not exercise censorship in the selection, use or access to material by rejecting on moral, political, gender, sexual preference, racial or religious grounds alone material which is otherwise relevant to the purpose of the library and meets the standards which are appropriate to the library concerned.”

Confidentiality and privacy

“Must protect each user's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received and materials consulted...”

Competency

“...obligations for ... competence in the performance of their duties...”

Copyright and intellectual property

“Must recognize and respect intellectual property rights...”

Responsibilities toward the profession

“The librarian should endeavor to build a strong, closely-knit professional association, in which the strength and activity of the group are enhanced by his/her own diligent and considered participation and promotion.”

Responsibilities toward other professions (and organizations)

“Librarians should contribute to the development of local culture through close cooperation with educational, social and cultural groups and organizations in the Locality.”

Responsibilities toward colleagues

“Must treat fellow workers and other
colleagues with respect, fairness...”

Professional development

“Must maintain and enhance their professional knowledge and skills to ensure excellence in the profession...”

Responsibilities toward society

“Librarians should make due efforts, in association with others, to stimulate the development of the cultural environment in society and the community which they serve, by cooperating with local residents and with members of appropriate groups and organizations...”

Administrative responsibilities

“A Librarian should actively participate in the formulation of policy in the operation and service program of his library.”

ALA Code of Ethics

- Adopted by ALA Council in 1995
- Provides guidance for librarians and information specialists to make ethical decisions
- 8 statements; text refers to “we” rather than librarians

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/proethics/codeofethics/codeethics.cfm>

ALA Code of Ethics

- Amended in 2008
- Statement IV:

1995: “We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.”

2008: “We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.”

The Angry Librarian

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XvAakX_cQ

Case Study #1

BOYCOTT

Case Study #1

1. What is the role of the nation's foreign policy in supplying needed information to researchers?
2. Are there alternatives the United States library can suggest to the requester?
3. How should the library respond to the request?

Case Study #2

LOYALTIES

Case Study #2

1. What are the boundaries of professional behavior for librarians who move into the commercial sector and have to deal with their former co-workers?
2. Is accepting lunch O.K.? Dinner? Pens? Calendars? Posters? Discounts? Favors?
Who should decide?
3. Should Belle inform anyone at her library about this conversation?

Questions?

Comments?