

Ethics And Values- Driven Advocacy and Libraries: Exploring Key Concepts

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This review was produced as part of the REVEAL
Project, funded by the CILIPS Research Fund

Glasgow, CILIPS

August 2023

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1. Introduction

This review has been produced as part of the REVEAL Project, funded by [CILIPS](#) through their [Research Fund](#). The project sought to consider effective advocacy for library and information services through the lens of the ethics and values of the profession and what the practising of these values on a day-to-day basis across the profession contributes to society.

In addition to this review of the key concepts related to advocacy, ethics, and values, the project outputs also include a range of videos and other materials such as infographics to support the themes explored in the review. All materials are made available free for use under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

The key driver of the REVEAL project is the premise that the “why” of what libraries do every day and the ethical values that underpin that work is fundamental to an effective advocacy strategy for the profession. This review, then, is produced to help to disseminate those values as widely as possible; to stakeholders within the library profession and for those in government, local government, and wider civil society who support the missions of libraries and could be interested in utilising a values-based approach to their own advocacy for library services. The key aim of the project is to enhance and encourage a collective advocacy across the profession and wider society through the provision of an accessible learning framework for library and information ethics and values, in the form of a set of continuing professional development tools.

Writing in 1985, Lindsey and Prentice suggested that “The average person is highly unlikely to have given a second – or even a first – thought to the question of the professional ethics of librarians” (p.vii). In a more contemporary setting, we could counter this notion by highlighting the concerns related to:

- attempts to restrict access to books via **copyright challenges** from individuals or communities, or
- concerns related to excessive **costs and restrictions to access to electronic books**, or
- concerns related to the **privacy of library users** when using library services, or
- concerns related to **how libraries organise knowledge**, who perhaps in doing so reinforce out of date biases and hierarchies.

It seems that ethical issues in libraries are now more in the news and public consciousness than ever. For Sturges, the issue is that the library profession has “changed from a predominant concern with technique (starting with topics like acquisitions and moving through cataloguing and conservation to user education and beyond), towards engagement with a range of issues (such as intellectual property, user privacy, and serving the socially excluded) in which the ethical dimension predominates” (Sturges, 2009, p.241).

However, for the library profession and other interested stakeholders to meet these and other contemporary challenges, we need as full as possible an understanding of ethical values and how they apply in the field of library and information work. Outwith those people fortunate enough to afford degree or masters level study of librarianship, there is

little opportunity to engage with these concepts in a meaningful way, and the materials produced as part of the REVEAL project are an attempt to fill this much needed gap. To borrow the title from a 2010 piece by Wong and Todaro for a moment, *frontline advocacy is everybody's job!* This literature review and the other materials produced by the REVEAL project seek to empower this view for those both within and from outwith the profession who wish to engage with library advocacy from a values-based perspective.

1.1. How to use this literature review

This literature review has been designed to be useful both as a theoretical introduction, and as a practical tool for the library profession and other interested stakeholders. No prior knowledge of any of the concepts is assumed, and all are explained in as an accessible a way as possible. For those who wish to learn more about some of the key theoretical concepts around advocacy, ethics, and human rights, **sections two and three** will provide this information. This theoretical background is immensely useful knowledge at any stage of advocacy, however in engaging with people from outside of the library profession to whom library values may be a nebulous concept, it is a vital component of understanding their motivations and how to present your case to them.

[Section Two](#) discusses advocacy as a concept, and explores advocacy strategy, as well as how we can utilise the techniques of rhetoric to better understand how to be effective advocates. This entails an understanding of a range of issues including the role of the speaker, audience, and context. The section also discusses how to make different kinds of argument for different situations and audiences, as well as some techniques on how to engage with audiences who may not agree with your cause and need to be either persuaded or countered.

[Section Three](#) explores the key ethical theories that are applied to social justice. These theories will often guide the approach and beliefs of different audiences to matters of public policy and rights, and thus are important for anyone engaged in public policy advocacy work to understand, regardless of the sector they are advocating for.

For those who wish to jump straight to how ethical values and advocacy can be considered within libraries, **sections four through to six** will provide this information and builds on the theories presented in sections two and three.

[Section Four](#) considers ethical codes within library and information services and considers some of the key writing in library and information ethics. What exactly are the ethical values the profession adheres to?

[Section Five](#) examines the contemporary ethical issues the profession is facing in practice, and how these are being addressed and reflected on by the profession in the modern era.

