Ethical Considerations
of Information Professionals*

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THIS analysis will be divided into four parts:

1) a presentation of a model or prototype for discussing ethical situations that arise in information work;
2) a discussion of professional ethics and the values that such ethics supports;
3) the role of codes of ethics and professional statements;
4) a conclusion. Given the nature of the original presentation from which this paper is derived, this article should be seen as a sketch or brief overview.

For a more detailed analysis, see [1].

A prototype for ethical decision-making in information work

In order to discuss ethical issues in information work, it is useful to develop a model or prototype for ethical decision-making. There are three aspects to the model:

1) the self;

2) the organization;
3) the environment.

Because these three features are always involved in professional ethical contexts, they form the basis of the model.

The self or person

The self is the core of ethical decision-making. It is the unique, autonomous moral agent, or person. It is this self that makes decisions or acquiesces to ethical decisions, whether acting for himself or herself or undertaking organizational, professional, or labor union roles.

There are certain factors or values that come into play because the nature of the self and self-interest and the persons relationships with other human beings. Michael Bayles [2], endorsing the Kantian belief in the dignity of each human person, provides a set of values that should serve the foundation of professional relationship (actually serving as the basis of any ethical relationships, here applied to tha context professional life): freedom and self-determination, protection from injury, equality of opportunity, privacy, and minimal well-being [2, pp. 6-7]; in addition, there should be added to this list: recognition for the work of others, whether in terms of economic or social rewards. A little while later this paper will elaborate on these values with respect to other persons and organizations. At the moment, we must note that the values that we accord to others should be ones that we also accord to ourselves. This means that we should maximize our freedom, protect our privacy, and feel free to have and articulate views that may run contrary to either organizational or professional opinions that we may have to entertain in our professional or organizational roles.

The organization

In every ethical professional situation, there is an organization or institutional structure. Even if one is an information broker, there is a formal structure that makes demands on the broker, so that he or she can embark on and develop a successful and professionals work in established institutions, such as libraries or information centers.

Organizations are, from an ethical point of view, peculiar kinds of moral agents. They often manifest a will, sometimes in tacit behavior or in explicit

policies or in the resolutions of a board of directors, that is not necessarily equivalent to the will of any particular organizational member or organizational members (although corporate presidents or directors can sometimes coopt this prerogative). That is, a collective or consensual decision is often the result of the interaction of group members, whose isolated opinions may very well be different from that of the group or institution. Collective decisions are often compromises, but they set a course for the organization. Thus, while it is generally recognized legally that organizations have moral agency (and legal responsability), the source or consequence of that agency may not be easy to trace or predict.

Because of this presence of the role that we play within the organization, there are factors that come into play. We can establish two sets of ethical considerations that arise in the context of ethical decision-making insofar as it is influenced by the organization: factors related to organizational autonomy and factors related to social utility.

With regard to the first set of factors, insofar as organizations have a kind of moral autonomy, they should enjoy some of the same values as individuals: freedom and self-determination, protection from injury, equality of opportunity, privacy, minimal well-being, and recognition. On grounds of their own self-interest they have a right to survival and can demand of employees a certain level of loyalty, as long as they continue to serve commendable social goals and are not seriously dysfunctional.

Furthermore, organizations also, in the course of their business or work, do socially useful things, such as producing products, providing jobs, etc. For example, a library as a social institution operating in the public trust and in accord with the first ammendment rights (guarantee of freedom of speech so as to ensure a free marketplace of ideas), manifests a principle of social utility: it contributes to the educational, cultural, and recreational well-being of the community that it serves. It makes available the repository of recorded information (unbiased organization-collection-provision), and grants free access to that collection, affirming that a «person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or views.» (Section B5, The ALA Library Bill of Rights [3])*.

In conjunction with organizational autonomy, a library (or its agents) is granted rights of independence and integrity in its collection decisions: the

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* O texto referido é publicado neste número junto do ALA's Code of Ethics. A documentação da ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom está disponível na ALA's Home-Page na Internet (http:// www.ala.org/alayou/interest/) (N. do Ed.).

individuals or group charged with the selection process will act autono-
mously with respect to the objectives of the system (not acquiescing to
coercion either internally, externally or with respect to source), and with
integrity (decisions are oriented to the objectives of the library and the need
for a balanced collection).

