Ethics are certainly not novel to the field of library and information studies. Censorship and freedom-of-expression challenges have faced the field for centuries; monopolies have existed since the earliest days of printing; privacy has been tested as a fundamental philosophical—and legal—value over time. Technologies, laws, policies, and practices have changed dramatically, with sometimes dire, sometimes positive consequences for the field of library and information studies. Whether ethics, or a core set of values for LIS, has changed in light of these is certainly debatable, though many believe that ethics do not change, but only surrounding circumstances do. This casebook explores the often increasingly complex situations information professionals experience in their daily work, encouraging them to consider their actions, their decisions, and the consequences that arise. We present these situations through a series of cases which span library settings, from public to academic to special and archival.

To understand the complexities of LIS professional ethics and in order to move into the major areas of case study throughout the book, it is important to review the foundations of ethics in general. Ethics is related to morals, moral systems, and human conduct. As a branch of philosophy, it systematically examines and studies such concepts as “right” and “wrong.” Ethics deals with what we should and should not do, what acts are “good” and “evil.” It examines such concepts and constructs as responsibility and rights. As the basis for ethics, morality is a set or system of rules, principles, or values (cultural, professional, religious, et cetera) that prescribe behavior and how we evaluate those behaviors. “Whenever we try to defend or criticize a moral belief we enter the realm of ethics. Ethics is not concerned with specific moral rules but with the foundation of morality and with providing general principles that will both help us evaluate the validity of a moral rule and choose between different moralities (different sets of moral rules)” (Solomon, 1993, p. 651). Too, Severson (1997, p. 8) suggests that “ethics is ... structured and deliberative; it is a kind of thinking about the moral life.” Finally, ethical decision-making presupposes that people are free, that they want to do what is “right,” and that they can make conscious, thoughtful and reflective decisions, in that their capacities are
not diminished or compromised. Ethics is notably distinct from law, religion, and policy; it will be important to consider that ethics is distinct from law “in that the law provides a structured context to which we look for ‘reasonable’ decisions; the law does not necessarily tell us what is inherently good or bad. It prescribes behavior not for the purpose of morality but for the purpose of satisfying a societal requirement or rule; rules are dictated by authority, not necessarily morality” (Buchanan, 2004, p. 618). Likewise, Spinello (1997) asserts that

law and morality do not always overlap or easily substitute for one another. Legal constraints and judicial decisions, no matter how nuanced, do not necessarily provide sufficient guidelines for addressing the complicated ethics issues in information science. Law is essentially reactive. Laws and regulations are rarely proactive, anticipating problems or possible inequities; rather, they react to problems that have surfaced and usually in a manner that is painstakingly slow [p. 24].

We LIS professionals are bound by many laws and regulations: laws surrounding intellectual property, laws surrounding privacy, laws surrounding unionization and striking. But we face challenges beyond legal specificity when we enter the realm of ethics. Throughout, we will suggest our readers consult with legal council where necessary and where appropriate, while also encouraging our readers to think about the inherent connections and disjunctions between law and ethics as they affect our daily work. We will be working in the realm of applied ethics.

Ethics is divided systematically into such areas as descriptive, normative, applied, and meta-ethics. Descriptive ethics involves the study of people’s beliefs and feelings about morality—it works to articulate (or describe) a situation or set of conditions, but does not express a value or moral judgment: It stops at the level of description. It contrasts with normative ethics, which is the study of how people ought to act, or what ought to be the case; normative ethics helps us consider and accept moral standards to regulate right and wrong conduct. Thus, we may assert that corporatization is harmful to public libraries. This is a descriptive statement. We may move beyond that by considering what should or what ought to be the role of corporate influence or privatization on public goods. Applied ethics is then the application of ethical theory to real-world, practical situations; common examples include bioethics, business ethics, or cyberethics (see Spinello & Tavani, 2004). In our example, then, we may consider the influence of LSSI on the public libraries in Los Angeles, California, in an applied ethics case. Finally, at a more philosophically complex level, meta-ethics is the study of ethics itself, of ethical language itself, what our ethical principles mean, and the fundamental nature of the justification of ethical statements. For example, what do we mean when we say someone is a “good” professional?

