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## Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals

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# **IFLA/ FAIFE**

## **Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals**

**Issued by: The Polish Librarians Association**

### **Introduction**

Basic moral values which define the professional mission of librarians and information professionals involve the protection of intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of access to knowledge, information and culture and the compliance with the principle of ideological, political and religious neutrality. Librarians and information professionals ought to be persons worthy of public trust, experts who mediate between readers and information users and written and information resources those users need to perform various tasks and attain their goals.

The code of ethics for librarians and information professionals defines basic principles binding for all representatives of the profession and identifying their social mission and ethical responsibility in all environments of their professional activity. The principles in question are divided into three groups. The first one involves principles of general relevance. Five subsequent sub-groups of the second group involve ethical standards defining the responsibility of the profession toward the public, library and information users, library and information resources, the professional community, employers and employing institutions. Third group involves obligations concerning the popularization of professional ethics and compliance with its principles.

## **PART ONE**

### **I. General principles**

1. Librarians and information professionals are members of the profession which is descended from the tradition of the librarian profession, the profession which is possessed of its own ethos, structure, associations, the system of professional education and recruitment. Librarians and information professionals accept duties resulting from the public mission characteristic of the librarianship and professional information services and they strive to shape and strengthen the positive image of their profession.
2. Librarians and information professionals' task is to recognize, satisfy and develop informational, educational, scientific, cultural, esthetic and entertainment needs of the users. Their particular duty is the creation of opportunities for free public access to national and international information resources as well as the preservation and public transmission of the cultural and scientific heritage.
3. Librarians and information professionals oppose the censorship and any forms of limiting access to information, knowledge and culture, referring to

3. Librarians and information professionals oppose the censorship and any forms of limiting access to information, knowledge and culture, referring to the rationality, common sense and the best professional practice.
4. Libraries and information centers are institutions of "public trust" whose motto is care for "the public good" in all fields of their activity. As far as the tasks and duties of their employing institutions and the usage of their collections and information resources are concerned, librarians and information professionals are obliged to offer services of the highest quality with equal diligence to all users.
5. While respecting the diversity of the users, librarians and information professionals are always guided by the principle of equal opportunities and respect for human rights, in particular the right to intellectual freedom and free access to knowledge, information and culture. They strive to learn ethical principles valid for groups they serve and cooperate with and try to respect them.
6. Librarians and information professionals respect users' right to privacy and discretion.
7. While working in libraries and information centers of public funding, librarians and information professionals strive to provide their basic information services free of charge, in particular the access to fully valuable materials of cognitive, utilizable or entertaining nature, within their institution, beyond it and in its digital space.
8. Librarians and information professionals respect the author rights and intellectual property rights.
9. While caring about the high quality of their services, librarians and information professionals continuously perfect their knowledge and skills and strive to employ all their professional competence in their professional activity.

## **PART TWO**

### **II. Librarians and information professionals toward the community**

1. Librarians and information professionals contribute through their work to the development of individuals as well as the whole community.
2. Librarians and information professionals actively disseminate in the community the awareness of the importance of knowledge and information as well as free access to them in order to improve the quality of life, the cultural and civilization development.
3. As far as their professional activity is concerned, librarians and information professionals never place the personal interest before the interest of the community.

### **III. Librarians and information professionals toward the user**

1. Irrespective of the character of their work, librarians and information professionals always work to the benefit of the user, respect him and

1. Irrespective of the character of their work, librarians and information professionals always work to the benefit of the user, respect him and strive to learn about his needs. Librarians and information professionals help users to access materials they search for, regardless of their content, carrier and access method involved.
2. Librarians and information professionals protect and keep secret all information concerning users, their interests and their personal data, using them only for the purposes defined by the law. Librarians and information professionals ensure to the users the freedom and privacy of using circulated/accessible resources.
3. Librarians and information professionals provide users with the best research/working conditions through the care taken of the high quality of research workspace, simple, understandable and logical organization of collected and circulated resources, informational materials prepared, requests for information answered and projects implemented. Librarians and information professionals care about the esthetic and functional value of their institutions, appropriate workstyle and friendly atmosphere.
4. Librarians and information professionals understand and respect the fact that not all users are equally capable of receiving information and using the library. They strive to equalize chances of such users, working with particular care to the benefit of the disabled and socially disadvantaged and supporting cultural (ethnic, national, religious, etc.) minorities. As the contributors to the process of children and youth education, librarians and information professionals strive to develop their information needs and reading culture.
5. Librarians and information professionals care about the high quality of services they offer, striving to exhaust all possibilities of satisfying user needs. Librarians and information professionals provide users with honest information on the full and actual scope of library services, the content of circulated collections and information resources, the quality of information tools employed and the possibilities of compensating limits to the available services through the cooperation of libraries and information centers.
6. Librarians and information professionals strive to provide users with clear, well-known information on the rules and regulations concerning the use of libraries and information centers, they avoid informal solutions that result in the creation of covert privileges. Librarians and information professionals attempt to offer their services to as many users as possible, yet they are entitled to refuse those who do not comply with the accepted principles, violate the rules or make other users feel uncomfortable.
7. In all their professional activities librarians and information professionals remain impartial and avoid any tendentious evaluation.
8. Assuming the servant role toward users,

information professionals remain impartial and avoid any tendentious evaluation.