The materials selected:

a) will not be «excluded because of the origin, background or views of
   those who contributed to their creation,» (Section B1, The ALA Li-
   brary Bill of Rights [3])*;
b) «should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment
   of all the people the library serves,» (Section B1, The ALA Library Bill
   of Rights [3])*.

In this respect it provides for the greater good of society, as part of its
organizational goals. Factors of organizational autonomy or social utility
emerge as a direct result of the existence and perpetuity of the organization
and the direct social objectives that it undertakes.

The Environment

It is difficult to find a perfect term that works for the various influences
or forces that emerge in ethical contexts in different situations, but the term,
«environment» seemed to be the best. «Environment» as used here is a
general and all-encompassing term to cover all those persons, organizations
and forces that affect or with which librarians and informational profession-
als in their professional activities must deal, apart from their obligations to
themselves and their organization. It is the context and its various forces
that variously come into play that make demands on or influence informa-
tion professionals. Depending on different ethical situations, different fac-
tors from the environment come into play. What specific factors come in to
play depends on the particular ethical problem and its context. For exam-
ple, a government agency may ask to review a patron's circulation records.
Only when this situation occurs do certain principles emerge that are rela-
tive to that case: here the extend to which patron records should enjoy
confidentiality and at what point or for what reasons a govermental agency
may make such demands to contravene patron privacy.

* Idem nota anterior (N. do Ed.).

There are two ways in which environmental factors can be manifested:

1) forces or «standards» not manifest in a specific agency: e. g., when a particular book is not bought for a library because it contains material offensive to the community (influence of «community standards») or when a library does by a particular book to balance and broaden its collection, despite the fact that it may alienate community standards («social responsibility»);
2) as specific persons or agencies: end-users, patrons, other organizations, legal or governmental requirements on various occasions come into play in diverse ethical situations. For example, a particular patron or religious group may object to certain books being made available in a public library collection.

There are several common factors that emerge from the environment:

a) factors related to social responsibility;
b) factors related to specific community standards (political or geographic or that of other professions);
c) factors related to legal standards or obligations;
d) professionsl standards;
e) demands of individuals, e. g., patrons;
f) the demands of outside organizations, e. g., the government or other institutions.

We will look at these in turn:

a) *Social Responsibility.* One of the most critical, but often ambigous, factors is that of social responsibility. As social institutions, libraries and information centers participate in the broad goals of and promote the greater good of society and not simply organizational goals. Several of the goals of social responsibility are articulated in the ALA's Library Bill of Rights* (This document is not the only one that articulates a sense of social responsibility, but aspects of it state such responsibilities reasonably well). For example, a library or information center actively pursues socially desirable goals: e. g., by cooperating «with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expressiopn and free access to ideas,» and challenging

* Idem nota anterior *(N. do Ed.).*

censorship («Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment» (Section B3, The ALA Library Bill of Rights [3])*. The first part manifests factors of social utility, but when the library actively challenges censorship, they are operating under principles of social responsibility.

The insistence of balance, representativeness or completeness in collections or databases can also be seen to be part of a principle of social responsibility. According to the Library Bill of Rights* a collection should represent «all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval» (B2) (The ALA Library Bill of Rights [3])*. There appear to be at least two aspects which embrace social responsibility: completeness and balance. The principle of completeness suggests that, within the goals of the library, there will be an effort to consciously represent all points of view and that misrepresentation, inaccurate and incomplete data will be avoided. The principle of balance suggests that there will be a lack of conscious bias and that no point of view will be given undue weight.