Theories of ethical thinking include utility-based (utilitarianism, which is a general philosophy holding that we should act in the way that maximizes happiness for the greatest number of people), duty-based (deontological, which stresses adherence to a set of principles as opposed to a strict consideration of consequences and is typically aligned
with Immanuel Kant), justice-based (most recently associated with the theories of justice and rights of John Rawls), and character-based (associated with Aristotelian models). This casebook will not delve deeply into the details of ethical theory, as it instead focuses on practical scenarios and examples that allow us to consider deep ethical issues in practice: It is an applied ethics text for the profession and we encourage its use in conjunction with other texts. There are many important philosophy and information ethics texts available that delve into core philosophical theories in great detail and provide a useful framework for understanding such ethical theories (see, for example, Freeman & Peace, 2005; Hauptman, 2002; Himma, 2007; Himma & Tavani, 2008; Hongladaram & Ess, 2007; Moore, 2005; Quinn, 2005; Schultz, 2005; Spinello & Tavani, 2004; Tavani, 2006).

The formal application of ethical theory to information is termed “information ethics,” concurrently coined such by Dr. Robert Hauptman in the United States and Dr. Rafael Capurro in Germany in the mid-1980s, though, as Capurro notes, the concept dates back throughout history (Capurro, 2006). Notably, information ethics was being taught in South Africa as early as 1990, at the University of Pretoria. In 1996, in her doctoral dissertation, Smith identified a taxonomy in which information ethics areas generally fall: ownership, access, and security, categories which still apply over ten years later. More specifically, information ethics “concerns itself with the production, storage, retrieval, security, and application of information within an ethical context” (Hauptman, 2002, p. 121). More broadly, information ethics explores and evaluates the following fundamental information issues:

- the development of moral values in the information field,
- the creation of new power structures in the information field,
- information myths,
- hidden contradictions and intentionalities in information theories and practices, and
- the development of ethical conflicts in the information field [Capurro, 2006].

As such, information ethics has evolved as a critical field of study over the past twenty years. It is a broader arena than computer ethics or cyberethics, which are notable subsets of the field. Scholars across disciplines and across cultures are now engaging in information ethics work and the field is burgeoning. Such international research centers as the International Center for Information Ethics (ICIE), directed by Rafael Capurro, show the vibrant state of information ethics across the globe; it is impossible to speak of information ethics without addressing the intercultural aspects that affect us as information professionals. Thus, we conclude this text with Capurro’s important essay on *intercultural information ethics* (IIE) and introduce cases that promote an awareness of these intercultural aspects. Capurro (2007) considers intercultural information ethics through a series of questions:

How far is the Internet changing local cultural values and traditional ways of life? How far do these changes affect the life and culture of future societies in a global and local sense? Put another way, how far do traditional cultures and their moral values communicate and
transform themselves under the impact of the digital “infosphere” in general and of the Internet in particular? In other words, intercultural information ethics can be conceived as a field of research where moral questions of the “infosphere” are reflected in a comparative manner on the basis of different cultural traditions.... The key question of intercultural information ethics is thus how far and in which ways are we going to be able to enlarge both freedom and justice within a perspective of sustainable cultural development that protects and encourages cultural diversity as well as the interaction between them.

With this awareness of the intercultural aspects, we acknowledge that our cases are generally grounded in American law and, generally, American perspectives; but, we further acknowledge that librarians and information professionals must be aware of the global nature of our profession; as noted in the preface, our future work will delve considerably deeper into IIE and we acknowledge that our scope is limited. It is, however, a healthy beginning for information professionals who have limited exposure to global librarianship and information studies work. Such issues as transborder data flow, cultural differences with regards to intellectual freedom and property norms, online research ethics, and data integrity and security are never too far afield from our local workplaces. Thus, the complexities abound in the face of local, global, and professional traditions. We believe that case study works well to explore these dimensions and the myriad ethical challenges facing LIS professionals today. Spinello (1997) describes case study as a popular instrument of provoking students to grapple with complicated moral problems and quandaries. Cases present such problems in a particular context and as a result, they require students to discern the ethical dimension of a situation among a plethora of intricate, perplexing, and sometimes conflicting information.... The most significant benefit of using the case study method is that it engages students and requires them to become active participants rather than passive observers [p. xii].

Case studies have been used to explore the deep dimensions of ethics in such previous works as Herbert White’s Ethical Dilemmas in Libraries: A Collection of Case Studies (1992), Fay Zipkowitz’s Professional Ethics in Librarianship: A Real Life Casebook (1996), Gary Edson’s Museum Ethics (1997) and Richard Spinello’s Case Studies in Information and Computer Ethics (1997). Most recently, McMenemy, Poulter & Burton (2006) have used case studies to promote ethical reflection in the LIS field. We hope our contribution further promotes ethical consideration of our local and our global responsibilities in and to the profession.

