

TRANSCENDING TECHNOLOGY

A COGNITIVE LEARNING TOWARDS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**PROF. (DR.) RANBIR SINGH
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Professional Code of Ethics in Librarianship: A bird's Eye View of India's Contribution

*Mahipal Dutt** & *Dr Rupesh Gaur†*

Introduction

A person is expected to behave in a particular and specific way to conduct himself in his daily life. He is bound with some guidelines in every sphere of life and is expected to behave in accordance with these guidelines in every walk of life. His behavior in the family, at the workplace, during business or as a professional is bound with some particular guidelines while interacting with others. Even thieves and dacoits have their own code of conduct. We come to know about the right wrong situation according to value system of a given group at a time through these guidelines. These guidelines are termed as ethics or morals or value system or moral philosophy. Before discussing the code of ethics in Library and Information Science, it is necessary to understand the meaning of two terms viz: ethics and profession.

Profession

Cambridge English Dictionary defines profession as “ any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education.”

Professionalism is a complex of the methods and standards which are acquired by the study of a particular profession at an advanced level as amplified by the practice of those methods and adherence to those standards

Profession does not mean a mere collection of individuals who are doing same work by which they are getting their living, nor it is a group which is organized wholly for the its members' economic protection, although this is a natural factor

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and cannot be overlooked. Actually, a profession is a collection of people who do their duties within the boundaries of some certain rules or standards. Wikipedia defines profession as “A profession is a vocation founded upon specialized educational training, the purpose of which is to supply disinterested objective counsel and service to others, for a direct and definite compensation, wholly apart from expectation of other business gain.” The people follow these designed rules or standards with some objectives in mind like for the better public service and for the better protection of its members. The essences of a profession lies in the beauty that their success is measured by the service being performed by them and not with their income of financial gains.

Librarianship: A profession

Librarianship has got all the major attributes and characteristics involved in a profession. Service is the main aim and central value in librarianship. 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-to-be should, of course, like books. They should also like people and be able to work well with people. Good physical health and a certain amount of vitality are also required.

Dr Ranganathan, father of library science in India, guided the library and information science professionals that “The library profession is a noble profession. It can do no harm to anybody.”

He stressed that the LIS professionals must have the spirit of serving the users along with dedicated research and loyalty. He told that “If the young aspirants to the library profession, now put above want and on a 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.”

Ethics

Ethics, derived basically from a Greek word “ethos” meaning character or custom. Ethics is a set of moral principles that governs the person's conduct, behavior, character, humbleness, fairness, values, commitment, morality, duties to self improvement to the society at large and his obligations to the profession, to the institution and the society at large.

According to Williams (2010) “Ethics” assets and “evil” assets are, thus, present in any human population. The people within a profession doesn’t make it as “good” or “bad” but encouragement or discouragement in professional context make it good or bad. It is clear that the role of professionals in organizational ethics and politics is of extreme significance. The ethics work standards and guidelines for the people to know the difference between right and wrong.

Organizational ethics generally refers to the culture, processes, outcomes, character, shared values and the way how an organization acts. The values held and the code of principles, both written and unwritten, are the basis for ethical behavior. Beliefs about right, wrong, just, unjust, good or bad in human behavior are reflected by the ethics. Social norms, religious influences and cultural practices shape some set of guiding principles which constitute moral values or ethics. The ethics are like a compass directing the behavior of the people toward each other, making them understand and fulfill society obligations.

Ethics include the fundamental principles and concepts of decent human behavior. Primož Juznic and others (2001), define ethics as a moral system for librarians which consists of specific rules of behavior for different library activities.

Professional ethics

A profession consists of some basic concepts or some fundamental rules or principles and cannot be called a profession without these principles. 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. The member of the profession who is called as a professional must abide by some defined set of rules. These rules are defined by the licensing authority in order to maintain the credibility of the profession. Chambers 20th Century Dictionary defines ethics as “ethics is a science of morals. It is that branch of philosophy which is concerned with the human character and conduct.”

These ethical concepts or principles and values are the guiding factors to the behavior of a person at different levels like within professions, at organizational or personal level.