While it is difficult to define social responsibility easily and precisel it is a moral imperative that comes from the broader social context within which an organization works, particularly when that organization works in the public domain or human beings in the general population. To uphold ideals of social responsibility is to address the broader goals of society: e.g., in addressing social inequities that have existed in the past and in making sure that all members of society of represented in the work and efforts of the organization. Just as other library associations have recognized the importance of social responsibility, the American Library Associations's «Mission, Priority Areas, Goals» statement recognizes that:

...the social responsibilities of the American Library Association are defined in terms of the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society; support for efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States on these problems and to encourage them to examine the many views on the facts regarding each problem; and the willingness of the ALA to take a position on current critical issues with the relationship of libraries and li-

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* Idem nota anterior *(N. do Ed.)*.

brary service set forth in the position statement. [4, Section, 1.1, p. H134].

This statement is written for the American context, but it is easy to extrapolate it to other countries or an international context.

b) *Factors related to specific community standards (political or geographic or that of other professions).* The community should and does have impact on libraries; whether specific individuals or institutions outside of the library should control library activities or purchase (e. g., censorship) is another matter. As noted earlier, such influences can take two forms:

1) as an indefinite force not associated with any specific moral agency. In the case of purchasing decisions for a library, it may take the form of a librarian's self-censorship in ordering or disallowing certain materials, based on his or her sense of what are acceptable community standards for library materials. On the other hand;

2) persons (e. g., individual patrons) or organizations (e. g., religious groups) may challenge the availability of certain materials in the library or may attempt to coerce the library into buying certain materials (generally favorable to their position).

Such forms of censorship should be challenged, but the community does influence purchasing decisions of the library, sometimes properly (as in ordering suitable materials for children) and sometimes not (as in attempted cases of censorship). Censorship, it should be noted, is not generally the rejection of a particular book or the insistence of the inclusion of another, but the systematic exclusion of a certain kind of book. While it is impossible to establish a set of principles at this point to address the complexity of such issues, the only point at the moment is that the community does influence ethical decision-making in the context of library work.

c) *Factors related to legal standards or obligations.* There are sometimes laws that must be considered as well: laws regarding the payment of taxes, the prohibition of the availability of obscene materials, etc. While legal standards do have to be addressed, it is not always the case that they may be ethical. In the United States, many librarians balked at the demands of the FBI to act as surveillance agents of foreign patrons. While there may have been legislative or judicial

support for such activities, many librarians felt that such actions were unethical, inappropriately violating the privacy rights of patrons.

d) *Professional standards.* The values which professionals should embrace will be addressed later. At the moment, we can note some of the things that professions typically demand: competence; the recognition of the occasional contrary demands of professional and personal values (often entailing the supersession of professional values over personal ones); avoidance of conflict of interest; the establishment of codes as guidelines for professionals and the establishment of boundaries for appropriate behavior (e. g., in supplying medical information but not providing medical advice).

e) *Demands of individuals,* e. g., patrons

f) *The demands of outside organizations,* e. g., the government or other institutions. These two can be treated together since they share some similarities.

The core of professional values lies in respect for human beings and human institutions. As social institutions, libraries and information centers engage in relations with the public (individual persons) or other agencies (groups or organizations). As noted earlier, Michael Bayles [2] sets forth a list of basic moral considerations:

1) freedom and self-determination,
2) protection from injury,
3) equality of opportunity,
4) privacy,
5) minimal well-being; to which was appended,
6) recognition of one's work.

We will look at each of these in more detail in a latter section.

At the moment, we can provide an illustration. If one considers the value of the moral autonomy, freedom amd self-determination, librarians and other information professionals must respect and negotiate the rights and autonomy of moral agents, whether individual or institutional. Within constraints imposed by other obligations (e. g., a patron cannot be permitted to monopolize the time of library staff), they should encourage the maximal freedom of patons, e. g., in stimulating or challenging patrons to pursue their research and interests to the fullest degree. There are, of course, areas of conflit in balancing the rights of one patron and the rights of other patrons: e. g., the library has the right to curtail a smelly, homeless

person (one case of the so-called «problem patron») who uses the library as a place to sleep during the day.

