Information Ethics for 21st Century Library Professionals

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Abstract

Purpose: To provide an introduction to concepts and resources that will be useful to library professionals learning about information ethics.

Methodology: This paper argues for the importance of information ethics to 21st century library professionals. It describes what various authors have said about how information ethics can be applied to the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals.

Findings: In order to deal effectively with their ethical dilemmas, library professionals must have a good working knowledge of information ethics. Codes of professional ethics can help to provide such knowledge, but they are not sufficient. Courses on information ethics must be part of the education of information professionals. Such courses should provide library professionals with an understanding of ethical theories and how they apply to concrete practical cases. Such courses should also make explicit the connection between information ethics and the mission of the library professional.

Research limitations: This paper is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of publications on the topic of information ethics and library professionals.

Value: This paper provides library professionals with a concise introduction to information ethics.

Keywords: Information ethics, Librarianship, Library science, Equitable access to information, Censorship, Intellectual freedom, Information privacy, Intellectual property.

Paper Type: Literature Review

Introduction

Library professionals play an extremely important role in society. Their mission is essentially to provide members of society with access to the information that they need (cf. Ortega y Gasset 1934). Just like doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, library professionals would like to carry out their mission in an ethical manner.[1] And, like these other professionals, they regularly face ethical dilemmas.

- Should we put Internet filters on all the computers in a public library (cf. Doyle 2002)?
- Should we tell law enforcement officers investigating potential terrorists what a particular patron has checked out (cf. Garoogian 1991)?
- Should we add a book donated by a racist organization to the library collection (cf. Nesta and Blanke 1991)?

- Should we allow a homeless person that smells very bad to use the library (cf. Baldwin 1996)?
- Should we include Holocaust denial literature in the library collection (cf. Wolkoff 1996)?
- Should we charge for specialized information services in a public library (cf. Hannabuss 1996)?
- Should we make photocopies of an article for a class when the school library cannot afford multiple copies of the book itself?
- Should we put a warning label on an encyclopedia that contains clearly inaccurate medical information (cf. Pendergrast 1988)?

As Diana Woodward (1990) forcefully argued, in order to deal effectively with these ethical dilemmas, library professionals need to be able to engage in ethical reasoning (cf. Hannabuss 1996). In particular, since these ethical dilemmas fall within the scope of *information ethics*, library professionals need to have a good working knowledge of information ethics. This paper will look at how such knowledge can help them to make better decisions.

The Technology

Some of the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals have arisen because of advances in information technology. And there is a lot of good material on the ethics of information technology. Spinello 1995 and 1997, De George 2003, and the journal *Ethics and Information Technology*, for example, are excellent resources. But most of the aforementioned ethical dilemmas do not involve new information technology to any large degree. Even those ethical dilemmas that do involve new information technology (e.g., whether to use Internet filters) are clearly special cases of much broader issues in information ethics (e.g., intellectual freedom). Thus, even for 21st century library professionals, the ethics of information technology is only a small part of information ethics.

Information ethics is essentially concerned with the question of *who* should have access to *what* information. The core issues of information ethics include *intellectual freedom*, *equitable access to information*, *information privacy*, and *intellectual property*. Advances in information technology have made the general population more aware of these issues. But library professionals have been concerned with these issues for centuries.

While it is not as hot a topic as the ethics of information technology, some research has been devoted to information ethics for library professionals. Hauptman 1988, Mintz 1990, Lancaster 1991, Froehlich 1992, Alfino and Pierce 1997, Smith 1997, Hauptman 2002, the International Center for Information Ethics (http://icie.zkm.de), the annual *Information Ethics Roundtable* (http://www.sir.arizona.edu/ier/), and the *Journal of Information Ethics*, for example, are all good resources. But there is one important type of resource on information ethics with which all library professionals ought to be familiar (cf. Hannabuss 1996, 28-29): namely, the *codes of professional ethics* that have been

adopted by the various organizations to which library professionals belong (see, e.g., AALL 1999, ALA 1995, ASIST 1992, MLA 1994, SAA 1992).

