Empowering Ethical Practice: Activities for Access Services

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Activity 1: Professor’s Lecture on Ethics

**Implementation**
Invite a professor from the Philosophy Department to talk with your group about what is meant by ethics. Have the professor explain the major ethical frameworks for right actions.

**Resources**
Professor of Ethics

**Time**
20 minutes

**Focus**
- Definition of ethics and major ethical frameworks.
- How does an understanding of moral theory help determine right actions?
- What is the difference between an ethical decision and a policy decision? Are the two related?

**Outcome**
- Staff have a shared vocabulary for ethical frameworks.
- Staff can articulate how ethics differ from policy but also how they might be related.

Activity 2: Review ALA and IFLA Codes of Ethics

**Implementation**
Ask each staff member to read the ALA Code of Ethics and the IFLA Code of Ethics independently during their work time. At a staff meeting, review each code and ask staff to identify tasks within their functional areas that do or do not support these codes. Record these responses.

**Resources**
Links to Codes of Ethics to each member of Access Services.
- IFLA Code of Ethics: [https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092](https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092)

**Time**
20 minutes for independent reading, 20-40 minutes for group discussion

**Focus**
- Intentional review of the professional codes of ethics that explain overarching library values.
- Discussion of Library policies and workflows that support the values within the codes and those that present challenges in supporting the codes.

**Outcomes**
- Staff make connections between library values and professional codes of ethics.
- Staff create a written record of the way in which Library policies support the ALA and IFLA code of ethics or create challenges.

Activity 3: Group discussion of several Library scenarios.

**Implementation**
Discuss Library scenarios and answer questions below to determine the presence of any existing ethical dilemmas or policy issues within each scenario. Refer to the ALA and IFLA Code of Ethics as well as Richard Rubin’s “four elements of Ethical Deliberation” from his 2016 edition of *Foundations of Library and Information Science* (pp.546-549). You can ask folks to read these three pages in advance of your discussion. Address the following questions:
- How should we approach this problem?
- Is this an ethical decision, or a policy decision, or both?
- If there is a policy involved, what might be the ethics underlying it?
- Are there competing ethical principles present?

**Resources**
- IFLA Code of Ethics: [https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092](https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11092)
List of library scenarios of your own choosing.

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<th>Time</th>
<th>20 minutes for independent reading, 20-40 minutes for group discussion</th>
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| Focus | • Identifying ethical and/or policy issues within each dilemma.  
      • Formulating courses of action and being able to articulate how that action supports a library ethic or policy. |
| Outcomes | • Staff can identify the ways in which library policies and ethics are inter-related.  
          • Staff discuss potential scenarios in advance of confronting the scenario in their actual work. |

**Activity 4: Review annotations of current Library literature on ethical practices within your functional area.**

| Implementation Preparation | Compile (or identify) a bibliography of current articles or book chapters related to ethical considerations within each functional area of Access Services. Try to find three to five articles or chapters that describe an issue of ethics within each area. Create short, three sentence annotations summarizing the author’s message.  
| Give the citations and annotations to staff and ask that they read only within their area, to keep the activity manageable and limit demands on staff time. Ask staff to add to a shared document the ethical considerations expressed in the annotations they read. |
| Group Discussion | Using the shared document, have staff discuss the ethical issues presented in the annotations from their functional area. Ask staff to group these issues into larger value areas such as respect, equality, care, transparency, accountability/stewardship, and empowerment. This discussion and the resulting document can then lead to a Service Philosophy Statement or an Ethics Statement for the unit. |
| Resources | Three to five citations and short annotations from current articles or book chapters in each functional area: course reserves, interlibrary loan, circulation, reference, instruction, and the digital lab. |
| Time | 20-40 minutes to read and add to the shared document, 40 minutes for discussion. |
| Focus | • Review of Library literature on ethics as it relates to day-to-day work in a functional area.  
      • Ability to identify an ethical issue or related policy as expressed in the annotation. |
| Outcome | • Staff can identify ethical issues within each functional unit.  
         • Staff can identify the overarching ethical values that are within the day-to-day work of each functional unit |

**References**


