

Towards the ethical librarian

Perspectives and challenges of staff of Sam Jonah Library, University of Cape Coast – Ghana

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the perspectives and viewpoints of professional staff of the Sam Jonah Library in as much as the ethical aspects of their profession are concerned. The paper also seeks to determine the common ethical issues that confront these professionals and their default courses of action in dealing with these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – The descriptive survey design was used as the research methodology with the population of the study being all professional (post-graduate diploma and above) and para-professional (certificate, diploma and first degree) staff of the library. Due to the small number of professional staff (43) in the library, the census sampling technique was used.

Findings – Results indicated the existence of ethical dilemmas in the working lives of these professionals with guidance for dealing with these dilemmas emanating mostly from consultation of senior colleagues. Although the findings showed that the Ghana Library Association (GLA) had an ethics handbook, it was revealed that majority of the staff were not aware of its existence. It was also discovered that one of the major challenges of these professionals is the absence of a specific library code of ethics handbook to guide staff in case they are confronted with these ethical dilemmas. The study recommends a strong awareness creation initiative from the GLA to bring to the notice of members, the existence of a formal code of ethics document.

Originality/value – The paper provides information on specific ethical issues confronting staff of the library and their current modes of dealing with the dilemmas they encounter.

Keywords Ethics, Code of ethics, Ethical dilemmas, Ethics in librarianship, Ghana Library Association, Sam Jonah Library

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

All professions are guided by codes of conduct or ethical guidelines. These ethical guidelines are laid down usually by professional bodies to guide members of the profession in their day-to-day activities and to serve as a reference guide for those professionals who find themselves at crossroads as to what to do in some situations when a single course of action is not clear cut.

Professional ethics are defined by Hoffman (2005) as the principles of conduct that govern an individual or a group of individuals belonging to a common profession. Issues bordering on ethics have predominantly been found in the more traditional professions like medicine and law; however, other professions have involved the concept of ethics in their operations (Du Mont, 1991).

Usherwood (1981) places the evolution of ethics in librarianship originally in the years leading up to 1938 and credits the Americans as the foremost drivers of this concept. Librarians play a critical role in the society; they are mandated to acquire information and grant access to this information to their users. A shift in the librarianship profession has ensured that libraries do not only acquire information and facilitate access, but go on further to publicize the availability of such information. This paradigm shift in librarianship has been necessitated by the need of the library to stay relevant in light of competition from online sources and commercial search engines.



In the performance of their duties, librarians are required to carry out their missions in an ethical manner as is expected from other professionals like doctors and lawyers (Fallis, 2007). This has brought into play concepts and phrases like information ethics and “the ethical librarian” which converge at a point indicating that the librarian must abide by certain standards and codes of practice in the performance of their duties.

The ever changing landscape of the librarianship and information science profession requires that librarians concern themselves with the ethical aspects of their work while keeping an eye on the legal implications of the information they seek to disseminate. Thus the twenty-first century librarian is not merely a custodian of information resources, but also one who ensures that the information he/she grants access to is used by the users in an ethical manner (Ferguson and Weckert, 1998). These contemporary issues have brought concepts like plagiarism, copyright, censorship among others which hitherto had very little to do with librarianship, to the forefront of the profession.

Fallis (2007), Himma (2007) and Trushina (2004) concur that the twenty-first century librarian must accept that there are ethical implications for his or her job and as such remains his or her mandate to ensure that the delivery of service is done in an ethical manner. Fallis (2007) further argues that it is quite dangerous to leave the ethical aspects of the librarianship profession to the librarian without any help or guide. To do this, Fallis points out that it is virtually leaving everything to the morality of the librarian and ultimately to chance.

Statement of the problem

Budd (2006) argues strongly that just about everything that the librarian does as a professional has ethical implications and consequences. This he ascribes to the need of the librarian to do more than his traditional duty in light of competition from commercial search engines and online information sources.

Librarians provide access to a very important resource – information. This resource is provided virtually free of charge and cheaply, yet could have varied consequences depending on how it is used. In their quest to excel in their core mandate of providing accurate, timely, relevant and comprehensive information, librarians tend to collect information resources that cuts across all knowledge and could be used by the varied sections of the general public (Finks, 1991).

