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ETHICS IN RESEARCH AND THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS TO OVERCOME ETHICAL CHALLENGES

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Ethics in Research and the Role of Librarians to Overcome Ethical Challenges

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Abstract – "Ethics or simple honesty is the building blocks upon which our whole society is based…"

Kerry Stokes

The philosophical examination from a moral standpoint that is matters of moral judgment may be called ethics in general terms. We therefore strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing both- our skills and knowledge. Ethics is a code of values which guide our choices and actions and determine the purpose of our lives.

The present paper aims to highlight on ethics in research which are partially associated with standards related to the research process, highlighting the role of the librarians to overcome ethical challenges.

Keywords: Ethics, Research, Codes, Challenges, Librarianship.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethics is studying and talking about what is right and wrong, good or bad. It is also studying what makes something good or bad. This helps decide whether other things are good or bad. Understanding ethics can help people decide what to do when they have choices. Many philosophers think that doing anything or making any choice is a part of ethics. Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. Ethics derived from the Greek word "ethos" which means "way of living", it is concerned with human conduct, more specifically the behavior of individuals in society.

In other words; ethics may be defined as the norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. 'Research ethics' refers to a complex set of values, standards and institutional schemes that help constitute and regulate scientific activity. The ethical responsibilities inherent in research are partly associated with standards related to the research process, including relationships between researches, and partly with respect for the individuals and institutions being studies, including responsibility for the use and dissemination of the research.

There are four moral principles which constitute the basis for ethics in research

1. The Principles of Non- malfeasance: Research must not cause harm to the participants in particular and to people in general.

2. The Principle of Beneficence: Research should also make a positive contribution towards the welfare of people.

3. The Principles of Autonomy: Research must respect and protect the rights and dignity of participants.

4. The Principles of Justice: The benefits and risks of research should be fairly distributed among people.

It is important to conduct research with ethical standards for a number of reasons

A. It respect and cause no harm to the participants.

B. It promote the aims of research and avoid error.

C. It promote the values that are essential for collaborative work. In other word, it involves a great deal of co- operation and coordination

among many different people in different disciplines.

D. Research involving human being, including using questionnaires and focus groups, must be passed by a committee whose job is to confirm that the research conforms to a set of ethical guidelines.

E. It also promote a variety of other important social values, such as social responsibility, compliance with the law, health and safety, human rights and animal welfare.

CODES AND POLICIES

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. These are as follow:-

1. We provide the highest level of services to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.

2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

3. 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.

4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.

5. 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.

6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.

7. We distinguish between our personal conviction 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.

8. 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.

IFLA recommends the code of ethics for IFLA to all its member association and institutions and to individual librarians and information workers for these purposes

Access to information

The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy.

To this end, librarians and other information workers reject censorship in all its forms, support provision of services free of cost to the user, promote collections and services to potential users, and seek the highest standards of accessibility to both physical and virtual services.

Responsibilities towards individuals and society

In order to promote inclusion and eradicate discrimination, librarians and other information workers ensure that the right of accessing information is not denied and that equitable services are provided for everyone whatever their age, citizenship, political belief, physical and mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, in- come, immigration and asylum – seeking status, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.

To enhance access for all, librarians and other information workers support people in their information searching, assist then to develop their reading skills and information literacy, and encourage them in the ethical use of information.

Privacy, secrecy and transparency

Librarians and other information workers respect personal privacy, and the protection of personal data, necessarily shared between individuals and institutions. At the same time they support the fullest possible transparency for information relating to public bodies, private sector companies and all other institutions whose activities affect the lives of individuals and society as a whole.

Open access and intellectual property

Librarians and other information workers' interest is to provide the best possible access for library users to information and ideas in any media or format, whilst recognizing that they are partners of authors, publishers and other creators of copy right protected works. Librarians and other information workers seek to ensure that both users' rights and creators' rights

are respected. They promote the principles of open access, open sources, and open licenses.

Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills

Librarians and other information workers are strictly committed to neutrality and an unbiased stance regarding collection, access and service. They seek to acquire balanced collection, apply fair service policies, avoid allowing personal conviction to hinder the carrying out of their professional duties, combat corruption and seek the highest standards of professional excellence.

Colleague and employer/ employee relationship

Librarians and other information workers treat each other with fairness and respect. To this end they oppose discrimination in any aspect of employment because of age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation. They support equal payment for equal work between men and women, share their professional experience, and contribute towards the work of their professional associations.

Ethics in LIS research

The word information ethics was first used by Robert Hauptman in the book "Ethical challenges in librarianship." Libraries are repositories for humanity's knowledge; they are our past, our present, and our future. They are much more than a storehouse for books; and include many other forms of data. The information available in libraries must be accessible to all people, regardless of education, age, or economic status. Library professionals play an important role in society. Their mission is to provide required information to the members of society. Just like other professional, library professionals would like to carry out their mission in an ethical manner. And, like other professionals, they regularly face ethical dilemmas. Some of the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals have arisen because of advances in information technology.

Retrieve of particular information requires specialized knowledge and librarians need to share that knowledge with users, instructing them on how to use electronic resources. Librarians also need to make sure that the information and services offered to users are current, timely, and of the highest quality possible. The user is relying on the information to be accurate and from a reliable source.

There are some ethical challenges in librarianship

1.   Censorship

2.   Privacy

3.   Access to information

4.   Selection and collection of information

5.   Copy right

6.   Fair use

7.   Codes of ethics

8.   Problem patrons

We have shared a responsibility to design our research carefully, using reliable methods to gather and analyses data, so that we have confidence in the validity of our findings. We also have a responsibility to treat our human subject with respect and justices. LIS researches must pay attention of principles of ethics i.e. principle of anonymity and principle of confidentiality which means data are handled carefully, so that information regarding people and institutions cannot be used in ways that would harm them. Ethics should be applied on all stages of research, such as planning, conducting and evaluating a research project.

In other words, to deal effectively with these ethical dilemmas, library professionals need to have a good knowledge of information ethics. Codes of ethics can help to provide such knowledge, but they are not sufficient. Courses on information ethics should be part of the education of library professionals.

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