

Importance of Professional Ethics for LIS Personnel in Academic Libraries**Pranjal Deka**

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As the academic library primarily serves the needs of the academic clientele i.e. teachers, students, researchers, the academic librarians have to play the pivotal role to effectively disseminate information to these clientele. From librarians, we can learn how to identify and evaluate information from universe of knowledge that is essential for making decisions that affect the way we live, work, learn, and govern ourselves. To provide better services they must possess both professional and personal competencies. Various facets like the working environment, IT skill, self-motivation; opportunities for skill development are play a crucial to provide efficient services towards the users. In this respect, a code of professional ethics acts as the catalyst agent among those facets. The purpose of this paper is to delineate the importance of professional ethics in academic librarianship.

Key Words: Professional Ethics, Librarianship, Code of Ethics,**1. Introduction**

Libraries are the back bone of civilised society and mirror of knowledge from time immemorial. By providing required information libraries fulfil the demand of users thirst for knowledge. A library is a system where a librarian looks after the storage and retrieval of information. In the professional front, the librarian is trained enough to deal with information in a wide variety of formats i.e. physical or logical. A librarian is an intermediary who helps right clientele to traverse through the passage of the World Wide Web and appraise information efficiently at right cost in right time. Library and information science profession is a service oriented profession with an aim to fulfil the information needs of the people and provide better service for society. Libraries and information centres are the trinity of information sources, professionals and patrons. LIS professionals act as an intermediary between the users and information sources. In order to make library and information centres a dynamic institution, library professionals must imbibe with the professional ethics, to perform their professional responsibility in a right manner at right time so that the eventual resolution of the libraries is achieved without any hindrance. This responsibility of library

professionals to perform their duties in right manner for better service has given rise to the concept of professional ethics in LIS profession.

2. Review of Literature

Yaya and Adeelo(2017) in their study discusses about the professionalism in librarianship with emphasis on the prospects, challenges and suggests some factors that could help in resolving the problem in Nigerian context. Adebayo and Mabowonku (2017) in their study discusses about the professional ethics in the context of effective dissemination of Information. Hansson (2016) in his study discusses about the formulation of ethical standards in professional librarianship. The author stated that ethical standards is not a sufficient but a necessary ingredience in what creates social legitimacy for professional practice. Igbeka and Okoroma (2013) in their study discusses about the awareness and practicability of librarianship ethics amongst the libraries. Rosemary (1991) in his study prepares a management model of ethical decision making in librarianship .The model combines individual variables with situational variables and shows why policymakers and decision makers must exercise moral judgment in performing their duties.

3. Ethics Denotes:

The term ethics is derived from the Greek word “ethos” which means custom or character. Ethics is a set of moral principles that govern the person’s conduct, behavior, character, fairness, humbleness, morality, values, commitment, duties to self-improvement to the society at large, and his obligation to the profession, institution and society at large.

The Oxford English Dictionary clears the meaning of the word ethics as the science of morals; the department of study concerned with the principles of human duty.

As a philosophical discipline of study, ethics is a systematic approach to understanding, analysing, and distinguishing matters of right and wrong, good and bad, and admirable and deplorable as they relate to the well-being of and the relationships among sentient beings. Ethics is often used in connection with the activities of organizations and with the professional code of conduct: for instance, Library and information professionals code of ethics, which are often formalized in terms of exhaustive sets of rules or guidelines stating how employees are expected to behave in their workplace.

4. Librarianship as a profession:

Prof. 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 do no harm to anybody.” He exhorted them to imbibe the spirit of service and research with dedication and undivided loyalty. He said, “If the young aspirants to the library profession, now put above want and at par with other professions, 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.”

5. Professional Ethics:

“Intellectual freedom can exist only where two essential 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).

“Code of Ethics for Library and Information Professionals” adopted by JOCLAI (The Joint Council of Library Associations in India):

Professional ethics and responsibilities of librarians are covered by LIS course. In 1986 the Joint Council of Library Association in India adopted a set of professional ethics for Indian Library and Information Professional.

- Library and Information profession is a service-oriented profession. Library and Information professionals should gather information, organize them into easily accessible collections and provide a mechanism that helps productive utilization of the same by the eligible clientele.
- Library and Information profession must be governed by the democratic principle of giving every user his/her opportunity to access the information resources and make special efforts to keep their interests growing towards further developments.
- Library and Information professionals must familiarize themselves with all available information sources that are of interest to their clientele either on demand or in anticipation. Library and information professionals must keep service-orientation in their professional work.
- Library and Information professionals should avoid unlawful and unethical pecuniary interest and must serve their clientele on an equitable basis.
- Library and Information professionals should keep timeliness as a prime factor in serving information to users. A delayed response brings discredit to the service and ultimately may not be useful.
- Library and Information professional should aim at the development of their own professional organizations and take pride in the ethos, activities, and services. They should encourage the younger generation of professionals with their own exemplary service.
- Library and Information professionals should cultivate their field of knowledge in a professional way. They should contribute to the field by research, teaching, and dissemination through literature.

6. Ethics of Librarianship

Ethics of librarianship, an essential element of Library Profession denotes the conduct and behaviour 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.

Seven Lamps of Professional ethics and its importance in Academic librarianship

- **Impersonal selection of documents:** The librarian or the information professional should select the documents as the need and demand of the various strata of clientele i.e. students, teachers, researchers etc. He/She should not be biased towards a particular category of users or a discipline.
- **Service before self:** LIS professionals should serve the patrons with full effort. Their motto is to serve the users first then to think about themselves.
- **Split mind:** LIS personnel should be broad minded.
- **Sympathetic behaviour:** LIS personnel should behave politely and sympathetically to attract the clientele in the library. Otherwise the users may likely to depend more on internet.
- **Tact:** LIS professionals should act tactfully to manage the changed situation of automated environment of LICs.
- **Industries:** LIS professionals should be engaged to serve each and every need of the users.
- **Scholarship:** LIS professionals should maintain the high level of information services to satisfy all types of clientele.

7. Concluding comment:

A librarian is for the users and the latter cannot do without the valuable and skilled services of a competent librarian. Their bond of friendship is unbreakable. A librarian is called as the friend, philosopher and guide of the amateur and the scholar alike. A librarian has an onus to prove himself worthy of this honour. The duty of a librarian to himself means the acquaintance of a librarian with those resources with which he duty to himself in an appropriate manner. His conduct must be enviable and he must treat his clients with sympathy and love.

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