

Importance of Professional Ethics in Indian Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the meaning of professional ethics. The paper discusses about the various aspects of professional ethics such as purpose, need, importance, and principles. Various countries have prepared and adopted professional ethics which is shown in the table. Role of IFLA is mentioned here for the development of professional ethics at international level.

Keywords: Ethics, Importance, Libraries, Professional

INTRODUCTION

We live in Indian society which enrich in social, cultural, economic, intellectual and scientific perspective. Information is an important element for the developments of these perspectives. Libraries are that centre, which is involving to collect, organises, preserve and communicate the information. So libraries are essential part of our society which plays the role in the development of the society. Libraries contribute in the development of society from long time through the collection, organisation, preservation and dissemination of various types of information. Every society follows few ethics for its progress. Due to absence of ethics, whole system of the society will collapse.

As we already know that libraries provide its service to the society without facing any profit and loss. Then we may say that library profession is a public dealing and service-based profession. Library staff, library resources and readers are the most important elements of library system. Library staff plays a role of arbitrator

between resources and users of library. So, it is important for the library staff to adopt ethical way to fulfil their responsibilities. Any profession cannot progress without ethics. Ethics are moral values and principles which are important for developing understanding of right and wrong way in the society. Therefore, how it is possible for the library and information professionals to survive without professional ethics.

Meaning of Ethics

In common language, meaning of ethics is from moral or character or custom or values or standards, etc. Ethics is a set of few principles which develop the person's thinking to do their responsibilities with right manner. The word 'ethic' is derived from Latin language 'ethicus' which means custom or character or attitude of community/people. It develops the understanding of persons to discriminate between right or wrong, good or bad in their profession. The word 'ethics' define in different information sources which are given here:-

- The Oxford English Dictionary describes ethics as the science of morals; the department of study concerned with the principles of human duty.
- Encyclopedia Britannica explains ethics-‘as the branch of philosophy that is concerned with what is morally good or bad, right and wrong’. A synonym for ethics is moral philosophy.
- Webster’s International Dictionary define ethics in three ways :
 1. The discipline dealing with what is good and bad or right and wrong with moral duty and obligation;
 2. A group of moral principles or set of values; a particular theory or system or moral values; the principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession; standards of behaviour.
 3. The adjective ‘Ethical’ connotes conformity to professionally endorsed principles and practice or a system/philosophy of conduct and principles practiced by a person or group.

It is clear from above definitions that it is the set of moral principles that develop the person’s character, professional conduct and obligations. It develops the understanding and analysing capacity for handling matters in the society in the right manner. It is a part of philosophy which relates with ideal behaviour or conduct of persons in society. It develops the power of rational justification in human mind.

Professional Ethics

All profession of the world adopts some set of standards which brings to the occupation at higher level. Lots of professionals such as medical practitioner, legal practitioner, journalists, engineers, teaching faculty and business organisations follow their professional ethics for getting higher status. It is a basic value which enclosed with the occupation. It is necessary for making reputation and better

understanding of any persons. In other words, professional ethics means ethics attach with related service. Due to professional ethics, any person understand the right and wrong manner to achieve their goals.

<http://en.wikipedia.org> defines ‘professional ethics encompass the personal and corporate standards of behaviour expected by professionals’.

According to American Library Association, a code of ethics serves in ‘making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professional providing information services, library trustees and library staffs’.

According to IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers, ‘The code of ethics and professional conduct is offered as a series of ethical propositions for the guidance of individual librarians as well as other information workers, and for the consideration of library and information Associations when creating or revising their own codes’.

As professional ethics is important for other profession similarly it is also needful for library and information professionals. Library profession is a service-based profession; therefore, the necessity of professional ethics increases. Generally, professional ethics are prepared by professional institutes for their members to perform their work in right way. Various international institutes such as IFLA and ALA are involved in the development of professional ethics for this profession.

