

**Personal Convictions and Information Profession Culture: How the Culture of the
Information Profession Strengthens My Desire to Pursue a Career in the Library**

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Abstract

This analytic essay explores the culture of the information professions and how it contributes to the personal decision to choose the profession. Through exploring in-use culture, espoused beliefs and values, and a shared identity, paired with personal reflection, this essay examines three topics: informed decision-making, accessibility of information, and the protection of intellectual freedom. The findings of this analysis reveal the interconnectedness of the information professional and personal beliefs and values. This essay highlights the implications of how personal convictions and outlooks on society contribute to how we work, act, and think.

Keywords: librarianship, informed decision-making, intellectual freedom, accessibility

Personal Convictions and Information Profession Culture: How the Culture of the Information Profession Strengthens My Desire to Pursue a Career in the Library

As I familiarize myself with the organizational culture of librarianship and the information profession, I am strengthened in my decision to pursue this career. Culture, or the “outward representation of [the] values and an inward reflection of how [they] operate,” is an important aspect of a profession, especially when they are in consideration of a career (U.S. Army Center, 2012). In this essay, I will explore three aspects of the culture of information professionals as they are directly correlated to my personal beliefs and strengthen my decision to pursue the Master of Library and Information Science. I will be exploring these concepts through the lens of organizational culture as spelled out in *Army Culture*, a video dedicated to the organizational culture of the American Army. Through this lens, I will be exploring the empowering concept of informed decision-making, the creation of equal access to information, and the importance of protecting intellectual freedom.

The Librarian’s Use of Informed Decision-Making

Informed decision-making as a part of the information profession culture can be looked at through the lens of in-use values, or those that “represent the reality of our thoughts and decisions” (U.S. Army Center, 2012) and manifest in the way professionals systematically do things (Walster, 2024). While these aspects of culture are not explicitly laid out in writing, they become part of the culture because of the actions of those within the organization and their consensus of beliefs. Because of the value that is put on information by the nature of the profession, it makes sense that this would contribute to the profession’s culture.

Informed decision-making, also known as data-driven or data-conscious decision-making, can be best explained as “using evidence to inform decisions and evaluate their outcomes” (Bryant, 2024, para. 4). Libraries have begun using data to “better understand and demonstrate their library’s impact” (Public Library Association, n.d.). The Public Library Association shares various tools for library staff to use data to inform their planning, improvement, and advocacy efforts. I am encouraged by this development, as information is an immensely valuable resource. I believe that, as a society, being informed is one of the most empowering attributes a person can develop. Information should contribute to every decision we make, one way or another. One hope I have is that this aspect of current information professional culture will carry over to patrons. This can take on many forms. For instance, the identification of relevant and trustworthy sources of information when it comes to decisions like voting in presidential elections or using sales data to devise a purchasing list. Every individual should have the resources and ability to use information effectively in this way.

Creating Equitable Access to Information for All

Accessibility of information fits into a few aspects of culture. Accessibility falls under espoused beliefs and values, as the *Library Bill of Rights* states that a person’s right to a library should not be “denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views” (ALA, n.d.). This can be expanded to include those with physical or developmental disabilities as well. Accessibility of information also falls under the shared identity aspect of the culture of the information profession. The shared identity is “derived from a common and shared mission, purpose, and sacrifice” (U.S. Army Center, 2012). This aspect of culture can shape every action and reaction of an individual.

Accessibility of information can take on many forms, and one that I think is important to prioritize right now is the transition to electronic resources. Electronic and information technology (EIT) is presenting opportunities for “education, innovation, commerce, and community” and is changing how individuals can “interact with, contribute to, and understand information” (Ostergaard, 2015, 156). One issue that libraries are running into, however, is how to make these EIT resources accessible to patrons with disabilities. As libraries and information centers work toward total accessibility, it shows me two aspects of the situation. One being their dedication to accessibility for all, and two being their willingness to evolve. This willingness to turn to electronic resources shows that the information profession is not afraid of change.

There are benefits to a transition to more electronic and digital library resources. Researchers found that there is a direct correlation between the use of library resources and the demonstration of information skills and literacy (Frandsen, et al. 2017). I think it is important to understand that EIT is the future while still understanding what is truly accessible for patrons. If a patron does not have internet access, does that make the library and its resources obsolete? Do those with disabilities need to work harder because certain resources are now only in a format that cannot be used by them? We are working toward accessibility for all, and that should contribute to the decisions being made.

Protecting Intellectual Freedom and Fighting Against Censorship

Working for the protection of intellectual freedom and fighting against censorship is an aspect of the information profession’s culture in the way that it is “published in doctrine, rules and regulations, and policies” (U.S. Army Center, 2012). These are the espoused beliefs and values of an organization. They are what the profession says is important and what they aspire for all members to support. Within the library profession, the American Library Association

(ALA) has defined intellectual freedom as “the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction” (Magi & Garner, 2021, 3). The ALA vows its efforts in support of intellectual freedom in a variety of ways. Explicitly stated in the *Library Bill of Rights*, “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation” and “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment” (ALA, n.d.). This clear statement on censorship makes it clear for information professionals that they must understand this as the viewpoint of the ALA and even if they do not fully agree, it is an express aspect of their job that will come up time and time again.

The ALA’s Banned Books Week is an event that began in 1982 as a response to a sudden push in book challenges in libraries, bookstores, and schools around the United States. The annual event “highlights the value of free and open access to information” (Banned Books Week, n.d.). An English teacher at Ursuline Academy assigned her students to write a letter to Banned Books Week after having read *Fahrenheit 451* and how this has impacted their beliefs on banned books. One student compared writers to artists, describing the vulgarity of art at times, and yet they are considered masterpieces. Another student explored the idea that diverse perspectives and opinions should be respected and even when we disagree, “we must encourage and facilitate the spreading of various ideas and standpoints on a subject, as this is the only way of learning and expanding our mindset” (Griffiths, 2016, 19). The protection of intellectual freedom is directly tied up in censorship, which bars diverse ideas and perspectives from readers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my positive perception of the culture of the information profession has been strengthened through informed decision-making, efforts for equal access to information for

all patrons, and the protection of intellectual freedom. Prioritizing informed decision-making demonstrates the value that libraries and information centers hold on information. Facilitating equal access to information not only works to fulfill the needs of all patrons but also displays the willingness and commitment to adapt to new technologies and trends. Intellectual freedom allows the individual to seek any viewpoint without fear of restriction, which is at the core of the library profession's espoused values. Ultimately, the information profession's culture strengthens my desire to be a part of it and aligns with my personal beliefs about empowerment through information, accessibility, and freedom to read.

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Appendix 1: Artificial Intelligence Statement

Throughout the course of developing and writing this paper, I used AI tools in order to enhance my work. All ideas are mine and all research was conducted by me. AI applications were only used as tools to help me with organization and ensure my ideas were properly portrayed.

My first use of AI was using Chat PDF to garner a better understanding of the assignment directions. This tool was able to take the directions in PDF format and explain the contents in a simple and broken-down format that helped develop my understanding of the assignment. I also asked for a sample outline of the paper with word counts in order to get a better idea of how long I should make each section. Chat PDF was also able to contribute to my abstract format, breaking it down into these sections: purpose, key beliefs and values, methodology, main findings or insights, and implications.

I also used AI in this project to develop my paper title and headings. Using a loose description of the ideas I expressed; I was able to use Warrior GPT to create unique and descriptive titles that convey the topics I am describing.