



Ethical Framework

Clarifying notes

Commitment to Professional Ethics by CILIP Members

As an ethical Information Professional I make a commitment to uphold, promote and defend:

A1. Human rights, equalities and diversity, and the equitable treatment of users and colleagues

Human rights

"Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that belong to every single one of us, anywhere in the world. Human rights apply no matter where you are from, what you believe in, or how you choose to live your life". Amnesty International¹

The idea of human rights, particularly as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948), requires us all to recognise and acknowledge the humanity of others and to respect their rights.

Article 19 of the UDHR² appertains most closely to the information profession. This Article sets out rights of freedom of opinion, expression and access to information for all human beings.

As recognised by IFLA in its "Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers"³, the need to share ideas and information has grown more important with the increasing complexity of society and this provides a rationale for libraries and the practice of librarianship.

Equalities, equitable treatment, and diversity

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has equal opportunities, and is not treated less favourably on the basis of their specific "protected characteristics" or

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/what-are-human-rights> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

² <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

³ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

social background. Under the Equality Act (2010)⁴, protected characteristics include race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and age.

Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people, and placing a positive value on those differences. This is strongly linked with promoting human rights and freedoms, based on principles such as dignity and respect.

What does this mean for professional practice?

Library and information professionals should stand for diversity and challenge prejudice wherever it is found in the information, knowledge and library sector. We should uphold, promote and defend the contribution of a diverse workforce across and at all levels of the profession.

All members of our society should have equitable and ready access to knowledge, information, data and works of imagination appropriate to their needs, wants and aspirations.

A2. The public benefit and the advancement of the wider good of our profession to society

Public benefit

By the terms of its Royal Charter, the object of CILIP is “to work for the benefit of the public to promote education and knowledge through the establishment and development of libraries and information services and to advance information science”⁵. And as a registered charity, CILIP has to meet “the public benefit” requirement.

The “public benefit” in the context of the Ethical Principles is the good or well-being of society as a whole.

The wider good of the library and information professions

The wider good stemming from the provision of library and information services include benefits for health and wellbeing, literacy levels, education and job prospects, social inclusion and cohesion and economic prosperity.

What does this mean for professional practice?

CILIP members across all sectors should commit to working for the “public benefit” in all professional matters; that is striving to uphold, promote and defend the public interest and add public value through the services they provide.

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

⁵ <https://www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=RoyalCharter>

Library and information professionals work across more than 20 industry sectors, from advanced manufacturing to Government, SME's and the public sector. The services we provide *all* have the potential to add public benefit by contributing to the delivery of inclusive growth, economic diversification and social empowerment for everyone, which leads to increased public wellbeing.

A3. Preservation and continuity of access to knowledge

Preservation

"Preservation is the art of 'keeping safe', 'maintaining', 'retaining', and 'keeping alive'. Preservation, as it applies to library and archive collections, can be defined as 'all managerial, technical and financial considerations applied to retard deterioration and extend the useful life of (collection) materials to ensure their continued availability'". Eden, P. et al., 1998⁶

Access

Access is the opportunity or right to use the materials

What does this mean for professional practice?

Preservation is an ethical activity as decisions are made on what is saved, why it is saved, and how it is saved.⁷ Improperly handled documents could threaten to damage or even eliminate documentary heritage for future generations.⁸

While for some libraries preserving the collective memory is explicit in their mission, all library and information professionals should show an appropriate concern for the future information needs of society through the long term preservation of materials in all formats.

As recognised by IFLA in its *Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers*⁹, the core mission of library and information professionals is to ensure access to information for all, therefore due regard should also be given to ensuring continuity of access to preserved materials.

⁶ Eden, P. et al., 1998 cited in The British Library Preservation Advisory Centre., 2013 *Building a preservation policy*. London: The British Library

https://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/building_a_preservation_policy.pdf [Accessed 28 August 2018]

⁷ Berger, S., 2009. The evolving ethics of preservation: Redefining practices and responsibilities in the 21st century. *The Serials Librarian*, 57(1), pp57-68.

⁸ Cox, R. J., Middleton, A., Rohrbaugh, R.G., & Scholzen, D., 2009. A different kind of archival security: Three cases. *Library and Archival Security*, 22(1), pp33-60

⁹ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

A4. Intellectual freedom, including freedom from censorship

Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual freedom is the right to access and share information, to intellectual activity and creativity, to expression and debate.

Censorship

Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons find objectionable or dangerous on political, religious or moral grounds.

