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# A discussion and suggestions on ethical barriers in librarianship: Information privacy, controversial materials, and personal beliefs

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A discussion and suggestions on ethical barriers in librarianship: Information privacy,  
controversial materials, and personal beliefs

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### **Abstract**

In this work, the author discusses three ethical issues that have become barriers in the library environment: information privacy, controversial materials, and personal beliefs. The specific issues are covered by the ALA Code of Ethics, which is a general but clear guideline. In the library's everyday life, however, these guidelines are being challenged by the occasional or consistent behaviors of librarians, users, and administrators. The author has witnessed situations when the above mentioned ethical issues caused conflicts and threatened to challenge librarianship as a concept and the values that come with it. The author presents the LIS literature on the three issues and provides his opinion and suggestions on how they can be properly approached by information professionals. It is important to point out that the author does not treat the information professional as a librarianship machine that follows rules and guidelines, but as a human being with his/her unique personality and personal convictions.

### **Introduction**

The ALA Code of Ethics mentions eight principles as guidelines for information professionals. These guidelines are general but clear. This means that they can be applied in any situation with, possibly, a small amount of flexibility. All of these principles are very important, but three stand out more in the everyday life of the library (author's experience). These are *information privacy*, *controversial materials*, and *personal beliefs*. These specific issues come up frequently, especially the information privacy issue, which is an everyday concern.

The ethical issues discussed in this paper have been a concern for this author since he became a student in the library program and started working at a library. As a student, the author

has tried to find answers to these issues at the philosophical level, while as a librarian he has had to deal with them. He has plenty of experience in a little less than a year in his library career on the two of the three issues discussed in this paper, information privacy and personal beliefs. It is true that they have become the author's obsession. Some of the author's experiences are great examples that show how information professionals can literally struggle to do their job right. Some of these examples will be used without any reference to specific people or libraries.

Information professionals are human beings with their own personalities and convictions. They are not machines that apply principles, values, and regulations without thinking or feeling. The author approaches the three issues having the above statement in mind. In the case of controversial materials, as pointed out in the "Definitions" section, the author refers to both users and information professionals and their role in making this issue a barrier.

The author's goal is to provide a review of the existing literature on specific ethical issues and help colleagues reflect on their own experiences, compare their approach to the author's, and find ways to overcome the barriers. It is the author's belief that a common approach by all information professionals is necessary, in order for the library profession to move into the future without these barriers and a bigger support by the communities. Thus, this work becomes a medium for the increase of awareness on these ethical issues and the quest for solutions.

### **Limitations**

As mentioned in the previous section, this work includes only three of the ethical issues that exist in the library profession. The author's goal is not to break down and analyze the entire ALA Code of Ethics. There is an emphasis in this work on the specific three issues mentioned earlier, because the author believes that they appear more frequently in the everyday library

environment. A discussion on all ethical issues would make this work too broad and it would be impossible to discuss thoroughly any of them. Furthermore, this work is not a study on the three issues. It is a discussion based on the existing literature and author's personal experiences, opinion, and suggestions.

### **Definitions**

**Barrier:** Will be used to express problems caused by the ethical issues discussed in the paper that do not allow the smooth function of the library and interaction between the library staff and the users. **User:** The author prefers the word user to patron, because he perceives patrons as clients of a for-profit organization. **Information privacy:** This term refers to the ethical issue related to the use of user information by the library, in order to improve services, programs, and the collection. Data mining and data analytics are included in the methods of collecting the information. **Controversial materials:** This term refers to the ethical issue regarding materials that cause reactions among certain members of the community. It also refers to information professionals who are too biased during their collection development duties.

### **Personal beliefs:**

This term refers to the librarians' personal beliefs that may interfere with their duties.

### **Information Privacy**

#### **Literature Review**

Caldwell-Stone (2012) defines users' information privacy as the right to read and inquire anything, without the fear of being judged or punished. Further, the library staff must keep their personal, circulation, and inquiry information private. The problem that Caldwell-Stone indicates is technology related. Ordering and downloading an e-book results in a significant amount of

information about the user's preferences and even focus points in the book. As the author mentions, the proactive solution to this problem is the negotiation with vendors and agencies regarding the privacy of user information.