Is Librarianship A Profession

Several times it has discussed that librarianship is a profession or not. Lots of experts give their arguments in its favour. They say that all the professional characteristics are found in the librarianship. Following characteristics are found in librarian:-

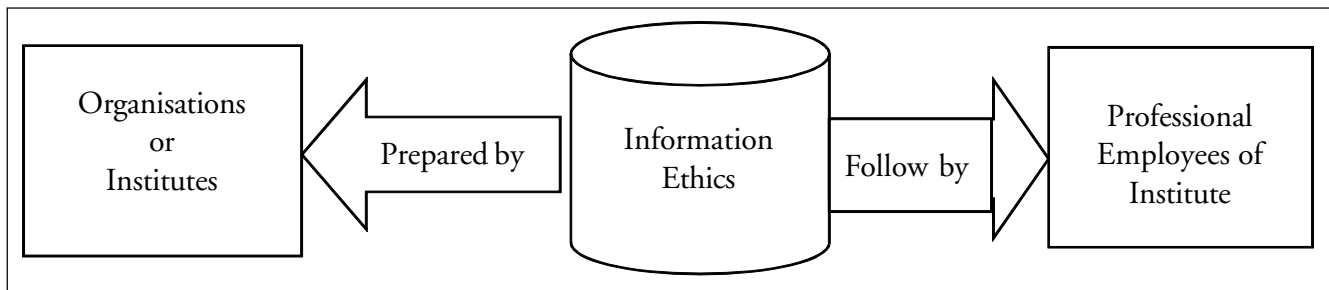


Figure 1: Procedure of Information Ethics

- It provides service to the public/users.
- Only those persons should adopt the profession who is interested in help to others, suitable salary and satisfactory working conditions.
- As a librarian, he should like books and people and have handling capacity of people.
- It is a noble profession because it is not harmful for anybody.
- It needs dedication of employees in their service.
- It needs loyalty and honesty of employees for providing service.
- This profession provides service up to the satisfaction level of persons.

Purpose of Professional Ethics for Librarians

Ethics is central point of our life. Without ethics our society is to diverge from their way. The concept of social responsibility is fundamentally an ethical concept. Similarly, professional ethics are affected to library and information science professionals.

P.S.G. Kumar explains the purpose of professional ethics in library and information science:

- Dedication in providing service.
- Maintain equality to caste, creed, religion and idealisms.
- Professional should knowledgeable person.

- Follow the six freedom for study, thought, speech, press, dissemination of knowledge and instruction.
- Strong voice for library legislation and censorship.

Need of Professional Ethics for Library and Information Science Professionals

Due to following reasons, librarians need some professional ethics for providing services to readers:

- They provide services to public. So, the highest level of honesty, integrity and character is to need.
- It is an intellectual profession which requires hard work and laborious efforts of employees.
- In this profession, throughout updation is required. So, it is necessary to do continuous study for employees.
- Professionals provide the highest level of services to their users on the basis of well-organised and appropriate collection. This is possible only they follow professional ethics.
- Professionals adopt principles of equity for providing services. So, it requires moral responsibilities.
- Library professionals require maintaining good relationship with users, colleagues and resources. So it is necessary to maintain a strong moral and ethical foundation of the LIS profession in the information society.
- Library professionals should adopt ethics when they acquire new arrivals.

Importance

- Guide the professionals to take proper decision.
- Guide the professionals to enhance the level of profession.
- Guide the professionals to fulfil the expectations of users.
- Guide the professionals to maintain high level values.
- Guide the professionals to maintain passion between members.

Principles of Professional Ethics for Library Professionals

In 2007, IFLA contributed in few ethical principles for library professionals which are given here:

User services:

- LIS professionals provide high quality services to all users on equal and legal basis.
- LIS professionals are not discriminate users on the basis of racial, caste, age, social status, creed and gender of sexual orientation.
- LIS professionals provide information and advice to their users objectively, impartially and courteously and assist them in retrieving the information.
- LIS professionals protect children and youths against unsuitable contents according to the Young Persons Protection Act and other legal regulations.
- LIS professionals follow the principles of free accessibility of information.
- LIS professionals maintain privacy of client. They share personal data with other institutions under the law.
- They provide services on professional manner.