What librarians and information professionals however find difficult is ensuring that the information resources they provide and the information contained therein is used responsibly and not to the detriment of the general public and the entire society at large. Striking a balance, however, between providing and facilitating unencumbered access to all kinds of information on one hand and ensuring that the information provided is used responsibly and ethically is not quite an easy task and usually places staff of the Sam Jonah Library in the unenviable position of having to choose between two impossible alternatives.

Sturges (2009) argues that in this modern era of varying legal implications over the provision of access and use of information, it is quite easy for a librarian to find him/herself in an ethical dilemma. The regularity with which librarians and information professionals find themselves at crossroads or in a position of ethical dilemma led to the call for a guide to aid these professionals and to provide guidance to an appropriate course of action in seemingly impossible situations and scenarios.

Though it is not uncommon for staff of the Sam Jonah Library to find themselves in ethical dilemmas, the absence of an official Code of Professional Conduct or Practice to prescribe appropriate courses of action and to provide guidance at crucial times seems to make the jobs of these librarians difficult and hamper their efforts to be as professionally ethical as they can possibly be.

The Ghana Library Association (GLA) being the professional body for librarians in Ghana excels in providing education and capacity building opportunities for its members.

The GLA promulgated a code of ethics in 2014 to guide professionals in situations where a single flawless course of action is not possible. Much as the promulgation of a code of ethics is a giant step, the creation of awareness of same is a major blot on the code. This is manifested by the absence of the code on the association's website of all places.

Having established the fact that ethical dilemmas do occur in the professional lives of librarians at the Sam Jonah Library and the seemingly unawareness of the staff to the availability of a code of ethics for librarians, the researchers are curious to know the opinions of the staff of the library concerning the existing state of affairs.

The study therefore sets out to investigate the common instances that pose ethical dilemmas to staff of the Sam Jonah Library and the common course of action of staff in the face of these ethical dilemmas.

Objectives of the study

- (1) to ascertain the availability of a code of professional conduct handbook in the library;
- (2) to unearth some of the instances that pose ethical dilemmas to staff; and
- (3) to ascertain the common course of action of staff in the face of ethical dilemmas.

Literature review

Du Mont (1991) opines that ethics in the information science field and librarianship is primarily concerned with the application of moral principles to the conduct and actions of librarians and other professionals involved in information dissemination. She goes further to deliver the opinion of Pearce and Robinson (1989) that ethical standards while not universally accepted by all, they are the end results of discretionary decision-making behavior affecting the lives and well-being of others and more often in a positive way.

The evolution and development of ethics in librarianship according to Du Mont (1991) though was of concern prior to the 1960s, the social responsibility debate of the 1960s caused librarians and other information professionals to take a second and critical look at the issue of ethics in librarianship. Du Mont (1991) argues that historically librarians deemed their social responsibility to be limited to the collections in their libraries, however, since the advent of the social responsibility debate librarians now acknowledge they are responsible to other stakeholders outside their collections. Librarians now concern themselves with the repercussions of their actions and inactions on the environment in which they operate. To this end stakeholders like users, non-users, employees, suppliers, authors, publishers, government agencies, public interest groups and host communities occupy an important position in the drive to making the librarian ethically and socially responsible (Du Mont, 1991).

Trushina (2004) argues that the need of the library to abide by ethical principles is at an all-time high as a result of the human-targeted services the library provides. This has brought many moral and legal issues to the fore of the librarianship profession. In a bid to codify these ethical principles, Codes of Ethics and Conduct were promulgated by most professional library bodies to regulate the conduct of their members. In the opinion of Trushina (2004), codes of ethics go beyond being a mere standard of professional conduct to providing a framework for professional values and a paradigm for national library development for countries.

The code of ethics promulgated by a Professional Library Association is capable of describing the aims and goals of library services, principles of relations with patrons and colleagues, library and government authorities, attitudes to cultural heritage and developing information flows, the use of the internet and similar things (Trushina, 2004).