Cyrus and Baggett (2012) also discuss the changes that technology has brought to how information privacy is being handled. One of the issues that the authors discuss is that of entering personal information in search engines to acquire information. Search engines and social media are not protectors of personal information. Mobile technology exacerbates the problem, due to the agreement policies and applications (geolocation) on mobile devices. Cyrus and Baggett suggest three ways in which information professionals can contribute in the debate and finding solutions about information privacy: Becoming informed about technological developments and trends, creating user instruction programs, and assisting users in applying privacy settings on their devices.

Ferguson et al (2011) discuss the Radio-Frequency Identification's (RFID) contribution to the information privacy problem. The data about the item stored in its RFID can identify user preferences, which may lead even in the exposure of the user's religious and political beliefs. The authors argue that RFID's are useful, not only for security purposes but for circulation as well. However, their signals can be intercepted and used against the user.

Fouty (1993) discusses the risk to information privacy caused by the online circulation systems. The author states that both user and library related information in records is private. The author suggests the collection of limited data for the users' records, by authorized personnel with security access. Fouty takes the latter a little further, stating that limited personnel should have authorized access to users' records.

Klinefelter (2011) points out that only entering the library reveals information about a person and every action taken by the user from that point on increases that amount of private information released. Further, the author discusses the law on information privacy by libraries and states that violation of the law is punishable. Librarians are bound by the profession's values and standards to protect information privacy. Technology, once more, is challenged, since the risks of revealing confidential information, even unintentionally are great. The evolvement of technology forces libraries to revisit the issue and "adjust" their approach. Internet technology today allows for gathering information about user behavior. In public computers, the deletion of trails of information becomes more and more challenging.

Phetterplace (2010) discusses browser security issues. Knowing that users may enter personal information in forms and sites in many occasions and for many reasons, he suggests the use of Firefox and Chrome instead of Internet Explorer and Safari. The last two have been proven very vulnerable. The author also discusses browser settings and the restriction of search engines to the few known and legitimate. Finally, the author mentions the need for user training on Internet security.

Stover (1987) deals with librarian confidentiality. One of the things that he points out is that there are no legal consequences when a librarian breaches confidentiality. The reason for this is that confidentiality has not been defined properly by the profession and the law. The general suggestions are the following (p. 243):

- a. "Cases where the client has given written permission;"
- b. "Cases where research may be duplicated and privacy is not requested;"
- c. "Cases where dangerous criminal activity is suspected."

Sutlieff and Chelin (2010) conducted a study in order to determine the amount of trust that students have in the academic library, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), and the government, as well as how students perceive the reasons for and types of personal information that libraries keep. The authors found that students generally have trust in the library but not the NICS and the government, and the library's approach on data protection. The latter happens due to the libraries' association with the NICS. The authors' suggestions are the improvement of the library policy, staff awareness on advocacy issues related to privacy rights, and the avoidance of association with the NICS.

Van Wel and Royakkers (2004) discuss ethical issues in data mining. The authors point out that in data mining and data analytics the data gathered may identify the users and their beliefs, be used along with different pieces of data in irrelevant contexts, or be misused, resulting in harming the user. The authors believe that the users' consent is necessary for data mining.

Zimmer (Spring 2013) discusses the dangerous to information privacy by Library 2.0 services, which require the sharing of users' information. The author's concern is as to how libraries can integrate 2.0 technologies without jeopardizing users' privacy and generally the traditional ethics of the profession. The author suggests a number of rules regarding the use of 2.0 services, such as user consent, creation of different accounts for regular services and 2.0 services, minimization of data tracking, confidentiality, and user education.

