



Global Headquarters
331 South Patrick Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA
1-703-647-4900
Fax: 1-703-647-4901
www.sla.org

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Information Ethics Advisory Council
DATE: 6 January 2010
RE: SLA Professional Ethics Guidelines

MEMBERS:

Toni Carbo, Co-Chair (2009-2010)
Thomas Froehlich, Co-Chair (2009-2011)
Louis-Rene Dussureault (2009-2011)
Jonathan Gordon-Till (2009)
Barbie Keiser (2009-2010)
Barbara Wildemuth (2009)
Deb Hunt (Board Liaison)
Carolyn Sosnowski (SLA Staff)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Directors approve these guidelines for ethical conduct for SLA members.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Information Ethics Advisory Council was established in early 2009. Its primary charge is to "[d]evelop and finalize the association's ethics values statements and guidelines based on input gathered from members, the Presidential Study Commission on Professional Recruitment, Ethics, and Professional Standards (PREPS) report, and the Ethics Task Force." The members of the council created the draft guidelines by reviewing existing ethical codes and guidelines, examining research, and seeking feedback from SLA Ethics Ambassadors. Please see the attachment for the text of the draft ethics guidelines, including additional background information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT: We don't anticipate a financial commitment from SLA for the establishment of ethics guidelines.

Prepared by: Information Ethics Advisory Council
Submitted by: Information Ethics Advisory Council

ATTACHMENT

SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION PROFESSIONAL ETHICS GUIDELINES (DRAFT)

Prologue:

SLA seeks to promote the professional welfare of its members, the organizations and people they serve and the global progress of the knowledge society. In an environment where notions of ethics and service continue to extend and expand, SLA members strive to implement and promote guidelines for the ethical and appropriate use of information and knowledge. Fundamental to these guidelines is the recognition that there are different kinds of information and knowledge, such as personally identifiable, proprietary, or classified information or public information pertaining to the actions of government.

SLA recognizes that ethical reflection is required in the application of these guidelines. In certain situations, ethical values may be in conflict or may demand that one ethical value take priority over another, especially given the diversity of SLA membership. For example, accountability to society or to the organization may trump the common right to privacy or confidentiality.

SLA's guidelines for professional conduct are situated among diverse value systems: basic human rights; organizational missions, goals, objectives and ethical codes; legal, cultural, societal and governmental norms; and personal ethical beliefs. Within this context, SLA provides these values and guidelines to help its members frame ethical deliberation whenever ethical problems arise in a professional context so that they may take appropriate actions.

SLA promotes the profession's reputation for integrity, candor, loyalty, competence, diligence, honesty, discretion and confidentiality through creating and sustaining an environment that facilitates mutual trust among employers, clients or other individuals served, and the profession.

Guidelines.

SLA professionals:

Act with honesty, fairness and in good faith in serving and providing value to their employing organization, their clients, and vendors.

Serve their clients or employers with the highest level of service.

Seek to improve the quality of and add value to the information and knowledge they provide, including its organization, collection, indexing, preservation, access, services, systems and dissemination.

Provide the organization and its clients with the best sources and services possible within organizational constraints.

Respect the intellectual property of their employers, clients and competitors, and within the legal and ethical constraints of the organization, inform their clients or employers of potential legal and ethical violations in the provision of sources or services.

Respect the privacy, rights, and reputation of individuals and organizations in the proper use of information content regardless of format or medium, adhering to the best practices of ensuring

confidentiality.

Enhance employer success by contributing effectively to senior management strategies and decisions regarding information applications, tools and technologies, and policies for the organization.

Strive for excellence by seeking and maintaining professional knowledge and competencies in intellectual and information technologies in themselves, their colleagues, their organization and other professionals, including education for information literacy, equipping all with the skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Represent themselves accurately concerning their education, competencies and experience to their employers, clients, colleagues and other professionals.

Avoid conflicts of interest while in the performance of their work, including improper gain at the expense of employers, clients or colleagues.

Enrich the profession by:

Contributing to its knowledge base by sharing best practices, experiences and research, and

Valuing diversity and cultural inclusiveness.

Appendix

History:

In 2007 the SLA Board's Ethics Workgroup analyzed codes of ethics and guidelines from library and information associations, and examined the basic tenets of them in connection with the SLA Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century (2003). The Workgroup identified a list of components selected for their relevance to SLA and presented its report to the Board on 12 September 2007. An Ethics Summit held during the 2008 Annual Conference, which included more than 40 Ethics Ambassadors and unit leaders among the participants. Small groups brainstormed and SLA's Public Relations Advisory Council (PRAC) selected from the discussion summary, the top five values statements that best reflected the Association's core mission, values and objectives. The original values were:

- (1) Making appropriate use of other peoples' work (e.g. intellectual property) whether created within our organization or externally.
- (2) Transactional Integrity: Acting with honesty, fairness, and in good faith in serving and providing value to customers and negotiating with vendors.
- (3) Respecting the privacy and rights of individuals and organizations in use of e-mail and online discussions and provision of information on user actions to management.
- (4) Educating our constituencies on good information-seeking behavior appropriate to the type of decision being made, legal use of the information and using authoritative information sources.
- (5) Diversity, cultural inclusiveness, respect for differences (e.g. making our sentiments known when we feel that material may be used in a manner harmful or hurtful to any given group.)

The PRAC proposed to the board the creation of a new permanent Advisory Council for Information Ethics (IEAC), and the proposal was accepted by the board. The IEAC was appointed in the spring of

2009 and met for the first time in June 2009 at the Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Among its many charges was to "Develop and finalize the SLA ethics values statements and guidelines," which the IEAC determined to be its first priority. Fundamental to any set of guidelines are basic human rights, exemplified in such documents as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the constitutions of many countries. Such rights are considered basic for these SLA Guidelines and should be reflected upon before or while implementing them.