

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR LIBRARIANS IN NIGERIA

1. Preamble

Librarians and information scientists are imbued to serve people through the provision of access to quality information resources in either print or electronic formats through which people's standard of living are improved, dreams are actualized, education is sustained, sound decisions are made and executed, freedom of expression is enhanced and information resources are preserved for posterity. The proliferation of information in different formats and the attendant complexity in retrieval processes have promoted and sustained the need for society to share resources, work, ideas and information. This provides the rationale for library and information practice. The belief in the need for human beings to share information and ideas implies the recognition of information rights as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 19 which sets out the right to freedom of opinion, expression and access to information for all and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas in any media, regardless of frontiers (IFLA, 2011).

The Library as an institution exists for the benefit of a given constituency, whether it is the citizens of a community, members of an educational institution or some larger or more specialized group. Those who enter the library profession assume an obligation to maintain ethical standards of behaviour in relation to the governing authority under which they work, to the library constituency, to the library as an institution, to fellow workers, to colleagues and to society in general. IFLA (2011) posits that the core mission of library and information professionals is to facilitate access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy. Librarians do not encourage censorship, denial and restriction of information to anybody by any person or groups of persons and use the most efficient and effective methods and standards to serve their clientele.

2. The Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), Act 12, 1995

2.1 Vision

To be a world class regulatory body that provides a platform for the delivery of quality library and information services in Nigeria.

2.2 Mission Statement

To pursue the attainment of professional excellence by determining who is a librarian; the standard of knowledge and skills required for registration and practice; guidelines for accreditation and minimum standards for libraries, organizing Mandatory Continuing Professional Development and maintaining professional discipline among librarians.

2.3. Functions of the LRCN

In fulfillment of Act 12 of 1995 establishing the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria, the Council is charged with the responsibilities of:

1. Determining who are librarians;
2. Determining what standard of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as librarians, and reviewing those standards from time to time;
3. Securing the establishment and maintenance of a register of persons entitled to practice the profession and publication, from time to time, such lists of persons;
4. Maintaining discipline within the profession;
5. Performing such other functions as may be conferred upon the Council by the Act.

3. Objectives of the Code of Conduct

The objectives of the Code of Conduct for librarians include:

- a. To guide the librarian in maintaining standards of ethical behaviour in his relationship with state and society, clients, profession and colleagues and oneself.
- b. To guide registered librarians in their daily discharge of duties as it will help to regulate professional behaviour in terms of safeguarding the interests of the community served, especially as they are engaged in the process of providing access to information.
- c. To provide objective benchmarks for assessing librarians conduct and discharge of professional duties.
- d. To clarify the librarians rights, privileges, obligations and their legal bases.
- e. To re-awaken the sense of self-esteem, dignity, honour, service and moral rectitude of the librarian and re-affirm the librarians age-long position of leadership as gatekeepers and disseminators of information.
- f. To boost public confidence in the ability of the library and information science profession to regulate itself and contribute meaningfully to national development in order to enhance the professional image of librarians.
- g. To build a strong moral and ethical foundation for the actualization of an information society.

4. Librarians Code of Conduct

The general purpose of this code is to set guidelines for the ethical conduct expected of all librarians in Nigeria, therefore they are to adhere by this code of conduct. The Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria Act 12, 1995, Section 17 (1) empowers the Council to prosecute librarians based on unprofessional conduct. Therefore, the Council is obligated to spell out the terms of such misconduct.

4.1. Librarians Investigating Panel (LIP)

The LRCN Act in Section 16, Subsection 3 established a Librarians Investigating Panel to be referred to as 'The Investigating Panel' which is charged with the duty of:

- a. Conducting a preliminary investigation into any case of alleged misconduct by a librarian, in his capacity as a librarian or should for any other reason be the subject of proceedings before the disciplinary committee.
- b. Deciding whether the case should be referred to the Librarians Disciplinary Committee.
- c. Submitting a report on any action taken by the Investigating Panel to the Disciplinary Committee.

4.2. Librarians Disciplinary Committee (LDC)

The LRCN Act in Section 16, Subsection 2 also established the Librarians Disciplinary Committee which is to be referred to as 'The Disciplinary Committee'.

The Committee is charged with the responsibility of considering and determining any case referred to it by the Librarians Investigating Panel.

