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Ethics in Library and Information Science Profession

Dr. Pawar Ganpat Ramsing

ABSTRACT

In this information era libraries play important role. Mission of the LIS (Library and information science) professional is to provide right information to the right user in right format at the right time. Due to information explosion, it is very difficult for LIS professionals to provide the exact Information Librarianship profession aims at better service. Only interested persons should be encouraged to enter the field at least as much in opportunities to help others as in an appropriate salary and satisfactory environment of work.

Keywords : Ethics; Professional Ethics; Codes of Ethics; Ethical Principles; Library and Information Science Professionals

Introduction

"Recently knowledge centers or libraries are repositories for humanity's knowledge or information; they are our past, our present, and also our future. They are much more than storage for books, and include many other forms of data. The information available in libraries must be accessible to all people. Access of particular order of information requires specialized knowledge and [illegible] that are beyond the capabilities of [illegible] and particularly of undergraduates starting [illegible] careers. LIS professionals need to share [illegible] with patrons instructing them on how to [illegible] information resources and the Internet so that [illegible] research on their own, while pointing out the [illegible] problems associated with electronic research.

[illegible] knowledge resource centers from time [illegible] serving the societies by collecting, [illegible] and disseminating information [illegible] in multiple formats. Libraries as knowledge [illegible] [illegible] oriented profession with a mission and the mission is to fulfill the information needs of the people. Libraries consists of three elements i.e. LIS professionals, information sources and library patrons. LIS professionals are acting as a link between the library patrons and information sources. In order to make libraries as vibrant institutions library staff has to perform their professional.

What is Ethics

The term ethics was derived from Greek word 'ethos', which means character. Ethics are the moral principles that a person must follow, irrespective of the place or time. Behaving ethically involves doing the right thing at the right time. Ethics is often used in connection with the activities of organizations and with the professional code of conduct.

Definition

Ethics: The application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to the collection, analysis, reporting, and publication of information about research [illegible]. In particular active acceptance of subjects [illegible] confidentiality, and informed consent [illegible] gaining attention of professionals [illegible]

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researchers around the world. Since ethics has application in all fields and thus, the professionals are required to perform their tasks in an ethical manner. For this, even many organizations of LIS professionals have adopted codes of professional ethics. Such codes of professional ethics provide LIS professionals with guiding principles and norms to obtaining solutions to various problems.

Importance

Most of the users learn ethical norms at home, at school, in church, or in other social settings. Although most people acquire their sense of right and wrong during childhood, moral development occurs throughout life and human beings pass through different stages of growth as they mature. Ethical norms are so ubiquitous that one might be tempted to regard them as simple commonsense. On the other hand, if morality were nothing more than commonsense. Explanation of these disagreements is that all people recognize some common ethical norms but interpret, apply, and balance them in different ways in light of their own values and life experiences. For example, two people could agree that murder is wrong but disagree about the morality of abortion because they have different understandings of what it means to be a human being.

Librarianship as a profession

As we see Librarianship has got all the aspects of a profession as mentioned above. As a profession, Librarianship aims at better service. Only those persons should be encouraged to enter the field who are interested at least as much in opportunities to help others as in a suitable salary and satisfactory conditions of work. Librarians should like books as well as people and be able to work well with people.

Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, speaking about the profession of librarianship in India, reminded the library professionals that "The library profession is a noble profession. It can't harm anybody," devote themselves to their work with undivided attention, and throw themselves heart and soul to give the library service to every reader at every time they will have the satisfaction of having left not only library service and library science but also our country at a much more advanced stage than what they found when they entered the library profession."

Ethics of LIS Professionals

Here we state that According to Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, "Ethics is a science of morality. It is that branch of Philosophy which is concerned with the human character and conduct.

Intellectual freedom can occur only where two important conditions are met: first, that all individuals have the right to hold any belief on any subject and to convey their ideas in any form they deem appropriate, and second, that society makes an equal commitment to the right of unrestricted access to information and ideas regardless of the communication medium used, the content of work, and the viewpoint of both the author and the receiver of information" (Intellectual Freedom Manual, 7th edition). Once we have defined goals for our profession, we need to make sure that we meet these goals in ethical ways. Library and information workers are expected to follow certain ethical standards, typically codified in documents called Codes of Ethics. A profession is not a profession without a set of basic or fundamental principles or ethics. Professional ethics is the science of right conduct and character. Ethical issues are based on certain moral values which are considered to be good and worthwhile for the well-being of the society in general.

Code of Ethics

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. We state the values to which we are committed, and embody the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

As we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general [illegible] ethical principles that guide the work [illegible]

other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

The principles of this code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.

Ethics of Librarianship

Ethics of librarianship, an essential aspect of Library Profession shows the conduct and behavior of those who adopt the profession. A library professional owes certain responsibilities to the library's public and its books, the library professional organizations and to himself.

Responsibility to the soul of book

A book may be compared to a human being. Like the latter, it has a soul and a body. Paper, binding, and printing constitute its body while the actual contents of the book constitute its soul. A librarian owes a duty to the book to keep its body clean like his own body and save it from destruction by enemies i.e. insects and white-ants. He should repair it at the moment it is torn and also treat it with insecticides at periodic intervals. Besides, he has to take appropriate steps to save the book from its other enemies which include fire, [illegible] dust and human [illegible].

Responsibility to the Readers

A librarian is for the readers and the latter cannot do without the valuable and expert services of a qualified librarian. Their bond of friendship is unbreakable. A librarian is called 'the guide, the Philosopher and the friend' of the users.

Responsibility to the Profession

A profession is a calling, for admission to which special training, education, and character are required. The professionals of librarianship being a learned professional have public service as its ideal. To maintain this high ideal, a librarian should cultivate 'professional habits' and should avoid the bad 'business habits'. A Librarian should see that he should never do anything which spoils the profession or which undermines its foundations.

Responsibility to the Staff

"Each member of the staff should be regarded by the librarian as a colleague and should be encouraged to realize that his work, however menial it may appear, is essential for the smooth working for the whole establishment." Responsibility to himself: The duty of a librarian to himself means the acquaintance of a librarian with those books with which he is there to serve his clientele. He must know "something of everything" so that he may fulfill his duty to himself in a befitting manner. His conduct must be enviable and he must treat his clients with sympathy and love. B.M. Headicar remarked, "We must have both dignity and humility.

Conclusions

Here, we can conclude that Librarianship as a profession needs specific knowledge, skill with creative ability. A person receiving such skills and abilities can be called a skilled professional. The users expect special responsibility from the professionals. However, it is disclosed from the study of the subject that we professionals talk more about the profession and practice little in discharging the responsibilities of the profession. Therefore, various Associations have prepared a code of ethics for library professionals and it is expected that they should follow those norms and standards given in the code of ethics. The practice of the code of ethics will lead to the profession towards the excellence.

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