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Recommendations and conclusions

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RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is important to have a fixed set of values as a profession. Ideally these core values would be listed in a professional code of ethics, but realistically there are always unusual constraints and unique conditions that make straightforward answers difficult to obtain. This is why codes of ethics are not to be seen as collections of answers, but means to facilitating and guiding ethical reflection.

Codes often are criticized as being too broad and too conventional by professionals. The gap between codes of ethics and actual ethical issues that come up in the workplace needs to be bridged by case studies. Case studies could provide typical real life scenarios of ethical conflicts and dilemmas. These case studies can then be described and analyzed against a professional code of ethics. This analysis would not present “the” solution, but different options and their ethical consequences. The intention is to encourage the ethical reflection of individual employees and to make clear that neither codes nor case studies absolve a person in charge from their professional responsibility. Ethical reflection should thusly be unavoidable, and the codes remain a means to facilitate ethically-grounded decision making and behavior.

At the same time, librarians and their associations have to be aware that their professional codes of ethics are neither unchangeable nor completely universal. Cultural differences and the difference in laws between countries need to be taken into consideration. For example, while most are entirely against child pornography it was not illegal in Japan until this year. A debate needs to be sustained in how great the

differences between national codes of ethics and the IFLA code may be seen as culturally conditioned, or as a result of a politically dubious climate.

Ethical education should start at library schools and be continue with frequent training and intensive professional debates. Making colleagues aware of ethical obligations and the nature of these debates is very important.

In public librarians should promote their value. Identified as advocates of free access to information and freedom of expression, this can help their reputation might rise, and to take part in professional debates surrounding these fundamental values with related professions, partners, and the public as a whole. Particularly if freedom of access, privacy, or freedom of expression are threatened.

Given these core values, librarians and libraries should present the library as a space for uncontrolled thinking, as a meeting point where people from different social areas come together and as an unbiased place where citizens can get the information needed to participate in democratic processes and to control governments and authorities.

These qualities that evolve from the profession's ethical values and attitudes may strengthen the efforts of libraries and librarians to demonstrate the unique and indispensable services of libraries in the information society.