According to Code

How Codes and Standards of Ethics and Values Are Learned, Related, and Applied to Information Organization

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The LIS Mansion

Winchester Mystery House, San Jose, CA. Ca. 160 rooms, including 40 bedrooms, two ballrooms, 47 fireplaces, 13 bathrooms, 3 elevators, and at least one ghost.
Educating a Flexible and Balanced Profession

http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/
Photo from home page of School of Information, University of Texas

Hill; Ethics of Information Organization, Milwaukee, 2009
Looking at the LIS Curriculum

Limitations to the survey:

- Based on website content only
- Limited to graduate LIS programs accredited by ALA
- Does not include programs at Montreal, Puerto Rico, or Queens
- Course description style and detail varies from program to program
- No mention of ethics in course description may not mean absence from course content
- Syllabi were consulted only when readily available and when necessary
- Content of “Special topics in …” or “Issues in …” courses is impossible to determine
- Presence of the word “principles” was not taken to indicate consideration of ethics
- Courses in intellectual freedom, diversity, globalization, etc. were not included
- Some descriptions were read carefully; Others were scanned
Collective Ethics Curriculum

- 54 ALA-accredited masters programs in LIS covered (3 programs were not examined):
  1. 16 programs have a course with ethics in its name
  2. 6 programs have a Foundations course, or an Information and Society course with ethics in the course description
  3. 28 programs have neither
  4. 4 additional programs that have neither 1 nor 2 do have some other course whose description mentions ethics
  5. 5 courses other than separate ethics or foundations courses include some mention of ethics in the description.
    - 3 were from Simmons, in courses in reference, oral history, and intellectual freedom.
    - One was from Toronto, in a course on public libraries.
    - One was from Pittsburgh, in a course on the organization of information.
One Information Organization Course
Indicated Consideration of Ethics

Pittsburgh:

• Introduction To Cataloging And Classification
  Theory, principles, and standards of descriptive and subject cataloging as currently practiced and conceptualized; emphasis on the changing information landscape. Focuses on analyzing systems and practices that respond to user needs, practically and ethically. Provides beginning-level experience with bibliographic utilities, description, metadata, and encoding schemes, choice of entry, construction of headings, authority control, Dewey and Library of Congress classification schemes, and Library of Congress Subject Headings.
Close, Possibly a Cigar?

Western Ontario’s Description mentions “values”

Organization of Information

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. organize, describe, and provide access to recorded information in a variety of formats
2. demonstrate an awareness of professional values and standards pertaining to information organization within various information communities
3. critically analyse issues of information organization, and communicate that analysis effectively with others, including users, colleague employers and members of the community

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Representative Description of an Information Organization Course

North Texas:

- **Introduction to Information Organization.**
  Principles, concepts and practices of information organization and presentation. Concepts and problems of human information behavior, classification and categorization related to information organization. Database technology, structure and design. Standards for information organization, data representation and information exchange. Systems for organizing information and facilitating information access in various information use environments.
Foundations Course Descriptions
Sometimes Mention Ethics

- **Pratt: Information Professions:** Introduces the fields of librarianship and information professions. Course material covers the evolving role of libraries in society, the legal and **ethical aspects** of the profession and the impact of rapidly changing information environments. Also included are the principles of management, development of policies and procedures, effective communication skills, types of libraries and information centers, and organizational and staffing structures.

- **Washington: Information in Social Context:** Concepts, processes, and issues related to the larger social context within which the life cycle of knowledge is played out. Discussion topics include intellectual freedom, information as public/private good, intellectual property, privacy, confidentiality, information liability, information and telecommunications policy, the economics of information, and other **professional values**.

- **Illinois: Libraries, Information and Society.** Explores major issues in the library and information science professions as they involve their communities of users and sponsors. Analyzes specific situations that reflect the professional agenda of these fields, including intellectual freedom, community service, **professional ethics**, social responsibilities, intellectual property, literacy, historical and international models, the socio-cultural role of libraries and information agencies and professionalism in general, focusing in particular on the interrelationships among these issues.
No Ethics Course Relates Ethics and IO

- **Pittsburgh: Information Ethics:** Ethics as a prelude to learning the skills of ethical decision-making and, then, to applying these skills to the real and current challenges of the information professions. Decision-making and challenges related to information sources and services in all formats and media; to the Internet and other digital sources (cyberethics); and to information-related topics in management.