How we learn morals and how we learn to use ethics as a framework for decision-making in general or in a profession is, of course, a philosophically complex discussion. We must first understand the potential differences between personal morals and professional values, as well as differences within our professional values. Typically, on the personal level, we accept that we learn and internalize moral values from our parents, schools, churches, society, and customs (though this could be debated). But how do we learn professional values? We assume we learn these through formal education and through
practice in the field, but what of those professionals who seemingly lack values? Or those who have very different values systems than “the rest of us”?

As a profession, do we consider how ethics should be taught? Library and information science programs are increasingly offering courses in ethics, intellectual freedom, law, and policy as standalone courses, as well as integrating these themes across the curriculum. Core classes—such as reference, collection development, management, and foundations—of LIS typically include a component of applied ethics, though standards of coverage and pedagogy vary widely (Buchanan, 2004). At the present time, there is no required coursework in ethics in LIS schools or programs, as dictated by the accrediting bodies of LIS education. The major educational association of the LIS field, the Association for Library and Information Science, has a special interest group on ethics that was formed in April 2005, but at the time of this writing, no statement or explicit endorsement of ethics in the curriculum has been issued. As professionals, we then look to the Codes of Ethics of such associations as the ALA, Canadian Library Association (CLA), or appropriate organization, but, notably, such associations as the ALA are consensus building, rather than regulatory. We accept that professional ethics, the underlying, and explicit, values of a given profession, are generally embodied in codes of ethics or professional mission statements. Yet conflicts and dilemmas occur in light of, or in response to, technologies, policies, laws, and cultural norms. Changes may threaten one’s personal values or a profession’s values; when one is a member of a profession, he or she must navigate these distinct realms and come to some reconciliation if one’s personal values are misaligned with the professional. Codes of ethics do not always provide answers and they of course do not operate on levels of deep specificity; they provide guidelines, not rules, which is probably best; and, certainly, they are not laws.

Typically, in LIS education in North America, we are introduced to ethical practice and professional ethics through two main organizations: the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and the American Library Association (ALA). The CLA’s Code of Ethics is as follows:

**Canadian Library Association’s Code of Ethics, adopted June 1976**

Members of the Canadian Library Association have the individual and collective responsibility to:

1. support and implement the principles and practices embodied in the current Canadian Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom;
2. make every effort to promote and maintain the highest possible range and standards of library service to all segments of Canadian society;
3. facilitate access to any or all sources of information which may be of assistance to library users;
4. protect the privacy and dignity of library users and staff [Canadian Library Association, reprinted with permission].

The American Library Association’s Code of Ethics dates to 1930, with subsequent revisions in 1939, 1975, 1979, 1981, and 1995. The current ALA Code of Ethics is succinct, as many codes of ethics are:
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 and 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 explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the 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.

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 insti-
tutions.

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

VII. We distinguish between our personal 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 [American Library Association, 1995; reprinted with permission].

Society of American Archivists: Code of Ethics for Archivists

Preamble

The Code of Ethics for Archivists establishes standards for the archival profession. It
introduces new members of the profession to those standards, reminds experienced
archivists of their professional responsibilities, and serves as a model for institutional
policies. It also is intended to inspire public confidence in the profession.

This code provides an ethical framework to guide members of the profession. It does
not provide the solution to specific problems.
The term “archivist” as used in this code encompasses all those concerned with the selection, control, care, preservation, and administration of historical and documentary records of enduring value.

I. Purpose
The Society of American Archivists recognizes the importance of educating the profession and general public about archival ethics by codifying ethical principles to guide the work of archivists. This code provides a set of principles to which archivists aspire.

II. Professional Relationships
Archivists select, preserve, and make available historical and documentary records of enduring value. Archivists cooperate, collaborate, and respect each institution and its mission and collecting policy. Respect and cooperation form the basis of all professional relationships with colleagues and users.

III. Judgment
Archivists should exercise professional judgment in acquiring, appraising, and processing historical materials. They should not allow personal beliefs or perspectives to affect their decisions.

IV. Trust
Archivists should not profit or otherwise benefit from their privileged access to and control of historical records and documentary materials.