Conflicts among the Self, Organization and the Environment

Conflicts, while hopefully not normal, do occur, as in the case of the problem patron whose rights conflicts with other patrons and staff. One can illustrate other conflicts, according to the following groupings: between the self and the organization; between the profession and the organization; between the self and the professions and even within the organization. In most cases, the resolution of such conflicts is no easy matter, and difficult choices have to be made. It may very well be the case that each person in a conflict may embrace the same values or different ones, and even if they are the same, the way they see those values implemented may differ: for example, most libraries and library professionals believe in social responsibility, but they may disagree about how social responsibility should be realized in a particular situation. To promote social causes, such as equal pay for male and female librarians, some may feel the need to proselytize their cause, by wearing buttons at work and attending rallies; others may believe that it is better to do a good or better job and that will force issues that support inequities in pay scale.

Some authors have suggested principles by which to weigh ethical decisions: Froehlich [1, 5] and Rubin [6] arrived at a list similar to and partially adapted from a list of Sharon Baker [7] develops:

1) act in such a way that the amount of harm is minimized;
2) respect the autonomy of self and others;
3) seek justice of fairness;
4) seek social harmony;
5) be faithful to organizational, professional and public trust.

Most people would agree with these principles: however, they may very well disagree with how these principles are implemented. Furthermore, there are tensions among these principles (firing an employee to manifest organizational trust may act in tension to respecting the autonomy of others (e. g., the employee) or perhaps even being fair or just: e. g., an employee may be fired because of a lack of funds, not because they did not do their jobs well. One can provide several illustrations. Illustration of the tensions between the self and the organization. Organizations are limited and have

failings for a variety of reasons: poor administrative personnel, lack of money or suppport, incompetent or deficient workers, poor working conditions. In order for an organization to improve itself, it must engage in corrective behaviors, often spawned by input from employees: that is, employees should be granted the freedom to criticize an organization. However, such criticism should be constructive rather than destructive. What limits, if any, should be placed on individuals in criticizing an organization? There very well may be value conflicts on what an employee regards as important versus what the organization feels as important: can an employee wear a political (e. g., VOTE DEMOCRATC!) or social activist button (e. g., UNIONIZE! or SUPPORT GAY RIGHTS!) to work? To what extent is it permissible for employees to assert their individuality, freedom and autonomy on the job? To what extent does the organization have a right to curtail their autonomy? Is there a limit to the nature and extent of the criticism that an employee or employee group can lodge against the organization?

Illustratin of the tensions between the profession and the organization. There are many different kinds of professionals and some of them may be more loyal to the profession rather than the organization (e. g., doctors). Raelin [8, p. 40] classifies these allegiances as «locals» versus «cosmopolitans»: «The cosmopolitan pledges first loyalty to the profession and is interested in being evaluated by his or her peers in the profession. The local, on the other hand, extends loyalty to the organization and is interested in being recognized and evaluated by the organization's official agents, its managers.» Librarians and information professionals tend to belong to «locals» rather than «cosmopolitans.» Because of this, when conflicts arise between professionals and the organization, the loyalty falls toward the organization. For example, the profession may set standards for competence (e. g., requirements that information professionals constantly seek continuing education) or standards for minimum wage scales that the organization ignores or discards.

Tensions between the self and the profession. The profession may attempt to insist that organizations only hire employees of accredited programs (e. g., ALA accredited schools), while a potential employee, who may have not graduated from such a program, may feel quite competent to undertake a job, properly reasoning that graduating from an accredited school cannot guarantee or establish the competence of a potential employee or graduating from a non-accredited school cannot establish incompetence of an employee to an employer [One must note that accreditation aims at increasing the probability of providing well-trained employees].

Even within factors within an organization, tensions can arise. For example, libraries and information centers have the obligation of creating organizations that are efficient and courteous (e. g., only by hiring the best candidates). But as socially responsible agencies, they may advance social goals in hiring practices (e. g., equal employment opportunities, equality of the sexes) that may run contrary to factors related to organizational utility (e. g., sacrificing the best candidates or hiring only the cheapest candidates). One of the more common conflicts is between social responsibility and social utility. Buying materials that suit the interests of ordinary patrons would advance goals of social utility. Buying materials for a complete and balanced collection upholds ideals of social responsibility. Such actions may contravene social utility goals because in buying esoteric or unpopular materials, they may alienate certain patrons (e.g., buying books on Marxism) and collect materials that may be seldom used.