The Codes

A code of ethics is a list of guiding principles for ethical behavior. For example, a code of ethics tends to contain statements of the form "You shall do X" (e.g., "You shall protect intellectual property rights") or "You shall not do Y" (e.g., "You shall not censor library resources"). Codes of professional ethics for library organizations are mainly intended to guide the behavior of library professionals. However, these codes serve other functions as well. In particular, these codes of professional ethics inform the public about what library professionals are committed to doing.

In a survey of library professionals, Wallace Koehler et al. (2000) found that there are differences in which principles are emphasized, but that there is fairly wide agreement about what the principles are. For example, library professionals should "uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources."[2] Also, they should "protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality" and "recognize and respect intellectual property rights."

Codes of professional ethics for library organizations typically address the core issues of information ethics, such as intellectual freedom and intellectual property. But it should also be noted that these codes typically go beyond principles of information ethics. They include principles of professional ethics more generally. For example, they typically discuss such issues as the treatment of employees and professional development. But such issues are common to many professions and are not directly related to information. This paper will focus specifically on the principles of information ethics.

Limitations of the Codes

Codes of professional ethics are an important and valuable resource for library professionals. However, they tend to leave a number of important questions unanswered.[3] First of all, what exactly do these principles *mean*? For example, what does it mean to "uphold the principles of intellectual freedom" or to "respect intellectual property rights"? It is not always clear how library professionals should apply these principles to concrete cases.

Second, what should library professionals do when these principles *conflict* with other ethical principles? Whenever we are guided by more than one ethical principle, there is a possibility that these principles will give us conflicting advice in certain cases. For example, it has been suggested that the duty to protect the privacy of library patrons (e.g., by maintaining the confidentiality of their circulation records) conflicts with the duty to protect our society from terrorists. In fact, these principles of information ethics can even conflict with each other. For example, respecting intellectual property rights can often get in the way of providing better access to information (as in the dilemma for the school librarian described above).

Finally, and most importantly, what is the *ethical justification* for these principles? In other words, why should library professionals follow these principles? In addition to its intrinsic theoretical interest, there are a number of practical reasons why it is important for library professionals to have an answer to this question. For one thing, even if one is already committed to following these principles, understanding how they are justified can make them easier to apply in concrete cases. Also, such an understanding allows library professionals to defend the decisions that they make when ethical dilemmas arise (cf. Woodward 1990, 8). Without such an understanding, library professionals have little chance of convincing people who do not already agree that these principles should be followed. Furthermore, according to many ethical theories, right action requires more than just doing the right thing. For example, Aristotle (350BC, Book II, Section 4) claims that one has to do the right thing *for the right reason* (which requires an understanding of how these principles are justified).

The Courses

Given these limitations of the professional codes of ethics, library professionals need additional exposure to information ethics. Just like business ethics for business students and medical ethics for medical students, information ethics should be part of the education of library professionals. Along these lines, Toni Carbo and Stephen Almagno (2001) have argued for the importance of information ethics courses in library science programs. They also describe the history of one of the earliest information ethics courses (at the University of Pittsburgh). Many library professionals who have taken such courses report that they have been extremely beneficial (cf. Carbo and Almagno 2001, 514-515). Also, as Elizabeth Buchanan (2004, 52) points out, most students of library science believe that this is a critical topic that should be required in library science programs.

But despite the importance of the topic, there are still relatively few courses on information ethics for library professionals. Elizabeth Buchanan (2004) recently did a survey of the information ethics courses offered by library science programs in the United States. Far less than half of the ALA accredited programs offer such a course (cf. Carbo and Almagno 2001, 517). And only a few of these programs (e.g., the University of Arizona) require students to take a course on information ethics. In most library science programs, ethical issues are only covered briefly in courses on other topics, such as collection management or information policy (cf. Drabenstott 2000). In addition to suggesting that courses devoted to information ethics should be part of library science programs, this paper essentially addresses the question what should be taught in such courses.