8. Assuming the servant role toward users, librarians and information professionals treat all critique expressed by the users with respect and openness. Librarians and information professionals immediately and honestly answer to all complaints.

#### **IV. Librarians and information professionals toward library and information resources**

1. Librarians and information professionals respect all resources they are entrusted with. Not limiting access to them, they strive for the rational preservation and protection of library and information resources. Librarians and information professionals comply with the regulations on the use of computer hardware and software, including license agreements, and the netiquette. They care about the compliance with the regulations on the use of resources, in particular those which result from the operative copyright/author rights, not allowing for the production of illegal copies or alterations of original works.
2. To the best of their knowledge, librarians and information professionals strive to ensure the highest quality of information systems and services they use or create.
3. Librarians and information professionals adjust library and information resources of their institution to the needs of the public and their professional community, taking care of the appropriate standards of their content as well as continuous updates. As far as the choice and selection of resources is concerned, librarians and information professionals comply with the principle of impartiality, objective and competent evaluation, informing users on the accepted rules of resource development.
4. Aware of the varying value of library and information materials, librarians and information professionals strive to learn various methods of resource evaluation, taking into consideration the opinion of scientific and literary critics. While selecting and cataloging resources, they are guided by user needs and the principle of prioritizing the materials of the highest quality.
5. While acquiring, cataloging, organizing, selecting, evaluating and circulating library and information resources, librarians and information professionals resist all manifestations of discrimination and remain impartial; they strive to employ such tools for cataloging documents and organizing collections which preclude users from becoming prejudiced against any given texts or resources.
6. If some library materials or information resources are excluded from the public circulation due to their rarity, value, confidential or socially detrimental character, librarians and information professionals inform users on the existence of such materials in a given institution and state the rules and regulations on their use.

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## **V. Librarians and information professionals toward their colleagues and profession**

1. Librarians and information professionals work reliably, learn the best practices employed in the librarianship and information services, strive to perfect services offered to users. Librarians and information professionals conform to the code of practice of the employing institution.
2. Librarians and information professionals strive to become members of the team free of artificial hierarchy, authority and ritual but conforming to the principles of good work organization. Librarians and information professionals are aware that their work is a type of service which requires them to be scrupulous, punctual, orderly, tactful, well-groomed and well-mannered. Librarians and information professionals fully engage all their competence only in those fields of library and information services where their knowledge and skills are adequate.
3. Librarians and information professionals are guided by the positively understood principle of professional solidarity, caring about the positive image of their profession.
4. Respecting and understanding their colleagues' achievements, librarians and information professionals use exclusively substantive arguments in the discussion - also while talking to their subordinates and superiors. Remaining in the professional relationship does not free anyone from the conformance to the legal standards and professional ethics.
5. Caring about the continuous development of their skills and knowledge, librarians and information professionals strive to perfect their professional environment/community and the quality of services offered by their employing institutions and they support their colleagues, in particular their subordinates, in the development of their professional skills. Librarians and information professionals support their professional organizations and associations.
6. Librarians and information professionals in managerial positions assume a unique responsibility for their subordinates' compliance with the code of professional practice and ethics, personally setting a good example to their colleagues.
7. Building tools of access to library and information resources and creating information, librarians and information professionals care about the reliability, understandability, communicative value and precision of transmitted content as well as their own statements.

## **VI. Librarians and information professionals toward the employer**

1. Librarians and information professionals are loyal employees. They care about the good reputation

1. Librarians and information professionals are loyal employees. They care about the good reputation of their employing institution, they strive to create and consolidate the positive public image of their institution.
2. Librarians and information professionals strive to understand and deepen their knowledge of the tasks and goals of their employing institution and support them with their own activity.
3. Librarians and information professionals use the potential of their knowledge and professional skills, striving for the development of their employing institution and enhancement of its methodology, information resources and tools.
4. Librarians and information professionals have a right to expect, require and demand honest salaries adequate to their professional qualifications and work difficulty, although they should never make the quality of their work dependent on their salaries.
5. Librarians and information professionals avoid becoming involved in any unethical practices which may be suggested or recommended to them.

## **PART THREE**

### **VII. Final resolutions**

1. Librarians and information professionals in all their activities related to their profession comply with the principles of professional ethics defined in this Code.
2. Librarians and information professionals strive to deepen and popularize the awareness of ethical and legal aspects of library and information activity and services.
3. Librarians and information professionals resist the unethical behavior of members of their professional community.

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The original of this text was finally approved on February 2, 2005 by its Authors and the representatives of the Executive Board of the Polish Librarians Association: Jan Wołosz (Chair of the Board) and Elżbieta Stefańczyk (Secretary of the Board) after the inclusion of opinions expressed during the public debate on the subject.