

Ethical Values for Contemporary Librarianship: A Literary Approach

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to elucidate the ethical principles of librarianship that are necessary for the effective management of libraries in the modern era. This article emphasizes the ethical principles that are essential to the field of librarianship in the modern era where online resources play a major role. It discusses the importance of ethical values, as well as the international code of ethics that guides librarians. Additionally, the article explores the advantages of adhering to ethical values in librarianship, while also acknowledging the challenges that may arise in implementing them. The articles additionally emphasized the ethical code that librarians should adhere to in the modern era and make suggestions to uphold intellectual property rights.

KEYWORDS: Ethics, Ethical Values, Librarianship, Digital Librarianship

INTRODUCTION

Advances in technology have transformed librarianship to a great extent including, the acquisition, organization, and dissemination of print and electronic information resources. Electronic or online information resources have supported librarians in many ways at the same time posed many challenges in offering services to users ethically. Consequently, librarians and information professionals are faced with moral quandaries when deciding on appropriate

courses of action. In response to this ethical code, which is also referred to as moral philosophy / moral principles has come to the rescue of librarians. The term ethics comes from the ancient Greek word "ethos," which means beliefs about what is morally correct or acceptable (Government of Canada, n.d.).

All librarians and information professionals must follow the ethical code. Ethical codes are the principles that outline library and information professionals' social mission and

ethical responsibilities in all professional contexts. These principles explain the librarians' obligations to the users, resources, professional community, staff, and employing institutions (Omigie, 2020). Ethical code also guides librarians' behaviour and decisions and while also help in protecting intellectual freedom, confidentiality, and information access. Intellectual freedom, information accessibility, and community service underpin librarianship. Librarians need to follow ethics to preserve documents, promote literacy, provide fair access to information for everyone, protect intellectual property right, and impartiality with regard to ideology at the same time must help readers and users access written and information resources.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Ray, 2022)The author emphasized the ethical considerations relevant to the field of librarianship, specifically drawing attention to Ranganath's law and Johan Bekker's code design recommendations.

(Omigie, 2020) shed light on the issues in librarianship practice of Nigeria, IFLA standard codes of ethics, and roles of practicing librarians to showcase the importance of librarianship ethics and advised library associations to play a pivotal role in assisting librarians in establishing a sustainable library environment. (Mostak & Hoq, 2020) examined ethics of librarianship and the ethical dilemma of librarians to encourage library professionals to discuss and reflect on ethics and morality, for 21st-century librarianship discourse.

(Roy, 2019) delineated the Indian LIS professional ethical code emphasizing its importance. The author underscored that India has upheld ethical standards since ancient times and needs a contemporary ethical framework that aligns with the principles of modern librarianship.

(Hou, 2020) studied librarian professional ethics, principles, norms, and research methods from a historical perspective and compared China and the US research state and found that theoretical studies and experience in China were far from complete. The author advised to learn from

America and emphasize content system building to librarians' professional ethics.

(Javier, 2021) compared the code of ethics for the Philippines, Malaysian and Indonesian librarians by highlighting the codes of their respective countries and found that librarians followed their nations' codes of ethics. Additionally, it was found that the Indonesian and Malaysian codes are too vague, whereas the Philippine code is more precise. The author suggested library associations to conduct training and help patrons comprehend the code.

(Luo, 2016) analyzed the ethical issues pertaining to modern reference work using an online survey of 212 reference librarians and identified copyright and privacy concerns as the primary concerns. Additionally, the author noticed that a significant proportion of librarians exhibited a moderate level of familiarity with the ALA code of ethics. Thus advised librarians to acquire the necessary skills and analytical methodologies to effectively handle ethical dilemmas.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHICAL VALUES

Ethics is an important part of every profession. The field of ethics pertains to the moral evaluation of actions, determining whether they are deemed morally right or wrong (Lebar, 2009). Ethical values emphasize moral, ethical, and decent behavior. Ethics uses "value" to determine the best path of action or way of life by assigning a level of importance to a thing. In ethical behavior and virtuous living, an action of great value is morally acceptable, while an unethical activity is morally repulsive. Onuoma and Nwachukwu (2012) defined "ethical values as moral principles, standards, ideals, traditions, codes of conduct, customs, etiquette, and other variables that regulate behavior" (Onoyeyan, 2018). Whereas according to Frank et al. (2011), ethical value upholds fairness, honesty, transparency, and respect for the rights and confidentiality of users.

Some commonly recognized ethical values are highlighted below (Lebar, 2009); (Thornton, 2015); (The American Library Association, 2020)

Integrity: Acting honestly and consistently with strong moral and ethical principles.