There are a number of other important questions, however, that I will not address in this paper. For example, should the course be taught by library professionals who have actually faced some of these ethical dilemmas or can it be taught by philosophers trained in applied ethics? Also, should the course be taught face-to-face or can it be taught over the Internet?[4] Carbo (2005) provides a fairly comprehensive list of such questions.

The Content

Information ethics for library professionals is an area of applied ethics. It is not just a theoretical exercise. Students of library science are actually going to need to be able to apply what they learn in courses on information ethics. Thus, most courses on information ethics for library professionals focus on *case studies*. That is, they look at concrete practical cases (such as those listed above) that actually arise in the day-to-day activities of library professionals. As Stuart Hannabuss (1996) points out, case studies are a critical component of such courses.

However, library professionals also need the tools to analyze these concrete cases. More precisely, they need to be able to engage in ethical reasoning (cf. Woodward 1990, 8-10). This requires an understanding of *ethical theories*. Such understanding is necessary to overcome the aforementioned limitations of the professional codes of ethics. However, there is frequently too little emphasis on theory in information ethics courses in library science programs.[5] Thus, the remainder of this paper will look at how ethical theories can be applied to issues in information ethics.

The Theories

Ethical theories make claims about which actions people should take and about which actions people should not take. In other words, they provide criteria for distinguishing between *right* actions and *wrong* actions. As a result, they can be used to justify particular courses of action. Of course, different ethical theories give different criteria for distinguishing between actions that are right and actions that are wrong. Basically, they use different sorts of *reasons* to justify particular courses of action.

Ethical theories can be roughly divided into four main types depending upon whether they appeal to consequences, duties, rights, or virtues. For each of the aforementioned ethical dilemmas, we might profitably ask what a consequence-based theory, a duty-based theory, a rights-based theory, or a virtue-based theory would say that we should do. Indeed, answering this question is a useful exercise for students.

In this section, I will briefly discuss the main examples of each type of theory.[6] Along the way, I will point out how various authors have applied these ethical theories to the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals. The point here is not to argue for any particular theory or for any particular resolution of these dilemmas. In fact, I take this sort of pluralism to be a good pedagogical approach for courses on information ethics. The goal of such courses should not be to indoctrinate students with a particular ethical theory, but to give them the tools to grapple effectively with these dilemmas.

     a) Consequence-based Theories

According to a consequence-based theory, what distinguishes right actions from wrong actions is that they have better consequences. In order to do the right thing, we should

perform actions that have the good *consequences*. Consequence-based theories clearly have quite a bit of intuitive appeal. Also, they can be easily applied to the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals.

The main example of a consequence-based theory is *utilitarianism*. According to utilitarianism, goodness is measured in terms of the amount of happiness in the world. Thus, the right action is the one that maximizes overall happiness. The most influential development of utilitarianism is due to the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1863).

Mill's (1859) influential argument for intellectual freedom, and against censorship, shows how utilitarianism can be applied to information ethics. There are two steps to Mill's argument. First, he argues that we are more likely to acquire true beliefs if there is no censorship. Second, he argues that acquiring true beliefs tends to increase overall happiness. In support of the first step, Mill points out that, since human beings are fallible, we are sure to censor some true information if we censor (even if we try to only censor false information). Furthermore, even if we succeeded in only censoring false information, our true beliefs would quickly become "dead dogma[s], not … living truth[s]." That is, we would lose the conviction in our beliefs that comes from seeing how they stand up to criticism.