V. Authenticity and Integrity
Archivists strive to preserve and protect the authenticity of records in their holdings by documenting their creation and use in hard copy and electronic formats. They have a fundamental obligation to preserve the intellectual and physical integrity of those records.

Archivists may not alter, manipulate, or destroy data or records to conceal facts or distort evidence.

VI. Access
Archivists strive to promote open and equitable access to their services and the records in their care without discrimination or preferential treatment, and in accordance with legal requirements, cultural sensitivities, and institutional policies.

Archivists recognize their responsibility to promote the use of records as a fundamental purpose of the keeping of archives. Archivists may place restrictions on access for the protection of privacy or confidentiality of information in the records.

VII. Privacy
Archivists protect the privacy rights of donors and individuals or groups who are the subject of records. They respect all users’ right to privacy by maintaining the confidentiality of their research and protecting any personal information collected about them in accordance with the institution’s security procedures.

VIII. Security/Protection
Archivists protect all documentary materials for which they are responsible and guard them against defacement, physical damage, deterioration, and theft. Archivists should cooperate with colleagues and law enforcement agencies to apprehend and prosecute thieves and vandals.

IX. Law
Archivists must uphold all federal, state, and local laws.

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These codes are intended for all library and information science professionals, but they are purely advisory, with no enforcement or regulatory significance. As with many codes of ethics, as we discuss in Chapter Five, the value comes in great part through symbolism. The codes dictate the underlying moral system of the profession. Yet, a librarian will not lose her “library license” should she violate the ALA code. In fact, she may not even know the code exists. Others have decided this code and the American Library Association in general do not speak for them. For instance, the Family Friendly Libraries Association was founded in 1996 with the goal of providing an alternative model of library advocacy; this organization, for instance, has questioned the “political” work and/or “liberal tendencies” of the ALA. Of course, library and information studies faculty may not belong to the ALA and instead to the Association for Library and Information Science Education. There is no requirement to belong to any professional association, in fact. Subsets of librarianship and information studies may find more suitable homes in associations such as the American Association of School Librarians (a direct unit of the ALA), the American Society for Information Science and Technology (see below), the American Association of Law Libraries (see below), the Special Libraries Association, the Medical Libraries Association, the Society of American Archivists (see below), or the Association of Computing Machinery. It is important to understand that even if one individually elects not to adhere to a particular code, professional associations’ values may be used to determine policies and as frameworks for institutional codes of conduct and professional expectations.

American Society for Information Science and Technology Professional Guidelines (reprinted with permission)

Dedicated to the Memory of Diana Woodward

ASIS&T recognizes the plurality of uses and users of information technologies, services, systems and products as well as the diversity of goals or objectives, sometimes conflicting, among producers, vendors, mediators, and users of information systems.

ASIS&T urges its members to be ever aware of the social, economic, cultural, and political impacts of their actions or inaction.

ASIS&T members have obligations to employers, clients, and system users, to the profession, and to society, to use judgment and discretion in making choices, providing equitable service, and in defending the rights of open inquiry.

Responsibilities to Employers/ Clients/ System Users

• To act faithfully for their employers or clients in professional matters
• To uphold each user’s, provider’s, or employer’s right to privacy and confidentiality and to respect whatever proprietary rights belong to them, by limiting access to, providing proper security for and ensuring proper disposal of data about clients, patrons or users
• To treat all persons fairly.

Responsibility to the Profession

To truthfully represent themselves and the information systems which they utilize or which they represent, by
• not knowingly making false statements or providing erroneous or misleading information
• informing their employers, clients or sponsors of any circumstances that create a conflict of interest
• not using their position beyond their authorized limits or by not using their credentials to misrepresent themselves
• following and promoting standards of conduct in accord with the best current practices
• undertaking their research conscientiously, in gathering, tabulating or interpreting data; in following proper approval procedures for subjects; and in producing or disseminating their research results
• pursuing ongoing professional development and encouraging and assisting colleagues and others to do the same
• adhering to principles of due process and equality of opportunity.

Responsibility to Society
To improve the information systems with which they work or which they represent, to the best of their means and abilities by
• providing the most reliable and accurate information and acknowledging the credibility of the sources as known or unknown
• resisting all forms of censorship, inappropriate selection and acquisitions policies, and biases in information selection, provision and dissemination
• making known any biases, errors and inaccuracies found to exist and striving to correct those which can be remedied.

