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Code of Professional Conduct

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The Library Association

Code of Professional Conduct

Preface to The Library Association's Code of Professional Conduct

Why have a Code?
The Code of Conduct indicates the standards of behaviour expected of a member of the Association. It sets out, in general terms, the standards and duties which it is reasonable to expect a professional to observe. This can be used as a point of reference when dealing with disciplinary procedures against members. This is intended to protect the profession, individual practitioners, and their clients.

If you have a complaint
Complaints under the Code of Professional Conduct or the Bye-laws of The Library Association may be made by anybody, whether they are members of the Association or not. If you believe you have such a complaint, please write, in confidence to:

The Chief Executive, The Library Association,
7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

The Chief Executive will consider the complaint and seek the advice of the Disciplinary Committee's advisory panel before deciding to refer it to the full Disciplinary Committee of Library Association Council. Those complaints that are upheld following rigorous investigation may result in expulsion, suspension, reprimand, admonition and guidance on future behaviour.

Additional advice
We are happy to answer any queries concerning this document. If there is any section that you would like clarifying further, please contact The Library Association Chief Executive.

This Code of Professional Conduct was approved by Library Association Council and the Annual General Meeting in 1983, in accordance with The Library Association's Bye-law 45(a).

Please note the term 'librarian' throughout this document includes all library and information personnel, however styled.

A set of guidance notes on the Code is available on request from Information Services.

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1. Members of the Association must conduct themselves in such a way that their conduct would not be reasonably regarded by their professional colleagues within the field of librarianship (including the provision of information services) as serious professional misconduct or as professional misconduct. It is by this overall test that the conduct will be judged.
2. **a** Members must comply with the Charter and Bye-laws of the Association and the provisions of this Code of Conduct;

   b Members must not engage in conduct which may seriously prejudice the standing and reputation of the library profession or of The Library Association.

   c Members must be competent in their professional activities including the requirement
   (i) to keep abreast of developments in librarianship in those branches of professional practice in which qualifications and experience entitle them to engage;
   (ii) in respect of those members of the Association responsible for supervising the training and duties of another librarian, to ensure that those whom they supervise are trained to carry out their duties in a competent manner.

qualifications and experience entitle them to engage;
(ii) in respect of those members of the Association responsible for supervising the training and duties of another librarian, to ensure that those whom they supervise are trained to carry out their duties in a competent manner.

d Members' primary duty when acting in the capacity of librarian is to their clients, i.e. the persons or groups of persons for whose requirements and use are intended the resources and services which the members are engaged to provide. In all professional considerations the interests of the clients within their prescribed or legitimate requirements take precedence over all other interests. It is recognised that the persons or groups of persons to whom this duty is owed will vary according to the nature of the employment which members undertake. In particular it is recognised that different considerations will apply where members are working at a place to which the public has right of access from those where they are working in an environment where the public is excluded or given only limited access.

e In places to which the public has right of access, save where the flow of information must be restricted by reason of confidentiality, members have an obligation to facilitate the flow of information and ideas and to protect and promote the rights of every individual to have free and equal access to sources of information without discrimination and within the limits of the law.

f Members must fulfil to the best of their ability the contractual obligations owed to their employer. However circumstances may arise when the public interest or the reputation of the profession itself may be at variance with the narrower interests of an employer. If it is found to be impossible to reconcile such difference then public interest and the maintenance of professional standards must be the primary considerations.

g Members should not knowingly promote material the prime purpose of which is to encourage discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation. It shall not be regarded as promoting such material to divulge it for the purpose of studying the subject of that discrimination.

h (i) Members must not divulge or permit to be divulged any materials, information or administrative record (in manual or electronic form) which has been entrusted to them in confidence, to any third party nor use such information without the prior consent of the client for any purpose other than that for which it was first obtained. This duty to the client continues after the relationship of librarian and client ceases.
(ii) Members are absolved from the duty set out in sub-paragraph (i) above in so far as is required by law and in so far as it is necessary to answer accusations before the Disciplinary Committee.

i Members' actions and decisions should be determined solely by their professional judgement and they should not profit from their position otherwise than by normal remuneration or fee for professional services.

j Members must report the facts to the Secretary of The Library Association if convicted of any offence involving dishonesty or one which brings the profession into disrepute.

k Members must:
(i) respond to any requirements from the Disciplinary Committee for comments or information on a complaint;
(ii) attend the committee proceedings when required to do so, with such representation as is provided for in the Bye-Laws;
(iii) attend upon a nominated person for the purpose of receiving guidance as to future conduct if required to do so.

3. **a** Failure to comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 2, including the requirements relating to competence may, if proved before the Disciplinary Committee be regarded by it as serious professional misconduct and, if so, shall render the member concerned liable to be expelled or suspended (either unconditionally or subject to conditions) to be ordered to repay or forego fees and expenses as appropriate, or to be reprimanded and/or to be ordered to pay the costs of the hearing.

   b Failure to comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 2, which, in the opinion of the Disciplinary Committee, falls short of serious professional misconduct may, if proved, render the member liable to be admonished or to be given appropriate guidance as to his or her future conduct.

   c The provisions of Bye-Laws 44-46 shall apply.