All of these are examples of conflicts, but they do not necessarily provide means to resolve these conflicts. In order to do so, we must look to the values or principles that information professionals hold and to determine whether there are principles of supersession that might apply. We begin by embellishing the foundation, already partially laid, of shared values of information professionals. We have already suggested a set of principles, but we have noted that it is not clear in a given situation whether a particular principle should take precedence. The problenm of the supersession of moral principles (a way of determining the priority of ethical principles) is a thorny issue. But first we must ask whether is such a thing as «professional ethics»?

Professional ethics and professional obligations

In the view of this author, professional ethics are not a special kind of ethics but regular ethics applied in the context of professional or organizational life. Having said that, however, some ethical problems arise that are specific to professional or organizational life. For example, there are problems which emerge because of the nature of organizational or professional contexts or roles, such as protecting the confidentiality of patron records. In ordinary life, one respects privacy, but its application gets extended to patron records, because of the professional/organizational role that one is undertaking as a librarian or information professional.

Likewise, professional values are not special values, but normal ethical values applied in the context of professional and/or organizational life. The

foundation for these values was laid earlier, derived from beliefs about fundamental rights of human beings: freedom and self-determination, protection from injury, equality of opportunity, privacy, minimal well-being, and recognition of one's work.

Some of the literature may lead to the impression that information professionals are to have no values. The title of such works as D. J. Foskett's work, taken a sheer face value, seems to give such an idea: The Creed of a Librarian: No Politics, No Religion, No Morals [9]. Such a position is impossible and undesirable. Foskett is in fact promoting a set of values: that information professionals should not impose their beliefs on patrons and should be tolerant of all politics, all religions, and all morals (unless, of course, it clearly violates some legal or ethical principle: e. g., a librarian does not have to help a student plagiarize footnotes). One of the important dimensions of library service is to respect the rights of individuals in their freedom and self-determination. Such a value in turn sets a framework for collection development: that a library's holdings should be as balanced and comprehensive as possible (in light the user population), reflecting the wide variety of interests, whether actual or possible, of the actual or potential patrons.

At any event, given the aforementioned framework, one can establish professional values and obligations. Professional values are derived from fundamental rights of human beings applied to the context of professional and organizational life. As already iterated, these rights are:

1) freedom and self-determination (moral autonomy);
2) protection from injury;
3) equality of opportunity;
4) privacy;
5) minimal well-being;
6) recognition for one's work (1-5 derived from Michael Bayles [2]).

Now we can see how these rights are cast into a series of obligations, which we will treat in turn: obligations to oneself, organizational obligations (and obligations to employers), environmental obligations, including: obligations to clients, obligations to systems (indirect obligations to clients), obligations to third parties, obligations to the profession, obligations to community of cultural standards and obligations to society.

1) *Freedom and self-determination (moral autonomy).* If people are accorded a right to self-determination, then they have a right to a

diversity of materials and information through which they would actualize their self-determination. Databases and library collections should therefore contain as balanced, complete and diversified viewpoints as possible.

2) *Protection from injury.* Clients (and employees) require a reasonably safe and comfortable environment in which to do their work or pursue their interests. No patrons (or staff for that matter) should have their physical security compromised: e. g., handrails and other facilities should be installed for the safety of handicapped or disabled patrons. The Hippocratic adage, «Do No Harm,» must also apply in libraries: e. g., materials for adults should not be accessible to children.

3) *Equality of opportunity.* Each patron should be provided equal and timely access, whether they are poor or undereducated or rich or a member of the board of trustees. New patrons should be provided with the same immediate courteous service as a member of the board of directors or management. No one should be disallowed proper service because of economic position or social status. Futhermore, not only would equality of opportunity imply equitable circulation and service policies, but also balance in collection development and database coverage (no viewpoint will be given undue weight, avoidance of conscious bias and censorship). Also third parties, such as contractors bidding on work for a public library or book jobbers, must be provided equality of opportunity. And hiring and promotions within a library or information center should follow equitable guidelines.