The professionals have some kind of knowledge and expertise and while applying this knowledge, they are governed by some set of moral values which are called as professional ethics. Only the professionals are capable of applying the skills, knowledge and expertise and doing judgments to reach the decisions, where

the general public, due to the lack of the required skills and knowledge is not able to reach. There are various code of ethics in different disciplines. For example in the library and information science, there are ALA codes of ethics, IFLA code of ethics and in India, Haryana Library Association, JOCLAI in collaboration with ILA has adopted some code of ethics.

Code of ethics by Haryana Library Association:

Haryana Library Association (HLA) published the profile and bibliographic directory of library professionals in the year 1999 in which the association has adopted some code of ethics for library professionals.

Code of Professional Ethics

TEXT

Preamble: We, the librarians and information professionals of India.

Convinced of the fact that a library is meant to fulfil certain definite educational, cultural and socio-economic objectives of the contemporary society;

Realising that we have a clearly defined effective role to play in fulfilment of these objectives:

Aware of the fact that this role, modified from time to time with the introduction of new innovations in information techniques and the overall development of our technological society, will continue in the foreseeable future;

Believing that in our democratic society, following a socialistic pattern, every citizen has the right to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to undistorted, unbiased information, irrespective of his educational, cultural level, political affiliation, caste, creed, religion, age or sex and that we are committed to foster readers' right to read as they please, only except such materials which are covered by censorship regulations imposed by law;

Accepting our special responsibility of selecting reading materials and guiding lay public in their use of the library's resources, to enlarge their mental horizon and elevate their taste;

Considering that we are not simply a congeries of certain related groups of technicians and managers, but a homogeneous group of educators, equipped with general techniques and technology of library management, continuously updated to keep pace with the changing needs of our progressive society;

Conscious fully of the fact that membership in our profession carries with it special obligations to maintain the highest level of personal integrity and competencies, and:

Determined to create a healthy profession tradition for the future; create and give unto ourselves the following code of professional ethics:

The Code

1. Library and information profession is a service profession. Library and information professionals should gather informations, organise into easily accessible collections, provide mechanisms that help productive utilisation of the same by all the eligible clientele.
2. Library and information professionals must be governed by the democratic principle of giving every user his/her opportunity to access to information resources and make special efforts to keep their interest growing towards further developments.
3. Library and information professional must familiarise themselves with all available information sources that are of interest to their clientele either on demand or in anticipation. They may be in the forms of book, technical papers, and other non-print records and even sometimes specialist in any field of knowledge. Gathering, organising and transmitting information to the appropriate targets of use is an essential credo of librarians and information personnel, efficiency and effectiveness in finding targets of use for every information available is the main focus of our profession.
4. Library and information professionals must keep service orientation in their professional work. Personal philosophies and attitudes should not interfere with those of the institutional organisations.
5. Library and information professional should avoid unlawful and unethical pecuniary interests and must serve their clientele on an equitable basis.
6. Library and informational professions should keep timeliness as a prime factor in serving information to user. A delayed response brings discredit to the service and ultimately may not be useful.
7. Library and information professionals should aim at the development of their own professional organisations and take pride in the ethos, activities and service. They should encourage younger generation of professionals with their own exemplary service.
8. 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.

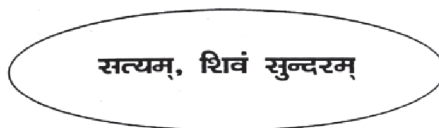


Figure 1 : HLA Code of Ethics. Source: Haryana Library Association

Code of ethics by JOCLAI:

JOCLAI (The Joint Council of Library Associations in India has been set up by IASLIC (Indian Association of Library and Information Centers) for cooperation and healthy future traditions for library and information science professionals. IASLIC in association with Indian Library Association (ILA) formed the code of ethics. However, the code adoption process remained obscure even today. In fact it is in a state of stupor. Only the office of Delhi library Association has one enlarged copy of these ethics.

INDIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
"A Code of Ethics For Library & Information Professionals"
As adopted by JOCLAI

Preamble: We the librarians and information professionals of India

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Believing that in our democratic society, following a socialistic pattern, every citizen has the right to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to undistorted, unbiased information, irrespective of his educational, cultural level, political affiliation, caste, creed, religion, age or sex and that we are committed to foster readers rights to read as they please, only except such material which are covered by censorship regulations imposed by law;

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8. Library and information professionals should cultivate their field of knowledge in a professional way. They should contribute to the field by the research, teaching and dissemination through literature.

Figure 2: JOCLAI Code of Ethics. Source: Delhi Library Association

Following points can be extracted from the above codes of ethics:

➤ **Service-oriented attitude**

The library and information science professionals must have the attitude of service towards the users.

➤ **Collection, organization and retrieval of information**

The LIS professionals must be familiar with the tools and techniques to collect organize and retrieve the information. The users must be provided with the easy mechanisms for retrieval of the required information.

➤ **Users' needs and interests**

The LIS professionals must understand the information needs and interests of the users. They must ensure the supremacy of the users' demands.

➤ **Familiarization with information sources**

It is must for the LIS professionals to be familiar with all the information sources available and how to access them in order to meet the current or anticipated demands by the users. Providing the appropriate information sources for information requirements of the user irrespective of its form, is the main duty of a LIS professional.

➤ **Service orientation**

Service orientation in his work is the major requirement by a Library and information professional. There should not be any conflict between the personal attitude and philosophies of a professional and of the institution.

➤ **Avoid unlawful interests**

It is also necessary for the LIS professionals that unethical fiscal and unlawful interests and the basis for service to their clientele should be equitable.

➤ **Research and Teaching**

It is the moral responsibility and obligation to the LIS professional to contribute in expansion of the profession through teaching, research and literature dissemination.

Effect of Code of ethics on Librarianship:

If followed these code of ethics can make positive changes in following areas:

1. **Users:** the ethics strengthen the relationship between the library and its users. These guide the library professionals towards the users' requirements in focus.
2. **Profession:** The ethics ensure that the library professionals should understand their duties and responsibilities to work for the professional development and excellence amongst the professionals.
3. **Colleagues:** The ethics guide the library and information science professionals have good professional relationships with the colleagues and with other professional members. These ethics enhance the cooperation between the members.
4. **Organization:** The ethics ensure that the library and library professionals should get due respect and must be considered as an integral part by the institution or organization.
5. **Society:** The ethics ensure that the library should get its due status and should play its role in providing information for the advancement of the society.

Ethics of Librarianship:

Ethics of librarianship denotes the behavior and conduct of the library and information science professionals. There are some certain obligations for the LIS professionals towards the library users, books, organization and even to himself as a professional. These are:

➤ **Duty to the Readers**

The readers in a library are dependent on the valuable and expert services provided by the librarian. They have a very strong, positive and unbreakable bond of friendship between them. The librarian acts as 'the guide, the philosopher and the friend' to the users without any bias or prejudice. It is the duty of a librarian to prove himself to be worthy of the honour given to him by the users.

➤ **Duty to the soul of the book**

Books are the integral part and parcel of a library. We cannot imagine a library without books. A book also has a body and a soul like a human being. The body of a book is constituted from the papers it contains, its binding and printing etc. Actual contents of a book can be termed as the soul of a book.

A librarian owns a duty to the book to keep its body clean like his own body and save it from destruction by its enemies i.e. insects and white-ants. He should repair it at the moment is torn and also treat it with insecticides at periodical intervals. Besides, he has to take appropriate steps to save the book from its other enemies which include fire, water, dust and human thieves etc.

A librarian owns a responsibility to the book to maintain its frame clean like his personal frame and store it from destruction by way of its enemies i.e. bugs and white-ants. He ought to repair it in the interim is torn and additionally deal with it with pesticides at periodical durations. besides, he has to take appropriate steps to store the book from its different enemies which encompass fire, water, dirt and human thieves and so on.

➤ **Duty to the profession**

A profession is a calling, for admission to which, special training, education and character are required. The ideal of the profession is public service and it is the duty of a professional to inculcate and reflect professional habits in him for the betterment of the profession. Anything or any habit spoiling name and respect of the profession must be avoided by the professionals.