In [Section Six](#) we conclude the discussion by considering how the theories on advocacy, social justice, and ethics can be combined with the ethical concerns of the library profession to create effective advocacy strategies. The goal is to present a values-driven guide on how to do library advocacy that addresses key contemporary challenges.

2. What Is Advocacy?

The *Cambridge English Dictionary* defines advocacy as, “public support of an idea, plan, or way of doing something.” The term is generally understood as applying to a course of action or a set of strategies that promotes engaging an audience or audiences to persuade them of the merits of a specific argument or cause.

Advocacy can happen at a range of different levels, from the kinds of advocacy done at a global level by international bodies, to national advocacy undertaken by national representative bodies, to the more local advocacy seen in towns and communities across the world. Advocacy is also done each and every day by professionals who serve the needs of clients and users, and for whom the quality of service and the outcomes received by the client prove crucial in furthering the wider societal goals of the professions concerned.

2.1. Advocacy Strategies

In their research Gen and Wright (2020) identified six specific strategies commonly used by nonprofit organisations in the USA to further their policy advocacy work, these are:

- **Public lobbying:** where advocates are representing a public interest or public good on behalf of the wider community. Gen and Wright suggest that favourable “policy change, improved physical and social conditions, and enhanced democracy result from advocates lobbying policymakers on the public’s interests” (Gen and Wright, 2020, p.192).
- **Institutional partnership:** where advocates are partners with policymakers and can provide expertise in, research, and messaging to the partnership. Here, Gen and Wright suggest that change can happen for advocates, “when they build collaborative and congenial relationships with policymakers to achieve mutual policy goals (Gen and Wright, 2020, p.192).
- **Inside-outside:** where someone working inside a policymaking organisation is championing the case and is supported by an advocate outside of the policymaking organisation who helps provide the messaging necessary to effect desired change.
- **Direct reform:** where advocates can influence policy through direct action, including litigation, monitoring of policy, and actively evaluating the outcome of policy initiatives.
- **Indirect pressure:** where advocates influence public views on a cause to gain public enthusiasm for that cause which is then reflected in policymakers seeking to satisfy a changing mood.
- **Popular power:** linked to indirect pressure, but a more organised strategy whereby public demand is so vocal that policy change must occur. Gen and Wright argue that “The public holds ultimate power in policymaking, so these advocates work to mobilize the public and communicate their demands” (Gen and Wright, 2020, p.192).

Each of these different types of advocacy strategy require different types of advocates, different skillsets, and different knowledge bases to be effective.

In a 2018 study of 50 policy areas across Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, it was found that: “the extent to which an advocate’s chances of preference attainment increases with public support depends on the number of advocates lobbying on an issue” (Rasmussen, Mader, and Reher, 2018, p.159).

From within the library and information literature we have previously seen a solid discussion of advocacy and its importance for the sector. Hackman defines advocacy as “activities consciously aimed to persuade individuals or organizations to act on behalf of a programme or institution” (Hackman, 2011). Hoover, as “the process of educating and influencing decision makers to enlist their active support for libraries of all types” (Hoover, 2012). Hummel suggests “library advocacy is about engaging fully in the political process” (Hummel, 2014).

Hicks observes that advocacy, “is often considered part of a continuum with marketing and public relations” (Hicks, 2016, p.616). Importantly, however, Hicks highlights that the three strands in the continuum serve significantly different purposes. Citing training provided by the Canadian Library Association as a rubric for this she tells us that:

Public relations “communicates ‘this is who we are, this is what we do, for whom and when’” ... Marketing “asks ‘who are you, what do you want, how can I best deliver it to you, tell you about it and what price are you willing to pay?’” Advocacy “says to decision-makers, potential partners, funders, any stakeholder, ‘Your agenda will be greatly assisted by what we have to offer’” (Hicks, 2016, p.616).

As we have seen above, this element of tapping into the goals of others from outwith your group to further your cause is one of the vital components of advocacy.

2.2. Why Do Values Matter in Advocacy?

As we will discuss in [Section Four](#) of this review, the library and information profession have a set of values that guide practice, and while these may vary slightly by the country in which the profession is situated, they remain a yardstick for professional practice and how the profession understands its contribution to society. Professional values thus form a significant part of the advocacy strategy of professions. In the case of CILIP, the Ethical Framework that all members adhere to forms a bond between the professional and the professional body to **uphold**, **promote**, and **advocate** for these values (CILIP, 2022). These are not passive concepts and entail both individual members of the profession and the professional body being proactive advocates of the values the profession represents.

