

SLIDE 1.1

Alternative Basic Library Education Course 12: Ethics and Public Service

SLIDE 1.2

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This course is designed for members of the library community who have no formal library training. You will learn about the fundamental principles of the library profession. Other courses in this series include the reference interview, evaluating reference sources, and basic reference tools.

This course is divided into nine sections, which include information, links to explore and a self-evaluation test. The course takes approximately 2 hours to complete. You can stop and re-enter the course at anytime.

During the course you will be prompted to explore links to external websites. If you click on one of these, a new window will open. When you are ready to return to the course, just close that window. Download the script and other tools found under the Resources Tab.

After you complete the final examination, you will be prompted to access a course survey which will allow you to print your own certificate of completion for the course.

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In this course, you will learn about the following principles of the library profession:

- Lesson 1: Professional Ethics
- Lesson 2: Equitable Access
- Lesson 3: Intellectual Freedom
- Lesson 4: Privacy and Confidentiality
- Lesson 5: Intellectual Property Rights
- Lesson 6: Respect, Fairness, and Good Faith
- Lesson 7: Private Interests & Personal Beliefs
- Lesson 8: Professional Development
- Lesson 9: Diversity and Inclusion

Click on a course section to further explore the topic of ethics and public services. It is recommended to go through the course sequentially so you don't overlook any category.

SLIDE 2.1

Lesson 1: Professional Ethics. What is ethics?

SLIDE 2.2

Ethics is defined as “the body of moral principles or values governing, or distinctive of, a particular culture or group.”

Why do ethics matter? Ethics affect behavior. Responsible behavior, regardless of personal biases, is the result of adhering to values or ethics. While most people have personal ethics that affect their daily behavior, there are also ethics in the workplace.

Librarianship is a profession and like most professions has its codes of ethics, that is, a shared set of principles and fundamental values that serve as guidelines for professional conduct. For example, doctors, lawyers, social workers, and teachers all subscribe to their own code of ethics.

It is important to understand the ethics of your profession or workplace, as they provide a background, or framework, for creating policies, procedures, and guidelines which influence day to day activities.

If you are in a position to create policies or procedures, understanding the ethics of the workplace will ensure that those policies and procedures are reasonable ones.

If you are not a policy maker, understanding the ethics, or values, that shape library policies will help you be more effective in carrying out your responsibilities.

How ethical issues are handled will vary according to the type of library in which you work, the community your library serves, and your library’s governance and administrative structures. School, public, academic, and special libraries all have issues that are unique to their particular library communities. It is important to have policies, procedures, and guidelines in place to address these issues.

SLIDE 2.3

The American Library Association’s Code of Ethics lists the fundamental principles of the library profession. The Code of Ethics is a document that translates the values of intellectual freedom that define our profession into broad statements, as follows:

1. 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.
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.

SLIDE 2.4

6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. 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.
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.
9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

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This code of ethics was first adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council. It was amended in 1981, 1995, 2008, and 2021.

You can find the ALA's Code of Ethics and information about the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), which is responsible for updating the code, at ALA's website.

SLIDE 3.1

Lesson 2: Equitable Access.

SLIDE 3.2

Let's take a look at the first article again:

"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."

Equitable access is central to library services. From an ethical standpoint, the library is obligated to offer equitable services and accurate, friendly, and unbiased responses to questions. Library policies should also be written with equity in mind. All patrons who walk into the library, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, should receive service to meet their needs.

Equity refers to fair and equal treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people.

Although equity and equality are related, they refer to different concepts:

- Equality ensures that all are afforded the same treatment, the same chances, the same resources, etc.
- Equity ensures that all obtain what they need to succeed.

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Equity recognizes that people have circumstances beyond their control. Barriers to equal access could include race, disability, lack of money or access to equipment or training.

Libraries help ensure that people can access the information they need – regardless of age, origin, background, views, socioeconomic status, physical limitations, or geographic barriers. Good library staff members will use their professional and social skills to welcome patrons and put them at ease.

SLIDE 3.3

Some examples of equitable access include:

- A college or university library making textbooks available for checkout so students who cannot afford to purchase the books can still have access to them.
- In parking lots, the parking spaces closest to building entrances are reserved for people with mobility issues, allowing them to have equitable access to the library's facilities.

Libraries are continually thinking of new ways of providing equitable service to meet their patrons' needs. As a part of the library, you should be thinking about it as well.

The hallmark of professional service is according all patrons the same level of courtesy, respect, and library service whether in person, by phone, or via email. If you are in charge of the physical layout of the library, make sure aisles are free of obstacles so someone using a wheelchair can get through. If you work on the library's website, it is important to make sure that it is fully accessible and compatible with screen-reading software, such as JAWS or Eye-Pal.

The library belongs to everyone, so equitable access is foundational to library work.