➤ **Duties to the staff:**

“Each member of the staff should be regarded by the librarian as a colleague and should be encouraged to realize his work, however menial it may appear, is essential for the smooth working or the whole establishment.”

further, within the challenge of work and hours there need to be no marked leniency toward some individuals, or the shifting of unpopular duties continually to individuals who are the most inclined to do them. Lengthy carrier isn't always usually a reason for neither favored treatment, nor a low earnings an excuse for terrible paintings.

➤ **Duties to himself**

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 – as his profession is like that of the medical profession. He heals the wounds of ignorance whereas the doctor heals bodily ulcers and ailments.

His behavior have to be enviable and he should treat his clients with love and sympathy. Like medical profession, a librarian also heals the injuries of lack of knowledge like a health practitioner heals bodily ulcers and ailments.

B M Headicar remarks, “We must have both dignity and humility.”

Some qualities a librarian must have:

A librarian to be a successful professional must keep burning the “seven lamps of conduct”

➤ **Impersonal Book Selection**

A librarian must select books without any prejudice. He should not accept the books if these are below standard. He should not reject books on the basis of his personal dislike of the authors of the books under the garb of declaring these as below standard.

A librarian ought to pick out books with none prejudice. Books below the standard should not be accepted. Books should not be rejected on personal dislike basis of the authors of the books under the apparel of declaring those as below standard.

➤ **Service before self**

The main motto of a librarian must be ‘Service before self’ as he is there as a medium to meet the information needs of his users.

➤ **Split –mind**

Having a split-mind is a mandatory quality of a librarian. He must follow and keep trying fulfilling the information needs of his users. He must be multi faceted and multi talented. His mind should be active all the time.

➤ **Sympathetic behavior**

Inculcating self-confidence among library users and having sympathy in user's needs is the chief role of the librarian. A librarian should be a lovable person who can treat his users in a very well manner.

➤ **Tact**

Being tactful is the major requirement of a librarian. He will have to deal with different type of users with tactics. A successful librarian will understand and handle the information needs tactfully.

➤ **Industry**

A librarian must be hardworking, patient and industrious person. The nature of his job requires much perservance and labour. The persons who are willing to help others all the time, are the successful ones.

➤ **Scholarship**

The librarian himself must be a scholar, and then only he can guide others. He must have the knowledge of information resources, how to access the required information. A librarian should be a research scholar himself.

Role of Library professional in Digital Information Era

The past industrial Revolution Era brought significant changes in the science and technology development that had revolutionized the concepts and application. According to Daniel Bell, the information revolution had captured and changed roles of individuals from blue-collar jobs. The concept of even the libraries where a host of activities are surrounded has been totally changes due to this revolution. Thus along with the shift on the key concept of information revolution, changes have taken place in the role of information producers and information providers.

Library is a bridge between knowledge generator and knowledge users. The librarian now a days is the evaluator and navigator of information and not merely a custodian of the library resources. He has to play a very crucial and major role in present digital era because in this environment of information explosion, it is a huge task to retrieve and find the right and qualitative information. The crucial change in the role involves in understanding, capturing, structuring the tacit and explicit knowledge in a proper order and content management.

For this, a new kind of professionals have emerged as information managers, computer organizers, systems managers, system administrators etc., even the designation of library in-charge is changing from age-old librarian, to library manager, information officers, information scientist, information resource managers and cyberian to the present knowledge counselor and corporate intelligence professional.

Conclusion

As the JOCLAI code of ethics state that librarianship as a profession needs specialized knowledge, skill with creative ability. A person possessing such skills and abilities can be called exact professional. The society expects special responsibility from the professionals. However it is revealed from the study of the subject that we professionals talk more about the profession and practice little in discharging the responsibilities.

Therefore, this code of ethics along with others at international level agencies like IFLA, ALA etc should be followed by the library professionals in order to serve the users in a better way and for the upliftment of the profession. To aware more professionals about the norms and standards, this code of ethics must be marketed at a wider level. The practice of code of ethics will lead to the profession towards the excellence. Also, further studies should be done to extract core values relevant to LIS professionals.

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