

WV PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTORS BOOT CAMP

# ETHICS AND THE LIBRARIAN

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*That's a central part of philosophy, of ethics. What do I owe to strangers? What do I owe to my family? What is it to live a good life? Those are questions which we face as individuals.*

- Peter Singer

# What is Ethics?

(i)

- Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. The term comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means "character".
- In general, ethics is the philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular issues activities in private and public life that are matters of moral judgment.

# What is Ethics?

(ii)

- Business ethics (also corporate ethics) is a form of applied ethics or professional ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that arise in a business environment. It applies to all aspects of business conduct and is relevant to the conduct of individuals and entire organizations.
- Ethical codes are established for those professional which require a high level of ethical practice.

# Professions with ethical conduct codes

- Just about any....including:
  - Physicians (Hippocratic Oath)
  - Nurses
  - Lawyers
  - Educators
  - Accountants/Auditors
  - **Librarians**

# The ALA Code of Professional Ethics

- Adopted in 1939. Last amended January 22, 2008.
- Recognizes that ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict.
- The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.
- Recognizes that librarians significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. The code recognizes that In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, library workers are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. Librarians have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.
- Only provides a basic ethical framework for the provision of service

# The ALA Code

(i)

- I. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
- II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
- III. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

# The ALA Code

(ii)

- IV. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
- V. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
- VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.

# The ALA Code

(iii)

- VII. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
- VIII. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

# Unethical conduct

- Robbing or embezzlement of public monies intended for library service.
- Deciding what information or service a user is to receive based on personal biases on the subject or towards the user or anything the user may, in your mind, represent.
- Deciding what should go into the collection based on your own personal interests or biases.
- Not taking actions to insure that the library collection is not fully accessible.
- Not clearly delineating between your own person opinions and that of the parent body (the library)
- Disrespectful treatment of peers, subordinates, superiors, and particularly those being served.
- Unfair treatment in personnel actions.
- Laziness, when it ultimately hurts the user and the institution.

# On ethical conduct in library practice....

*It takes a special breed of person to work in the library field. The bottom line is they are willing, basically, to throw their life on the line in practicing the Code of Ethics and defending its basic tenets of privacy, equality, professionalism, excellence in service, and improving humanity, or not.*

*Those that aren't need to get off at the next station.*

- Gordon Coleman

*Questions?*

# WRAP UP!

- Slides will be available soon.
- Questions?
- Parting thoughts?

**THANK YOU!!!**