The relevance and necessity of a code of ethics in library operations is comprehensively addressed in a document credited to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). According to IFLA “the Code of Ethics is the instrument which conveys to the public and the government, the seriousness and responsibilities of the profession. The code of ethics therefore:

- urge members to comply with the rules and regulations of the association;
- instruct members to comply with the national laws and policies and not indulge in any activity which would bring the profession into disrepute; and
- urge members to maintain high standards of service, keep abreast of new developments in the field and take responsibility for mention and training new professionals.”

Bekker (as cited in Finks, 1991) states clearly that a code of ethics must define the limits of acceptable conduct and prescribe guidance and suggestions as to what kinds of actions are deemed right or wrong in the profession. The author advises that for a code of ethics to become viable, it must discourage and prohibit inferior behaviors and conducts that have the potential of bringing the profession into disrepute.

Trushina (2004) makes reference to a 2003 approved comparative analysis of the codes of ethics of 34 library professional unions in Armenia, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Estonia, France, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, the UK and the USA. Fallis (2007) agrees with Trushina (2004) that whilst there exist cultural differences and different development trends in all countries, these codes of ethics have so much in common. The principle of free access to information, confidentiality of private users’ information, intellectual freedom, competency of the librarian and the integrity of the librarian are but a few of the ethical postulates that transcends the differing cultural and geographic challenges imposed by the different codes of ethics used by librarians the world over.

Bopp and Smith (2011) identify the promulgation of codes of ethics and conduct as an attempt to counter the difficulties inherent in imposing a single moral perspective on the conduct of librarians. The latter alongside the heterogeneity of modern society and the growing need for tolerance for different ideas and opinions makes the adoption and use of codes of ethics very relevant. Bopp and Smith (2011) list the Guidelines for Behavioral Performance for Reference and Information Service Providers, The American Library Association’s (ALA) “Code of Ethics,” The American Society for Information Science and Technology’s (ASIS&T) “ASIS&T Professional Guidelines,” The Society of American Archivists’ “Code of Ethics for Archivists,” The Medical Library Association’s “Code of Ethics for Health Sciences Librarianship” and the American Association of Law Libraries’ “AALL Ethical Principles” as some of the major codes of ethics in use in the librarianship and information science profession in the USA.

Ethical dilemmas occur in almost every profession including medicine, law, social work, teaching and librarianship to mention a few. Hommadi (2008) defines ethical dilemma as a situation in which a professional finds himself/herself, which has the potential to be a problem as a result of the unclear and uneasy courses of action available. For an ethical dilemma to occur, Hommadi (2008) prescribes that first the professional or agent must be in a situation demanding or requiring a decision to be made. Second, there must be different courses of action available to be chosen from for the professional and finally the professional must compromise no matter the course of action taken and accept that there is no perfect solution.

Ethical dilemmas in librarianship have been known to exist since the incorporation of ethics into the librarianship profession. Mcmenemy (2007) however is of the opinion that the

incidence of ethical dilemmas in librarianship and the information profession has increased in contemporary times mainly as a result of concepts like copyright, censorship, plagiarism and other legal implications associated with the information resources librarians work with. In the opinion of Sturges (2009) a librarian cannot possibly sit aloof and watch the intellectual property of an author be used in an unethical way with the excuse that he is not the agent of the author. To this effect librarians without asking for it have become “agents” of authors in a way by ensuring that their intellectual properties are used rightly and ethically. It is no coincidence that the Sam Jonah Library, University of Cape Coast offers training and education to its clients in the aspect of copyright, plagiarism, citation and referencing (UCC, 2012).

Cottrell (1999) advances the argument that the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has escalated the ethical issues inherent in the operations of many professions notably librarianship. In her review of the relevant literature, Cottrell (1999) identifies privacy and confidentiality (reference and circulation), censorship and copyright issues (acquisitions and cataloguing) and archiving and preservation as some of the issues with ethical implications that has come to the fore following the revolution of ICT. Privacy and confidentiality perhaps are the most critical ethical issue in librarianship (Zwass, 2012). Finding an equilibrium between the need to respect the privacy of patrons and having the utmost regard for all information perceived to be confidential about clients on one hand and the need to monitor the research activities and patterns of clients and divulging same information to authorities when there is the need on the other hand is not an easy task for librarians and has been the cause of an ongoing debate on the issue (Matingwina, 2015). Censorship and the right of access to information are also age long ethical issues that have bedeviled the librarianship profession since the concept of ethics was introduced into the profession (Du Mont, 1991; Matingwina, 2015). Again there is the need to strike a balance between offering information that seeks to educate, inform and entertain on one hand and refusing to collect information or in the instances where such information is collected, restricting access to such information which may be offensive or discriminatory to a class of people in the society on the other hand.