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Here are some additional resources for learning more about access in libraries:

- Access to Library Resources and Services (ALA)
- Resources to help libraries build the capacity for better service to patrons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH); DeafBlind; Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI) (ICfL)
- Accessibility (WC3)
- Reducing Barriers to Library Access with Fine Free Policies (ICfL)

SLIDE 4.1

Lesson 3: Intellectual Freedom

SLIDE 4.2

Okay, let's move on to Article 2, which states:

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

ALA defines intellectual freedom as "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored."

Intellectual freedom encompasses the freedom to hold, receive and disseminate ideas. It is a core value of the library profession and a cornerstone of democracy.

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Censorship is a change in the access status of material, based on the content of the work and made by a governing authority or its representatives. Such changes include exclusion, restriction, removal, or age/grade level changes.

A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view, rather they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others.

Banning is the removal of those materials.

Libraries play a leading role in promoting intellectual freedom by making all types of information available in an organized manner. In addition, libraries support literacy and the individual's right to read.

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Requests to ban or remove books from collections do happen and it is important for libraries to be prepared. The most important way to prepare is to have a written collection development policy approved by the library's governing authority – either the library board or the school board – that discusses what to do in case of a challenge. The American Library Association has a webpage dedicated to supporting libraries during a challenge process, which contains guidelines, policy toolkits, and advice on how to respond to challenges.

The library should have specific procedures for handling challenges. All public service staff members should be acquainted with the policies and trained in the procedures to follow when a challenge is made. Remember, anyone has the right to express a concern and the person filing the challenge should be treated with respect. Be sure to explain the library's policies and procedures for submitting a formal challenge and hand a copy of the library's collection development policy and request for reconsideration form to the person wishing to make the challenge. Once you have done so, it is important to say nothing more on the topic.

The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) encourages all challenges be reported through their online form. All reports made through the form are confidential and anyone can make a report. The OIF also provides confidential support during censorship challenges to library materials, services, and programs.

You may also wish to enlist the support of local organizations. In fact, if local civic, religious, educational, and political organizations and the local media understand your selection and service policies, they may be more supportive when a challenge does occur.

I urge you to do everything possible to retain library materials that meet the standards established in the library's collection development policy. In order to ensure intellectual freedom, it is important not to restrict or remove any materials until a decision has been made by the library director or the director's designee.

While many of these steps indicate action that needs to be taken by the library director, quite often library staff members working with the public will be the first to hear complaints or whispers of a challenge. It may not be your responsibility to follow through with the response, but your understanding of the library's selection and service policies and procedures will help make certain that the challenge is addressed in a professional and timely manner.

If you are not sure about the policies and procedures of your library, consult with your library's policy manual to learn about them. Your library director or department head can answer your questions about these policies.

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Article five of the Library Bill of Rights states:

"A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views."

The right to use a library includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials and facilities the library has to offer. Some public libraries have procedures and practices making it difficult to gain access to materials by putting them in special areas that limit their use.

Any situation restricting access creates a barrier for patrons. Barriers may be related to language or be psychological in nature. For example, traditionally some restricted materials have dealt with controversial or sensitive subjects. Patrons may be reluctant to ask for these materials because they are intimidated or embarrassed. Another barrier for patrons can be language if a person has difficulty communicating with the library staff because of language skills.

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Some materials are kept in separate areas in order to protect the materials – specifically for physical preservation which can include protection from theft and mutilation. This is usually done with materials that have lasting value and cannot be replaced if they are stolen or defaced. Older materials with historical value are often housed in separate collections.

Children are often denied access to certain services and materials that are available to adults. Restrictions can take a variety of forms, such as: library cards that limit circulation of some materials to adults only, collections for adults only, collections restricted according to a student's grade level, and interlibrary loan service for adults only.

Remember, materials appropriate to meeting the needs and interests of each library user must be determined on an individual basis. Library staff cannot predict what resources will satisfy the needs of any child based on a single fact such as age or school grade.

Libraries should not restrict access to collections and services for children in order to avoid controversy or objections from parents. Neither should staff in public libraries overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents.

A public library's policies should state that only parents have the right and responsibility to restrict the access of their children (and only their children) to library resources.

A school library may have more latitude in this area depending on the policies set forth by the school board.

While good, clear policies and procedures won't keep challenges from occurring, they are essential to help you and your staff deal with them.

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A quick note before moving on about internet access and filtering. Internet access in libraries is a bit controversial, especially as it relates to minors. In 2000, Congress passed the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), requiring

public libraries to install filters on computers in order to block websites that contain offensive materials. This requirement is a condition of receiving federal funds and E-rate funding.

While the intent of the law is to protect children from pornography, most people in the library profession view the law as a violation of our professional ethics, contending that by censoring information the law violates the principles of equal access for all and intellectual freedom. In addition, because no filter is perfect, some legitimate websites will be blocked. In addition, these filters are designed to detect keywords, not images.

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All libraries should have internet use policies, just as they have policies for other library services and collections. If you are creating a policy or updating one, evaluate it in light of the library's mission statement as well as your other access policies, such as those for circulation and reference service. Your policy may also need to be revised because of the U.S. Supreme Court decisions on the Children's Internet Protection Act.

