Professional Ethics and Values of Librarianship in view of College Librarian
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ABSTRACT

Library and information science professions are very challenging and at the same time exciting future. The working environment is becoming more and more complex with constant change in the organizational, technological and information environment. Professionals have to keep up to date with new forms of information, information media and information sources, new technologies and systems, and new tasks and roles. They have to navigate with the complex environment of social, political and cultural situations, which is often in the turmoil of restructuring. They also have to constantly justify themselves and their services, and demonstrate their value to the parent organization. This paper reviews the challenges in professional values and ethics in librarianship and the competencies, skills, knowledge and attitudes needed by college librarians to survive and flourish in the digital era.

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KEYWORDS: Librarianship, Profession, Values, Ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the professions today are under tremendous pressures due to the application of various kinds of technologies and societal changes. The profession of librarianship is not excluding under such pressures. In recent decades, the dimensions of library and information science have widened, with the application of information and communication technology, rapidly expanding information needs of users, unprecedented increase in the volume and variety of information packages and societal changes. At present no library is self sufficient because of user's versatile need and information explosion. Recent developments in the field of librarianship create new problems and issues that are often creating conflicting approaches in setting ethical standards in professional performance. To understand properly, following are some technical words and their meanings relating to professional ethics.

Ethics: The general meaning of ethics is that it is a set of moral principles. These may be rules of conduct recognized with respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc.[1]

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[1] Sauce, Essay. (2016). Ethics for library and information science (LIS) professionals.
https://www.essaysauce.com/education-essays/ethics-library-information-science-lis-professionals/

Profession: Profession implies an occupation requiring special training and knowledge in a specific field. Whereas occupation is the general word to indicate an activity in which a person is engaged for his living. Synonymous words with profession are vocation, employment, business, trade, etc. - all refer to the activity to which a person regularly devotes himself, especially his regular work, or means of getting a living.

Professional: Professional is one who is engaged in an activity as a means of livelihood or connected with a profession. For example a doctor, a lawyer, a scientist etc.

Professionalism: Professionalism is the standard practices of professionals as distinguished from others. An expertise is expected from professionals with full involvement in and commitment to those who receive services from them.

Professional ethics: Professional ethics is considered as an expression of the ethos (i.e. character, spirit, culture, practice) of a profession. In other words, it should reflect or be based upon, all the basic values associated with the profession. It reveals that what the profession is, what the practitioners think of themselves and of their place in society. It indicates what is distinctive about the group. The quality of service offered by them should be of a class that makes they distinguished.[2]

2. CORE VALUES OF LIBRARIANSHIP

The foundation of modern librarianship depends on a set of core values, which guide all professional practitioners. The values underscore relating to information needs of the users. American Library Association Core Values Task Force pointed out the following values of librarianship[3]:

- ➢ Access
- ➢ Confidentiality/Privacy
- ➢ Democracy
- ➢ Diversity
- ➢ Education and Lifelong Learning
- ➢ Intellectual Freedom
- ➢ Preservation
- ➢ The Public Good
- ➢ Professionalism
- ➢ Service
- ➢ Social Responsibility

3. VALUES OF AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

Mary Ann Griffin identified the following widely accepted values of an academic library[4]:

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[2] Singh, Priti and Mishra, Rajani. (2017). Professional Ethics in Librarianship: an Indian perspective. Library Waves, 3(1), 74-79. https://www.librarywaves.com/index.php/lw/article/download/52/54

[3] American Library Association. Core values of librarianship. http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/updatedpolicymanual/section2/40corevalues#40.2

➢ Equal access to information

➢ Providing a balanced collection

➢ Superior assistance to users

➢ The importance of each staff member to the organization

➢ The importance of scholarly endeavors.

4. IFLA CODES OF ETHICS FOR LIBRARIANS AND INFORMATION WORKERS

Code of ethics for librarians and information workers given by IFLA[5] Governing Board in August 2012 are as follows in brief:

➢ **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.

➢ **Responsibilities towards individuals and society:** Librarians and other information workers should ensure the right of accessing information for everyone whatever their age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, income, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.

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

➢ **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, whilst recognizing that they are partners of authors, publishers and other creators of copyright protected works.

➢ **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.

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

5. COMPETENCIES FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSION

Competencies needed by library and information professionals may be grouped as under:

➢ **Traditional librarianship skills:** Such as acquisition, classification, cataloguing, reference and information search skills.

➢ **Value-adding skills:** Such as research skills and skills in synthesizing and packaging of information to support users.

➢ **Transferable and soft skills:** Such as skills in communication, management, leadership, teaching, training, teamwork, as well as the ability to empathize with users and understand their information needs.