Other services:

- LIS professionals encourage the free flow of information and reject the censorship of information.
- They protect the cultural heritage of country for future generation.
- They follow the principle of lifelong learning and improve their capacity.
- They organise events with their partners for promote reading habits between public.
- They adopt high level ethics for maintaining relation with publishers and suppliers.
- They follow legal issues in providing information from internet to its users.
- They develop the capacity to identify the rights of creators and copyright holders of copyright-protected library and information material.

Code of Ethics Adopted by Libraries of Different Countries

IFLA shows that approximately 60 countries of the world are adopted code of ethics for their library professionals. Some of them are shown in this Table 1.

IFLA Contribution for the Development of Code of Ethics for Library Professionals

During 2010 and 2012, a working group of IFLA members was trying to contribute the draft of international code of ethics for librarians and information professionals. Final approval was given by IFLA Governing Board in August 2012. It is presented in two versions:-namely comprehensive and shorter version. In short, different points of code of ethics are discussed here:-

- Access to information.
- Responsibilities towards individuals and society.

Table 1: Code of Ethics Adopted by Libraries of Different Countries

S.No.	Name of country	Library agency	Approval date
1.	Armenia	Armenia Library Association	11 June 2003
2.	Australia	The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)	1986 revised Nov. 1997
3.	Belgium	Flemish Library, Archive and Documentation Association npo (VVBAD)	N/A on IFLA Website
4.	Botswana	Botswana library Association	N/A on IFLA Website
5.	Brasil	Conselho federal de Biblioteconomia, Portuguese	N/A on IFLA Website
6.	Bulgaria	Bulgarian Library and Information Association	2002
7.	Canada	The Canadian Library Association (CLA)	June 1976
8.	Chile	Colegio de Bibliotecarios de Chile A.G.	N/A on IFLA Website
9.	China	Library Society of China	2002
10.	Costa Rica	Colegio de Bibliotecarios de Costa Rica	N/A on IFLA Website
11.	Croatia	The Croatian Library Association	7 May 1992 and updated on 4 December 2002
12.	Czech Republic	Association of Library & information Professionals of the Czech Republic	25 June 2004
13.	Cuba	Asociacion Cubana de Bibliotecarios	N/A on IFLA Website
14.	Estonia	Estonian Librarians Association (ELA)	14 February 2001
15.	EI Salvador	Asociacion de Bibliotecarios de EI Salvador	N/A on IFLA Website
16.	Finland	Finnish Library Association	N/A on IFLA Website
17.	France	Association des Bibliothecaires Francais (ABF)	23 March 2003
18.	Germany	BID-Bibliothek und Information Deutschland	Updated 19 March 2007
19.	Hungary	Board of the Association of Hungarian Librarians and the Board of the Federation of Libraries and Information Centres	17 January 2006
20.	Hong Kong	The Hong Kong Library Association	1995
21.	Indonesia	The Association of Indonesian Librarians	N/A on IFLA Website
22.	Iceland	Upplysing-Felag bokasafns-og upplysingfraeda	N/A on IFLA Website
23.	Ireland	Library Association of Ireland (LAI)	8 March 2007
24.	Israel	The Israeli Center for Libraries	N/A on IFLA Website
25.	Italy	The Italian Library association (AIB)	30 October 1997
26.	Jamaica	The Jamaica Library Association	Revised 1991
27.	Japan	The Japan Library Association	4 June 1980
28.	Korea	The Korean Library Association (KLA)	30 October 1997
29.	Lithuania	The Luthuanian Librarians Association (LLA)	Adopted 1998
30.	Latvia	Latvian Librarians Association (LLA)	N/A on IFLA Website
31.	Luxembourg	The Librarians Association of Luxembourg	N/A on IFLA Website
32.	Malta	Malta Library and Information Association (MALIA)	N/A on IFLA Website

Table 1contd.....