Zimmer (June 2013) returns to the topic mentioned above with a study that attempts to answer three questions: a. whether information privacy issues due to library 2.0 are addressed by the literature; b. if the literature addresses the issues, how are they being approached (importance); and c. whether there are any steps and strategies included in the literature that could address the issues. The findings of the study are rather disappointing, since, only a 39 out

of the 677 works related to library 2.0 address information privacy issues; in 22 of these works privacy is taken seriously although it may not be the main issue in the work; and only 14 of the 39 works provide suggestions and/or guidelines that address privacy issues. The author recommends clear guidelines and increase of the librarians' awareness as ways to deal with information privacy in library 2.0.

### **Discussion**

The above literature review shows a definite concern about information privacy. The favorite topic is technology, how it affects information privacy, and what can be done to avoid actions that jeopardize information privacy, resulting, among other things, to users' mistrust. The old concern is related to librarian confidentiality, which will be discussed first.

As mentioned above, Stover (1987, p.243) points out three general guidelines regarding breach of confidentiality. Obviously, users' consent for the use of information for a specific reason is not considered breach of confidentiality. The duplication of a research work is a little vague, though. However, Stover mentioned that the profession's instructions are vague (1987, p. 242). The librarians must automatically assume that confidentiality is included and not expect the users to request it. In this case, a librarian may ask the user, whether the work can be duplicated and possibly expanded for the improvement of the profession and/or its reference services. Information professionals, in this author's opinion, should not assume that the users want anything else except from the norm, which in this case is information privacy.

The third guideline is when criminal activity is suspected. This is, probably, the clearest guideline. What is not clear in this case is how information professionals define or understand criminal activity. The very common example of a user asking for instructions on how to make a bomb will be used here. This user may be a Chemistry or Physics student researching the

properties of uranium 233 and 235 and their reactions under certain conditions or the interaction of certain explosives. The bottom line here is that the request may be strictly scientific. The librarians may misinterpret this request as an attempt to create explosives for a terrorist attack. This author believes that the best way to avoid misinterpretations is to use a few discreet statements in the reference interview that will give the librarians a clue about the intentions of the person. Statements like “Are you doing a research on uranium 233?”, or “Are you a Physics student? I love Physics!” are less intrusive and show interest in the user’s work. An addition to the above statements would be “Can you give me some information about your research that will help me find what you’re looking for?” Obviously, the above statements are examples and each situation is different. The reference librarians must be ready to come up with ideas like the ones above.

With technology, as the authors in the literature imply, things are getting more complicated. Library 2.0, RFIDs, and public computers are the areas of concern. The question is not whether libraries should move forward and use technology or go back to old-fashioned ways. This author strongly believes that libraries should follow and play a role in technological advancements. Today’s librarians are tech savvy. Technology courses are included in the library programs and personal improvement in this area is considered a must for the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian. The question is more of the “how” type. How can libraries use technology, so information privacy is ensured and the users’ trust is sustained?

Regarding Library 2.0, one of the issues that has been discussed by a number of authors in the literature is the reduction of user information kept by Circulation. The problem with this suggestion is that the information kept is absolutely necessary for the creation of a unique record for library card holders, for proof of local residency, and the ability to contact the users.

Reducing this information will result in functional circulation problems. The other suggestion is to have authorized personnel accessing the users' accounts and create new ones. In a library with full departmentalization and strict staff roles and duties, this can happen. However, a lot of libraries today lack the necessary personnel. This results in cross-training, which in turn results in more people getting involved in circulation from other departments. Library budgets have become an issue that affects even users' information privacy! The only way for libraries to deal with this issue is to make sure, as much as possible, that the staff is trustworthy.

The RFID issue has to do with the use of technology. RFID's, outside their security role, pick up user information that can be used in circulation statistics. This information can be hacked with the right equipment. There is nothing really that libraries can do in this case. On the other hand, the slight possibility of RFID hacking should not stop libraries from using it.

