



GHANA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

CODE OF ETHICS

Preamble

The Ghana Library Association (GLA), established in 1962, is the recognized professional body for the development and promotion of professional Library practice in Ghana. It is registered under the Professional Bodies Decree NRCD 143 of 1973 with registration No. PB 21 dated August, 1986.

The Association recognizes 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, and library staff.

The purpose of this code of ethics is to define and clarify the ethical responsibilities of the present and future members of GLA. Thus, it indicates the standards of behaviour expected of librarians and other information workers. It sets out, in general terms, the standards and duties which are reasonable to expect a professional to observe. It is intended to protect the profession, individual practitioners and their clients.

In the pursuit of the practice of professional librarianship, it is imperative that librarians and other information workers conduct themselves in an ethical manner in order to earn and maintain the confidence of library patrons, corporate institutions, (public, private and non-governmental) as well as the global community.

As a sequel to the above, librarians and other information workers must acknowledge that:

- We have an obligation to our users in terms of providing them with every information needed at the least cost, teach them to use effectively every tool in the library in searching for information, train them to be lifelong learners/information literate, teach them to be responsible with information and appreciate issues such as copyright and plagiarism among others.
- We have an obligation to Management, therefore, we shall promote the understanding of library practice to Management using every resource at our disposal.
- We have an obligation to fellow members, therefore, we shall uphold the high ideals of professionalism as outlined in GLA's Constitution. Further, we shall cooperate with fellow members and shall treat them with honesty and respect at all times.
- We have an obligation to society and will participate to the best of our ability in the dissemination of knowledge, pertaining to the general development and understanding of professional library practice. Again, we shall not use knowledge of a confidential

nature to further our personal interest nor shall we violate the privacy and confidentiality of information entrusted to our care.

- We have an obligation to our country, therefore, in our personal business and social contacts, we shall uphold our nation and honour the chosen way of life of our fellow citizens.

Each member must accept these obligations as a personal responsibility and actively discharge them with the uttermost dedication.

The clauses of the code of ethics build on the principles outlined in the preamble:

1. Access to information

- The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy.
- Librarians and other information workers reject the denial and restriction of access to information and ideas most particularly through censorship whether by states, governments, or religious or civil society institutions.
- Librarians and other information workers offering services to the public should make every endeavour to offer access to their collections and services free of cost to the user. If membership fees and administrative charges are inevitable, they should be kept as low as possible, and practical solutions found so that socially disadvantaged people are not excluded.
- Librarians and other information workers promote and publicize their collection and services so that users and prospective users are aware of their existence and availability.
- Librarians and other information workers use the most effective ways to make the material accessible to all. For this purpose they seek to ensure that the websites of libraries and other information institutions comply with international standards for accessibility and access to them is not subject to barriers.

2. Responsibilities towards individuals and society

- In order to promote inclusion and eradicate discrimination, librarians and other information workers ensure that the right of accessing information is not denied and that equitable services are provided for everyone whatever their age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender, education, income, immigration and asylum-seeking status, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.
- Librarians and other information workers respect language minorities in the country and their right to access information in their own language.
- Librarians and other information workers organize and present content in a way that

allows an autonomous user to find the information s/he needs. Librarians and other information workers help and support users in their information searching.

- Librarians and other information workers offer services to increase reading skills. They promote information literacy including the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and create, use and communicate information. And they promote the ethical use of information thereby helping to eliminate plagiarism and other forms of misuse of information.
- Librarians and other information workers respect the protection of minors while ensuring this does not impact on the information rights of adults.

3. Privacy, secrecy and transparency

- Librarians and other information workers respect personal privacy, and the protection of personal data, necessarily shared between individuals and institutions.
- The relationship between the library and the user is one of confidentiality and librarians and other information workers will take appropriate measures to ensure that user data is not shared beyond the original transaction.
- Librarians and other information workers support and participate in transparency so that the workings of government, administration and business are opened to the scrutiny of the general public.

4. Open Access and Intellectual Property

- Librarians and other information workers' interest is to provide the best possible access for library users to information and ideas in any media or format. This includes support for the principles of open access, open source, and open licenses.
- Librarians and other information workers aim to provide fair, swift, economical, efficient and effective access to information for users.
- Librarians and other information workers have a professional duty to advocate for exceptions and limitations to copyright restrictions for libraries.
- Librarians and other information workers are partners of authors, publishers and other creators of copyright protected works. Librarians and other information workers recognize the intellectual property right of authors and other creators and will seek to ensure that their rights are respected.
- Librarians and other information workers negotiate the most favourable terms for access to works on behalf of their users and seek to ensure that access is not unnecessarily prevented or hindered by the mode of administration of intellectual property laws and that licenses do not override exceptions for libraries contained in national legislation.

- Librarians and other information workers encourage governments to establish an intellectual property regime that appropriately respects balance between the interests of rightsholders and individuals and the institutions such as libraries which serve them.
- Librarians and other information workers also advocate that copyright terms should be limited and that information that has fallen in the public domain remains public and free.

5. Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills

- Librarians and other information workers are strictly committed to neutrality and an unbiased stance regarding collection, access and service. Neutrality results in the most balanced collection and the most balanced access to information achievable.
- Librarians and other information workers define and publish their policies for selection, organization, preservation, provision, and dissemination of information.
- Librarians and other information workers distinguish between their personal convictions and professional duties. They do not advance private interests or personal beliefs at the expense of neutrality.
- Librarians and other information workers have the right to free speech in the workplace provided it does not infringe the principle of neutrality towards users.
- Librarians and other information workers counter corruption directly affecting librarianship, as in the sourcing and supply of library materials, appointments to library posts and administration of library contracts and finances.
- Librarians and other information workers strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing their knowledge and skills. They aim at the highest standards of service quality and thus promote the positive reputation of the profession.

6. Colleague and employer/employee relationship

- Librarians and other information workers treat each other with fairness and respect.
- Librarians and other information workers share their professional experience with colleagues and they help and guide new professionals to enter the professional community and develop their skills. They contribute to the activities of their professional association and participate in research and publication on professional matters.
- Librarians and other information workers strive to earn a reputation and status based on their professionalism and ethical behaviour. They do not compete with colleagues by the use of unfair methods.

Conclusion

The Spirit behind this Code of Ethics stems from the philosophy that ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. It is for this reason that the code of ethics states the values to which the GLA is committed and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession.

As professionals in the field of librarianship, GLA members pledge to uphold and abide by high standards of integrity and professional conduct, the sense of accepting responsibility for their actions, the need to continually seek to enhance their professional capabilities, the understanding to practice with fairness and honesty, and the value of encouraging others in the profession to act in an ethical and professional manner.

***The clauses have been extracted from the *IFLA Code of ethics for librarians and other Information workers* with regards to the obligations and expectations associated with membership of the profession and core principles outlined.**

Adopted by GLA Council on August 27, 2014 and also at the GLA Annual General Meeting on 6th November 2014.