Introduction to Ethical Principles and Code of Professional Practice for Library and Information Professionals

Library and information professionals are frequently the essential link between information users and the information or piece of literature which they require. They therefore occupy a privileged position which carries corresponding responsibilities. In addition, whether they are self-employed or employed, their position is sometimes a sensitive one, which may impose a need to balance conflicting requirements.

The purpose of the Principles and Code which follow this introduction is to provide a framework to help library and information professionals, who are members of CILIP, to manage the responsibilities and sensitivities which figure prominently in their work in line with the enduring values of the profession. There is a statement of *Ethical Principles* and a more extended *Code of Professional Practice,* which applies these principles to the different groups and professionals to which our members must relate. The Code also makes some additional points with regard to professional behaviour. Both the Principles and the Code are consistent with the provisions set out by CEPLIS (Conseil Europeen des Professions Liberales) in their *Common Values of the Liberal Professions in the European Union (2007)*[1].

The Principles and Code should not be considered prescriptive but need to be reflected upon within the context of each different situation. Often a judgement will be required as to the balance between separate principles or items in the Code that may seem, on occasion, to pull in different directions. We all inhabit a grey world when it is rarely a simple case of right and wrong but rather one of finding an informed way forward in the light of all circumstances.

Given the diversity of the information profession, it is inevitable that not every statement in the *Code of Professional Practice* will be equally applicable to every member of CILIP. However, the *Ethical Principles* ought to command more general support, even though some members may not feel the force of each one of them to the same extent in their day-to-day practice. The Principles and Code assume that respect for duly enacted law is a fundamental responsibility for everybody and so such provision is not duplicated in the Principles and Code.

By the terms of its Royal Charter, CILIP has a responsibility to "the public good". It is therefore anticipated that our *Ethical Principles* and our *Code of Professional*

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[1] For this see http://www.ceplis.org/en/values.php

Practice may be of interest well beyond the immediate limits of the membership of CILIP, both to those whose work bears close comparison with ours, and also to those who may, from time to time, want a clear statement of our ethical principles and what we consider to be good professional practice.

Associated with these Principles and Code, there is a growing collection of practical examples, illustrating how information professionals and others can use the Principles and Code to help them cope with ethical dilemmas they may face. In further support of the Principles and Code, CILIP has established an Ethics Panel of experienced members of the profession, and they and the professional staff of CILIP are available to members who may need additional help in resolving ethical issues.

CILIP's Disciplinary Regulations provide that a Member will be guilty of professional misconduct if he/she has acted contrary to the aims, objects and interests of CILIP or in a manner unbecoming or prejudicial to the profession. In reaching decisions under the Disciplinary Procedure, regard will be had to the *Statement of Ethical Principles* and the *Code of Professional Practice* and Members should therefore be aware that a lack of regard for the Principles and Code may, depending on the circumstances, be a ground for disciplinary action.

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