Public computer security is an interesting area of the information privacy topic, because it involves the users. Users enter their personal information on website forms and logins for a number of reasons. The fact that these computers are public, which means that they are accessed by anybody, creates the biggest danger. Additionally, entering information on non-legitimate and suspicious sites can result in identity theft. The library cannot control all suspicious sites through restrictions. What is required, and has been suggested in the literature reviewed above, is user instruction on how to use the Internet. From this author's experience, the two big mistakes that users make on the internet are that a. they don't sign out their accounts, allowing other users to have access to them and b. they do not know how to recognize whether a website is legitimate or not. Free instructional courses by the libraries would reduce this danger. Libraries cannot force their users to participate in these programs. They can only create the programs, advertise them, and help the users who are willing to learn.

Data mining and data analytics are technologies that have provided a lot of information for improvement purposes. Granted that these technologies can be used to harm, one cannot dismiss the technology. Protection required from the person who is misusing it. On the other hand, information that derives from data mining is very useful for the improvement of a site, marketing strategies, statistics, and more. If this information stays within the library and used only for improvement, there is no problem. Regarding the user consent issue that Van Wel and Royakkers (2004) mention, it is impossible to ask all users to allow access and use of their information for data analytics. The concept behind having the users consent for data mining is understandable and logical, but sending out requests for consent to thousands of people seems unfeasible. Most of the library users do not know what data mining is and will be afraid to allow it. In this case, improvement is impossible due to lack of information. Owners of personal sites can prevent data mining by making their site private. The same can happen with profiles.

There is one conclusion that derives from the above technology discussion. The libraries cannot guarantee information privacy wherever technology is involved. With the advancement of technology, in a few years information privacy will become more difficult, unless some way is developed along with the new technologies that will ensure information privacy. On the other hand, the idea of reducing or eliminating technology will be against human nature's main trait, which is seeking new knowledge and evolving. Libraries need to stay in the loop and lead human evolution.

### **Controversial Materials**

#### **Literature Review**

Adams (2008) discusses the need for a "materials selection policy" for school libraries, in order to defend against complaints by parents. This policy must provide guidance for the

reconsideration policy and be current and handy as well. The most important point that Adams makes (2008, p.28), however, is that the school administration should not be afraid to follow the policy.

Boles (1994) presents a case study regarding the acquisition of Ku Klux Klan documentation by the Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library in 1992. The author makes an interesting point in his conclusion (p. 64). The public is not expected to appreciate materials that are controversial. Libraries and, especially, archival departments must find ways to educate the public on the need for historical materials that may not reflect their beliefs.

Burke (2008) deals with the censorship on gay materials in libraries, which showed an increase since the 90's. The author discusses a survey conducted between 1973 and 2006, using samples of the US population from the age of 18 and up. The results of the survey show an increase in tolerance for controversial issues as time moves on, a fact that counteracts the impression that conservative activism is growing larger. The results of the survey do not necessarily depend on demographic and ideological shifts during the years.

Cornog (1993) discusses sexuality literature in libraries. Not surprisingly, statistics between 1991 and 1993 showed that 70-90% of the reactions to sexual materials were a result of young users' accessing them. The author suggests 11 responses (p.2) by the libraries to censoring parents. All responses cannot be mentioned here due to lack of space. However, this author cannot avoid mentioning a couple of highlights: "No one is forcing you to read the...." and "We agree that the library should reflect community values. However, our community is more varied than you may think, and we have many patrons who would wish to read...." The author concludes (p.4) with some advice to librarians. One of the things she mentions is the need for a

“materials selection policy.” Most importantly, however, the author emphasizes on the need for the right mentality by the librarians, indicating that the controversy caused by censorship is a healthy part of a democratic process.

Doyle (2003) opposes censorship based on Asheim’s statements (1954) against censorship and on how a librarian and a censor approach de-selection. Asheim (Doyle, 2003, p.6) stated in 1954 that a censor sees de-selection as a process for book removal, while the librarian sees it as a process for keeping the book. Further the author discusses decision making on materials that can be used by potential terrorists (p.10). He points out that, such materials should be considered “dangerous” only if they met two conditions: a. being only manuals, containing no ideology and b. their instructions are meant for devices that can cause death or serious injuries.