Tony Doyle (2001) has recently argued that Mill's argument actually supports an *absolute* ban on censorship.[7] Doyle (2001, 60) admits that, according to utilitarianism, "if we could be sure that a type of expression was seriously inimical to half the population, that it carried no compensating benefits, and that it could be banned with few repercussions, then we should ban it." However, he still argues that there should be an absolute ban on censorship because *we cannot be sure* which types of expression will have these bad consequences. Don Fallis and Kay Mathiesen (2001) have argued (contra Doyle) that there may be cases where the potential consequences are sufficiently bad and sufficiently likely that censorship is unfortunately the right action.

Consequence-based theories can easily be applied to other issues in information ethics as well. For example, Edwin Hettinger (1989, 47-51) has offered a utilitarian argument for respecting intellectual property rights. The basic idea is that, if intellectual property rights are not respected, authors will not be able to recover the costs of producing the intellectual property.[8] As a result, they may not be willing to create (and supply libraries with) more intellectual property, which would clearly be a bad consequence.

b) Duty-based Theories

Of course, consequences are not necessarily all that matters in determining what the right thing to do is. Many ethical theorists think that there are ethical *duties* that human beings must obey regardless of the consequences. For example, we arguably have a duty not to kill innocent people even if doing so would have very good consequences. The most influential duty-based theory was developed by Immanuel Kant (1785).

According to Kant, the basis for right action is the *categorical imperative*, which states that "I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law." It follows from this, for example, that lying is wrong. If *everybody* lied, then no one would trust anybody else and there would be no point to lying. Thus, the maxim "Lie whenever it is to your advantage" would not work as a universal law. Kant gives other versions of the categorical imperative that actually provide more straightforward guidelines for identifying right actions. For example, a well-known version states that you should "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means." In other words, you should not simply *use* other people in order to achieve your goals. Woodward (1990, 15) has tried to use Kant's categorical imperative to provide a defense of intellectual freedom.

A more recent (and more user-friendly) duty-based theory was developed W. D. Ross (1930). One reason for the greater accessibility of Ross's theory is that (unlike Kant or Mill) he does not try to distinguish between right actions and wrong actions using a single unified principle. Ross instead presents a whole list of duties that are each supposed follow directly from our moral intuition. This list includes a duty to keep our promises, a duty to distribute goods justly (*justice*), a duty to improve the lot of others with respect to virtue, intelligence, and happiness (*beneficence*), and a duty to avoid injury to others. The duties of justice and beneficence are especially important for library professionals. In addition, Ross's list of duties is not intended to be exhaustive. As a result, there may be additional duties (possibly a duty to provide access to information) that are directly relevant to library professionals.

c) Rights-based Theories

Other ethical theorists think that the right thing to do is determined by the *rights* that human beings have.[9] The most influential rights-based theory was developed by John Locke (1689). Such theories are especially congenial to information ethics as discussions of these topics are often framed in terms of rights. The *Library Bill of Rights* (ALA 1996) is a notable example.

We have some rights merely by virtue of being human. For example, the "inalienable rights" that Thomas Jefferson appeals to in the Declaration of Independence are of this sort. Such *natural rights* have many potential applications to information ethics. For example, it has been suggested that it is in the nature of human beings to think for themselves and that this fact implies that we have certain rights. In particular, Woodward (1990, 15-16) claims that this fact establishes that we have a natural right to unrestricted access to information. If information were generally withheld from us, our ability to think for ourselves about what we should do would be seriously impeded. In other words, restrictions on access to information would conflict with our nature. Along similar lines, it has been argued that we have a natural right to privacy (see, e.g., Schoeman 1984). The basic idea is that we are not really able to think for ourselves if we are worried that our choices (e.g., about what to read) are being observed.

In addition to our natural rights, we also have rights that arise from our participation in a society. John Rawls (1971) has developed a very influential ethical theory that focuses on these sorts of rights. People do not usually make an explicit agreement to participate in a society. Furthermore, even if they did, it is not clear that such an agreement would be *fair*. The people who have more power often take advantage of the people who have less power. As a result, we cannot base an ethical theory on an actual agreement that people have made. Instead, Rawls bases his theory on the idea of a *hypothetical* (but fair) agreement.