Garrow and Hasenfeld’s research highlights that an “organization’s moral frame explains the type of advocacy it is likely to pursue” (Garrow and Hasenfeld, 2014, p.82). The moral frame of an organisation is normally conceptualised within a mission statement, or as above for professional bodies, additionally in the ethical frameworks that members are expected to uphold. In reality, what kinds of challenges does this kind of moral framing present in terms of advocacy? Firstly, the realisation that not everyone else in society, and even within your own profession, will necessarily agree with how you as an individual interpret these values, especially if these values are formulated within ethical codes in a general way that is open to

interpretation. This is especially the case when a professional is engaged in debates around contentious issues, which require engagement with a range of stakeholders who may have multiple views on those issues in a bid to attempt to influence them.

The importance of understanding an opponent's political or ethical viewpoint before you can counter it with your own advocacy has been explored in research by Feinberg and Willer (2015). They proposed two hypotheses, the first that "political advocates spontaneously make arguments grounded in their own moral values, not the values of those targeted for persuasion" and the second that "political arguments reframed to appeal to the moral values (Feinberg and Willer, 2015, p.1665). Their findings supported both hypotheses and led them to suggest that advocating for an issue or cause needs to understand the political viewpoint of those you are trying to convince of your cause, which might mean reframing your arguments to fit the moral standpoint of those very people you are trying to persuade. They acknowledge this might be challenging for many of us, because doing so may compromise our own beliefs (Feinberg and Willer, 2015, p.1679). We will explore some techniques on how to do this in the next section.

2.3. *Advocacy – the Art of Persuasion?*

If we arrive at the conclusion that advocacy is about persuading others of the merits of your argument or cause, then the concept of persuasion and how it is undertaken becomes vital. This places us in the theoretical area known as rhetoric, defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary* as, "speech or writing intended to be effective and influence people."

In this next section we will utilise the work of Ramage, Bean, and Johnson in their *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings* (7th edition, which is an older edition). This is a seminal work on rhetoric within written work which explores key techniques in how to use the theories of rhetoric to enhance advocacy initiatives. Although obtaining this book in the UK can be quite challenging, it is highly recommended for those wishing to explore the concepts in more detail. Any of the editions has excellent coverage of the themes discussed below.

The social context of an argument (in this context defined as engagement with a concept or idea between one or more parties) can be visualised "as a triangle with interrelated points labeled *message*, *writer/speaker*, and *audience*" (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.75). Ramage, Bean, and Johnson dub this, *the rhetorical triangle*, and argue that "when you alter one point of the triangle (for example, when you change the audience for whom you are writing), you often need to alter the other points (by restructuring the message itself and perhaps by changing the tone or image you project as writer/speaker)" (2007, p.75).

Even in the modern age, how we think about the art of persuasion has been heavily influenced by the writing of Aristotle, who proposed a framework in his *The Art of Rhetoric*. Aristotle discussed the three key elements of persuasion, **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**, and for Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, "Each point on the [rhetorical triangle] in turn corresponds to one of the three kinds of persuasive appeals that ancient rhetoricians" favoured (p.75).

A fourth element related to the context, opportunity, or moment, **kairos**, is also an important aspect of rhetoric. Each of the four elements are discussed in more detail in the next section.

2.3.1. Logos – the importance of a logical argument or case

It might seem an obvious consideration, but the arguments you make for a cause must have a logical basis. In rhetoric, this is referred to as *logos*, which is the aspect of the rhetorical triangle that does not relate to the person speaking, or the emotional impact of their message, but instead the logical consistency of the message itself.

In public advocacy this usually entails building your message on some kind of evidence that is convincing. This can obviously be built on something like a statistical framework, e.g. “X% improvement in educational outcomes was witnessed with a specific intervention” or “X% of money is saved for the health service, and people were seen to have better much health outcomes if they cut sugar from their diet.” These kinds of arguments are deductive in nature because they use provable and trackable facts to reach a conclusion. If the facts and statistics used are accurate and presented ethically, this can be an immensely powerful way of advocating for a cause, as genuine evidence can be hard to refute.