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[4] Griffin, Mary Ann. (1986). Managing Values in an Academic Library. In *Energies for Transition: Proceedings of the Fourth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries, Baltimore, Maryland, April 9-12, 1986* (pp. 105-107). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

[5] IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers (short version). (2012). http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-code-of-ethics-for-librarians-and-other-information-workers-short-version

- ➢ **Attitudes, values and personal traits:** Such as user orientation and service orientation, flexibility and willingness to handle a wide range of tasks, adaptability and ability to handle change, continual learning, and an entrepreneurial attitude.
- ➢ **Domain knowledge:** Subject knowledge for specific type of information service or organization they are working in.
- ➢ **IT skills:** Such as Internet, Web and XML technologies, Barcode, RFID, federated search engines, programming and scripting, Operating system, Library management software and productivity tools (e.g. word processing, spreadsheet, database, etc.).

6. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

College librarians are facing several challenges in their professional life. These are as follows:

Educating the users about ourselves: The first challenges relates to the ongoing need to educate the library users about ourselves - like who we are, what we do, the value of what we do, and why we do it. Part of our job of education is to help user understand, the life cycle of information from its creation, evaluation, organization, management, and preservation to its dissemination and use.

Old vs. New: Another challenge of our discipline and profession is incorporating the 'new', whether it is new technologies, innovations in management, techniques and practices, or other developments.

Information literacy: Part of our challenge is to educate the users about information use i.e. information literacy, to encompass the competencies - the knowledge, skills, and attitudes - needed to explore information space, find, evaluate, manage, organize, preserve, disseminate, use, and create information. These competencies needed are different for information resources in different formats and media. Challenges have to face with more competencies, and have to learn how best to teach and learn them.

Understanding and appreciating cultural differences: In our role as information providers, we are frequently confronted with the need to understand and appreciate significant differences across cultures and will need to pay attention to these differences in all of our services. Meeting this challenge will require additional resources to meet the language and cultural needs of our users.

Collaborating across boundaries: Librarian's works to develop resources and services across boundaries. Questions of state licensing, authentication of users, decisions about rules, organizational politics, and others will continue to demand attention and resolution. The question of authentication of users, who have access the network based information or data is one requiring much more attention.

Policy making: There are so many critical issues exist in policy making. Such as, who should have access to what information? How can we provide the best and fairest balance between access and protection? Who needs to know what information, and how do we ensure that they and only they get the needed information quickly and accurately?

Earning confidence: The final challenge is that of earning and keeping confidence in profession. Because various decisions are made based on the information we provide.

Attitude of higher authorities: One of the important challenges of librarianship is the attitude of higher authorities. In most cases voice of librarian is dominated by the administration. Librarians are force to do the library activities and other jobs as specified by the higher authorities according to their preferences or choice.

SUGGESTIONS

➢ To enhance access for all, college librarians should support users in their information searching, assist them to develop their reading skills and information literacy, and encourage them in the ethical use of information.

➢ To ensure the right of accessing information for everyone, librarians reject censorship in all its forms, support provision of services free of cost to the user, promote collections and services to potential users. Librarians also find out the highest standards of accessibility to both physical and online services.

➢ For privacy, secrecy and transparency librarians should support the fullest possible transparency for information relating to public bodies, private sector companies and all other institutions whose activities affect the lives of individuals and society as a whole.

➢ Librarians should ensure that both users' rights and creators' rights. They promote the principles of open access, open source, and open licenses. They seek to limit the expansion of copyright terms.

➢ Librarians should acquire balanced collections, avoid personal convictions and seek the highest standards of professional excellence.

➢ Traditional skills are still in demand in librarianship, but college librarians have to be expanded to handle new digital formats and the online environment. For example, cataloging now includes use of new metadata schemes and cataloguing of digital and Internet resources. Similarly, acquisition and reference librarians have to handle digital resources and online environments, and use online and electronic tools in their work.

➢ Instead of just identifying the source of information and providing documents, librarians will increasingly be evaluating, filtering, extracting, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing and packaging information into a form that is ready for immediate use by their clients for decision-making and other purposes.

➢ They are expected to grow professionally and remain update with the trends, skills, and knowledge relevant to the field. Representative activities that demonstrate growth may include learning plan activities, reading discussion or investigative groups, mentoring programs, continuing education, attending conferences etc.

CONCLUSION

Librarians are expected to demonstrate excellence in meeting their position responsibilities, as defined by their job description and goals. Librarians obtained their universal values by supporting intellectual freedom, protecting library users' right, respecting intellectual property rights, treating colleagues with respect, distinguishing between personal convictions and professional duties, striving for excellence by enhancing one's own knowledge and skills, and faith on their parent organization. While these challenges may seem daunting, we have been meeting them every day. Whether librarianship is an exciting profession we have to look forward to tomorrow's changes and challenges.

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