Librarians' code of ethics: fundamental principles

[Italian version]

0. Scope of application

0.1. This is a code of ethics: it binds librarians as professionals and it is not a code of legal provisions.

0.2. The code of ethics embodies the foundations of the autonomy of the library profession in that it indicates, given the consent of its practitioners, the principles to be followed autonomously and responsibly in their professional activities.

0.3. The code of ethics establishes the librarians' duties towards users, documents (interpreted as duties towards their authors, towards their users, also potential and future, and towards those who contributed to their production and transmission) and the profession.

0.4. The members of the Italian Library Association (AIB) are obliged to comply with the code, which is a guarantee of the professional behaviour of its members towards other parties. Moreover, the code binds, within the applicable limits, also "friends" members of AIB.

0.5. The code also aims to serve as a guidance for all librarians and for all the people and the institutions that, for whatever reason and whatever job they have, operate in or for libraries or other similar or related bibliographic, documentary or information institutions or services.

1. Duties towards users

1.1. Librarians shall provide users with access to publicly available documents and to the information contained therein without any restriction and shall uphold the principle of their free accessibility.

1.2. The information supplied by librarians shall be as complete and impartial as possible, not conditioned by librarians' personal opinions and values or by external pressures.

1.3. In the management of the library and in the services to the public, librarians shall not accept any discrimination or conditioning related to the characteristics, opinions or orientations of users or of any other subject directly or indirectly involved in library activities.

1.4. Librarians shall reject and oppose any form of censorship of the documents that they collect, organize and make accessible and of the information they themselves provide to users.

1.5. It is not the duty of librarians, unlike other figures (such as parents, teachers, researchers, critics and booksellers), to control or limit – except for specific legal obligations – the access to documents by under age users, or – in general – to express positive or negative evaluations on the documents requested, used or made available to the public. Librarians can provide instructions and advice on the most effective tools and methods for the search, the selection and the evaluation of documents and information, but they refrain from giving advice in professional fields other than their own.

1.6. Librarians shall promote users' development of autonomous critical competencies related to the search, comprehension, selection and evaluation of documentary and information sources.

1.7. Librarians shall guarantee the confidentiality of users, of the information they requested or received or that in any way concerns them and of the sources used.

1.8. Librarians, in the conduct of their profession, shall not be in a position of conflict of interest or place their own private interests above the library's and its users' interests.

2. Duties towards documents

2.1. Librarians commit themselves to select, collect (through ownership or access), preserve, protect and enhance publicly available documents and the information contained therein, promoting the accessibility, the dissemination and the development of knowledge.

2.2. Librarians commit themselves to guarantee the transmission of recorded knowledge and of any form of recorded expression, through the rational organization and management of documents and information, by acting impartially and with professional culture.

2.3. Librarians, conscious of the global context in which they operate, commit themselves to promote the integration of information systems and the removal of the organizational, cultural, technological, economic and geographical obstacles which hinder the circulation of information, of documents and of knowledge.

2.4. Librarians shall promote a proper balance between the right of accessing information by users and the rights, both ethical and legal, of authors and publishers. They commit themselves to promote, in particular, the ethical use of information and the fight against any form of plagiarism.

3. Duties towards the profession

3.1. Librarians shall honour the profession, aware of its fundamental social utility, committing themselves – individually and in association – so that it is recognized and respected by citizens and institutions.

3.2. It is the duty of librarians to promote, individually and in association, the autonomy and efficiency of library service, as a tool of democracy and freedom.

3.3. Librarians shall possess a broad and in-depth professional culture, thanks to which they provide users with high-quality service, ensuring the efficiency of performances and pursuing optimal use of resources.

3.4. Librarians' professional competencies shall be constantly updated, also through participation in associations and organizations in the field.
Approved on 12 May 2014 in Turin by AIB’s General assembly in replacement of The librarian’s code of conduct: fundamental principles which was approved on 30 October 1997 in Naples by AIB’s General assembly. The new text was prepared by the Working group on the review of the code of ethics appointed by AIB’s National executive board in October 2013, with the integration of some of the proposals for amendments emerged during the public discussion that took place online between January 31 and February 22, 2014 and during AIB’s General assembly held in Rome on 1 March 2014.

Translation from Italian to English by Juliana Mazzocchi, revised by AIB’s Working group on the review of the code of ethics (Ornella Foglieni, Alberto Petrucciani, Aldo Pirola, Carlo Revelli, Riccardo Ridi) and by AIB’s National executive board, August-December 2014.


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