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Code of Ethics for Information Professionals in Portugal

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Associação Portuguesa de Bibliotecários, Arquivistas e Documentalistas (BAD), Associação para a Gestão da Informação (INCITE), Associação dos Profissionais da Documentação e Informação da Saúde (APDIS)

Code of Ethics for Information Professionals in Portugal

Preamble

This code considers as information professionals:

> *Documentalists, librarians, archivists, information and knowledge managers and others who mediate between the originators of content, information service providers, information users and information technologies.* (1)

The aims of this Code of Ethics are:

1. To serve as an instrument that will clarify and help information professionals in Portugal in making ethical decisions.
2. To give the users of Portuguese information services (libraries, archives, information services) the confidence that their rights are being respected by the professionals.
3. To present society with the undertaking to which the information professionals working in Portugal commit themselves in relation to the ethical values guiding their professional activities.
4. To help new members in the profession to integrate themselves in professional terms, succinctly expressing the values of the profession.

This code has been drawn up by the Commission of Ethics for Information Professionals in Portugal, based on the Protocol for the creation of this same Commission, signed by the presidents of the sector's three professional associations: BAD (Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists), INCITE (Portuguese Association for the Development of Scientific and Technical Information), APDIS (Portuguese Association of Health Documentation).

The publication of this Code of Ethics, which was adopted at a general meeting of information professionals on June 25th 1999, is the responsibility of the above-mentioned Professional Associations.

The concrete application of these principles will be supervised by the same Professional Associations.

Regardless of the necessary legal, civil or criminal proceedings, any disrespect shown by any professional for what is stated in this code will be punished by:

- Professional Caution
- Formal warning addressed to the respective employer

Each and every citizen has the responsibility to ask for clarifications and make complaints to the professional associations, seeking financial compensation from the employers if they have been victims of professional malpractice.

The Commission of Ethics for Information Professionals considers that the contents of this code may be updated and corrected in line with future professional requirements, but that the spirit of openness and respect for Human Rights must always be respected.

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Elements of the Code of Ethics

The various matters to be included in this code of ethics are:

1. Intellectual Freedom
2. Privacy of Users of Information services
3. Professionalism

Intellectual Freedom

Information professionals in Portugal are staunch defenders of access to information and make every effort to ensure that this attitude is matched by their continuously alerting people to all possible forms of censorship.

Information professionals in Portugal assume the following responsibilities as their own:

1. To facilitate the access of information service users to all manner of information published under any support whatsoever.
2. To build up collections suited to the information requirements of the users of information services, adopting a proactive attitude in order to ensure that these needs are foreseen even before they are expressed.
3. To make a selection of materials, in order to effect a balance between supply and demand, updating and preservation, the diversity of subjects and the necessary balance between different points of view.
4. To treat all information in such a way as to facilitate access thereto.
5. To afford access to the information is their services.
6. To make it explicit that, in defining the information policy of the services for which they are responsible, the main task of these services is to make information, of whatever kind, under whatever form of support, available to all users.
7. Not to permit any outside interference that may impede or hinder access to the information made available through their services.
8. Not to allow their own opinions interfere in the freedom of access to information.
9. To oppose the implementation of any solution that may limit or manipulate access to information
10. To draw up, participate in the preparation of, know about, support and publicise all legislation relating to the right of access to information without any interference whatsoever.

Information professionals consider that this code will further the integration into their professional activity of the human rights that they already respect. Information professionals in Portugal consider that is their duty to respect Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

> *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.* (2)

Privacy of Users of Information Services

Privacy is important in its own right. Information professionals in Portugal recognise the importance and singularity of each of the users of their services and thus respect their privacy as a right.