What does this mean for professional practice?

A fair and prosperous democratic society is built upon access to information and ideas, and upholding, promoting and defending this access is a core mission of library and information professionals.

When a library and information service is funded by the public it should provide access to all publically available information as far as resources allow. Access should not be restricted on any grounds except that of the law. The legal basis of any restriction should always be stated.

Within a knowledge economy information assets are business critical to many businesses and other independently funded organisations. These assets provide competitive advantage, contribute to profit and help them meet their objectives. Access may be restricted on grounds such as commercial interest. Such organisations should manage their information within an appropriate regulatory and ethical framework.

A5. Impartiality and the avoidance of inappropriate bias

Impartiality

The unbiased, equal treatment of others.

Inappropriate bias

Value judgments that are not suitable or proper in the circumstances.

What does this mean for professional practice?

Library and information professionals should strive to be impartial and avoid inappropriate bias when acquiring and evaluating information and mediating it to other information users. We should avoid inappropriate bias wherever possible in

the provision of services, and we should be transparent about, and accountable for, our professional judgements.

A6. The confidentiality of information provided by clients or users and the right of all individuals to privacy

Privacy

Privacy is a fundamental *human right* recognized in the UN Declaration of *Human Rights* (Article 12)¹⁰, European Convention on Human Rights (Article 8)¹¹ and in many other international and regional treaties. *Privacy* underpins *human* dignity and other key values such as freedom of association and freedom of speech.

The UK incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into the Human Rights Act (1998)¹². This includes the Right to respect for Private and Family Life (article 8) and Freedom of Expression (Article 10).

The right to privacy can only be limited by law when it is necessary to do so in a democratic society for reasons such as national security, public safety, the prevention of crime or protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Any limitation on this right must be proportionate.

Confidentiality

The state of keeping or being kept secret or private

What does this mean for professional practice?

As recognised by IFLA in its *Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers*¹³, library and information professionals should respect personal privacy, and the protection of personal data necessarily shared between individuals and institutions.

The relationship between the library and the user is one of confidentiality and appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that user data is not shared beyond the original transaction without their consent. Article 4 (11) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 defines valid consent as:

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

¹¹ https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf [Accessed 28 August 2018]

¹² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/schedule/1>

¹³ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

*"Any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes by which he or she, by a statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to him or her"*¹⁴

The Information Commissioners Office has issued practical guidance for UK organisations on consent under the GDPR.¹⁵

A7. The development of information skills and information literacy

Information skills

The ability to access and retrieve required information.

Information literacy

"The ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society". CILIP, 2018¹⁶

What does this mean for professional practice?

The development of information skills and information literacy are central for information professionals as we create, curate and enable the use of diverse types of information in an ethical manner, and we have a crucial role in advocating for these skills.

Information Literacy is needed in the following contexts:

- Education
- The Workplace
- Health
- Citizenship
- Everyday life

These five areas are explained in *The CILIP Definition of Information Literacy 2018*¹⁷

¹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679&from=EN> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

¹⁵ <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/consent/> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

¹⁶ <https://infolit.org.uk/ILdefinitionCILIP2018.pdf> [Accessed 28 August 2018]

¹⁷ Ibid

Code of Professional Conduct

At all times I will work to uphold and advance:

B1. The reputation of the profession

The public's trust and confidence in the library and information profession, and the reputation of the profession generally, can be undermined by a library and information professional's conduct. We should have regard to our professional standing at all times.¹⁸

B2. The currency and relevancy of my skills

Maintaining the currency and relevancy of our skills is important as it ensures we continue to be competent professionals.

Continuing professional development is our personal responsibility, as it is the responsibility of all professionals. By keeping our skills current and relevant we are best placed to deliver a high quality service that safeguards the public and meets the expectations of users. This also helps to uphold and advance the reputation of the library and information profession.

B3. Engagement with, and learning from, colleagues, my professional bodies, and those in other related professions

By "engagement with" we mean fostering positive relationships and setting up partnerships to achieve similar goals. By "learning from" we mean being respectful of the experience and expertise of all those we meet in a professional capacity and being open to acquiring new skills and knowledge from them.

B4. Integrity in the management of information, human and financial resources

As set out in the "Seven principles of public life" (the Nolan Principles), by "integrity" we mean avoiding placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence us in our management of information, human and financial resources. We should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.¹⁸

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--> [Accessed 28 August 2018]