Pattee (2006) defends sexually explicit young adult literature as educational and information source. The author states that a large percentage of this kind of literature has been written for the purpose of educating young adults and assisting them in dealing with their sexual maturation process. At the same time, these materials are being censored by individuals, groups of people, and the media, based on certain societal values that exist currently. These censors fail to recognize the importance of the sexual maturation process and the need for information, in order for the young adults to deal with it. The author believes that the sexuality education provided to young people is inadequate (p.31). Sexually explicit literature can fill in the gaps that sexuality education has left (p.32). Further, the author points out (p.34) that the sexually explicit language in such literature provides an alternative to the scientific language that sexuality education uses. This alternative language is more appropriate and understandable for young people. Sexually explicit literature deals not only with the physical part of a sexual act, but with the emotional part as well.

Wengert (2001) discusses (among other things) the role of the library profession in censorship. Librarians judge what to include or not include in collections, offer opinions on what is appropriate for a young user, and decide on how to silence a complaint by a censor (p.491-492). The latter case is very interesting considering that the library becomes a censor of the censor! Further, the author discusses a number of sites that provide information on people and the controversy behind their installation on a public computer in a library (p.496). Not providing such program becomes a censoring issue for the library. On the other hand, allowing it violates information privacy for the people investigated by the program.

Wirth (1996) provides the results of an ALA's Public Library Association survey on 372 libraries all over the U.S and demographics information on censorship. Regarding the survey results (p.44), it seems that, at the time (1996), there was an average of 3 to 4 requests for item removal per year with an increase of less than one request the last five years reaching 1996. It is important to mention that most librarians would most likely approach a request as a community opinion. The demographics statistics showed that bigger libraries may have more requests for removals, simply because their collection is larger and more controversial materials are included in them.

### **Discussion**

It is evident that the "controversial materials" issue can be approached in different ways, depending on personal beliefs (will be discussed in the next section) and experiences. A policy regarding materials collections is necessary, but it may not be any good if it is not applied and followed. Administrations may force the librarians to remove materials, in order to avoid confrontations and complaints. This reaction to censorship shows lack of respect to freedom of information and the library profession. The policy serves as defense towards censorship. If

applied, it may not stop the complaints, but it will back up the library in its attempt to keep controversial materials in its collection.

Controversial materials of historical and socio-political nature, may offend users with different beliefs from those presented in the text. However, the value of these materials as information sources is unmeasurable. The removal of such materials may raise complaints by users who agree with the beliefs represented in them. In this case, the library becomes the censor. If materials referring to different races or sexual preferences are removed, this can be considered an act of discrimination against certain parts of the population. Nevertheless, such act violated the freedom of information rights. As Cornog (1993) mentions, users do not have to agree with and like certain materials. They don't have to read them, however, they must respect the fact that other users may wish to read them. Freedom of choice is a misunderstood concept today. People defend it when it suits them and dismiss it when it suits others with different opinions and approaches.

Sexually explicit materials may or may not assist young readers with the process of sexual maturation. Nevertheless, what is useful and what is not may be a subjective matter. It is important for a reader to be able to keep from these readings the useful information and ignore the harmful or wrong ones. However, does a young adult have enough knowledge and maturity to do so? On the other hand, a librarian offering readers advisory based on age becomes a censor. How can librarians judge what is age appropriate for a specific young user, when they have no information on this user's maturity and understanding levels?

The Internet has opened the Pandora box in controversial materials. The issue that Wengert (2001) discusses regarding programs that provide information on people, is just one case of conflict. If the library judges that such programs violate information privacy,

immediately becomes a censor of those programs. This author believes that, in order to avoid confrontations with users and long explanations, it is better to ignore such programs. If asked, the librarians can blame the budget or technical issues, but they should not engage in an attempt to convince the user. The other issue that the Internet has created is porn sites. From one point of view, this is considered a violation of user rights and freedom of information. The author is not going to argue the informational value or harmfulness of porn in this paper. There are libraries that have the space for a couple of public computers for users who wish to view porn. Other libraries that do not have this additional space, face a dilemma deriving from the difficulty in stopping users from viewing porn. The excuse that these materials offend some of the users is weak, as compared to the users' excuse that stopping them from viewing porn violates their rights.