The American Library Association suggests the following considerations:

- Ensure that policies speak to access for all.
- Involve your library staff, board, and Friends group in the policy writing process.
- Keep it simple. Avoid jargon. Making the policy too technical will confuse people.
- Make policies readily available and visible to the public.
- Provide an up-to-date code of conduct or etiquette guide for using the internet at your library; include specific suggestions for positive action. List prohibited behavior and the consequences.
- Provide a statement addressing patron privacy.
- Communicate clearly that users are responsible for what they access online; parents are responsible for their children's internet use.
- Update your policy regularly; make sure it reflects the Supreme Court CIPA decisions.

For more information visit the ALA's Libraries and the Internet Toolkit.

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Restrictions to internet use might include limits on the amount of time allowed per day and/or the number of pages printed per session.

A statement of prohibited activities should include viewing obscenity or child pornography, unauthorized copying of copyrighted or protected materials, propagation of computer viruses, vandalism or reconfiguration of workspaces, and any other illegal activities.

Be aware that the Children's Internet Protection Act has internet safety policy requirements for libraries that receive federal funds for internet connectivity.

You may not be the person responsible for creating an internet policy for your library. However, if your library does not have an internet policy posted and you do not know if there is one, check with your library director, school principal, or the governing board to find out if one exists, and if not, what can be done to create one.

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Here are some resources for further reading on intellectual freedom and censorship:

- Intellectual Freedom: Issues and Resources (ALA)
- ICfL's Trustees and Directors page (Idaho Commission for Libraries).
- Filters and Filtering (ALA)
- Internet Manifesto (ALA)

If you would like to see an example of a collection development policy that states its selection criteria, take a look at the Collection Policy of the Ames [Iowa] Public Library.

SLIDE 5.1

Lesson 4: Privacy and Confidentiality

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Article 3 states:

“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 right to privacy – the right to read, consider, and develop ideas and beliefs free from observation or unwanted surveillance – is the bedrock foundation for intellectual freedom. Privacy is essential to free inquiry in the library because it enables library users to select, access, and consider information and ideas without fear of embarrassment, judgment, publication, or ostracism. A lack of privacy in the library can have a significant and chilling effect upon library users' willingness to exercise their First Amendment right to read, impairing access to ideas.

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While privacy and confidentiality go hand in hand, there are some differences in their meanings. While privacy focuses on the rights of users, confidentiality is the responsibility of the library.

Confidentiality exists when a library is in possession of personally identifiable information about patrons and keeps that information private on their behalf. The responsibility of confidentiality is assumed when libraries require or keep records such as browsing history, interlibrary loan slips, computer sign-up sheets, or research notes.

What is “personally identifiable information?” It is information that not only identifies a particular person but also tells something about that person. For example, what books someone checks out. In libraries, there are many forms of personally identifiable information used daily, including circulation records, computer sign-up sheets, and overdue or reserve notices.

Libraries try their best to limit the amount of personally identifiable information that is collected, monitored, disclosed, retained and transmitted while fulfilling their duty to comply with their state's library confidentiality statute.

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Here are three practices a library can adopt to reduce the risk of having patrons' personal information disclosed:

1. Evaluate the information collected about individuals and request only what is absolutely necessary. For example, the library has no legitimate reason to request a patron's Social Security Number and storing this information may turn out to be a legal liability for the library. The patron's driver's license number and date of birth are sufficient for identification purposes.
2. Know the legal requirements for keeping this information and destroy it as soon as possible. If you are in Idaho your ICfL Area Field Consultant can answer your public records questions.
3. All staff members should be aware of their privacy and confidentiality responsibilities. Only appropriate paid staff members need to have access to patron records. Volunteers cannot be held to the same privacy standards as paid staff and so do not perform circulation duties, except for shelving.

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Library staff have an obligation to protect the privacy of patrons and keep their information needs confidential. Frequently, it is necessary to consult with other staff members when conducting circulation and reference transactions. However, in these discussions, staff members should respect their patrons' privacy by keeping the consultations confidential and revealing only as much information to their colleagues as is needed to respond to the patron's request. In addition, library staff have a professional obligation not to discuss specific library users with friends or colleagues in or out of the workplace.

In addition to protecting circulation records, don't forget interlibrary loan. Patrons' names and other personally identifiable information usually appear on interlibrary loan forms that go to the lending library. Make sure the minimum amount of information necessary for record keeping is included on the forms.

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Patrons have a right to find and use information without having it observed by others – either library staff or other patrons. This can be an issue for public computers. Evaluate the physical setup of your library:

- Are your public computer workstations positioned to give the maximum amount of privacy possible?
- You may want to consider using privacy screens on the monitors if computer privacy is not possible otherwise.
- Having staff routinely monitor patron use of library materials and resources is inappropriate unless it is done for the purpose of protecting library property.