4) *Privacy.* Privacy is the ability of a person to control what is known about them, primarily to protect against unwarranted access to personal information. Confidentiality is that aspect of system transactions that respects the right to privacy of system users. For example, according to the constitutions of many contries, individuals are given the right to privacy; based on this right, libraries and information centers must uphold confidentiality of patron records and patron requests to the system of members of staff, e. g., reference questions to online searchers. The current version of the *American Library Association's Code of Ethics** states this principle succinctly: librarians must protect each user's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received, and materials consulted, borrowed

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* Idem nota anterior *(N. do Ed.).*

or acquired» [10]. Thus, transactions between the patron and the information system (library, database) should be treated as confidential and patron's privacy in the use of the system would be respected.

5) *Minimal well-being.* The library should provide environmental conditions that are comfortable for the patron (as well as employees). They should also provide collection that will meet the minimum needs of their typical patrons. Supplemented by the values of self-determination and equality of opportunity, one can argue that the right of human beings in the modern world to a minimal well-being include the right to information. It is the right to free and public access to information, at least to certain kinds of information. Dowlin [11] suggests the following: information as it pertains to candidates for public office or as it pertains to issues that will be decided by voters; information that is necessary for individuals to cope with their environment; information about their local, state or federal government; information that is relevant to their consumption of basic necessities, such as food, housing, transportation and medicine; information to improve health and safety; and information to increase their employment and careers. Such as a position has profound implications for developing countries.

6) *Recognition for one's work.* Such a recognition would result in economic rewards (e. g., royalties to authors, compilers, editors, et al. on the sale and use of one's work, copyright, and public lending bills that reward authors after the first sale) or in moral rights (the author's name is associated with the work and the work cannot be modified). In the Western cultures, the recognition results in economic rewards; in Eastern cultures, great works are often recognized through copying (ethical values in cultures may be the same — good work must be recognized — but the mores are different).

While the recognition of work usually translates in economic reward or social or organizational recognition, it is not always appropriate to do so with respect to the work of patrons. However, librarians and other information professionals must recognize the value of person's research or interests to themselves and so their requests for information or recreation must be honored with civility and respect by information professionals. The same should apply to the value of the work of other organizations or institutions that would interact with the library or information center in any way.

Professional obligations

Following the scheme developed above, there are several areas that professional ethics:

1) *Personal obligations to oneself* (within professional contexts) entails maximizing one's own freedom and to respecting one's own moral autonomy, to not treating oneself merely as a means in the organization (to not reduce onseself to one's roles), but to use one's distinctive voice, in light of or in spite of professional organizational or union roles. While library and information work is a service profession, it is easy to forget that information professionals have an obligation to themselves. This is important to note, because sometimes we forget sometimes we forget to do so or subsume ourselves under the roles we undertake, that we should treat ourselves as persons, entitled to our own opinions on matters. As one version of Kant's categorical imperative proclaims we should always treat others, whether in our own person or that of another, as ends, and never merely as means [12]. If we accept the validity of Kant's imperative, then it follows that even if we play organizational or professional roles, we should not treat ourselves merely as slaves ou mouthpieces for those roles, but that we should maintain our own sense of moral autonomy. Difficult as it may be to play properly, we may hold views as managers or supervisors, with which we personally or professionally disagree, and for which we may have an obligation to voice. For example, we are entitled to opinions that may be contrary to those demanded by our professional or organizational role, we can demand respect for our person and the value of our work and should be entitled to participate in decision-making as it affects our well-being privacy or protection from injury.