The role of librarians in censorship situations is very difficult, even when a policy is in place. Librarians judge what to add to or remove from the collection. A percentage of bias is always involved, since librarians are humans and not automatons. Librarians have been raised in a certain way like everybody else. Even the most open-minded ones have opinions that they support strongly. They are expected to be objective, but this can happen only to a certain degree. When librarians deal with complaints about controversial materials are trying to defend freedom of information. This is accomplished through an effort to silence the user who complains. The policy becomes the means for this action, which can be considered censorship and discrimination, even if the excuse is that they defend the freedom of information. The problem here is that the librarians find themselves in the middle of a conflict that cannot be handled perfectly. One thing that all information professionals must understand is that they cannot make everybody happy. No matter what they do, their actions can be considered wrong from a certain

point of view. This is inevitable! Serving the community as a whole and defending the collection by including all points of view is what they can do.

As species, humans have not evolved to the point of accepting others for what they are and what they believe. Censorship is the evidence of the previous statement. Librarians can help the users reach a higher level of understanding on this issue by educating them. References in newsletters and displays on certain occasions related to controversial topics, will pass the message that the library includes everything and involves everybody.

### **Personal Beliefs**

#### **Literature Review**

Bunge (1999, p.26-29) discusses the reference librarian/user relationship. During an inquiry session the librarian not only finds the requested information but attempts to guide as well. The excuse for this guidance is a kind of librarian superiority. The librarian, however, does not know the exact needs or the goals of the user and should not make judgments. The only area where the librarian is expected to show his expertise and make judgments is that of the information sources.

Cain (1996) discusses decision making in collection development and labeling. Librarians censor every time they take under consideration the opinions of a single group or include their personal beliefs in the collection development or de-selection process. They also censor when they label materials and remove them to a separate area of the library because they are considered controversial.

Harkovitch (2003) conducted a study to explore librarians' personal convictions as opposed to the code of ethics. The goal of the author is to show the differences between personal beliefs and intellectual freedom, especially in pornography issues. As part of the study, the

author asks librarians to explain how they manage to put aside their personal beliefs in order to defend the code of ethics. The results of the study showed that, although the majority conforms with the intellectual freedom principles, a 37% has to deal with a conflict between their personal beliefs and their professional approach. A 79% admits that they find pornographic materials offensive, which proves that the conflict exists to some extent to the majority of the librarian sample. Hauptman (1976) tested librarians in 13 academic libraries asking for instructions to construct an explosive. None of the librarians involved denied assistance on the grounds of personal beliefs.

Rice (1989) discusses the difference of a librarian's approach between collection development and reference. For the most part, librarians avoid using judgment or revealing and imposing their personal beliefs on users, while they allow themselves to judge the quality of materials in collection development. The author asks the question whether it is possible to help a user evaluate quality while remaining neutral. In collection development the librarians are required to take under consideration the needs of different user groups and not just one person. The author believes that the same approach that librarians have towards collection development should also have towards reference, by assisting and teaching when necessary.

Smith (*n.d.*) discusses ethical issues in special libraries. One of the major points that the author makes is that medical or legal librarians cannot give out advice, which in most cases would be a personal opinion, because they could be considered responsible if this advice was proven wrong with undesirable consequences. Further, the author states that, when certain requests are considered by the librarians to be unethical, they should be able to put their personal feelings aside and remain professionals. The author refers to Hauptman (1996) who states ".....They should not compromise their own principles just to do their job."

White (2011) discusses whether a librarian should be opinionated or not. It is worth quoting the author's last paragraph and leave the rest for the discussion section below: "By removing opinions so completely from our position in the library, are we just shooting ourselves in our comfortable yet stylish shod foot? Where do impartial and accurate information services end and at what point does advocacy begin?"