Another privacy issue is individuals – either library staff or patrons – who are offended by what someone is viewing. Information does not have to be illegal to be offensive to others. However, when lawsuits result, the courts have generally ruled in favor of the rights of the person using the material, unless it was impossible for the offended person to avoid seeing the information. This is an added reason to provide as much privacy as possible for library users.

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Privacy and confidentiality rights do not extend to illegal activities.

If library staff members observe illegal behavior, it should be reported immediately to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Your library should have written procedures for responding to criminal behavior, as well as for behavior that violates library policies.

Your policy for conduct in the library and your policy for internet use should contain statements that illegal acts will not be permitted. For example, "Any activity or conduct that is in violation of federal, state, or local laws is strictly prohibited on library premises."

You may also wish to include in your policy the definition of obscene material that is in the Idaho Code 18-4101.

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Privacy and confidentiality for children is a different matter. There is a difference in the roles of public and school libraries with respect to privacy and confidentiality for children.

In the public library, parents should be held responsible for their children's use of the library and should be notified about the privacy and confidentiality policies of your library as a standard procedure when issuing library cards to children.

School libraries may assume a more responsible role for the students, although this varies from school district to school district.

In addition to federal laws, many states have privacy and confidentiality laws specifically directed at protecting children. When creating or revising your library's privacy and confidentiality policies, check with your library's attorney to find out if any state and local laws, in addition to federal laws, apply.

More information on privacy and confidentiality issues can be found in Privacy and Confidentiality Q&A from ALA.

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Sometimes, people will attempt to gain access to a library's records.

Occasionally, requests for a patron's records have come from individuals or organizations wishing to embarrass and individual or harm their reputation by making this information public.

There may be requests from individuals wanting to know who has an item checked out, so they can gain access to it before it is returned to the library.

Often these requests for library records come from law enforcement agencies seeking help in criminal investigations. In fact, their interest in library records has increased in recent years because of computer crimes, such as e-mail threats, child pornography, and the need for surveillance and investigation since September 11, 2001.

Regardless of the reason for seeking access to library records, most states have laws protecting the confidentiality of this information. These laws generally exempt library records from disclosure as public records. This means they can only be obtained legally by court order.

Idaho's law on library records is found in the Idaho Code, Title 9-340E. The following records are exempt from disclosure:

“The records of a library which, when examined alone, or when examined with other public records, would reveal the identity of the library patron checking out, requesting, or using an item from a library.”

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Every library should have a policy on confidentiality along with procedures for the staff to follow when faced with requests for library records.

The American Library Association has prepared a document, *How to Respond to Law Enforcement Requests for Library Records and User Information: Suggested Guidelines*, that identifies the types of official requests libraries might receive and how they should be handled by library staff. It also lists items to include in preparing or revising a library policy on confidentiality.

Every library should establish and follow a retention policy for keeping personally identifiable information. Collect the minimum amount needed and discard what you can as soon as possible. Make sure your policy is in compliance with state and local laws.

Take steps to change common library practices that place personal information in public view. Avoid exposure to the public of: notices sent for overdue or requested materials, staff computers with screens that can be observed by the public, sign-in sheets for equipment and services, even telephone messages that are left on patrons' answering machines about information or materials requested.

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Be sure your policy requires that a court order must be shown for law enforcement requests for library records or information. All staff, board members, and volunteers should know who on the staff is designated to handle requests from law enforcement. This is usually the library director or school principal. Make sure all staff and volunteers are trained in the procedures to follow for handling a law enforcement request.

Law enforcement offices making requests for library records should be asked for identification, then referred to the designated person responsible for handling such requests. This person should be prepared to handle a variety of information requests from law enforcement.

You may not be the designated person responsible for receiving requests for confidential information. Nevertheless, you need to know the rights and responsibilities of the library and the correct procedures to follow. If your library does not have policies and procedures for addressing requests for library records, encourage your administration and/or governing board to create policies and procedures for handling such requests.

You should be aware that the USA PATRIOT Act has changed some of the rules under which law enforcement officials can obtain information.

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What is the USA PATRIOT Act and how does it affect libraries?

USA PATRIOT is an acronym that stands for “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.”

This Act was passed on October 26, 2001, in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The purpose of the law is to expand the surveillance and investigation capabilities of federal law enforcement agencies.

In particular, libraries are affected by access to records under the Foreign Intelligence Security Act (FISA). Provisions of this law include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Federal agents can obtain search warrants for library materials, equipment, or records, including records for circulation, internet use, and patron registration.
- Probable cause (grounds to suspect a crime has been, or is being, committed) is not required.
- Libraries and library staff served with a search warrant issued under FISA may not disclose that the search took place and that the records or material were removed. Patrons cannot be told their records were taken by the federal government.

It is important to know that this law overrides state confidentiality laws.

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Since the law was passed, libraries have experienced an increase in requests from law enforcement for patron records and emails. What should librarians do?

- Create policies and procedures for staff to follow in handling requests from law enforcement agencies.
- Be sure that all staff understands the policies and is trained in the procedures.
- Evaluate your record keeping procedures for personally identifiable information.
- Don't keep information that is unnecessary for operating your library.