S.No.	Name of country	Library agency	Approval date
33.	Mauritius	Mauritius Council of Registered librarians (MCRL)	2013
34.	Malaysia	Librarians Association of Malaysia	N/A on IFLA Website
35.	Mexico	El Colegio Nacional de Bibliotecarios (CNB)	1991-92
36.	Netherlands	Public Library Section of the Netherlands Association of Librarians	13 May 1993
37.	New Zealand	The Library & Information Association New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA)	N/A on IFLA Website
38.	Nicaragua	Asociacion Nicaraguense de Bibliotecarios y Profesionales Afines	N/A on IFLA Website
39.	Nigeria	Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria	N/A on IFLA Website
40.	Philippines	The Professional regulation Commission of the Republic of the Philippines	14 August 1992
41.	Panama	Asociacion Panamena de Bibliotecarios	N/A on IFLA Website
42.	Peru	Colegio deee Bibliotecologos del Peru	N/A on IFLA Website
43.	Poland	The Polish Librarians Association	N/A on IFLA Website
44.	Portugal	Portuguese association of Librarians, archivists and Documentalists (BAD), Portuguese Association for the Development of Scientific and Technical Information (INCITI),Portuguese Association of Health Documentation (APDIS)	N/A on IFLA Website
45.	Pureto Rico	Sociedad de Bibliotecarios de Puerto Rico	N/A on IFLA Website
46.	Russia	Russian library Association	22 April 1999
47.	Serbia	Serbian Library Association	14 December 1992
48.	Singapore	The Library Association of Singapore (LAS)	N/A on IFLA Website
49.	Slovenia	The Slovenian Library association	8 November 1995
50.	South Africa	Library and information Association of South Africa (LIASA)	Revised 2013
51.	Spain	Spanish federation of Societies of Archivist, Librarians, Documentalist and Museology (FESABID)	23 May 2013
52.	Sri Lanka	The Sri Lanka Library association (SLLA)	6 December 1997
53.	Sweden	The Librarians Association (BF)	N/A on IFLA Website
54.	Switzerland	The Association of Swiss Librarians and Libraries(BBS)	N/A on IFLA Website
55.	Thailand	The Thai Library Association	N/A on IFLA Website
56.	Turkey	The Turkish Librarian's Association (TKD) Professional Ethics Principles	Established 1996 accepted 2 April 2010
57.	Ukraine	The Ukranian Library Association	30 May 1996
58.	United Kingdom	CILIP:The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals	1983
59.	Uruguay	Asociacion de Bibliotecologos del Uruguay	14 November 2000
60.	USA	The American Library association(ALA)	1939
61.	Venezuela	Colegio Bibliotecologos y Archivologos de Venezuela (CBAV)	16 October 2010

Source: (Content taken from IFLA website)

- Privacy, secrecy and transparency.
- Open access and intellectual property
- Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills.
- Colleague and employer/employee relationship.

Attempt to Prepare Code of Ethics for Library Professionals in India

Lots of learned professional are tried to attempt prepare code of ethics in this field. But no constructive attempt is done in ground level. Lots of seminars are organised by Indian associations such as IASLIC, but these efforts are also failed. In 1989 Joint Council of Library Association in India (JOCLAI) had prepared draft for code of ethics. The draft described following eight points (www.egyankosh.ac)

- Library and information science service to clientele.
- Library and information professional and their up gradation.
- Library and information professional and information resources.
- Library and information professional and professionalism
- Library and information professional and ethical values.
- Library and information professional and timely service.
- Library and information professional and professional organizations.
- Library and information professional and cultivation of professional knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Libraries are involved in the creation of society. Then society expects from the library professionals to do

their responsibilities in right manner. Therefore Code of ethics is necessary for the development of profession. Library professionals of these countries are followed code of ethics and found better reputation in the society. Due to adoption of codes, professionals will go to excellence. In India, Library professionals face the deficiency of code of professional ethics. So, it is important for library associations and learned professionals to take further steps for creation of code of ethics in ground level.

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