Respect: Treating others with dignity, recognizing their worth, and honoring their rights.

Responsibility: Being accountable for one's actions and taking ownership of the consequences.

Fairness: Ensuring impartiality and equal treatment for all individuals.

Compassion: Showing empathy and concern for the well-being of others.

Honesty: Being truthful and sincere in communication and interactions.

Trustworthiness: Building and maintaining trust through reliability and ethical behavior.

Justice: Upholding fairness and equity in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

Sustainability: Promoting practices that preserve the environment and ensure the well-being of future generations.

Beneficence: Acting in ways that promote the well-being and welfare of others.

It is important to note that ethical values can sometimes conflict with one another or lead to different interpretations based on specific circumstances. Therefore, ethical decision-making often involves thoughtful consideration and balancing of various ethical principles to arrive at the most appropriate course of action.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHICAL VALUES FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

Professionalism refers to the conduct, attitude, and techniques that are characteristic of a professional, as opposed to an amateur. It encompasses the established norms and practices that define a profession (Ray, 2022). The library profession is one that focuses on providing services to clientele. It is essential for library professionals to make every effort to provide services that are objective and fair, while also assuring their right to intellectual freedom while upholding absolute users' privacy (Luo, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to uphold ethical standards in the field of librarianship while carrying out the aforementioned tasks. The field of library and information science ethics offers a moral structure for information professionals to

conduct a range of information-related tasks, such as collecting, retaining, manipulating, and utilizing information (Hoq, 2014).

Ethical Values plays a significant role in librarianship, as outlined by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) "A collection of professional guidelines for librarians and other library employees adopted by the national library or librarians associations or implemented by government agencies" are librarianship ethics (Byrne, 2004). Whereas Navalani, refers librarianship ethics as the "science of right conduct and character; the science which treats of the nature and grounds of moral obligation; the doctrine of man's duty in respect of himself and the right of others" (Varalakshmi et al., 2013). To effectively deal with the intricacies inherent in professional practice, it is imperative to adhere to a set of moral guidelines or ethical norms. Thus ethical values play an important role in librarianship. Below mentioned are some of the important ethics that need to be followed by librarians

ICT has a significant impact on the current information environment. Currently, there exist e-resources or online resources that can be provided without any interruption to users to their location. Libraries are entrusted with the duty of ensuring equitable access to information and impartial provision of services to their users. The internet poses challenges to the reliability of information, and libraries face difficulties in ensuring the provision of high-quality information. The users face additional privacy challenges due to the accessibility of electronic information beyond the confines of the library location. The current objective is not to engage in purchasing or subscribing, but rather to obtain a license that is subject to various terms and conditions pertaining to privacy. Furthermore, libraries have traditionally obtained resources, but they now have the ability to access the intellectual property of others through both free and paid channels. The librarian bears the responsibility and obligation to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information, safeguard privacy, ensure equitable access to information, and provide services to all individuals without

discrimination based on factors such as caste, creed, gender, class, or social status. Additionally, the librarian must work to address disparities in access to digital resources. To clarify, the foremost concerns in the modern era pertain to the following:

- Preservation of privacy
- Ensuring authenticity and validity
- Maintaining accuracy and timeliness

INTERNATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

ALA code has been presented as it is reported by ALA and Mostak & Hoq

1. "Provision of the highest level of service to all library users;
2. Upholding the principles of intellectual freedom;
3. Protection of library users' right to privacy and confidentiality;
4. Respect for IPR and maintaining a balance between the interests of information users and rights holders;
5. Treating co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith;
6. Not advancing private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues or the employing institutions;
7. Distinguishing between personal convictions and professional duties; and
8. Striving for excellence in the profession" (American Library Association, 2008) (Mostak & Hoq, 2020)

IFLA CODE OF ETHICS FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

1. Librarians should provide access to information of all kinds
2. Librarians should have responsibilities toward individuals and society
3. They should maintain privacy, secrecy, and transparency
4. Librarians should provide open access resources and take precautions to uphold intellectual property
5. Librarians should maintain neutrality personal integrity and professional skills
6. Librarians should maintain colleague and employer/employee relationships (IFLA, 2012)

JAPAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

The code of ethics for librarianship approved at the annual general conference of the Japan Library Association in June 1980 is listed as it is below