Bair (2005) in her exposition of the different aspects of librarianship and particularly the importance of technical services like cataloguing and classification argues against the common practice of promulgating a single code of ethics to cover all aspects of the librarianship profession. In her argument citing Bierbaum (1994), she opines that a single blanket code of ethics might just not be enough to cover comprehensively the inherent ethical dilemmas and their implications embedded in the technical services of the librarianship profession. There is therefore the need to enact a code of ethics that is comprehensive enough to cover every aspect of the librarianship profession imaginable or alternatively the enactment of specific codes of ethics covering different areas of the profession. Here reference can be made to “Guidelines for Behavioral Performance for Reference and Information Service Providers,” a code of ethics enacted by the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) to guide members in their duties as reference librarians and to prescribe appropriate courses of action when they find themselves in ethical dilemmas. Bair (2005) asserts that there is growing need for a code of ethics for cataloguing and classification as a result of the critical role it plays in librarianship and the many circumstances inherent in this activity that give rise to ethical issues. In her opinion these professionals usually need more guidance on these ethical issues than is usually provided by the more general codes of ethics available.

Methodology

For a study that seeks to ascertain the opinions of a group of librarians regarding the ethical aspects of their job, the study of each respondent in detail is paramount. This is mainly

because ethics is regarded and construed by different people in different ways even when these are individuals in the same profession.

The descriptive survey design under the quantitative approach was adopted as the methodology for the study. The survey design was chosen because of its propensity to reach a larger audience and in this case the majority of the respondents. Questionnaire was the main data collection instrument used with a combination of closed ended and open ended questions. The population of the study included all professional librarians of Sam Jonah Library. To this end, the study engaged the views and opinions of all professional (post-graduate diploma and above) and para-professional (certificate, diploma and degree) staff. The total population of the study totaled 43. Due to this smaller number of professional and para-professional librarians, the Census sampling technique was used. Whilst a number of designs under the qualitative approach could have equally proven appropriate for the study, getting the respondents to sit for a considerable length of time for an interview session (which is one of the most reliable data collection instrument under the qualitative approach) was going to be a challenge. The researchers in light of this tried mitigating the effect of the loss of the benefits of the interview sessions with a significant percentage of open ended questions in the questionnaire to allow for the expression of respondents opinions.

Analysis and discussion of findings

A total of 41 questionnaires were retrieved out of the 43 administered to respondents thereby putting the response rate at 95.35 percent. Data retrieved from respondents were analyzed by the use of simple frequencies, percentages and charts.

Background information of respondents

The researchers sought to provide an overview of the respondents whose views and opinions formed the outcome of the study. To this end, the age, gender and working experience of respondents were analyzed to bring perspective into the study.

Age of respondents

Out of the 41 respondents, 17 (41.46 percent) were in the 31–40 years bracket while the least age group was determined to be the 20–30 years bracket which represented only 4.89 percent.

Table I shows the age distribution of the respondents engaged in the study. The age distribution of the respondents implies the existence of age-related experience and wisdom which tends to come in handy when one finds himself or herself in an ethical dilemma. This is corroborated by Mcmenemy (2007) who found that age related wisdom and experience goes a long way in assisting professional librarians in coming to a reasonable course of action in the face of ethical dilemmas. Table I shows that a significant percentage (95.11 percent) of the professional staff of the Sam Jonah Library fall between the ages 31 and 60 which ultimately shows the availability of age related experience and wisdom which has been found to be relevant and helpful in the face of ethical dilemmas.

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
20–30	2	4.89
31–40	17	41.46
41–50	6	14.63
51–60	16	39.02
Total	41	100

Source: Field Data (2018)

Table I.
Age of respondents

Work experience of respondents

To determine the exposure of respondents to ethical dilemmas in their working life and their default course of action in these circumstances required understanding the length of working experience and departments of respondents.