4.3. Penalties for Unprofessional Conduct

The LRCN Act, Section 17 authorizes the LDC to punish a registered librarian where:

- a. He/She is adjudged by the disciplinary committee to be guilty of infamous conduct in a professional respect or
- b. He/She is convicted in Nigeria or elsewhere by any court or tribunal having power to award punishment for an offence (whether or not such an offence is punishable with imprisonment) which in the opinion of the disciplinary committee is incompatible with the status of a librarian
- c. The Disciplinary Committee is satisfied that the name of any person has been fraudulently registered.

Penalties for erring librarians may include:

- a. Reprimand
- b. Striking off the name from the register permanently or for a specific period of time.

CHAPTER TWO

PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LIBRARIANSHIP IN NIGERIA

5. Librarian(s)

The term librarian(s) in the LRCN Act denotes any person registered or deemed to be registered as such under the Act.

6. Legal Requirements

To legally practice as a librarian in Nigeria, a person is required to register with the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). The LRCN Act, Section 9 further states that such a person must:

- a. Possess the requisite qualifications approved by the Council
- b. Not being a Nigerian, hold a qualification granted outside Nigeria which for the time being is accepted by the Council and is by law entitled to practice for all purposes as a librarian in the country in which the qualification was granted; provided that the other country accords Nigerian professional librarians the same reciprocal treatment and that he/she satisfies the Council that he/she has sufficient practical experience as a librarian.
- c. Be of good character
- d. Not have been convicted in Nigeria or elsewhere of an offence involving fraud or dishonesty.

7. Other Requirements

To be registered as a librarian and to have his/her name retained in the register, a person is required to comply with other requirements as stated in the LRCN Act regarding:

- a. Taking a course of training which is intended for persons who are seeking to become members of the profession and the Council considers is designed to confer on persons completing it sufficient knowledge and skill for the practice of that profession
- b. Licensing
- c. Mandatory Continuing Professional Development
- d. Annual subscription.
- e. Certificate of Experience
- f. Any other requirements that may be made from time to time.

8. Obligations of Librarians

- a. Professional Standards
- b. Professional Commitment
- c. Efficiency and Effectiveness
- d. Arbitration

9. Rights and Privileges of Registered Librarians

Registered librarians shall enjoy the following rights and privileges:

- a. Legal status as librarians
- b. Freedom to attach or use the prefix Certified Librarian of Nigeria (CLN) or any other titles or prefixes as may be approved by the LRCN for the identification of registered librarians in Nigeria
- c. Freedom to practice the profession in any establishment or institution within Nigeria
- d. Participate in all activities open to registered librarians, including online activities
- e. Letter of credence from the LRCN as required by local or foreign bodies/institutions from around the globe
- f. Professional salary scales, allowances and other benefits that may be secured by the LRCN for registered librarians
- g. Any other right or privilege specified by the LRCN.

10. Professional Conduct

For librarians in Nigeria to conduct themselves in the most ethical, moral and professional manner as well as adhere to best standards of practice that are universally acceptable and meet the demands of the LRCN regarding the quality of professional practice, all librarians shall be guided and bound by the rules contained in the Librarians Professional Code of Conduct.

This shall be subjected to the following conditions:

- a. An allegation of misconduct must have been made against the librarian
- b. The Investigating Panel must have carried out a preliminary investigation into the allegation
- c. A trial is conducted by the Librarians Disciplinary Committee in which the registered librarian is given the opportunity to defend his actions and conducts. Thereafter, penalties shall be imposed as prescribed in the LRCN Act 12, 1995.

11. Other Relevant Laws

Librarians shall also familiarize themselves with and abide by other relevant laws that relate to performance of their duties. These include:

- a. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers, 2011
- b. The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom, 2002
- c. United Nations Declaration on Human Right, 1948 (Article 19 & Article 27)
- d. Organization of African Unity, African Charter on Human and People's Rights, 1981; 2002
- e. African Platform on Access to Information, 2011
- f. Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences, Act 2000
- g. Nigerian Copyright Law, Act 42, 1999
- h. Freedom of Information Act, 2011
- i. The Ethics in Public Office, Act 2001
- j. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), 2006
- k. IFLA various statements, manifestoes, policy and technical documents.

CHAPTER THREE

RELATIONSHIPS

12. Relationship With the User

12.1. Access to Available Information

The librarian should guarantee the user access to available information resources regardless of the medium, without restriction that is not explicitly stated in laws and regulations. They should always make known to the public the resources and services of the library.

12.2. Library Collection

Information supplied by the librarian should be versatile, complete, objective and impartial. The librarian shall reject and oppose any form of censorship of the documents gathered and organized as well as the information supplied. He must encourage the free flow of information and ideas without discrimination.