In order to determine what a fair agreement would look like, Rawls asks us to perform a thought experiment. We imagine that the parties to the agreement are behind a *veil of ignorance*. That is, we imagine that they do not know anything about their particular position in society. For example, they do not know what they have (e.g., how wealthy they are), what their abilities are (e.g., how smart they are), or what goals they have in life. In other words, they do not know anything about themselves that might bias their decisions about what policies to adopt.

There are a number of ways in which Rawls's theory can applied to issues in information ethics. For example, Martin Frické et al. (2000, 482) have argued that Rawls's theory supports public funding of, and equitable access to, library services. Since a person behind the veil of ignorance does not know what her position in society is or what goals she actually has (i.e., what her "conception of the good" is), she cannot simply adopt policies that support the goals that she actually has. However, she can be fairly certain that she will need access to information whatever her specific goals happen to be. In other words, as Jeroen van den Hoven (1995) points out, information is what Rawls's would call a "primary good." Thus, she will want to make sure that access to information is provided to *all* members of society. Even if she is actually rich, she would agree to the public funding of library services because she has to allow for the possibility that she is poor and really needs those services.

Rawls intends his theory to be used to evaluate large-scale social policies (such as whether libraries should be publicly-funded). But his theory can also be used to evaluate small-scale social policies (such as how such libraries should be run). For example, Wendell Johnson (1994) has used Rawls' theory to evaluate reference policies. Also, Rawls's theory can be used to defend the intellectual freedom policies that most libraries adhere to. Since a person behind the veil of ignorance does not know what specific information she will need, she will want to make sure that access to information on a wide range of topics and from a wide range of perspectives is provided.

Rights-based theories can be applied to other issues in information ethics such as intellectual property. Adam Moore (2001), for example, has offered a Lockean defense of intellectual property rights. That is, he applies Locke's influential theory of property (which basically says that we have a natural right to the "fruits of our labor") to the special case of intellectual property. However, Thomas Jefferson (1813, 630) has claimed there is an important disanalogy between intellectual property and other sorts of property. He writes that "he who receives an idea from me, receives instruction himself

without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me." Hettinger (1989, 36-45) offers additional objections to a Lockean defense of intellectual property rights. Roger McCain (1988, 270) also points out that intellectual property rights can come into conflict with other property rights. For example, my right that my book not be copied without my permission conflicts with your right to use your expensive photocopier as you see fit (compare the dilemma for the school librarian described above). It is not immediately obvious which right takes precedence in such a conflict.

d) Virtue-based Theories

Finally, a few ethical theorists think that the right thing to do is determined by the *virtues* that human beings ought to have. According to virtue-based theories, the right thing to do is what a virtuous person would do in the same circumstances. The most influential virtue-based theory was developed by Aristotle (350BC). The Aristotelian virtues include things like courage, temperance, friendliness, and generosity.

Virtue-based theories have probably been the least discussed of the four types of theories. But they have been gaining in popularity in recent years. Philippa Foot (1978) and Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), for example, offer contemporary virtue-based theories. And virtues are clearly applicable to issues in information ethics. For example, library professionals often need to courage to stand up for the principles of information ethics in the face of resistance. Also, as Ashley McDowell (2002, 56) points out, friendliness certainly makes it more likely that library professionals will succeed in their mission of providing people with access to information.

Limitations of the Theories

Once we start explicitly applying these theories to the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals, however, several possible objections arise. First, it might be objected that this list of ethical theories is too limited. For example, the specific theories that I have discussed come out of the Western tradition in ethics. As Thomas Froehlich (2005, 13) correctly points out, it is also important to consider non-Western theories. Even so, these four approaches still capture the basic forms of ethical reasoning found in a multitude of cultures. The specific theories that I have discussed are simply notable examples of these four approaches. Also, unlike many non-Western ethical theories, the specific theories that I have discussed exemplify these approaches without being tied to particular religious traditions.