1. "The foundation of a librarian's work lies in the pursuit of his duties in accordance with the known expectations of society in general and the needs of the users of his library in particular
2. A librarian should not discriminate between or against library users
3. A librarian should respect the confidentiality of each library user
4. A librarian should honor the freedom of libraries in collecting, preserving and proffering library resources
5. A librarian should make his professional aim to familiarize himself, as far as possible both in and out of the library with the best collections offered and experience
6. A Librarian should apply himself to necessary professional training, both as an individual and as a member of a group
7. A Librarian should actively participate in the formulation of policy in the operation and service program of his library
8. A Librarian should cooperate with other Librarians in efforts to develop group professional competences
9. A librarian should make efforts to secure staff conditions that are appropriate for the development and pursuit of professional library services
10. A librarian should make it his aim to develop and maintain understanding and cooperation among libraries of all kinds
11. A librarian should make due efforts, in association with others, to stimulate the development of the cultural environment in society and the community which he serves, by cooperating with local residents and with members of appropriate groups and organizations
12. A librarian should make every effort to contribute to the development of the whole culture relating to publications and publishing that is responsive to the needs

and viewpoints of the public” (Conference, 1999)

ETHICAL PRACTICES FOR LIBRARIANS IN THE MODERN ERA

The utilization of digital information through copyright laws and license agreements in accordance with the principles of fair use is necessary. Publishers are leveraging the emergence of digital information to assert their need for enhanced safeguards against piracy, thereby challenging the more permissive information-sharing practices of libraries as well as the fair use rights of the general public. In the event that publishers and governments impose restrictions or fail to facilitate the exchange of digital information among libraries thus, the practice of resource sharing would be rendered ineffective. Hence, to sustain the linkage between information and users, librarians must exhibit cognizance of the license provisions they assent to, and collaborate with publishers and lawmakers to ensure the preservation of users' entitlements.

The ethical justifications for the equitable utilization of digital data, despite the increased ease of online piracy, are consistent with those for the equitable utilization of printed information. From the perspective of publishers, a utilitarian argument can be made against fair use and educational exemptions, as they may create a financial disincentive for authors to produce knowledge, publishers to disseminate knowledge, and aggregators to compile knowledge. It is indisputable that in order to promote learning, scholarly communication, education, research, and cultural production, all stakeholders, including authors, publishers, librarians, and patrons, must collaborate rather than impede one another. Consequently, it is imperative to maintain a balance in their interests.

BENEFITS OF ETHICAL VALUES FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

The benefits of ethical values for librarianship are highlighted below

- It aids in taking the appropriate actions and making deliberate decisions in accordance

with the rules and regulations, thereby facilitating the efficient operation of library activities.

- A code of ethics allows librarians to conduct themselves professionally thereby helping to serve users better
- Ethical codes protect librarians against unprofessional behavior.
- By adopting a code of ethics, librarians may gain public trust and be treated equally to other professions (Kshirsagar, 2016)

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING ETHICAL VALUES

The challenges in implementing ethical values as per Suwarno (2014) and (Restanti, n.d.) are highlighted below

- Ethical values in librarianship are unpopular: Unpopularity of the librarian's ethical code becomes a hurdle as not all librarians comprehend the ethical codes.
- Bureaucracy trumps ethics: Librarians work for agencies or institutions that have their own bureaucracy or power system, which makes policy for their benefit. When actions violate the code of ethics, bureaucracy hinders its implementation.
- Unequal librarian education: Careers depend on education further education determines comprehension. This suggests that librarians' comprehension and attitude toward the code of conduct's requirements are limited by the uneven distribution of librarian education.
- Librarians don't read the ethical code and consider it unimportant: Librarian codes of ethics are written norms. The librarian must read it to comprehend it. Most librarians just know the name of the code of ethics, not its content. Librarians should work hard and count points as credit scores to achieve advancement criteria.
- Ethics breaches do not determine punishment: Librarians must follow ethical guidelines, and violators must accept punishment whereas in the current scenario, there are no greater punishments for breaching them.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary era has witnessed a growing emphasis on the professional values and ethics that underpin the field of librarianship. This has been driven by recognition of the critical role that librarians play in facilitating access to information and knowledge, as well as the ethical responsibilities that come with this role. As such, there is a need for librarians to uphold a set of professional values and ethics that guide their conduct and decision-making in the provision of library services. Ethical values refer to principles or standards of behavior that guide individuals or groups in determining what is right or wrong, good or bad, in a moral sense. Ethical values are subjective and can vary among different cultures, religions, and individuals, but they often share common elements such as fairness, honesty, respect, compassion, and integrity. Ethics in professionals assist in evolving solutions to ethical dilemmas encountered in professional practice. Thus library associations should take steps in reframing the discussed ethical practices in accordance with the modern era and spread the ethics to all librarians.

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