IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers (full version)

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Preamble

This Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is offered as a series of ethical propositions for the guidance of individual librarians as well as other information workers, and for the consideration of Library and Information Associations when creating or revising their own codes.

The function of codes of ethics can be described as

- encouraging reflection on principles on which librarians and other information workers can form policies and handle dilemmas
- improving professional self-awareness
- providing transparency to users and society in general.

This code is not intended to replace existing codes or to remove the obligation on professional associations to develop their own codes through a process of research, consultation and cooperative drafting. Full compliance with this code is not expected.

This code is offered in the belief that:

Librarianship is, in its very essence, an ethical activity embodying a value-rich approach to professional work with information.

The need to share ideas and information has grown more important with the increasing complexity of society in recent centuries and this provides a rationale for libraries and the practice of librarianship.

The role of information institutions and professionals, including libraries and librarians, in modern society is to support the optimisation of the recording and representation of information and to provide access to it.
Information service in the interest of social, cultural and economic well-being is at the heart of librarianship and therefore librarians have social responsibility.

Furthermore, this belief in the human necessity of sharing information and ideas implies the recognition of information rights. The idea of human rights, particularly as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), requires us all to recognise and acknowledge the humanity of others and to respect their rights. In particular, Article 19 sets out rights of freedom of opinion, expression and access to information for all human beings.

Article 19 expressly sets out a right to "Seek, receive and impart information and ideas in any media and regardless of frontiers" which provides a clear rationale for libraries and the practice of modern and progressive librarianship. IFLA in statements, manifestos and policy and technical documents too numerous to list has expanded the understanding of work with information. Implicit in this work is the idea of information rights and their significance for the profession and society generally. The emphasis on information rights in turn obliges librarians and other information workers to develop a principled critique of relevant law and to be prepared to advise and, if appropriate, advocate the improvement of both the substance and administration of laws.

The clauses of this code of ethics build on the core principles outlined in this preamble to provide a set of suggestions on the conduct of professionals. IFLA recognises that whilst these core principles should remain at the heart of any such code, the specifics of codes will necessarily vary according to the particular society, community of practice or virtual community. Code making is an essential function of a professional association, just as ethical reflection is a necessity for

all professionals. IFLA recommends the Code of Ethics for IFLA to all its member associations and institutions and to individual librarians and information workers for these purposes.

IFLA undertakes to revise this code whenever appropriate.

1. Access to information
The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy.

Librarians and other information workers reject the denial and restriction of access to information and ideas most particularly through censorship whether by states, governments, or religious or civil society institutions.

Librarians and other information workers offering services to the public should make every endeavour to offer access to their collections and services free of cost to the user. If membership fees and administrative charges are inevitable, they should be kept as low as possible, and practical solutions found so that socially disadvantaged people are not excluded.

Librarians and other information workers promote and publicise their collection and services so that users and prospective users are aware of their existence and availability.

Librarians and other information workers use the most effective ways to make the material accessible to all. For this purpose they seek to ensure that the websites of libraries and other information institutions comply with international standards for accessibility and access to them is not subject to barriers.

2. Responsibilities towards individuals and society
In order to promote inclusion and eradicate discrimination, librarians and other information workers ensure that the right of accessing information is not denied and that equitable services are provided for everyone whatever their age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, income, immigration and asylum-seeking status, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Librarians and other information workers respect language minorities of a country and their right to access information in their own language.

Librarians and other information workers organize and present content in a way that allows an autonomous user to find the information s/he needs. Librarians and other information workers help and support users in their information searching.

Librarians and other information workers offer services to increase reading skills. They promote information literacy including the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and create, use and communicate information. And they promote the ethical use of information thereby helping to eliminate plagiarism and other forms of misuse of information.

Librarians and other information workers respect the protection of minors while ensuring this does not impact on the information rights of adults.

3. Privacy, secrecy and transparency
Librarians and other information workers respect personal privacy, and the protection of personal data, necessarily shared between individuals and institutions.

The relationship between the library and the user is one of confidentiality and librarians and other information workers will take appropriate measures to ensure that user data is not shared beyond the original transaction.

Librarians and other information workers support and participate in transparency so that the workings of government, administration and business are opened to the scrutiny of the general public. They also recognise that it is in the public interest that misconduct, corruption and crime be exposed by what constitute breaches of confidentiality by so-called 'whistleblowers'.

4. Open access and intellectual property
Librarians and other information workers' interest is to provide the best possible access for library users to information and ideas in any media or format. This includes support for the principles of open access, open source, and open licenses.

Librarians and other information workers aim to provide fair, swift, economical and effective access to information for users.

Librarians and other information workers have a professional duty to advocate for exceptions and limitations to copyright restrictions for libraries.

Librarians and other information workers are partners of authors, publishers and other creators of copyright protected works. Librarians and other information workers recognise the intellectual property right of authors and other creators and will seek to ensure that their rights are respected.

Librarians and other information workers negotiate the most favourable terms for access to works on behalf of their users and seek to ensure that access is not unnecessarily prevented or hindered by the mode of administration of intellectual property laws and that licenses do not override exceptions for libraries contained in national legislation. Librarians and other information workers encourage governments to establish an intellectual property regime that appropriately respects balance between the interests of rightsholders and individuals and the institutions such as libraries which serve them.

Librarians and other information workers also advocate that copyright terms should be limited and that information that has fallen in the public domain remains public and free.

5. Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills
Librarians and other information workers are strictly committed to neutrality and an unbiased stance regarding collection, access and service. Neutrality results in the most balanced collection and the most balanced access to information achievable.

Librarians and other information workers define and publish their policies for selection, organisation, preservation, provision, and dissemination of information.

Librarians and other information workers distinguish between their personal convictions and professional duties. They do not advance private interests or personal beliefs at the expense of neutrality.

Librarians and other information workers have the right to free speech in the workplace provided it does not infringe the principle of neutrality towards users.

Librarians and other information workers counter corruption directly affecting librarianship, as in the sourcing and supply of library materials, appointments to library posts and administration of library contracts and finances.

Librarians and other information workers strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing their knowledge and skills. They aim at the highest standards of service quality and thus promote the positive reputation of the profession.

6. Colleague and employer/employee relationship
Librarians and other information workers treat each other with fairness and respect.

Librarians and other information workers oppose discrimination in any aspect of employment because of age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Librarians and other information workers promote equal payment and benefits for men and women holding comparable jobs.

Librarians and other information workers share their professional experience with colleagues and they help and guide new professionals to enter the professional community and develop their skills. They contribute to the activities of their professional association and participate in research and publication on professional matters.

Librarians and other information workers strive to earn a reputation and status based on their professionalism and ethical behaviour. They do not compete with colleagues by the use of unfair methods.

Further study
- The Ethics of Librarianship. An International Survey. Ed. by Robert W. Vaagan with an introduction by Alex Byrne. München: Saur 2002 VI, 344 p.
- Gebolys, Zdzislaw, Jacek Tomaszczyk: Library Codes of Ethics Worldwide. Anthology. Berlin: Simon 2012. 267 p.

- Professional Codes of Ethics for Librarians [http://www.ifla.org/faife/professional-codes-of-ethics-for-librarians] . IFLA-Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Free Expression (FAIFE).
- Sturges, Paul: Doing the Right Thing. Professional ethics for information workers in Britain [http://www.fims.uwo.ca/people/faculty/frohmann/LIS774/Documents/Sturges%20on%20codes.pdf] . In: New Library World. 104, 2003, n. 1186, p. 94-102.

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Publications, FAIFE (Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression), Access to information, Code of Ethics, Privacy, Transparency, Open access, Intellectual property

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