

MCMENEMY, D., POULTER, A. and BURTON, P. F. *A Handbook of Ethical Practice: A Practical Guide to Dealing with Ethical Issues in Information and Library Work*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2007. (Chandos Information Professional Series).

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According to Garber, Hanssen and Walkowitz, ethics is “a process of formulation and self-questioning that continuously rearticulates boundaries, norms, selves and “others”. The present time, they say, sees a reinvigoration of the intellectual field of ethics (Garber, Hanssen and Walkowitz, 2000, viii-ix). The latest study of its application to the library and information profession is McMenemy, Poulter and Burton’s *Handbook of Ethical Practice: A Practical Guide to Dealing with Ethical Issues in Information and Library Work* (2007).

The prime purpose of McMenemy, Poulter and Burton’s book is to demonstrate how wide-ranging the connections between ethics and librarianship are. These encompass the activities of selection and purchase of materials, cataloguing and classification, information delivery (are you responsible for what is done with the information that you supply?), intellectual property rights, digital rights management, licensing, plagiarism, barriers to access (including censorship and internet filtering as well as physical and other barriers), privacy (including data protection), continuing professional development and person management. As the book is fairly short (153 pp.), it does not go into these areas in much detail but mainly sees its role as raising the reader’s awareness of how extensive the field is. The discussion of these areas is illustrated by relevant cases and examples, such as Hauptman’s experiment whereby he requested information from thirteen libraries on how to create a bomb in order to find out how many would comply with his request (p.xiii), an experiment carried out in 1975 although curiously relevant today.

This, on its own, though, would not make the *Handbook* into “a practical guide”. The practical nature of the work is demonstrated by a series of case studies where a scenario is presented to the reader, giving him, or her, a variety of possible ethical choices at the end. The case studies tie in with the different topics covered by the book. Thus one finds case studies relating to the ethics of information supply, intellectual property, freedom of access, privacy and acceptable use and management of the self, the individual and the organisation. Scenarios range from a staff member allowing her own personal beliefs to affect the nature of the information that she delivers to incidents where copyright is deliberately ignored to issues relating to how to support fellow staff members in a conflict situation. The reader is then asked to select his or her preferred ethical decision and is directed to the section of the book where that choice is discussed. Frustratingly, the different choices for each case study are not discussed consecutively so, if you would like to read a discussion of all the various options, you have to page back and forth to find them all.

A section at the beginning of the book looks at the ethical codes of the Library Associations of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. It establishes that most Library Associations' codes of ethics, unsurprisingly, cover similar areas of concern.

The book is successful in drawing the reader's attention to the wide range of ethical concerns that can impinge on the library and information professional's work. One does feel as though one is just skating over the surface of these issues though and that it would have been more satisfying had some of these topics been discussed in greater depths and presented in a way that provided more of a challenge to the reader's intellect.

Reference

Garber, M., Hanssen, B. and Walkowitz, R. L. (ed.) (2000) *The turn to ethics*. New York; London: Routledge.

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