Inductive arguments can also be made in rhetorical exercises by suggesting probable outcomes that may occur if certain scenarios are played out. Inductive arguments often posit a solution and can often gather evidence for their efficacy while the situation plays out, therefore they are arguably more speculative arguments to make. Nevertheless, inductive arguments can be a useful tool in an advocacy armoury. For instance, you could posit that a community benefits from having public spaces for people to gather, because it provides opportunities for the community to engage more often and grow closer and stronger. There is a certain logic to this, and it may be convincing enough to obtain funds to create community initiatives. Gathering data to prove the case is always wise, and often expected if funding is obtained for such scenarios, but it is important to note that such arguments are not usually based on factual evidence but on a speculative nature that must be realistic, understandable, and achievable to those who you are trying to influence.

2.3.2. Ethos – the appeal to credibility.

Ethos is a widely used word even to this day, and largely retains a similar meaning to its use in Ancient Greece, namely relating to character. In rhetoric it is utilised in relation to the character of the speaker delivering the message. Are they trustworthy? Do they speak from a position of knowledge and/or authority? As a messenger would they be liable to respect from the audience and therefore be listened to by the target audience?

Ethos is also relevant in terms of the delivery of the message by the speaker. For instance, do they show balance in presenting a case before they state their preferred view? The passion a speaker has for a cause is also an important element in ethos. Do they actually believe in the cause they are promoting, or are they going through the motions for some type of personal gain? Ramage, Bean, and Johnson highlight that Aristotle believed that trust in a speaker actually “resides within the speech itself, not in the prior reputation of the speaker” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.131).

There are three main priorities to consider to best create ethos in an argument:

- **Be knowledgeable about your issue:** know your topic area, be accurate on issues like statistics and concepts. If your evidence is sound, then your argument will be.
- **Be fair:** as well as knowing your own side, know and acknowledge other sides with respect. Show empathy for alternative views, even while you are trying to convince an audience those views are erroneous. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson argue that there are very few situations where scorn is merited, and usually only when you are talking to your own community. They summarise by suggesting that showing “empathy to alternative views is generally the best strategy.”
- **Build a bridge to your audience:** attempting to find common ground between the values of your community and/or cause and the values of those you are trying to influence. This strengthens the ethos of the speaker because it shows respect for the views of your audience or opposition (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.131-132).

In advocacy, who delivers the message, but even more importantly, how they deliver it are of paramount importance. Choosing a spokesperson or someone to represent your cause or organisation becomes a crucial choice for the successful receipt of the message you wish to be imparted.

2.3.3. Pathos – the importance of empathy for a position

Pathos is also a word that is still in use today, and in terms of the original usage of the word in Ancient Greece, it related to the concept of suffering or experience. In rhetoric, pathos relates to the values and beliefs of the audience and how this is tapped into by the speaker and the message. A large aspect of this is the notion of empathy, utilising skills to present a message that the receiver not only understands but is sympathetic to on a human level. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson state, “Pathos helps us see what is deeply at stake in an issue, what matters to the whole person” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.133).

It is important to note that pathos can be used to tap into both positive and negative emotions in the audience, and we often see it used as a strategy in politics in both cases. As such it can also be utilised to manipulate people with the use of false or misleading information, and therefore must be used in an ethical way.

More positively, it can also be tapped into as a technique to challenge negative beliefs or emotions through their countering with positive messages. As such it is an immensely powerful tool for advocacy to enable opposing of a narrative that may be harming the cause you are advocating for.

Aristotle highlighted what he believed were the emotional **dichotomies**. In terms of rhetoric, if the audience you are trying to engage with is having one particular emotion and this is antithetical to your argument or cause, then you can attempt to negate the opposing emotion with a positive one. For instance, if a person is showing anger and hostility towards your cause, then you need to find a way to try to calm them before you can convince them of the merits of your cause. Again, this may entail you having some *empathy* for their position, even if you vehemently disagree with it. It may not always be possible to change

an entrenched position of someone if they are solidly committed to it or their engagement with the idea comes from a position of bad faith.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson recommend several specific techniques for creating appeal for an argument from the position of pathos:

- **Use concrete language:** concrete language focuses on tangible concepts that an audience can understand rather than abstract concepts that might confuse. Grounding your arguments in positive language that appeals to our senses, that allow us to imagine ourselves in that situation.
- **Use specific examples and illustrations:** building on the use of concrete language, the use of specific examples can be immensely useful in building pathos. Examples from the lives of real people, if your service is engaged in public service, is a significant way to allow audiences to understand what your service provides.
- **Use narratives:** telling important stories that appeal to your audience's values can also help build pathos, especially opening narratives that set a scene. However, if done incorrectly, they can also be a risk. "If they are too private, too self-indulgent, too sentimental, or even too dramatic, and forceful, they can backfire on you.
- **Chose words, metaphors, and analogies with appropriate connotations:** selecting words, metaphors, or analogies that match your aim, can also be a very good way of building pathos. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson use the example of a new policy initiative, which if you are supporting you could call "bold and decisive", but if critiquing can call, "haughty and autocratic." The framing of the argument you make must be with a view to guiding the audience to see the argument through your "angle of vision" (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.133-135).

So how do pathos, ethos, and logos come together in practical advocacy? Gen and Wright summarise as follows: "an advocate representing children's issues could provide statistics that demonstrate the scale and consequences of a problem (*logos*), share stories about children who are personally affected by the problem (*pathos*), and demonstrate why the advocate is to be trusted on the issue, due to credentials or experience (*ethos*)" (Gen and Wright, 2020, p.31).

We will focus on this specifically in terms of libraries in the [final section](#).

2.3.4. Kairos – the importance of context and timing

The timing and appropriateness of an argument are as important as its logic, the speaker, or the emotional pull it has. This concept is known as *kairos*, which again comes from Ancient Greece and refers to opportunity, time, or season. How does this apply, then, in advocacy? Thinking "*kairoitically* is to be attuned to the total context of a situation in order to act in the right way at the right time" (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.139). In reality this can mean a series of different things, for instance:

- If a topic or theme is in the news or currently being debated in the public consciousness, and it is something that impacts on your cause, then try to engage with that debate. Missed opportunities are wasted opportunities. For example, at this point in time, the media is focused on issues around book censorship and "cancel

culture” – this is an important opportunity for those who professions who are well-versed in the debates related to intellectual freedom versus offensive content to have their say, and professions like librarianship rightly input into the public discussions around this to help inform public discourse, and at the same time advocate for the role of the library in this.

- Being aware of the likely timelines of legislation and policy development within your field is also a vital element of *kairos*. If you are aware that a policy is in the planning phase that will have an impact on your cause, you can develop a strategy for engaging with that policy issue before and during this policy development phase. Simply being reactive rather than proactive in such scenarios can leave you on the backfoot from an advocacy perspective.

Kairos also asks you to consider your argument in relation to the context and atmosphere in terms of the point when it is being made. For instance, there may be a necessity to join a public debate on a topic in your area of concern when it is at its most ferocious, especially if it involves challenges to human rights or other societal harms, or severe funding issues that risk the future of a service. However, if your cause is best served by waiting out such hostile environments for your case, this may also be wise. The right time for your argument may be when your voice is seen as the sensible and logical one in the fray, and the listeners are ready to hear that.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest that “There are no rules to help you determine the *kairotic* moment for your argument, but being attuned to *kairos* will help you “read” your audience and rhetorical situation in a dynamic way” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.139).

In the final section of this review ([Section Six](#)) we will consider how these four categories of logos, ethos, pathos, and *kairos*, can be practically understood and applied in the specific context of library advocacy.

2.3.5. Engaging with Diverse Audience Views

The kinds of arguments that can be made in terms of a cause roughly divide into three categories: **one-sided**, **multi-sided**, and **dialogic**. One-sided arguments present only the case of the speaker, while multi-sided arguments present the case of the speaker, but also engage with alternative or conflicting views. Dialogic arguments are characterised as more complex, “where the writer presents himself as uncertain, or searching, where the audience is considered a partner in the dialogue, and where the writer’s purpose is to seek common ground perhaps leading to a consensual solution to a problem” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.141).

In terms of how we can perceive one-sided arguments, they:

- Are usually targeted at people who already share your stance or point of view.
- Strengthen the views of those who agree but can further alienate those who do not.
- Can initially be persuasive to neutrals, but presented with conflicting evidence, neutrals can often change stance (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.142).

It is suggested in *Writing Arguments* that one way of considering audience in terms of your argument is to create a **Scale of Resistance** to consider who the audiences involved in relaying your message are and where they stand in relation to your cause, from those in accord with your message at one end of the spectrum, to those neutral in the centre, and those firmly opposed at the opposite end of the scale. For the purposes of this review, we have created such a scale in tabular form based on Ramage, Bean and Johnson’s concept, which we have focused on the topic of the arguments that might be put in place for and against the legalisation of drugs.