A library may have to respond differently to each public records request depending on who is making the request and how the request is made. Libraries should have a straightforward policy, reviewed by a lawyer, with the following provisions:

- The library will comply with all state and federal laws dealing with public records.
- The library will establish a procedure for handling public records requests. This person will be properly trained to handle requests.
- Upon receiving a public records requests, the designated staff person will immediately contact a lawyer and keep them informed through the process.

If your library does not yet have policies and procedures addressing public records requests, encourage your director or governing board to create appropriate policies and procedures. You may not be the person responsible for creating policies and procedures but knowing about laws that can affect your job will be helpful to you in your work.

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It may seem that ethical issues are more abstract than practical and don't affect the day to day activities in your library, but nothing could be further from the truth. Some common customer service problems overlap all the ethical concepts previously discussed – equal access for all, intellectual freedom, and privacy and confidentiality.

Now we will discuss difficult and disruptive patrons and unattended children. These issues point out the need to have library use or library conduct policies for your patrons, and procedures and guidelines for staff to follow when they are not obeyed.

Difficult patrons

Difficult and disruptive patrons can challenge your ability to provide equal service to everyone. First, identify why the person is a problem, so you can decide on the appropriate next steps.

The difficult patron is one who tests your patience, even though your desire is to be of assistance. The difficult patron may be:

- The demanding user who wants everything right now
- The customer who can never seem to find what they need without your constant help
- The person who always brings you a complaint
- The person who seldom bathes

Take extra care and creativity in working with all these people – perhaps even a tactful conversation about the amount of time you can spend with each patron during a busy period. However, you are ethically bound to show them respect and courtesy, and to assist them to the best of your ability within the time you have available.

Disruptive patrons, on the other hand, require a different approach. These are people who disturb the library's users or staff with aggressive or bad behavior, such as loud arguments or angry threats. These folks represent a potential danger and must be treated with special care. Remain calm and collect your thoughts.

Assess the situation and, if you feel comfortable doing so, ask the patron to accompany you to a quieter area – though not to an office or corner where you could be trapped. If possible, enlist the assistance of another staff member.

Calmly ask the patron to tell you what is wrong and listen carefully to the response. Because most people want to feel as though someone else takes their issues seriously, your goal should be to understand the reason for the outburst and to help the person feel listened to and understood.

A good response might be, "I can certainly understand why you feel that way." Usually when people believe their concerns have been heard, they will become less aggressive. You can then talk about what can and can't be done to meet their needs. Explain your policies quietly but firmly. Make it clear that consequences result from not following the rules.

Unfortunately, you may come across some people who are so angry, upset or emotionally troubled that they cannot or will not respond well to a situation such as previously described. When you are dealing with a person who is out of control, it is essential to protect yourself and others in your library. If, at any time, you or others in the library feel threatened, immediately call the appropriate authorities.

Unattended children

Even the best behaved young child should not be left in the library without a caregiver nearby. In libraries of more than one room a child should not be left unsupervised in the children's section while the parent goes off to another area.

In a library, as in any public place, an unattended child is vulnerable to accidental injury, theft of the child's property, fights and, in the worst case scenario, sexual predators or kidnapping. Public libraries have every right to insist that a responsible adult accompany each child in the building.

Unfortunately, there will be times when children are left unattended. During those times, you will want to keep four guidelines in mind:

- Protect the children from injury and harm from another person
- Protect their right to use the library
- Prevent them from interfering with other people's use of the library
- Involve the outside world: parents, teachers, child protective agencies, police, and other organizations which care about the welfare of children

The library should have policies addressing unattended children in the library and guidelines for handling these situations. Basic library rules apply to children and adults equally.

Library use

The best defense against difficult or disruptive patrons is to establish good, workable policies and administer them consistently. Policies are the official rules set by the trustees of your library or school district.

Policies should be available in a handbook or manual for all staff and patrons. In addition, you may want to post selected policies for your patrons, such as rules of conduct.

Procedures provide library staff with guidelines for enforcing the policies. They are often step-by-step instructions for handling situations.

It is extremely important that all staff be aware of library policies and be trained in the procedures. An introduction to the procedures should be included in orientation for all new employees, and they should be reviewed with all staff at regular intervals.

Sample policies and procedures for a variety of problems are available in books and on library websites.

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Librarians should help patrons find information. However, avoid giving advice, especially in the areas of law, medicine, and consumer products and services. The difference between information and advice is really one of fact and opinion or interpretation.