2) *Organizational obligations* — (Obligations between Professionals and Employers) entail organizational loyalty: promoting the social utility of the organization: i.e., promoting the educational, cultural and recreational goals of the organization; promoting organizational autonomy and survival (unless the organization is seriously dysfunctional). This is a dyadic relationship: obligations of employees to employers, obligations of employers to employees. Obligations of employee include: competence and diligence, honesty and candor, discretion, and avoidance of conflict of interest. Obligations of employer to the employee include: fairness in personnel relations, fair hiring and promotion practices, respect in peer relationships.

3) *Environmental obligations* include:

a) *Obligations between professionals and clients* comprising competence in the performance of one's tasks, privacy, confidentiality, respecting the freedom and self-determination of clients. But this is a dyadic relationship as well: professionals have responsibilities to clients and clients have responsibility to professionals. E. g., clients should be courteous to staff.

b) *Obligations between Professionals and Systems* (libraries or databases — indirect obligations to clients, balanced and complete collections, avoiding bias or systematic exclusion of certain kinds of materials (censorship), commitment to improve the quality of systems, warning patrons of the limitations and constraints of systems.

c) *Obligations to third parties* include respect for external agencies (e. g., governmental agencies) entail equality of opportunity, e. g., for book jobbers to negotiate books for the library; privacy/confidentiality: but are there acceptable breaches for suspected child abuse, spousal abuse, potential suicide, fraud criminal activities, or spying? And in other relationships not only are there obligations of professionals (e. g., when a vendor is bidding for a system or job, their quotations should reflect all conditions necessary to fulfill the bid.

d) *Obligations to the profession;* performing one's job comnpetently and with high standards, maintaining and improving one's job competently and with high standards, maintaining and improving his or her skills and knowledge (e.g., through continuing education), and encouraging colleagues to do the same; active participation in professional associations; professional solidarity; marketing the profession, professional standards and professional services; the development of professional standards and statements and codes of conduct, etc.

e) *Obligations to community or cultural standards,* as noted earlier, can be manifested in two ways:

1) as an anonymous force oor «standards» not manifest in a specific agency: e. g., when a particular book is not bought for a liabrary because it contains material offensive to the community (community standards) or in the prohibition of sexually graphic materials in a library, particularly the children's section.

2) as specific moral agencies or persons: end-users, patrons, other organizations, legal or governmental requirements, such as groups who form to protest the inclusion or exclusion of certain materials from the library.

f) *Obligations to society* (Social Responsibility) reflects the responsibility for seeking the public good. It can be articulated through representative and balanced collections; through politicizing librarians (lobbying for free access); through services to the handicapped; through literacy programs; and through strategies to redress information inequalities between developing and developed countries; through challenging censorship, and through balanced and representative collections.

Such are the varieties of obligations that can be sketched for the information professions, obligations based on shared values of professionals and ethical human beings. Again, while we can sketch such obligations, one should examine the issue of the supersession, determining which obligations take priority and/or how they are balanced. However, such an issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

Codes of ethics

Codes of ethics are useful instruments for sketching such basic professional values. But first one must note that there are different kinds of codes. According to Mark Frankel [13], there are three types of codes: aspiretional codes (which present ideals towards which practitioners should strive), educational codes (which substantiate their principles with commentary and interpretations), and regulatory codes (which provide a detailed set of rules to govern professional conduct and to provide a basis for solving grievances). He also notes that codes can have a variety of functions, not all of which are positive. A code can be: an enabling document which offers guidance to professionals «by simplifying the moral universe and by providing a framework for organizing and evaluating alternative courses of action»; a source of public evaluation; a means of professional socialization; a means of enhancing the profession's reputation and professional trust; a means of preserving entrenched professional biases (e. g., by protecting a profession's privileged status or by censoring unpopular ideas within its ranks); a deterrent to unethical behavior (e. g., through the use of sanctions

or by making it an obligation to report unethical behavior); a support system (e. g., from improper, external threats such as from censorship challenges); or as a means of adjudication among members or between members and outsiders [13]. If the *American Library Association's Code of Ethics** or the *Guide of Professional Conduct*** of the American Association for Information Science are typical of the profession, these codes tend to be primarily aspirational and somewhat educational. They are not regulatory in the sense that there are no sanctions associated with the codes or reporting mechanisms for unethical conduct, and it is unlikely that such codes should seek that role, because it is unclear who would constitute an appropriate authority for regulating behavior or enforcing it.