### **Discussion**

The "personal beliefs" issue is related to that of the "controversial materials", but it also has its own individuality. In collection development the librarians must make a judgment. This judgment is based on community preferences and their own knowledge, experience, and, yes, view of potential items. Regarding the community preferences, they do need to acknowledge the diversity of the community as much as possible, and not accept the opinions of one group only. Their own knowledge and experience are both necessary to get the job done. Their view of potential items is the sensitive issue. If one assumes that a librarian will put aside his/her personal beliefs that could lead to a biased collection, still the individuality of the person in this position is a strong element. This element is different in a different person. Each librarian will view an item differently. This means that, even when librarians put aside their personal beliefs, some part of this individuality remains active in the game. This differentiates the person from the machine. What should be expected from librarians is not to put aside their personal beliefs, but to control them. Their personal beliefs are part of their logical process, but they can become destructive, if they are not controlled, leading in biased decisions.

In reference, the "superior" librarian may have the tendency to guide the user. Knowledge and experience are important in evaluating sources. Further guidance, however, will

result in the librarians forcing their own opinions on the users. The librarian, as Bunge (1999, p.26-29) mentions, does not know what the real goals and motives of the user are. This happens despite the reference interview, which may be inadequate anyway, if the user does not allow it. The latter is a frequent situation, when users do not want to waste time in “interrogations” and end up rushing the process.

In the studies by Harkovitch (2003) and Hauptman (1976) mentioned above, it is evident that librarians generally act professionally when it comes to materials they disagree with. This does not imply lack of individuality or opinion. Rather, it implies a controlled situation that allows the library to serve a diverse community. This may be tough at times (personal experience), but it is necessary. The librarians do not serve themselves; they serve a community comprised of different groups. Assisting and teaching the users, when possible, will allow them to evaluate their own goals and approaches and make the right decisions for themselves.

The statement by Hauptman (1996) stating that librarians “...should not compromise their own principles just to do their job”, brings up a conflict between professionalism and individuality. To what extent should librarians compromise their beliefs in an attempt to remain professionals? Is there a limit in compromise? The answers to these questions depend on each case separately and personal judgment. Librarians who are in such conflict can reach colleagues in the library for help. Passing the specific task to a colleague to avoid reacting the wrong way, may be a good idea.

White (2001) expresses the same concerns with different words (mentioned above on p.18). Librarians must have opinions and values and must be advocates of these opinions and values. However, they need to know how and when to express these opinions and when to ask

for advice from colleagues. Removing the individuality from the librarians is like censoring them.

### **Conclusion**

Information privacy, controversial materials, and personal beliefs are three issues that cause conflicts and raise barriers in libraries. This paper has been an attempt to approach these issues not only from the cold and professional Code of Ethics point of view, but from that of the person-librarian and the library as an institution.

Information privacy has become a huge issue with the advancement of technologies in libraries. The advancement of technology cannot and should not stop, nor should libraries stop using technology. Technology makes the library function more effectively. Access to certain areas of technology that involve users' personal information can be limited to the necessary personnel. Use of personal information in data analytics is justified in this author's opinion, because the data retrieved can make the library more effective. There is no way to ask all users for their consent. Even if it was possible, a lot of users might not be able to understand the data analytics process and they would not agree. A final issue in information privacy is user confidentiality, which must be applied by all departments in the library.

Controversial materials refer to censorship. Libraries should have a materials collection policy in place, in order to be able to defend decisions for keeping certain items on the shelves. Freedom of information is the first line of defense and the encouragement of the censor user to choose items that he/she agrees with while respecting other users' preferences is a good way to approach a complaint. The Internet has created the biggest controversy with sexually explicit materials and people search programs. In the former case, a separate section for a couple of computer stations would be a nice solution, but it depends on library availability. In the latter

case, the library may or may not choose to buy these people-search programs. It is easy to justify purchases of this type by blaming the budget or technology incompatibility. The users do not know!

Librarians must have an opinion, but they need to know when and how to use it. In reference they should help the users evaluate the information sources but not evaluate the users' goals and approaches. However, they can teach them discreetly, in order to allow the users to evaluate their goals and approaches by themselves. In collection development, librarians may be able to put aside their personal views, but to what extent The element of individuality will always be there and it is constructive as long as it is controlled.

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