There is another way in which this list of ethical theories might appear to be too limited. Several authors, such as Luciano Floridi (2001), claim that information ethics needs its own unique ethical theory. Now, the ethical dilemmas faced by library professionals are certainly unique and interesting applications. But, as Kay Mathiesen (2004) points out, they can be effectively addressed using the existing ethical theories that have been developed over centuries (cf. Hauptman 2002). Deborah Johnson (1999) has made a similar point with regard to computer ethics.

Second, it might be objected that this list of ethical theories is too extensive. Different ethics theories will sometimes reach different conclusions about what the right thing to do is. However, this possibility does not imply that we have to determine which theory is *the* correct ethical theory before we can profitably engage in ethical reasoning. For one thing, most ethical theories agree most of the time about what the right thing to do is. For example, as noted above, all of the theories support intellectual freedom (albeit for different reasons). If a particular course action increases overall happiness *and* involves treating people as ends and not solely as means to an end, for example, then we have a pretty good case that this is the right action to take. Furthermore, even if we were to determine which theory was *the* correct ethical theory, we would not necessarily know exactly what the right thing to do is. For example, adherents of Ross's theory might easily disagree about what the right thing to do is because they disagree about which duty takes precedence when there is a conflict. Utilitarians might easily disagree about what the right thing to do is because they disagree about what the consequences of a particular course of action will be.

In any event, ethical theories are not primarily valuable because they give us a definitive answer about what the right thing to do is whenever we are faced with an ethical dilemma. Ethical theories are valuable because they force us to be explicit about the various considerations (e.g., consequences, duties, rights, virtues) that should play a role in our ethical reasoning. By thinking carefully about what rights might be at stake and about the potential consequences to the people affected by the decision, library professionals are more likely to make better decisions (cf. Spinello 1995, 38-39, Kirkwood 1997).

Finally, it might be objected that these ethical theories are not sufficiently in line with the principles of information ethics that appear in the professional codes. For example, the ALA (1996) contends that access to library materials should not be restricted on the basis of age. However, according to Frické et al. (2000, 482-483), Rawls's theory cannot be used to defend unrestricted access for children. A person behind the veil of ignorance will not know what her actual age is (e.g., she will not know if she is a child). As a result, it will be important to her that children have access to the information that they need. Even so, she may not support unrestricted access for children. She may reasonably worry that, if she actually is a young child, she will not be competent to decide which materials will be dangerous to her.

But the fact that these ethical theories do not perfectly support the principles of information ethics that appear in the professional codes is not a serious objection. Codes of professional ethics (just like laws) are written by fallible human beings and are subject to criticism and revision. William Sheerin (1991) and Gordon Baldwin (1996) have also argued that the ALA's positions are too extreme in many respects. In fact, many library professionals have taken exception to certain statements in the *Library Bill of Rights* and have gone on to adopt revised versions of those statements (cf. Baldwin 1996, 21).

The Mission

In the 21st century, all sorts of people face ethical dilemmas that fall within the scope of information ethics. For example, music fans have to decide whether to download music files from the Internet without paying. Also, just like the library professional, the bookseller may have to decide whether to tell law enforcement officers what books her patrons are reading. All of these people would benefit from a good working knowledge of information ethics. For example, it would be useful for them to be able to think about what Kant, Aristotle, or Rawls would say about their dilemmas. However, there is a reason why it is especially important for library professionals to have an understanding of information ethics. How library professionals respond to their ethical dilemmas directly affects their ability to carry out their *mission*.

The existentialist philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1934) probably made the most famous statement on the mission of the library professional. Jorge Sosa and Michael Harris (1991) provide a nice survey of the impact of Ortega y Gasset's statement on the library profession. A number of other authors (e.g., Wengert 2001) have subsequently offered somewhat different views about what the mission of the library professional is. But, while there is disagreement over the details, everyone seems to agree that the mission is essentially to provide people with access to the information that they need (cf. Moran 2001).