- **Simmons: Organizational/Information Ethics:** The course will examine the ethical implications of decisions made within various organizational contexts regarding issues such as property ownership, strategy formulation, the utilization of computer technology, employee relations, accountability, conflicts of interest, as well as other topics relevant to today's managers. Participants will examine the ethical implications of cases at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. The course will assist professionals to clarify and apply their own moral standards and ethical norms, beliefs, and values to unfamiliar, complex situations in which the appropriate application of these values may not be obvious. The course makes no effort to dictate what is "right," "proper," and "just"; that is left to the individual's own moral standards of behavior and ethical systems of belief.

- **Valdosta: Information and Ethics:** An introduction to the basic ethical precepts of the information professions and the importance of ethics. The course examines differences among ethical, legal, moral, and religious systems and includes a case-study methodology to explore ethical situations in the professional practice, drawing upon lessons offered by relevant professional organizations and their ethics codes.
Ethics Related to the Electronic Environment

**Michigan: Ethics, Values, and Information Dilemmas:**
The "information" revolution and the expanding use of information technology within all organizations, profit and non-profit, public and private, has created an environment in which access to massive quantities of information, at startling speeds, is now possible through electronic means. Within this environment, policy makers, managers, indeed all individual users of the technology must make decisions about how they want to use new technological capabilities and in some cases, even if they use technology in particular ways. The changing environment requires that all individuals clarify their values, understand ethical and unethical responses, and actively process information making informed decisions.
Code of Professional Ethics for Librarians

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies 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.

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 dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

I. 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.

II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

III. 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.

IV. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.

V. 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.

VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.

VII. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.

VIII. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.cfm
The Core Values of Librarianship

The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values that define, inform, and guide our professional practice. These values reflect the history and ongoing development of the profession and have been advanced, expanded, and refined by numerous policy statements of the American Library Association. Among these are:

- **Access**
- **Confidentiality/Privacy**
- **Democracy**
- **Diversity**
- **Education and Lifelong Learning**
- **Intellectual Freedom**
- **Preservation**
- **The Public Good**
- **Professionalism**
- **Service**
- **Social Responsibility**

- [http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/corevaluesstatement/corevalues.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/corevaluesstatement/corevalues.cfm)
Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.cfm
Principles for the Networked World

Principles for Digitized Content

- The accelerating mass digitization of collections in libraries and cultural heritage institutions demands a framework of principles and a body of policy to guide decision-making and to enable values-driven choices. The principles for the digitization of content will provoke a review of American Library Association policies that address the creation, access, use, and preservation of digital materials and that require revision, enhancement, and creation. This is critical to the advancement of ALA’s leadership role in the information society and to the support provided to members. This will also sustain the relevance and impact of libraries and librarians in their communities.

1. Values

- Digital collections are as important to libraries as all other types of collections. The policies of the Association apply fully to digital collections, including values such as intellectual freedom, commitment to access, respect for confidentiality and privacy, freedom of information, service for the public good, and professionalism.

- Digital content must be given the same consideration as other library materials when conducting collection development, organization and cataloging of works, reference services, and preservation.

- Digital content must be provided in various and alternative ways to meet the unique needs and circumstances of all people.

- Equitable access to digital library materials is ensured through maximum accessibility, ubiquity, sustainability, and barrier-free access.

9. Importance of Standards

- Digital collections must be built upon standards and best practices that maximize their usefulness.

- Such standards and best practices must serve the broadest community of users, including those with disabilities, support sustainable access and use over time, and provide user functionality that promotes the core library values.

- Preference should be given to open standards and non-proprietary technologies that support long-term sustainability.

http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/wo/referenceab/principles/principles.pdf
Core Competences of Librarianship

This document defines the basic knowledge to be possessed by all persons graduating from an ALA-accredited master's program in library and information studies. Librarians working in school, academic, public, special, and governmental libraries, and in other contexts will need to possess specialized knowledge beyond that specified here.