Legal reference

When providing legal reference service, it is okay to help patrons locate information. Do not:

- Attempt to explain the content of the material or interpret the law
- Attempt to apply information to a particular case
- Tell a patron whether something is legal or illegal
- Make a recommendation about a lawyer

Suppose a patron asks you what to do to obtain a divorce or file for bankruptcy. You can:

- Direct the person to the laws in the Idaho Code, or
- Refer Idaho residents to the Idaho Court Assistance Office & Self-Help Center
- Direct the person to library materials on these topics

Medical reference

The same basic guidelines apply to providing medical advice or information. It is okay to help patrons locate medical information. Do not:

- Attempt to explain or interpret the content of the information
- Recommend a specific method, procedure, treatment, or drugs
- Assist patrons in self-diagnosis
- Recommend specific physicians or clinics

You can recommend the National Library of Medicine MedlinePlus for reliable information.

Encourage patrons to get basic information so they can return to their doctors, prepared to ask informed questions.

Consumer products

People will come to your library asking for a recommended brand of product (for example a lawn mower, air conditioner, or electric toothbrush) to purchase. Although you may have strong opinions in this area, you will be safer to refer customers to the research of reliable and impartial organizations which have made rigorous comparisons between similar brand products.

Consumer Reports is the best-known magazine which publishes the results of such testing, but your patrons can find a surprising number of additional product evaluations in databases located in lili.org.

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Lesson 5: Intellectual Property

SLIDE 6.2

Article 4 states:

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

Intellectual property is defined as a product of the human intellect. It can be tangible – in physical form like a painting – or intangible, like a complex idea or equation. Patents, trademarks, and copyrighted works are all intellectual property and are protected by U.S. Copyright law.

Patents protect inventions and discoveries that are registered through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, an agency of the United States Department of Commerce.

A trademark protects the words, phrases, and symbols that identify products or services in a way that distinguishes them from others. They are also registered through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States to the authors of original works, including literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works. The most recent comprehensive law, the Copyright Act of 1976, generally gives the owner of a copyright the exclusive rights to the work.

How long does copyright protection last? The term of copyright for a particular work depends on several factors, including whether it has been published, and, if so, the date it was first published. As an example, works created on or after January 1, 1978, are automatically protected for the life of the author plus an additional 70 years. When the time has expired for a work to be protected by copyright law, it is in the public domain. As of January 1, 2021, works published from 1925 and before are in the public domain.

Most library staff members won't need to know the time limits for copyright, but it can be helpful to know they exist and where to find the information. ALA occasionally offers a course on fair use in the library, and Library Juice Academy offers an excellent copyright course.

SLIDE 6.3

Intended to balance the interests of information seekers and rights holders, the doctrine of “fair use” allows for limited use of copyrighted material under certain conditions. The fair use doctrine has a significant effect on libraries.

Libraries have an ethical, as well as legal, obligation to practice fair use. Fair Use is described in section 107 of the Copyright Law. Deciding whether the use of a copyrighted item is fair or not depends on four factors:

- The purpose and character of the use (is it educational or commercial?)
- The nature of the copyrighted work (is it informational or entertainment, published or unpublished?)
- The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and
- The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

Each factor must be measured on a sliding scale. For example, the scale leans toward fair use if the use is made for nonprofit educational purposes, if the material used is factual in nature, if the amount of the work that is used is proportionally small, and if there is likely to be no effect on the market for the item. On the other hand the scales leans away from fair use if the purpose is commercial, if the work is highly creative (as in a novel or a play), if a large portion of the work is used, and if the use is made in place of buying a legal copy.

SLIDE 6.4

For example:

- In course reserves, instructors often make available small portions of books for student readings but cannot copy and make available the entire copyrighted work.
- Fair use also permits libraries to reproduce one copy of a work to replace missing or damaged materials if a replacement cannot be purchased at a reasonable price. In addition, libraries may copy items for their patrons. Only one copy of an item may be made and the copyright notice must appear on the copy.
- A library may photocopy a page to replace a missing page in a book.
- Class projects presented to a teacher or to a class may include portions of copyrighted material because it is educational use and only a portion of a copyrighted work is used.
- Outside of education, fair use also covers things like parody. This allows shows like Saturday Night Live or artists like Weird Al Yankovic to poke fun at a copyrighted work in their own transformative way.

SLIDE 6.5

Copyright laws and the fair use guidelines have a great impact on procedures for interlibrary loan.

Interlibrary loan (often abbreviated ILL) is a service where a patron of one library can borrow materials that are owned by another library. These two libraries, the lending library and the borrowing library, work together to meet the needs of the patron. The borrowing library sends the lending library a request for the materials. The lending library fills the request by sending the materials or supplying a reason why the request cannot be filled. If sent, the borrowing library serves as the intermediary and makes the material available for the patron.

The acronym CONTU stands for the Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyrighted Works, established by Congress after the passage of the 1976 Copyright Act when it became apparent that more guidance was needed.

SLIDE 6.6

The guidelines for interlibrary loan, state, but are not limited to:

- In a calendar year, a library may request a maximum of five recent (published in the last five years) articles from a specific journal title.
- The requesting library must keep records on these transactions for three years.
- These restrictions do not apply to journal articles that were published more than five years ago.
- The lending library may comply with the request only if the borrowing library states that the request falls within the guidelines.