The data from respondents showed that 19 staff had worked in excess of a decade at the library while 14 and 5 staff members had worked for 6–10 years and less than 5 years, respectively. This finding implies that the working experience of the professional staff of the Sam Jonah Library is at a relatively good level with over 80 percent of the professional staff having in excess of half a decade working experience under their belt. This ultimately proves beneficial when difficult situations emerge and require a reasonable course of action. This is in conformity to the findings of McMenemy (2007) to the effect that while codes of ethics cannot be substituted by wisdom and experience, the length of working experience mitigates the difficulties staff encounter in the face of ethical dilemmas. The working experience outlook of respondents is represented in Figure 1.

Section of respondents

The researchers again sought to unearth the existence of specific ethical dilemmas associated with some activities or operations of the academic library. To this end, the primary sections of respondents were determined. This revealed the reference section as the most common to all respondents with 15 professional and para-professional staff engaged in reference work full time. In total, 11 staff members were engaged in the cataloguing department full time while another 7 staff members worked in the digital library full time. Figure 2 shows the rest of the departmental distribution.

Section susceptible to ethical dilemmas

The respondents drawn from the different sections of the library acquiesced to the point of view that ethical dilemmas though are universal, are apparent in certain operations of the library than others. Figure 3 shows the susceptibility of the various operations of the library to ethical issues and dilemma.

The emergence of reference work as the activity with the most inherent ethical dilemmas is ascribed to by respondents as a consequence of the service they provide and the fact that they are the face of the library. The determination of library operations with more ethical implications comes easy to the professional staff of Sam Jonah Library mainly as a result of the routine practice of job rotation in the library. This has culminated to the multi-dimensional nature of the staff and the consequent ability to assess the ethical implications inherent in all the different operations of the library. The digital section of the library

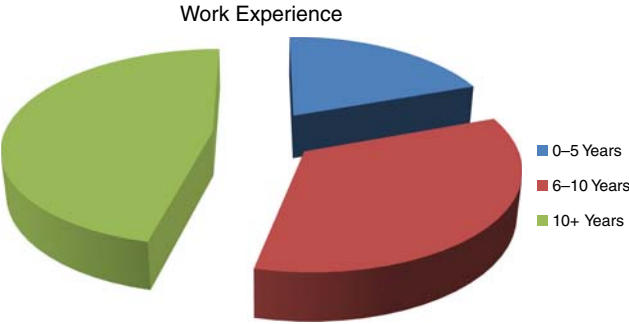
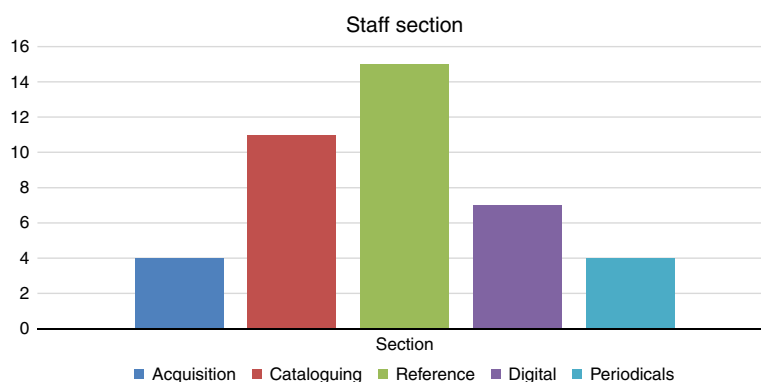


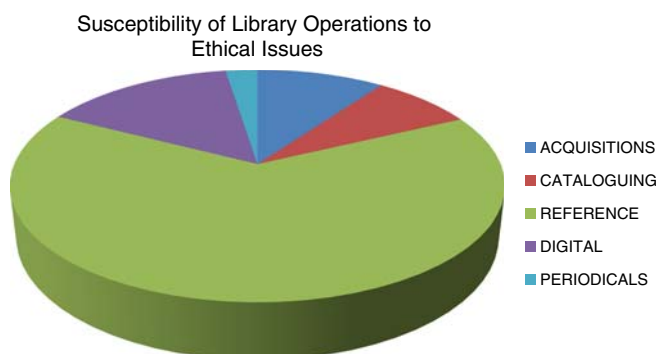
Figure 1.
Work experience of
respondents

