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## The librarians' code of ethics

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## Association des Bibliothécaires Français (ABF)

# The librarians' code of ethics

*Adopted by the national council of the French librarians' association Association des Bibliothécaires Français (ABS) on March 23rd, 2003*

### FRANÇAIS

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The librarian is assigned by the community, whether civil or private, to answer its needs in the fields of culture, information, education and leisure. He therefore builds up the public collections, and makes sure of their civic use and display. Conscious of his responsibilities and anxious to enforce the current laws and rules, he commits himself to respect the following principles, with regards to the users, to the collections, to his community and to his profession. This librarians' code of ethics, though being distinct from the documentary charter specific to each library, and from the charter of the superior council of the libraries, completes them both.

#### **1. The user**

The librarian is first and foremost in the service of the library users. The access to information and reading being a fundamental right, the librarian commits himself to:

- respect all the users
- provide each of them with the same services
- guarantee the confidentiality of the uses
- answer each request, or redirect it
- guarantee the necessary conditions of intellectual freedom by ensuring the freedom of reading
- ensure the users' free access to information, without allowing his own opinions to interfere
- allow the widest and most open access to free an equal information, without anticipating its subsequent use
- guarantee the users' autonomy, make them respect the documents, and promote self-education
- promote an open, tolerant and convivial conception of the library.

#### **2. The collection**

The librarian supports reflection by developing collections which fulfil the criteria of objectivity, impartiality, plurality of opinion. In order to do so, he commits himself, in the execution of his duties, to

- exercise no censorship whatsoever, guaranteeing the pluralism and intellectual encyclopaedism of the collections
- provide the users with all the documents necessary to their full and autonomous comprehension of the public debates, of the current events, of the great historical and philosophical issues
- enforce the laws and rules concerning the collections, as well as the law decisions, notably those forbidding the promotion of all kind of discrimination and violence, without substituting himself to the law
- guarantee the reliability of the information, work to their constant updating and accordance with the present state of the scientific knowledge
- organize the access to the sources of information in order to make them available, even from a distance, according to the current professional standards
- promote and highlight the collections, resources, services, respecting the strict neutrality of the civil service
- facilitate the free circulation of information.

#### **3. The administrative responsibility (civil or private community)**

Administrative responsibility defines a general policy, in its sphere of competence. Within these limits, the definition of the documentary policy, delegated to the librarian, is specified in a charter validated by the administrative responsibility. The librarian ensures its daily implementation in the respect to this code

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- the librarian takes part in the definition of the culture policy of his responsibility
- the librarian enforces the policy of his responsibility as long as this one does not go against the general laws, the specific and perennial missions of the library, as well as against the values defined in this code
- the librarian impresses upon his responsibility the necessities of professional training, as a trainee or as a trainer, and more particularly the necessities of his taking part in study days or trips, and in the statutory meetings of the professional associations. This participation is granted during the working time.
- The librarian gives his responsibility an account of the services and activities of his library, and evaluates them
- The librarian takes care of not yielding to the pressure of political, religious, ideological, union, or social groups which would try to influence the purchase policy by interdiction, intimidation, or compulsion, directly or through his responsibility.

#### **4. The profession**

Inside their professional body, the library staff show their solidarity. The librarian can thus find help and assistance, and provides his knowledge and experience. The librarian therefore

- contributes to the social usefulness of his profession
- does his job without allowing his personal opinions or interests to interfere
- expands his professional skills, trains himself and trains the others so as to maintain a high level of competence
- visits libraries, meets fellow librarians, including in foreign countries
- involves himself in professional life by joining professional associations, taking part in national and international congresses, and giving accounts of them
- publishes, and makes the reflection on the profession go forward by taking part in publications, meetings and study days
- encourages the cooperation, the mutualisation of tools, the belonging to cooperation pools and knowledge sharing networks
- seeks the improvement of the services through innovatory ways
- actively militates in favour of the recruitment and promotion of qualified staff
- widens and diversifies the publics
- gets professionally involved and integrates his library into the life of the city.

**(Translated from French by Marie- Hélène Maynard, Draguigan)**