To promote open and equal access to information, within the scope permitted by their organizations or work, and to resist procedures that promote unlawful discriminatory practices in access to and provision of information, by
• seeking to extend public awareness and appreciation of information availability and provision as well as the role of information professionals in providing such information
• freely reporting, publishing or disseminating information subject to legal and proprietary restraints of producers, vendors and employers, and the best interests of their employers or clients.

Information professionals shall engage in principled conduct whether on their own behalf or at the request of employers, colleagues, clients, agencies or the profession [ASIST].

American Association of Law Libraries Ethical Principles
(reprinted with permission)

Approved by the AALL membership, April 5, 1999

Preamble
When individuals have ready access to legal information, they can participate fully in the affairs of their government. By collecting, organizing, preserving, and retrieving legal information, the members of the American Association of Law Libraries enable people to make this ideal of democracy a reality.

Legal information professionals have an obligation to satisfy the needs, to promote the interests and to respect the values of their clientele. Law firms, corporations, academic and governmental institutions and the general public have legal information needs that are best addressed by professionals committed to the belief that serving these information needs is a noble calling and that fostering the equal participation of diverse people in library services underscores one of our basic tenets, open access to information for all individuals.
Service
We promote open and effective access to legal and related information. Further we recognize the need to establish methods of preserving, maintaining and retrieving legal information in many different forms.
We uphold a duty to our clientele to develop service policies that respect confidentiality and privacy.
We provide zealous service using the most appropriate resources and implementing programs consistent with our institution’s mission and goals.
We acknowledge the limits on service imposed by our institutions and by the duty to avoid the unauthorized practice of law.

Business Relationships
We promote fair and ethical trade practices.
We have a duty to avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or significant benefits gained at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
We strive to obtain the maximum value for our institution’s fiscal resources, while at the same time making judicious, analytical and rational use of our institution’s information resources.

Professional Responsibilities
We relate to our colleagues with respect and in a spirit of cooperation.
We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with the service we provide.
We recognize and respect the rights of the owner and the user of intellectual property.
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 [American Association of Law Libraries].

While some appreciate the symbolic value of such codes of ethics, others appreciate their pragmatism. Some codes will be used more informally to consider day-to-day moral conflicts. But decisions must ultimately be made and a code of ethics does not necessarily provide an answer, but it does provide a context. When we enter the realm of ethical decision-making, we will undoubtedly look to a framework from which to make responsible and sound decisions. As we explore the ethical implications surrounding library and information studies through case study, we enable readers to adapt various perspectives, see multiple issues in a scenario, and see how various stakeholders are affected. We promote an ethical decision-making model that includes critical reflection and consideration and responsible action.

We begin by defining the situation, recognizing our biases and prejudices. We look to our professional codes and/or our organizational or institutional policies to assess the situation within our professional context. We identify the stakeholders and the implications for those involved. We look at how the situation occurred and examine both significant and seemingly insignificant variables. We explore various perspectives of the
issue, looking to understand views that are very different than our own, seeking out alternative perspectives where possible and where necessary. Finally, we guarantee our competence in evaluating the situation and educate ourselves, whether this entails speaking to a technology specialist to understand the implications of some new technological innovation or speaking to a lawyer to understand the details of a pending law or policy change. Critical thinking requires information; it requires analysis and interpretation and it is a process that requires we examine our thought processes to unearth our own biases and tenacity. Critical thinking is being informed. Being informed is being responsible; one can consider the Aristotelian concept of excusable and inexcusable ignorance in this regard (see *Nichomachean Ethics*). Responsibility underscores decision-making and hopefully eliminates irresponsible decisions and unethical behaviors that damage individuals, professions, or society in general. Responsibility also implies accountability to our users and various stakeholders. Spinello (1997) discusses the concept of legal liability, in connection with responsibility and accountability in computer scientists in particular. Typically, librarians are not held legally liable within their workplaces.