SLIDE 6.7

You have probably seen “CCG” and “CCL” on interlibrary loan forms. “CCG” stands for Conforms to Copyright Guidelines and refers to articles less than five years old. “CCL” stands for Conforms to Copyright Law and is used for copies that are older than five years. Checking one of these boxes informs the lending library that the borrowing library is complying with the guidelines and the law.

SLIDE 6.8

Interlibrary loan is a valuable service that augments the resources available to your patrons. As library staff we have both a legal and ethical responsibility to make sure we use it properly. Here are some resources for further reading:

- Interlibrary Loans (ALA)
- Issues & Advocacy: Copyright (ALA)

SLIDE 7.1

Lesson 6: Respect, Fairness, and Good Faith

SLIDE 7.2

Article 5 states:

“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.”

It is not just what we do for our patrons that is important. What we do for each other is important too. We treat our colleagues with the same respect and concern that we give to our patrons.

Respect is the feeling of regarding someone well for their qualities or traits, but respect can also be the action of treating people with appreciation and dignity. As an employee you can respect your coworkers and supervisors by giving them the attention they need, listening to their opinions, and speaking with kindness.

Fairness in the workplace is just as important as it is anywhere else. A workplace where employees feel they are not being treated fairly will result in lower productivity, lack of motivation, and negative relationships. In order to ensure fairness, show that there is equal access to opportunity, clear processes and open communication, and a feedback system which facilitates constructive conversations.

The covenant of good faith is an unspoken agreement in an employee/employer relationship. The good faith covenant means that an employer owes an employee a duty to act in good faith and to deal fairly with them, and the employee has the same duty to the employer. For example, this would require the employer to only fire the employee when they have good cause. An employer shouldn't fire employees to replace them with cheaper labor, nor should they fire an employee to prevent them from getting benefits.

SLIDE 7.3

This article also asks us to advocate for working conditions that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions. This could be advocating for more inclusive hiring practices, paying attention to workplace safety, and ensuring employee policies are fairly written and implemented.

Here are some resources for further reading:

- [Speech in the Workplace Q&A \(ALA\)](#)
- [Good Faith \(Wikipedia\)](#)

SLIDE 8.1

Lesson 7: Private interests and personal beliefs

SLIDE 8.2

Articles 6 and 7 of the Code of Ethics also address fairness, dealing specifically with a librarian's personal beliefs and interests.

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

Private interests are any personal gains of benefit, privilege, exemption or advantage that are not available to the general public. Library staff should not use the resources of the library to for personal benefit. Advancing private interests while working for a public institution such as the library creates a conflict of interest.

For example, a library staff members must not be put in a position to make collection development decisions that will benefit themselves or their families. Or, if a database is being considered for purchase and a library staff member's spouse is a sales representative for that database, that library staff member would not be involved in making that decision.

By paying attention to potential conflicts of interest, the library ensures the appropriate use of library resources and assures the public good.

A conflict of interest is a situation where the concerns and goals of two different parties are incompatible, or where a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity.

As a library staff member, you can avoid conflicts of interest by observing boundaries between your personal and professional roles. Although friends or relatives may ask you for favors, like extending a checkout period or setting aside a popular new book for them, it is important to treat them like any other patron.

SLIDE 8.3

Article 7 states: “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.”

In other words, be objective. A library employee’s personal beliefs should not limit a patron’s search for or use of information. Professionals in charge of selecting library materials keep their personal beliefs separate from decision-making. And, although libraries may help patrons identify and research issues of an upcoming election, they do not promote one political candidate or party over another.

This also means answering questions with accurate information in nonjudgmental interactions. Any question asked by a patron is an important one, and so we treat both the question and the patron with respect. A question from a child may not take as much effort to answer as one from an adult, but the child deserves just as much attention. It is not our job to judge whether or not a question is worth answering.

One of the most difficult challenges in reference work is to remain neutral about the subject matter. You may feel a strong emotional reaction to certain questions because you are uncomfortable thinking about them or because your convictions differ from those of a patron. Nevertheless, it is your job to look at the question from the point of view of an impartial professional.

If you encounter a patron request that takes you outside of your comfort zone, take a deep breath, count to ten, and then provide the best answer you can using the resources at your library. Use this as an opportunity to hone your skills in evaluating reference materials by guiding your patron to the most authoritative sources available.

SLIDE 8.4

Here are some resources for further reading:

- Conflicts of Interest Q&A (ALA)
- Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Sector Toolkit (OECD)

SLIDE 9.1

Lesson 8: Professional Development

SLIDE 9.2

Article 8 states:

“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.”

Librarianship is a profession, and that means keeping up with changes in the global community of practice. This article focuses on professional development, which includes maintaining and expanding your knowledge and skills.

As a library employee there are lots of ways to increase your knowledge and skills. The library itself has a wealth of services and resources, and learning about them, even in areas you don't work in, can help you learn more about the profession. Your experiences, skills, and perspectives are valuable and can play a key role in the professional development of your library colleagues. After working in the library for a while, you may wish to consider helping to train and mentor new employees. You will be giving them a leg up while refreshing and sharpening your own skills. And always ask questions. If there is something you're interested in or want to know more about, there's no harm in asking.

