Ethical Issues in Librarianship: An Annotated Bibliography

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This Web page states ALA’s position on intellectual freedom and the freedom to read. It is also a resource on censorship issues.


This ALA Web page states that librarians “are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information.” Adopted in 1995, this code provides eight ethical principles that guide librarianship.


Respected library educator Bunge discusses the obligations of the librarian to their patrons and to society and proposes guidelines to deal with ethical issues.


The author presents three recent ethical dilemmas in collection development, including issues regarding the use of online periodicals.

Hannabuss discusses ethical dilemmas from a library management perspective, especially regarding information products and services.


Stating that “(u)nhibited access to information is essential to freedom, equality, global understanding and peace,” the *Manifesto* asserts that “intellectual freedom is the right of every individual,…freedom of access to information…is the central responsibility of the library profession (and)… barriers to the flow of information should be removed….,”

At the 75th anniversary of the formation of IFLA, the organization “proclaims the fundamental right of human beings both to access and to express information without restriction.” The declaration defends international intellectual freedom as stated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.


Jones discusses the ethics of librarianship in terms of Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity.


Kranich, former president of the American Library Association, presents essays on “the impact that libraries have had on democracy.”


Papers presented at a conference at the University of Illinois GSLIS. Clifford Christians, in his keynote address, stated the central issue as this: “As technology and the human race seek to accommodate one another, only a refined sense of ethical conduct will give humanity the upper hand in the partnership.”

Severson, reference librarian and ethicist, gives an introduction to information ethics and a strategy for dealing with ethical issues.


This book arose from the International Federation of Library (IFLA)’s efforts at promoting an understanding of the global issues surrounding freedom of access to information, particularly censorship, privacy, intellectual property rights, and the information divide between rich and poor. International librarians discuss these issues from their country’s perspective.


Library Trends, 49, 486-510.

Many discussions on library ethics, especially those involving censorship, revolve around the idea of rights of patrons. The author argues that this may be too narrow and that a richer discussion is possible when librarians frame their ethical considerations in light of their role as teachers, “experts who instruct others on how to achieve the projects they have in mind.”


Intended as a library science textbook, the author, a professor at University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Science, presents case studies organized around building ethical relationships with colleagues, patrons, vendors, etc.