Source: Field Data (2018)



Source: Field Data (2018)

Figure 2.
Section of respondents



Source: Field Data (2018)

Figure 3.
Susceptibility of
library operations to
ethical issues and
dilemmas

emerged as the next most susceptible section of the library to ethical issues and dilemmas. This is as a result of the intellectual property rights and its attendant issues such as copyright and plagiarism associated with most of their activities. This is in conformity to the findings of Bierbaum (1994) and Bair (2005), who postulated that the promulgation of single blanket codes of ethics to cover all areas of librarianship is grounded on the fact that some library operations have more ethical implications than others.

Ethical dilemmas

The study again sought to reveal the myriad of incidences and instances that places professional staff of Sam Jonah Library in ethical dilemmas. Respondents in providing responses concerning these instances identified issues ranging from reprographics of information resources to the solicitation of information of controversial and confidential nature from both users of the library and authorities alike. This is in alignment with the findings of Bopp and Smith (2011) who found that the need of librarians to find a reasonable balance between the right of users to access information and the need to protect society from harm as well as the need to keep information concerning clients confidential are the basis of the many instances of ethical dilemmas faced by librarians in their working lives.

Table II shows the opinions of respondents regarding the myriad of issues that places them in ethical dilemmas. The Table II shows that staff of the Sam Jonah Library have been

exposed to all kinds of ethical dilemmas with majority of respondents indicating their familiarity with ethical dilemmas bordering on the concept of plagiarism. Ethical dilemmas bordering on the provision of information of controversial and confidential nature were deemed to seldom occur though it does manifest.

Factors informing decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas

Having been found in one or more of these instances that put their ethical integrity to the test, respondents proffered numerous factors that inform their ultimate decision. These factors include codes of ethics, experience, empathy, professional intuition, consultation with a senior colleague and others. Figure 4 depicts the extent to which a particular factor is considered in arriving at a particular course of action in the instance of an ethical dilemma.

From Figure 4, it is clear that respondents consider the available and alternate codes of ethics mostly for guidance on the appropriate courses of action. Other notable avenues considered are reliance on professional intuition, experience, empathy and consultation of senior colleagues.

The significant reliance placed on the provisions of codes of ethics by respondents with the view of ascertaining appropriate courses of action required the researchers to ascertain the membership or otherwise of the respondents in the professional body of librarians in Ghana – the GLA.

The study revealed that out of the total number of respondents of 41, 28 were members of the GLA whilst the remaining 13 were yet to attain membership. The GLA has a code of ethics

Table II.
Ethical dilemmas
reminiscent of the
librarianship
profession

Incidences and instances	Frequency and percentage	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Reprography of thesis and dissertations	38 (92.68)	3 (7.32)
Full reprography of a book	37 (90.24)	4 (9.76)
Information on topics deemed dangerous to the general public	2 (4.88)	39 (95.12)
Information dangerous to the welfare of the individual seeking the information	3 (7.32)	38 (92.68)
Queries regarding controversial issues	19 (46.34)	22 (53.66)
Being asked by authorities to provide confidential information on a user's search pattern	3 (7.32)	38 (92.68)
Aiding in plagiarizing someone's work	27 (65.85)	14 (34.15)

Source: Field Data (2018)

Figure 4.
Factors considered in
arriving at a decision
in the face of an
ethical dilemma



meant to guide members in their professional lives. Trushina (2004) agrees to the foregoing with the findings from her study indicating the immense role of codes of ethics promulgated by Professional Library Associations have played in assisting librarians in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The awareness of the existence of this crucial document however is up for discussion. This is manifested by the fact that, out of the 28 respondents of the total population of 41 who are members of the GLA, only 11 (representing 39.29 percent) were aware of the existence of the code of ethics document while the remaining 17 (representing 60.74 percent) were in the dark concerning the availability of the ethics document.

Again, the study sought to determine from the respondents, their awareness of the availability or otherwise of an ethics handbook in Sam Jonah Library where the research was actually conducted. The results indicated that the vast majority of the respondents (96 percent) were oblivious of the existence of such a document. This is represented graphically in Figure 5.