1. Foundations of the Profession
   1A. The ethics, values, and foundational principles of the library and information profession.
   1B. The role of library and information professionals in the promotion of democratic principles and intellectual freedom (including freedom of expression, thought, and conscience).
   1C. The history of libraries and librarianship.
   1D. The history of human communication and its impact on libraries.
   1F. National and international social, public, information, economic, and cultural policies and trends of significance to the library and information profession.
   1G. The legal framework within which libraries and information agencies operate. That framework includes laws relating to copyright, privacy, freedom of expression, equal rights (e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act), and intellectual property.

3. Organization of Recorded Knowledge and Information
   3A. The principles involved in the organization and representation of recorded knowledge and information.
   3B. The developmental, descriptive, and evaluative skills needed to organize recorded knowledge and information resources.
   3C. The systems of cataloging, metadata, indexing, and classification standards and methods used to organize recorded knowledge and information.

http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/careers/corecomp/finalcorecompstat09.pdf
Every Paper a Yellow Brick Road

Hill; Ethics of Information Organization, Milwaukee, 2009
It’s Subjective

- **OPINION**: A belief or conclusion held with confidence, but not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof. Applicable to any conclusion to which one adheres without ruling out the possibility of debate.

- **BELIEF**: pertains to a conclusion, not necessarily derived firsthand, to which one subscribes strongly.

- **CONVICTION**: denotes belief that excludes doubt and that proceeds usually from the weight of evidence.

- **VALUE**: A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable. Value indicates worth or merit in terms of usefulness or importance to the possessor.

- **PRINCIPLE**: A basic truth, law, or assumption. Moral or ethical standards or judgments collectively.

- **JUDGEMENT**: The exercise of the capacity to make reasonable decisions, especially in regard to the practical affairs of life. The mental ability to perceive and distinguish relationships or alternatives.

- **MORAL**: Arising from conscience or the sense of right and wrong. MORAL pertains for personal behavior, while ETHICAL approaches behavior from a philosophical standpoint; it stresses more objectively defined, but essentially idealistic standards of right and wrong.

- **ETHIC**: A principle of right or good conduct. A system of moral principles or values.

- **ETHICS**: The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by the individual in his relationship with others. The rules or standards governing the conduct of members of a profession.

- **PHILOSOPHY**: A system of motivating concepts or principles. A basic theory or viewpoint. The system of values by which one lives.
Three Flavors of Ethics

• Commission:  Knowingly or purposely doing something that violates an ethical tenet. Includes applying misleading or biased subject headings to materials; classifying materials in a way that fails to acknowledge their validity.

• Omission:  Failing to deal adequately with information resources. Includes leaving materials undescribed as one method of limiting their use or limiting workload; Failure to bring out controversial or minority aspects of materials.

• Situational:  Often managerial in nature, where right and wrong are difficult to ascertain, and vary from situation to situation, from institution to institution, and from time to time. These are areas where we often fail to acknowledge any ethical component at all.
Organization of Information is not Unambiguous

The general (mistaken) perception of cataloging is that it is a cut-and-dried activity that involves the application of boring and occasionally complex but largely comprehensive and unambiguous rules and standards to circumstances presented by materials that are themselves unambiguous and that present no circumstances not adequately covered by the rules.
On the Record

Report of
The Library of Congress Working Group
on the Future of Bibliographic Control

On the Record Recommendations

1. Increase the Efficiency of Bibliographic Record Production and Maintenance

2. Enhance Access to Rare, Unique, and Other Special Hidden Materials

3. Position our Technology for the Future

4. Position our Community for the Future

5. Strengthen the Library and Information Science Profession

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On the Record: Sharing the Effort

- The continued sharing of effort will be one of the keys to the future success of libraries. Moreover, libraries will need to collaborate not just with each other, but with other organizations as well. … All possible means of collaboration should be considered. Sharing, however, is not a strategy for LC alone. The entire library community and its many partners must also be part of it. Rather than relying as heavily as it has on LC, the community needs to acknowledge that in at least some areas, LC may need to be able to rely on the work of others.