12.3. Rendering of Service

In managing the library and its services, the librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions. The librarian should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user.

12.4. Confidentiality

The librarian should respect the right of a user to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information or user data beyond the original transaction.

12.5. Users Right and Dignity

Librarians should have respect for the users right and dignity without prejudice to race, gender, religion, tribe, physical characteristics, age, place of origin, etc.

12.6. Corrupt Practice

Librarians should not receive or ask for gifts or gratification for themselves or for others in rendering services to the users. Corrupt practice here includes bribery, hoarding information materials in the wrong shelf, etc.

12.7. Responsible for User Education

Librarians should promote information literacy among users, including the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and create, use and communicate information in a legal manner, thereby helping to eliminate plagiarism and other forms of misuse of information. They should

teach the user how to use the library facilities, locate information resources and library software to enhance access to information and promote lifelong learning.

12.8. Transparency

Librarians should support transparency in government, administration and business while recognizing the legitimate sphere of official secrets that may restrict access to defined and limited categories and items of information.

13. Relationship With the Library Profession

13.1. Loyalty

The librarian should be loyal to the goal and aims of the library and their parent body irrespective of the locality.

13.2. Image of the Library

The librarian should consciously promote the image of the profession through services rendered to users and by engaging in active advocacy. Librarians should keep their reputation above reproach and should so conduct themselves to gain public esteem and respect for the library and the profession.

13.3. Motivation

Librarians' actions and decisions should be based on professional motives and not on personal interests or financial incentives. Librarians should distinguish, through their actions and statements, between their personal philosophies and attitudes and those of an institution or professional body.

13.4. Academic Development

Librarianship is centered on professionalism and cooperation; therefore the librarian should seek to update his knowledge and skills through MCPD programmes to keep him abreast of the best global practices and applications in the profession. He should also mentor, guide and assist new professionals and students in the profession to develop.

13.5. Innovation

Librarians should embrace new ideas, new knowledge and innovations that will contribute to the development of the profession through continuous redefinition of the services they provide to society.

13.6. Misconduct

Librarians should in no way assist in the unauthorized practice of librarianship. Any violation of provisions of existing laws, rules and regulations, the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Librarians and other laws must be reported to the appropriate quarters.

13.7. Democratic Behaviour

Librarians should contribute to the work of library associations and other endeavours to enhance the effectiveness of librarianship as a profession.

14. Relationship With Colleagues

14.1. Teamwork

Librarians should seek assistance from colleague in tasks beyond their management or professional ability when necessary and take delight in teamwork. There should be mutual respect and understanding for other members of the team.

14.2. Respect

Librarians should have respect toward their fellow employees and a spirit of courteous cooperation between individuals and departments is essential for effective library service.

14.3. Responsibilities to Colleagues

Librarians should endeavours to assist colleagues with information for executing tasks or making decisions. They should not conceal information or knowledge that will be beneficial to their colleagues or departments and should not compete with colleagues by use of unfair methods.

14.4. Discrimination

Librarians should shun all forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, sex, age and religion in their daily discharge of duties, cooperation and decision making.

14.5. Fair share of work load

The librarian owes a duty to carry his fair share of the library's work load. The work product of individual employees may not be misappropriated to the credit of others.

14.6. Confidentiality

The privacy of all library employees should be respected. Confidential information learned about any fellow employee should be retained in confidence. Criticism may then be offered to the proper authority for the sole purpose of improving library service.

14.7. Staff Development

The librarian should delegate authority, encourage a sense of responsibility and initiative on the part of staff members, provide for their professional development and appreciate good work. Staff members should be informed of the duties and problems of the library.

14.8. Constructive Criticism

Criticism of library policies, service and personnel should be offered only to the appropriate authority(ies) for the sole purpose of improvement of the library.

14.9. Financial Obligation

Acceptance of a position in a library incurs an obligation to remain long enough to repay the library for the expense incident to adjustment. A contract signed or agreement made should be adhered to faithfully until it expires or is dissolved by mutual consent.

14.10. Defamation of Colleagues

Librarians should be courteous in their relationship with others and careful in the choice of words and action so that they may not be interpreted as being derogatory or offensive to others.

15. Relationship With Other Libraries

15.1. Cooperation

Librarians should have mutual respect, strict adherence to established principles and a willingness to share knowledge and experience necessary for cooperation between libraries.

