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27 February 2018

LIS 600.02D – Foundation of Library and Information Studies

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#### **Assignment 4 – Values and Practices of LIS**

The American Library Association (ALA) is always striving to give all users, whether they are patrons or employees, a safe environment where they can both discuss and access information. Towards that goal, the Library Bill of Rights came into existence. The purpose of the Library Bill of Rights is the same as the original Bill of Rights, which is to protect the rights of citizens. In the realm of library and information studies, these set of policies are geared towards users who are looking to either access information or add in information. The association wants to keep the roads of knowledge from being blocked off to people who are looking to quench their never ending thirst for knowledge.

While this is the overall purpose behind the Library Bill of Rights, it has been looked at through many different lenses. Many authors, who have different perspectives on what the role of a library should be, each gave their own interpretation on the Library Bill of Rights. Each author gives an interpretation on what the values of a library should be. This essay will be taking a look at not only the Library Bill of Rights as it was originally written, but it will also look at one of those interpretations as well. Both the original and the interpreted versions will both be analyzed and put under the same microscope in order to uncover how they are related to each other in regards to any potential ethical concerns about the information practice.

The original version of the Library Bill of Rights was created to give the library realm a safe haven for the ideas of people who come from all walks of life. Based on this document, it would seem that there are at least six rules that govern how the library system works. The majority of these rules focus on protecting both users and information from discrimination. Depending on who is running the library at the current time, they have the power to either omit certain pieces of information or just remove it entirely. What can govern their decision to take that course of action could be because of the author's race, religion, beliefs, etc. To give an example, the second rule of these policies states that libraries are supposed to present all view points on both current and historical issues.<sup>1</sup> Libraries do not appear to be allowed to only show certain viewpoints while omitting other ones. The original version seemed to have been created to combat potential situations like this.

One of the interpretations of the document appears to concur with majority of the rules that it has put forth. In "Politics in American Libraries," it puts a lot more importance on the right to freely exchange information without hindrance. As stated by the interpretation, "Providing free, unfettered access to those ideas and opinions is an essential characteristic of American libraries."<sup>2</sup> The author stressed that libraries should give access to as many different types of information as possible so that users can be informed on different contemporary issues. This would in turn lead to healthy debates and exchange of ideas, which would fulfill the purpose for which libraries were created.

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<sup>1</sup> "Library Bill of Rights," *American Library Association* (June 2008), accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>.

<sup>2</sup> "Politics in American Libraries," *American Library Association* (July 2017), accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/politics>.

Both of these articles dig deep through the surface of the issues that surround the information practice. The library is designed to be a place where people cannot only exchange ideas and perspectives, but also to enlighten people as a result of those exchanges as well. Any restriction that is placed on this can be a major threat to the mission that the Library Bill of Rights is aiming to accomplish. Those who wrote this document believe that an author, no matter what their background is, has the right to distribute their ideas among the patrons. Overall, it is the duty of libraries to protect that right from any and all form of discrimination.

**Works Cited**

“Library Bill of Rights.” *American Library Association* (June 2008). Accessed February 28, 2018. <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>.

“Politics in American Libraries.” *American Library Association* (July 2017). Accessed February 28, 2018.

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