- … Because many libraries provide bibliographic control to their collections chiefly via copy cataloging and the loading of LC authority files into their online systems, over the past century these libraries have not only reduced the number of staff in their cataloging operations, but also have reduced the proportion of staff who are professionally educated to catalog.
1.2.1.1 Share **responsibility** for creating original cataloging according to interest, use, and ability. Consider categories of materials for which **responsibilities** can be distributed and categories of metadata that can be appropriately provided by each of the participants.

1.2.2.2 LC: For those aspects of operations that extend beyond the Library’s immediate mission as the Library of Congress, identify other entities or groups with the interest and ability to assume **responsibility** for them.

1.2.2.3 Work with interested entities such as PCC, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), professional organizations, publishers, etc. to plan transition to new distribution of **responsibilities**.

1.2.3 Expand Number of PCC Participants

1.2.4 Increase Incentives for Sharing Bibliographic Records

1.3.1.1 Identify ways to promote wider participation in the distribution of **responsibility** for creating, enhancing, and maintaining authority data.
On the Record: Sharing the Effort for Hidden Materials

- 2.1.1 Make the Discovery of Rare, Unique, and other Special Hidden Materials a High Priority
  - 2.1.1.3 Make finding aids accessible via online catalogs and available on the Internet.

- 2.1.2 Adopt as a guiding principle that some level of access must be provided to all materials as a first step to comprehensive access, as appropriate. Allow for different cataloging levels depending on the types of documents, their nature, and richness.
  - 2.1.2.1 Adopt as a guiding principle that some level of access must be provided to all materials as a first step to comprehensive access, as appropriate. Allow for different cataloging levels depending on the types of documents, their nature, and richness.

- 2.1.3 All: Integrate access tools (finding aids, metadata records, databases, authority files, etc.) for unique and rare materials into the information access structures that serve the institution as a whole.
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- 2.1.5 Share Access to Rare, Unique, and other Special Hidden Materials
  - 2.1.5.1 All: Encourage inter-institutional collaboration for sharing metadata records and authority records for rare and unique materials.
  - 2.1.5.2 All: Encourage libraries and archives to submit records for rare and unique materials to shared databases such as OCLC.
Obligations to Others

Librarianship is a cooperative discipline. Our cooperativeness finds form:

- in creation and willing adherence to common standards
- in sharing our materials and resources
- in sharing information about our materials
- in our sharing our work
The Chain Letter Analogy

- An unsolicited letter promises riches or good luck, if you just comply with its instructions: Put your name on the list below; send a copy of this message to xxx friends.; send a pair of socks to the person at the top of the list. In a few weeks, you'll get 50 pairs of socks.

- If everybody followed all of the instructions, you’d get 50 pairs of in return for your one. But if you don't follow the instructions, and hardly else does either, you get no socks. Even the person who actually does follow through gets no socks.

- Cooperative cataloging is what happens when we all forward the messages as instructed, and send the one pair of socks. After a while we get dozens and dozens of pairs of socks in return.

- Cooperative cataloging works because nearly everybody is contributing socks.

- Some who just forward the messages and don't send socks reap the benefits of all the other people who actually send socks.

- If there aren't many such non-contributors, the system works well enough to keep the contributors both happy and contributing.

- If a significant segment of the population stops contributing, the flow of socks dwindles, and those who are still contributing begin seeing less return on their effort, and begin to question whether the cost of their effort outweighs the value of their return.

- Cooperative agreements don’t threaten bad luck if you don’t keep the chain going, but the consequences if enough people drop out of the chain are unsustainable.

- But keeping the chain going requires a minimal investment, and brings enormous returns.
In Summary

- Ethics are everywhere.
- All management decisions are value laden.
- Ethical conduct brings rewards far beyond the abstract.
Increasing Awareness of Ethics

- Assure that ethics are explicitly covered explicitly across the LIS curriculum
- Assure that all people going through LIS programs are introduced to the codes of ethics and how to find them
- Be more obvious in our collective discussions about the application of ethics to decision making;
- Be especially aggressive about articulating the ethical context of decisions made in areas outside the obvious
- Examine existing codes to see if modifications might make the connections to all parts of the field more clear
- Consider an Interpretation of the codes for Information Organization
- Offer colloquia and programs that deal with matters of ethics
- Encourage people in Information Organization to involve themselves more in the field at large

Hill; Ethics of Information Organization, Milwaukee, 2009