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Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals

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Item Type	Preprint
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Download date	2026-11-13 04:31:08
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/212170

SPAIN: CODE OF ETHICS FOR LIBRARIANS AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

Prepared by the Working Group on Professional Ethics of the Spanish Association for Documentation and Information (SEDIC) and approved by the Assembly of the Spanish Federation of Societies of Archivists, Librarians, Documentalists and Museology (FESABID) (Toledo, 23.05.2013)

PREAMBLE

Information is an essential asset of society.

Individuals and organizations with responsibility for managing information must maintain an awareness of the potential social, economic, cultural, political and environmental impact of their actions, for they play a key role in selecting, organizing, preserving and disseminating information; in ensuring its use for legal, administrative, informational, cultural, scientific or business purposes; and in contributing to improving how organizations function, to preserving the collective memory and to enabling education, training, research and cultural dissemination.

Individuals and organizations that manage information work in diverse cultural, administrative and economic spheres.

The diversity of work relationships and of dependence on business and governmental hierarchies makes it even more essential to establish rules of conduct to guide individuals and institutions in making decisions, in dealing with ethical dilemmas, and in resolving potential conflicts of interest.

Being an association dedicated to the training of information professionals and to the exchange of experiences among them, SEDIC is committed to promoting ethics and integrity in the world of information. Professional ethics, integrity, fairness, honesty and respect for others are not just virtues, but they also represent what SEDIC members can expect from their colleagues.

As a specialized association of information professionals, SEDIC is defined by a core set of values and objectives, the goal of which is to:

Disseminate the importance of information for economic and scientific development by promoting the use of technology and information sources.

Act in a fair and honest manner with respect to others, in order to facilitate access to, and contact with, the labor market, bridging supply and demand by guiding organizations in the selection of professionals and providing a jobs listing service.

Support global diversity and understanding by encouraging participation in professional associations and stimulating international relations with peers from other countries, especially within the European Union.

Encourage cooperation among professionals by coordinating members' activities with those of other associations grouped under the Spanish Federation of Societies of Archivists, Librarians, Documentalists and Museology (FESABID) and other national and international associations.

Represent its members in their dealings with the public administration and with organizations related to their area of activity, as well as through international associations, conferences and meetings.

Chapter I. DEFINITION

The SEDIC Code of Ethics provides guidance to complement specialized knowledge and technical and legal regulations, contributing to professional practice that is both responsible and of high quality. This Code results from the evolution of society and of the profession itself and, as such, it reflects principles and values that are set out in core rules accepted by the professional community and based on its collective experience.

Chapter II. OBJECTIVES

To define the specific principles and values of the profession.

To present a distinctive image of professional expertise to the public based on the values that guide those responsible for information management during the exercise of their professional activities and to lay out what can be expected of these professionals.

To strengthen the bonds within the professional community by encouraging exchanges of information and experience among individuals and among professional associations and groups.

To offer a moral framework providing support to professionals faced with situations of abuse, interference, dilemmas, and conflicts of interest.

To create a flow of trust from society to the professional community consisting of individuals of high integrity who are experts in the provision of information services.

To promote self-reflection within the professional community regarding problematic and unforeseen situations brought about by the evolution of resources, of services and of society itself. This reflection should also ensure that responses to given situations are in accordance to recognized values.

Chapter III: SCOPE

This code serves to guide the professional practice of SEDIC's members working in both the public and private sectors. It also aims to provide guidance for other professionals working in organizations that manage information, without impinging on other existing ethical codes.

Chapter IV: PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the fundamental document defining professional ethics. Specifically Articles 1-3, referring to freedom, equality and dignity; Articles 18 & 19 dealing with the individual's freedom of expression, opinion and access to information; and Articles 26 and 27 which lay out the community's right to education and a cultural life, as well as the protection of intellectual property and copyright.

The SEDIC Code of Ethics adopts the Declaration's principles and goes more deeply into those most closely identified with the profession.

The ethical principles underlying the SEDIC Code of Ethics are:

Autonomy - a belief in the moral autonomy and dignity of human beings.

Justice - neutrality and impartiality overcoming any existing bias.

Social utility - an interest in serving society through decision-making and the definition of objectives.

Social responsibility - a desire to build a better society through the use of resources, the provision of training, and respect for the environment.

Trust - the establishment of a trustworthy environment for individuals, organizations, and professionals.

In virtue of the listed principles, information management professionals shall apply the following values in carrying out their professional activities:

1. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Defend the individual's freedom of expression, information and knowledge.

The only limitations to intellectual freedom shall be those based on respect for human

rights as promulgated by the United Nations.

2. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Ensure professional secrecy in the exercise of their activities in order to protect the confidentiality of users' personal data, with the only limitations being those determined by the legal framework.

Ensure privacy and respect personal and family intimacy, including the right to one's own image.

3. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Provide the best possible access to information, since it permits economic, social and democratic development, and inform users of the specific regulations governing information access, use and dissemination.

Ensure free and equal access to resources for all citizens, without restriction based on gender, on ideological, educational, cultural, political or economic motives, or on any other personal or societal conditions or circumstances.