We then consider the boundaries of our actions and inactions and we consider the intentions behind these. We evaluate alternatives to a given situation and we explore their repercussions. We determine a reasonable, logical, safe, responsible course of action, noting the stakeholders and how they will be affected. Ethical issues reach far and wide and a decision ultimately affects many individuals personally and society generally. How confident, and how comfortable, will we be with our decision? It is critical to engage in self-evaluation as part of the decision-making process. Will we be confident disclosing our decisions or would we prefer to hide our decisions behind a “closed door meeting” or in a “non-public contract”? Finally, we consider the cumulative effect of each and every decision. We do not make decisions in isolation. How will this decision potentially affect subsequent decisions and policy? For many years, in the library and information studies world, we have talked of a “slippery slope” when referring to matters of intellectual freedom. If we give in on this challenge, do we set in motion an uncontrollable downslide where the next challenge is “easily” granted, based on the previous decision? One action sets off others, with unintended consequences. Ethical decision-making must occur with careful, critical reason, with consideration of the generalization of such decisions. We must ask if we are confident with our decision in order to generalize it. Applied ethics is making decisions — decisions affect real people’s existences and decisions affect professions for years to come: In short, “nothing is more important than the way we treat each other” (Hauptman, foreword), and as we consider the issues presented throughout these cases, we must think and reflect on multiple levels — personal, professional, societal — local to global, global to local.

Thus, our objective through this book is to use case study to allow individuals and organizations the opportunity to explore the personal, the professional, the local and the global realms involved in LIS work and come, hopefully, to a place of understanding of and respect for ethical debate. We believe case studies are valuable and pragmatic: They
provide the opportunity for “lessons” prior to the “test” instead of the other way around, which can be costly, literally and figuratively, to society, the organization, and the individuals involved in a complex situation. Case study enables us, in educational settings, the opportunity to think critically about a set of conditions before we are knee-deep in them. Finally, case study is a viable way to raise awareness, to question standing beliefs and perspectives, and to assume alternative roles as part of a larger decision-making process. And, given the innumerable issues facing information professionals in the field through complexities surrounding technologies, law, policy and practice, we as information professionals must consider an understanding of ethics in general and professional ethics in particular as an essential proficiency, part of our skill set. For instance, it is notable that a recent job announcement at the Seattle Public Library included a “commitment to intellectual freedom” as a requisite skill for applicants. We’ve become more accustomed to technical skills listed as the essentials, but perhaps a new trend will emerge where we see “understanding of ethics and ethical decision-making processes” as a primary qualification, next to “ability to search online databases.”

As Ghandi said, action expresses priorities. At its core, ethical decision-making must be action-oriented or it is meaningless. As Hauptman (2002) suggested, we are not always used to making reflective decisions: “if we are faced with a dilemma ... we do not call upon Aristotle, the principal, or the Dean. We make a quick decision and act upon it ... so acculturated we are to providing help unthinkingly” (p. 9). We often act from a place of fear, of reaction, or of convenience. Ethical decision-making removes us from those places and gives us appropriate license to decide and act. Using cases as a means to explore and to ask important questions moves us from the realm of the symbolic into the realm of action. Action expresses priorities.

The book is structured around the following themes: Intellectual Freedom, Censorship, and Rights to Expression and Access to Information; Privacy; Intellectual Property, Copyright, Ownership, and Licensing; Professional Ethics; and Intercultural Information Ethics. These are significant areas of concern for a wide range of library and information professionals and our cases span library and information settings and introduce readers to various stakeholders’ perspectives. There are “classic” ethical issues, dealing with censorship and copyright issues, and emergent ethical issues, such as the PATRIOT Act, RFID, social networking sites, privatization and corporatization, and contingent worker model cases. Information professionals will face this host of issues in their daily work. We hope the cases spark engagement and discussion; such discussion enables us as professionals to think critically and make sound and responsible decisions, based on the above suggestions for ethical decision-making. The cases are designed to be accessible; they may seem simplistic on the surface, but upon consideration, deep ethical complexities are embedded. Yet the cases are succinct and are thus easy to incorporate into a classroom setting or a staff meeting. To promote reflection, we provide questions for discussion on each case. The majority of the cases are based in actual situations and we graciously thank the many individuals who have shared their cases with us. Fact is stranger than
fiction, we have learned yet again—we as librarians and information professionals face some interesting challenges in our work!

And, if we accept the importance of information, the power of information, then we, as information professionals, are dealing with enormous power on a daily basis. We should know the value of what we’re dealing with and be able to defend our actions and positions within these positions of power. Education—and therefore information—helps to find the answer to almost any problem or issue we face as individuals or as a society. Since the most accessible source of information has historically been a library, we are, as information professionals, directing, controlling, and altering the future of our societies, local and global.

Ethics is not easy work. It requires commitment and diligence. It is a thoughtful process, but, as Socrates once said, the unexamined life is not worth living (Apology, 38A). As information professionals in an increasingly complex field and world around us, such ethical examination is integral to our success.

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