15.2. Internship/Sabbatical

Visiting librarians should be extended every courtesy by the librarian of the institution being visited. The visitors' search for information concerning the building, organization and workings of the visited library should be facilitated in every way possible. Librarians, library experts, organizations or committees shall not visit a library in an advisory, consulting or reviewer capacity except at the express invitation of the governing authority or librarian of the library to be visited or empowered by law to so do.

15.3. Mutual Understanding among libraries

Librarians should aim at maintaining a symbiotic relationship irrespective of the type, locality and governing body. Such understanding and cooperation should be regarded not as an institutional objective but as a characteristic of professional librarianship.

15.4. Resource Sharing

Requests for information about other librarians and references should be handled with honesty, tactfully and discreetly. Information furnished should be objective and limited to personal, well-founded knowledge.

16. Relationship With Publishers, Library Suppliers and Software Vendors

16.1. Selection of Library Materials

In selection of library materials/software/equipment, the librarian should not compromise quality and standards in reaching decisions. The superior products offered at the most reasonable cost should be selected.

16.2. Publishers

The librarian, in relating with the publisher, should shun all forms of partiality in making decisions based on selecting publishers/suppliers of goods to the library. The librarian should not consider ethnic, religion and other affiliations in awarding contract.

16.3. Software vendors

In selecting library software or information resource, the librarians should consider the objectives, operability, durability, sustainability and cost rather than the suppliers.

16.4. Personal Gratuities

The librarian should not receive any form of personal gratuities be it gifts or cash from the library suppliers. The librarian should never enter into business dealing on behalf of the library which will result in personal profit. Librarians should negotiate the most favourable license and purchase terms for access to works with right holders as well as advocate for exceptions and limitations to copyright restrictions for libraries.

17. Relationship towards Documents and Information

17.1. Censorship

Librarians must resist the censorship of library materials by individuals and groups through peaceful dialogue.

17.2. Copyright

Librarians should respect copyright and treat the intellectual property right of authors and creators according to legal rules.

17.3. Preservation

The librarian undertakes to promote the enhancement and preservation of documents and information.

17.4. Library Cooperation

The librarian, conscious of the global context in which he operates, undertakes to promote, both individually and in cooperation, the integration of information systems and the removal of the organizational and geographical obstacles which hinder the circulation of information and documents.

17.5. Collection Development

A librarian should collect, organize, preserve and proffer library materials on the basis of professional knowledge and judgment. He should not yield to pressure or attempts at censorship of any kind.

17.6. Resource Sharing Among Libraries

The librarian, conscious of the global context in which he operates, undertakes to promote, both individually and in cooperation, the integration of information systems and the removal of the organizational and geographical obstacles which hinder the circulation of information and documents.

17.7. Open Access, Open Source, Open License, etc

The librarian promotes the principle of open access, open source, open licenses and other means of providing fair, swift, economical and effective access to information for users. He advocates for exceptions and limitations to copyright restrictions for libraries.

18. Relationship With Society

18.1. Advice to government/stakeholders

Librarians have the responsibility where possible to advise government and stakeholders on the provision of appropriate library policies, programmes, infrastructures and funding. Librarians should encourage governments to establish intellectual property laws that promote the development and protection of national and local creativity.

18.2. Civic participation

Librarians should participate in public and community affairs and thereby support the library to take its place among other educational, social and cultural agencies.

18.3. Tolerance

Librarians should accommodate the diverse cultures, religions, ideologies and practices of the society and promote good inter-human relations

18.4. Partnership

Librarians should encourage a general realization of the value of library service and be informed concerning movements, organizations and institutions whose aims are compatible with those of the library.

19. General

1. The librarian should work harmoniously with the governing authority.
2. The librarian must ensure complete loyalty to the policies set by the governing authority.
3. The librarian must not use his position for personal gain at the expense of the governing council.
4. The librarian should not allow outside activities to interrupt his principal duty of library service in his own library.
5. Librarians should safeguard library resources, furniture and infrastructure.

20. Interpretation and Review of the Code

20.1. Interpretation

In the case of a conflict arising from the interpretation of this Code of Conduct, the Registrar/Chief Executive Officer of the Librarians Registration Council shall provide the final interpretation.

20.2. Review

This Code of Conduct shall be reviewed from time to time at the discretion of the Council.

Bibliography

Professional Code of Ethics for Librarians. IFLA-Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Free Expression (FAIFE). Retrieved on 23 February, 2012 from <http://www.ifla.org/en/faife/professional-codes-of-ethics-for-librarians>

IFLA. (2011). Code of ethics for librarians and other information workers.