Courses of action

With some respondents unaware of the availability of a code of ethics document, the study sought to ascertain the common course of action for the respondents in the face of ethical dilemma.

Table III depicts the common courses of action adopted by professional staff of Sam Jonah Library in the face of ethical dilemma and in the seemingly absence of a code of ethics document or handbook.



Source: Field Data (2018)

Figure 5.
Awareness of a code
of ethics handbook

Action	Frequency	Percentage
Consultation with a senior colleague	36	50.00
Reliance on experience, intuition and common sense	24	33.33
Consultation of an alternative code of ethics	6	8.33
Relegate ethics to the background and chose the easy way out	3	4.17
Others	3	4.17
Total	72	100

Source: Field Data (2018)

Table III.
Common courses
of action

Table III shows the consultation of senior colleagues as the most common course of action adopted in the event of ethical dilemmas. The study also reveals the reliance on experience, intuition and common sense as well as the consultation of alternative codes of ethics documents as other popular courses of action adopted by staff in the face of ethical dilemmas.

The study also reveals the awareness of respondents to the ethical implications of their actions. Over three-quarters of the respondents allude to the fact that their actions and inactions have the potential of either positively or adversely affecting their clients, authors of information resources as well as the general public as a whole. This is in alignment to the findings of Sturges (2009), who found that the twenty-first century librarian's actions have varied implications both ethically and legally.

Conclusion

The universal acceptance of ethics as a part of every profession has placed responsibilities on practitioners to ensure that their actions and inactions are as fair as possible and grounded in sound reasoning. The varying implications of the actions of professional librarians denote that these professionals consider not only their professional mandates but also avert their minds to the social, political and legal implications of their actions and inactions. Being asked to provide assistance in the form of reprographics of information resources, confidential information regarding users' search patterns, queries on controversial and dangerous issues has placed these professionals in many ethical dilemmas. Factors such as age related wisdom and experience were identified by respondents as very useful in their struggle with instances that calls their professional ethics into question. Again professional intuition, empathy, consultation with senior colleagues as well as consultation of alternate code of ethics handbooks from different jurisdictions were some of the key decision making influencers for staff in the face of ethical dilemmas. Whilst the availability and awareness of the existence of codes of ethics handbooks go a long way in providing guidance in many ethical crossroads for professional librarians, the study reveals clearly some unorthodox but equally important courses of action staff engage to extricate themselves from a looming ethical dilemma. Nevertheless guiding these professionals in terms of prescribed and formalized courses of action seems the most conclusive way of dealing with the issues of ethical dilemmas confronting these librarians.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered with the aim of ensuring that professional staff and for that matter all other categories of staff of the Sam Jonah Library are guided as much as possible in their bid to master the ethical aspects of their profession.

First, it is recommended that the GLA make an enhanced effort to create awareness for its existing professional code of ethics document. This awareness creation must be targeted at the members of the association as well as non-members who are practicing any form of librarianship.

Again, educating members on the provisions of the ethics document as well as making copies available to them both in print and electronically would go a long way toward the objective of providing guidance to members.

It is also strongly recommended that a hyperlink to the code of ethics document promulgated by the GLA be provided on the website of the professional body for easy accessibility and perusal.

It is also proposed that the management of the Sam Jonah Library take steps to determine the common ethical dilemmas and issues confronting staff in their daily work

with the aim of prescribing common courses of action. A workshop or seminar can be organized to bring out the major issues of concern to staff in as much as professional ethics is concerned. The promulgation of a library specific ethics handbook with enough guidance for staff should be the objective of such forums.

Further research

By way of further research into the phenomenon under study, the researchers recommend the use of research designs under the qualitative approach. Whilst research designs under the quantitative approach are equally adept at providing conclusive answers to research questions, the application and use of data collection tools under the qualitative approach is likely to provide a new set of perspectives geared toward addressing the phenomenon under study more comprehensively and conclusively. An interview of respondents of the study would likely provide a more detailed and deeper understanding of the ethical issues confronting librarians and their course of action be they recommended by available codes of ethics handbooks or direction offered by guidance from senior colleagues or experience.

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