Information professionals in Portugal assume the following responsibilities as their own:

1. To use personal data only for the purposes for which they were collected.
2. To consider the following data as private: records of reading materials, loans, bibliographical consultations and any data that may identify the users of their services and their activities.
3. Not to publish data of a private nature, observing the security requirements to ensure that these data are not intercepted.
4. To guarantee tat records kept on paper or in computerised form are not left in places where they can be easily accessed or read by other users.
5. To take every precaution to ensure that the manipulation of and access to computerised records are only undertaken by authorised members of their services.
6. To guarantee that data on the reading habits or bibliographical interests of the users of their services are collected for the normal functioning thereof and that it is only possible to use these data for research or statistical purposes.
7. Not to inform any user of their services about the work undertaken by another user.
8. To consider any request for information that seeks to violate the privacy of a user as being improper and

statistical purposes.
7. Not to inform any user of their services about the work undertaken by another user.
8. To consider any request for information that seeks to violate the privacy of a user as being improper and abusive.
9. If pressurised for any reason into providing information of a private nature, information professionals may only do so with the prior written permission of the users who made this information available to them.

Information professionals in Portugal consider that it is their duty to respect Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

> *No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.* (3)

Professionalism

Information professionals in Portugal seek to perform their professional activities with the highest degree of professionalism.

Information professionals in Portugal assume the following responsibilities as their own:

1. To carry out their work competently and professionally.
2. To consider the sense of duty towards users of their information services as their central duty.
3. To raise public awareness of the possibilities inherent in the service which they provide and the other services that are available.
4. To seek to ensure continuous professional development, supporting colleagues who wish to do same.
5. To support all professional standards designed to foster professional competence.
6. To consider the information needs of the users of their services and of the general public as being above their own interests and those of the organisation for which they work.
7. To inform their employers, heads of service, colleagues and users of any conflicts of interest that may arise during their professional activity.
8. To contribute to the definition of a national information policy.
9. To promote, through their actions, public confidence in the correctness of their procedures and their professional efficiency.
10. To guarantee confidentiality about information inside the organisations for which they work. This undertaking continues beyond the end of their employment there.
11. To be aware of the exact nature and scope of their professional activity, not giving an image of themselves or of the organisation to which they belong that goes beyond their professional specificity.
12. To establish fair contracts, both with the users of their services and with suppliers thereof, in no way allowing their personal interests to benefit from these contracts.
13. To conduct their relations with the users of their services in an objective and impartial manner.
14. To ensure that the information supplied to the users is suitable, complete and clearly presented.
15. To accept responsibility for the quality of their work and for the consequences of any mistakes arising through their carelessness.
16. To provide the best information possible, in keeping with the needs of the users of their services, or to indicate the best service where these same users might find such information.
17. To acquire training that corresponds to the concrete needs of a good professional performance.
18. To consider that keeping themselves informed about the latest developments in their area is an essential part of their professional ethics.
19. To fill in the gaps in their training, maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of their professional practices, with an active attitude towards seeking knowledge of a professional nature.
20. To broaden the scope of research into information sciences.
21. To exchange information of a professional nature through professional associations, providing information, publishing articles, books or suggesting training schemes.
22. To support the participation of their colleagues in courses, seminars, conferences or any other activities that may broaden the scope of their professional knowledge.
23. To share their knowledge with other professionals and the users of their information services, in order to increase their professional efficiency.
24. To inform the public of the professional activities undertaken in this area.

In keeping with the respect that they have for the Universal Declarations of Human Rights, information professionals in Portugal undertaken to comply with this code of ethics in their professional activities.

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1. EEC Draft Helsinki Charter Conference on Freedom of Expression and Public Access, Helsinki, 10-11 June 1999
2. UNITED NATIONS – International Charter of Human Rights. Lisbon: United Nations Information Centre, 1993, p. 23.
3. UNITED NATIONS – International Charter of Human Rights. Lisbon: United Nations Information Centre, 1993, p. 22

1. EEC Draft Helsinki Charter Conference on Freedom of Expression and Public Access, Helsinki, 10-11 June 1999
2. UNITED NATIONS – International Charter of Human Rights. Lisbon: United Nations Information Centre, 1993, p. 23.
3. UNITED NATIONS – International Charter of Human Rights. Lisbon: United Nations Information Centre, 1993, p. 22