Facilitate access to information especially to groups and individuals that are at a disadvantage.

Support the universal right to knowledge and information, providing information that is updated, reliable, balanced and appropriate to the needs of information services users.

Guarantee transparency in the selection, access and provision of resources, by managing information in a way that facilitates access to it.

Encourage open access initiatives to ensure the right of access to information, with the only limitations being determined by the legal framework, the economic activity of the organization, and the need to preserve the documents themselves.

Support the principles of open government so that --through transparency, participation and integrity-- the functioning of government, public administration and businesses can be scrutinized by the general public.

Promote information literacy and provide training on searching and the proper use of resources, on the technological media that distribute them, and on the evaluation of information, in order that users –in an autonomous and responsible manner-- can obtain the needed information.

Ensure the integrity and authenticity of the information and documents provided.

It is contrary to professional ethics to seek or accept compensation for the query of, or access to, any product, unless such action is well regulated by the organizations concerned or is established by private entities whose activities are linked to the sale of information.

4. COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Protect copyright and intellectual property rights in accordance with existing law.

Advocate for exceptions and limitations to copyright, in favor of public libraries, archives and document centers, as well as of non-profit institutions.

Identify and clearly indicate the author and the original source of the information provided.

Inform their own organizations about copyright and instruct the public and colleagues on the legal and intellectual consequences of plagiarism.

Foster policies aimed at improving transparency and access to governmental and public administration information.

5. PROFESSIONALISM

Adopt an intrinsic commitment to educational, social and economic development; to research and innovation; to the understanding of present and past; and to the preservation of knowledge for future generations.

Promote the reputation and progress of the profession as well as the recognition of its social and economic benefits.

Defend independent, fair and objective professional criteria.

Act with honesty and integrity combined with a highly competent professional performance.

Defend fair and just working conditions for all regardless of a person's position in the organizational hierarchy or relations within the workplace. These conditions include, among others, equal pay regardless of gender, a safe and healthy working environment, and a secure and reliable contractual arrangement.

Promote university education in library and information sciences, as well as specialized training, so as to recognize and respect the diverse specializations that currently join together in high quality, innovative and modern services.

Maintain updated knowledge, skills and abilities, and the technical standards and legislation affecting libraries, archives and document centers. Ongoing training will enable professionals to carry out more effective management and public dissemination of information using currently prevalent channels (publications, Internet, social networks).

Encourage the transfer of knowledge between professionals, collaborate in the exchange of experiences through conferences and publications, and cooperate with other colleagues and related institutions.

Respect the law, relationships with colleagues, and the profession as a whole, in order to create a motivated work environment. Of special importance is the cooperation in the search for uncatalogued documents and for information not easily accessible.

Promote membership in associations in the field - among colleagues, the public, the organization for which they work, and most importantly, library and information science students. Join professional organizations in order to contribute to the strength and cohesiveness of the profession.

6. LOYALTY TO THE ORGANIZATION

Contribute to the mission, vision and strategic objectives of the organization and participate in attaining them.

Show loyalty to the institution through respect for confidential information and dedication to activities falling within the scope of the organization.

Not publicize internal affairs of the organization nor participate in activities or comments that may harm its corporate image, with the exception of disclosures denouncing illegal practices or conduct.

Ensure organizational assets, by carrying out honest business practices and using the name of the institution in marketing and advertising in an accurate and balanced manner.

7. CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION

Assume responsibility for protecting and preserving materials against physical damage, deterioration or theft. Be responsible also for the overall preservation of documents to ensure their authenticity, avoiding any manipulation or destruction of information or data that could conceal facts or distort evidence.

Promote policies for the responsible preservation of documents in any format, ensuring the integrity of the original document and following the international standards set for each type of media.

Ensure the preservation of information in order to enable present and future use.

8. RESPECT FOR CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Respect and preserve the cultural wealth and heritage of minorities.

Support and promote respect for cultural diversity as a way of achieving improved global dialogue and world understanding.

9. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Promote sustainable services in professional and work environments committed to the progress of the community and of society.

Ensure that the capture of external resources is in accordance with the profession's ethical criteria.

Ensure the adequacy of facilities and equipment so that they can be used by all segments of the population, especially children, the disabled and the elderly.

Contribute to sustainable development through responsible use of technology, resources, facilities, and energy, and establish methods of creating awareness and policies for the reuse and recycling of materials.

10. SERVICE QUALITY

Ensure a service environment of constant improvement and excellence.

Maintain upstanding conduct –both individually and collectively-- in all areas of work, in order to fulfill the primary objective of achieving quality service in the performance of all professional activity.

Make management aware of the impact on the quality of service caused by reductions

in human, economic or technical resources, and which could lead to a decreased or deficient level of attention to users.

Chapter V. FINAL PROVISIONS

1st. To ensure its effectiveness, the SEDIC Code of Ethics will be reviewed periodically to incorporate changes that may occur in the profession itself or in its social and institutional surroundings.

2nd. SEDIC will distribute the values and principles contained in this Code among its members, institutional authorities and other actors, as well as otherwise undertaking a maximum dissemination of the Code.

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