There are library blogs and podcasts, webinars, magazines, journals, and books available for your own professional development as well as online courses provided by organizations like InfoPeople, Library Juice Academy, and Amigos Library Services. These offer a huge variety of courses on any topic you can imagine, and at affordable prices. The Idaho Commission for Libraries provides financial support to Idaho library staff members wishing to attend online courses from these providers through our Continuing Education program. This support is available to the staff members of publicly funded libraries in Idaho. If you'd like more information about this program, visit our website. If you are not in Idaho, your own state library agency might also offer a similar service.

If you are interested in taking for credit courses, there are undergraduate college-level courses in library science and graduate degrees in library and information science. In Idaho, several universities offer independent study library science courses. There is no in-person library science school in the state of Idaho, but the School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University is quite active in training librarians and information professionals. Nearby schools include the University of Washington and San Jose State University. If you are interested in learning more about the graduate degree in library science, try chatting with others in the profession about their background and experience. The Idaho Commission for Libraries will also provide financial support to Idaho library staff members who are pursuing a library science graduate degree or taking independent-study library science courses. If you'd like more information about this funding program, visit our website.

Whenever possible, attend professional library conferences to expand your knowledge and skills. Each state has its own yearly conference, and many national and regional organizations also host in-person and virtual library conferences. These continuing education events are a great opportunity to learn from others in the profession, expanding your skills and knowledge. The Idaho Commission for Libraries will financially support Idaho library staff attending an in-person library conference for the first time. If you'd like more information about this program, visit our website. If you are not in Idaho, your own state library might offer a similar first-time attendee grant opportunity.

And don't forget about fostering the aspirations of potential new members of the profession. We need to support the ambitions of library employees who want to advance in librarianship in the future. I think the best way to do this is to be authentic and encouraging. A lot of us in the library profession had a lightbulb moment when we realized this magical wonderful place – the library – was also a place of employment, that librarianship could be a career. And most of the time it was someone working in a library, or really multiple people, who helped to guide us to where we are today.

SLIDE 9.3

Here are some resources for further reading:

- Continuing Education (ICfL)
- Education and Careers (ALA)

SLIDE 10.1

Lesson 9: Diversity and Inclusion

SLIDE 10.2

Article nine reads:

“We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.”

This new article in the ALA Code of Ethics was unanimously passed by ALA Council on June 29, 2021.

As community centers and institutions for the public good, it is important that we affirm the rights of every person who enters our libraries. Although in a previous section we encouraged you to be objective in patron interactions and strive to be neutral when discussing controversial subjects so as to be as welcoming and nonjudgmental as possible, that does not mean you should be neutral in reaction to inequity, oppression, or hate speech in your libraries or communities. Libraries are for everyone, including the most marginalized and powerless in our communities.

SLIDE 10.3

Systemic bias is the inherent tendency of a process to support particular sides or outcomes. A bias is a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc. are better than others, usually leading to treating some people unfairly.

Inequity is defined as a lack of fairness or justice. Oppression is defined as prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control.

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, it can also include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, or even diversity of thought. Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. Inclusion goes beyond simply making space for marginalized people and actively invites marginalized folks to participate equitably.

Social justice is defined as justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. The National Education Association defines racial justice as the systemic fair treatment of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice is not just the absence of discrimination

and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

It makes sense that libraries would work to both recognize bias in ourselves and dismantle systemic biases in libraries as much as possible. With our focus on providing access for all, systemic barriers and biases could prevent patrons from accessing the information they need. This last article reads like a call to action for libraries to use awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces to make an actionable difference in their communities.

SLIDE 10.4

Here are some resources for further reading:

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ALA)
- Diversity Counts study (2012) (ALA)
- Programming to Promote Diversity (ALA)
- Hateful Conduct in Libraries: Supporting Library Workers and Patrons (ALA)

SLIDE 11.1

Lesson 10: Wrapping up

SLIDE 11.2

So we've just spent a good amount of time talking through the Code of Ethics. These nine principles help to guide us as library professionals, regardless of the type or location of the library we serve. They are also not the only ethical guide we have as librarians. Here are some others, to name a few:

- Library Bill of Rights (ALA)
- ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections (ACRL)
- Core Professional Values for the Teen Services Profession (YALSA)

There's a lot of value in codifying the profession's ethical principles into these articles. Not only does it help us communicate our values with each other, but it also helps us make our principles clearer to the general public.

We hope that this has helped you to understand library ethics more clearly. Our professional ethics serve as a framework for our behavior and actions in libraries. If you are in a position to create or change library policies or procedures, understanding this ethical framework can help you establish reasonable policies and procedures. If you are a library staff member, understanding these values and how they shape library policies can help you be more effective and more confident in carrying out your ethical responsibilities to your patrons, your profession, and yourselves.