Supporting intellectual freedom and resisting censorship clearly further this mission. But it might seem that other principles of information ethics, such as protecting privacy rights and intellectual property rights, do not really have much to do with improving access to information. If anything, they seem to involve restricting access to information. However, as Rhoda Garoogian (1991, 229) points out, a failure to keep patron records confidential can have a potentially "chilling effect" on people's use of the library and, thus, restrict their access to information (cf. McDowell 2002, 55-56).[10] For example, a library patron might not be willing to check out a book on a sensitive subject if she knew that the FBI, or even just her friends and family, could easily find out about it. Also, as noted above, protecting intellectual property rights helps to insure that authors will continue to supply libraries with information that their patrons can access. Thus, these principles as well further the mission of the library professional.

Conclusion

Library professionals regularly face ethical dilemmas that fall within the scope of information ethics. In order to deal effectively with these ethical dilemmas, library professionals need to have a good working knowledge of information ethics. Codes of professional ethics can help to provide such knowledge, but they are not sufficient. Courses on information ethics must be part of the education of information professionals. Such courses should certainly consider concrete practical cases. For example, they should make use of case studies. But such courses should also provide library professionals with the tools to analyze these cases. In other words, they should give library professionals an understanding of ethical theories. A number of authors have shown how these theories can be applied to the ethical dilemmas faced by library

professionals. Such courses should also make explicit the connection between information ethics and the mission of the library professional.[11]

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Endnotes

1. Library professionals would certainly like to act legally as well as ethically. But this is a separate issue. Just because something is legal does not mean that it is ethical (and vice versa).

2. The ALA (2002) defines *intellectual freedom* as "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction" and *censorship* as "the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons … find objectionable or dangerous."

3. Many of these codes of ethics are supplemented by supporting documents (e.g., ALA 2002) that go some way toward addressing these questions.

4. Since learning how to engage in ethical reasoning requires dialogue, participation in class discussions is an extremely important component of this course. For example, in addition to being able to put forward a view, one has to be able to respond to objections to that view that other people might offer. This might suggest that this course would have to be taught in a traditional classroom setting. However, there is some reason to think that this course can also be taught effectively over the Internet (cf. Yasuoka 2004). For example, having to write out their comments seems to force people to be a little more thoughtful when expressing themselves.

5. In general, graduate education in library science should expose students to underlying theory as well as actual practice (cf. Fallis and Frické 1999, Buchanan 2004, 57). Economic theory (see, e.g., Kingma 1996), decision theory (see, e.g., Kirkwood 1997), and epistemology (see, e.g., Fallis 2006) are other examples of theories (often developed in other disciplines) that can help information professionals to do a better job.

6. This discussion draws on the concise introduction to ethical theories given by Richard Spinello (1995, 14-42).

7. Doyle (2001, 45-49) also provides a concise history of intellectual freedom policies in libraries.

8. Of course, as Joseph Branin and Mary Case (1998) point out, there is reason to believe that academic *publishers* are more than recovering their costs at the moment.

9. There is an important connection between rights-based theories and duty-based theories. Namely, rights impose duties or obligations on other human beings. For example, if I have a *right* to free speech, then you have an *obligation* not to interfere with my speech.

10. Some potential uses of circulation records might have benefits that outweigh such costs. For example, libraries could use information about what items people have checked out in the past to recommend new items in the same way that Amazon.com does.

This service arguably encourages, rather than deters, people from purchasing books at Amazon.com.

11. This paper draws heavily on the work of Kay Mathiesen, who originally developed the course on "Ethics for Library and Information Professionals" at the University of Arizona.

Biography

Don Fallis is an Associate Professor of Information Resources and Library Science at the University of Arizona. The main focus of his research is social epistemology and its applications to library and information science. His articles have appeared in the *Journal of Philosophy*, *Library Quarterly*, *Library Trends*, and *Philosophical Studies*.