Not everyone agrees that codes of ethics are good or useful. Robert Barnes [14] has noted two typical objections to codes.

1) A code is either unnecessary or unworkable: if it reflects generally accepted standards and professional practices, it is not required; if it does not, it will have little or no effect because if professional practice is corrupt, a code is unlikely to correct it. Similarly, people who are ethical are most probably ethical without a code and those who are not will at best pay lip service to the code.
2) The second objection focuses on the appropriateness of a professional organization to set standards for the entire field, given its diversity and complexity.

Furthermore, a code's principles tend to be general because if they are too sweeping, few people will be apply to negotiate its details. On the other hand, if it is too general, it will be worthless because of its lack of detail. [14] Similarly, codes can be misapplied because practitioners may not be able to understand the reasoning that produced the code or because a given case may not be covered by the code or is an exception to the code. In this way, codes in the hands of naive practitioners may become vehicles for the avoidance of ethical or moral deliberation by being appealed to as absolute standards.

None of these objections are crucial. Most of them can be solved through appropriate education and socialization. While a professional is still likely to be ethical without a code, it still is useful to articulate the goals and

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* Idem nota anterior *(N. do Ed.).*

** As «Asis Professional Guidelines» são publicadas neste número dos *Cadernos* e podem ser consultadas na Internet URL http://www.asis.org/) *(N. do Ed.).*

ideals of the profession, to raise consciousness about issues and potential abuses, to bear witness to a profession's collective beliefs, and to set standards for measuring practitioners or in delineating expected behavior (without any enforcing sanctions). While a professional society must be careful in articulating and promulgating its code, it cannot prevent practitioner's misunderstanding of its provisions, although it does have an obligation for providing sufficient explanations for its provisions and for providing proper education.

One model of a code can be presented, not that it is the only code or the best one. Both models are aspirational (setting ideals for the profession) and educational (socializing members into some awareness of expected behavior). The American Library Association has recently adopted (July 28, 1995)* a new form of their code of ethics, largely adapted from their earlier one, which was a six point code.

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees ans library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics* states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicity committed to intellectual freedom and freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

I. 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.

* Idem primeira nota da p. anterior (N. do Ed.).

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

III. 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.

IV. We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.

V. 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.

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

VII. We distinguish between our personal actions and 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.

VIII. 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. [10]*.

There are many goods aspects to this code insofar as it articulates many of the obligations listed about. There are some areas where it falls short: in the obligations of librarians and information professionals in correcting errors in systems and in improving the quality of systems. Futhermore, (and really it would be impossible to do so within the context of a stated code), it does not give clear guidance about balancing principles or about which ones take priority. It is easy to say that one should respect intellectual property, but that often raises tensions with those who believe in free access to information, or at least to certain kinds of information: countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have exemptions to copyright law (fair use or fair dealing statutes) that permit the use of copying for certain limited purposes, such as education. While such statutes do not negate intellectual property rights, they do offer challenges to their wholesale application.

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* O texto em VIII pontos do Código de Ética da American Library Association, encontra-se por razões práticas reproduzido à frente neste número, junto de outros documentos da ALA relevantes para este tema (N. do Ed.).

Conclusion

There are many other issues that need clarification and discussion. But that is beyondf the scope of this presentation. Hopefully, what has been given provides a sufficient framework through which the issues can be addressed and further elaborated.

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ABSTRACT   *The text is an analysis of ethical issues for information professionals, divided in four parts. In the first part the author presents a model or prototype for discussing ethical situations that arise in information work. The second one discusses professional ethics and the values that such ethics supports. The third presents the role of Codes of ethics and professional statements. The ALA's Code of Ethics of 1995 is presented and discussed.*

At the end the author presents this paper as a sketch for discussion, due to the nature of its original presentation as an oral adressing to the First portuguese organized International Meeting on Information Professional's Ethics, held in Lisbon in June 1995.

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