Table 1- Scale of Resistance on Proposal to Legalise Drugs

| Accord | | Undecided/Neutral | | Resistance |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <u>Strongly supportive</u> | <u>Supportive with conditions</u> | <u>Uncertain</u> | <u>Mostly opposed</u> | <u>Strongly opposed</u> |
| Seeking liberalisation of drug laws | Sympathetic to some drugs being legalised, but not all | Have no strong views in either direction, open to persuasion based on evidence and argument | Consider the dangers of legalisation likely outweigh any benefits of legalisation | Morally opposed to drugs and find any softening of legal approach to drug enforcement unacceptable. |

When we consider the range of different standpoints presented above, it becomes obvious that there is no one argument that will win over all audiences, and indeed a multi-focused approach for an advocacy organisation seeking to change hearts and minds would need to be adopted. While not all issues are as contentious as the legalisation of drugs, nevertheless, most issues will see audiences with differing viewpoints whose views need to be considered.

The **Scale of Resistance** is an immensely useful tool that can be utilised when planning an advocacy initiative, as you will rarely be able to rely on a singular case being made that will address all objections or concerns to your issue or cause. You may need to delve into more nuanced approaches to reach different audiences effectively:

“Seldom... will you encounter an issue in which the range of disagreement follows a simple line from accord to resistance. Often resistant views fall into different categories so that no single line of argument appeals to all those whose views are different from your own. You have to identify not only your audience’s resistance to your ideas but also the causes of that resistance” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.142).

In terms of application of this in a library context, James LaRue cites an arguably similar sentiment when reflecting on how censorship might manifest in libraries from the point of view of parents seeking to limit access to some titles in school or public libraries. LaRue suggests that while the profession rightly stands behind intellectual freedom as a fundamental ethical value, that often there is a context to censorship challenges in libraries

that are more about fear, or uncertainty in parents, and not necessarily a dogmatic stance from them that books **must** be banned. In his experience, LaRue found that:

In short, censorship had an *emotional* context. The issue wasn't really about the culture wars or extreme political agendas. It was about the difficulty many of us have when our children cross the threshold from infancy to childhood (4-6), or childhood to adolescence and maturity (14- 16). In an attempt to cope, parents went through paroxysms of anger, grief, self-righteousness, and a grasping for control. The library was an incidental target, part of the larger problem of a world where their kids were growing up faster than their parents were ready for (LaRue, 2018, p.7).

LaRue continues that once this empathic realisation is made, dialogue can occur, however delicate, and “involved a balance between respect—listening to the concern and giving it authentic consideration—and institutional purpose” (LaRue, 2018, p.7). James concludes in this area that often it entails the librarian or institution stating to the complainer that, “we seek to serve you well. But you are not the only one we serve” (LaRue, 2018, p.8). We will explore these ideas much fully in [Section Six](#) when we reflect on how library advocacy can be best undertaken in controversial cases.

More generally, how we appeal to different audiences relies on the types of arguments we make. As stated above, appealing to an audience who is already supportive is usually a **one-sided argument**. These are extremely common in terms of advocacy, because notwithstanding they may be seen as a form of “preaching to the choir” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.152) they can be hugely effective in keeping people who believe in your cause motivated and ready for action. We can identify one-sided arguments as happening regularly as it relates to professional audiences with outputs such as professional conferences, journals, and the like. Keeping the professional audience engaged with the important themes and concepts that underpin the values the profession espouses is a vital element in advocacy, even if it can feel a little like navel-gazing at times. This technique should never be how we undertake advocacies for all audiences, however.

Appealing to an **undecided or neutral audience** is a little more complex, as “in-group appeals that motivate an already supportive audience can repel a neutral or undecided audience” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.145). Such audiences can be considered as akin to jurors, contemplating all sides of an argument before deciding, but being highly resistant to any arguments that seek to demonise or caricature alternative viewpoints.

How does the writer or advocate engage effectively with this audience, then? Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest that the writer or advocate must be willing “to summarize opposing views fairly and to respond to them openly – either by trying to refute them or by conceding to their strengths and then shifting to a different field of values” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.145). Thus, understanding the ethical values of your opposition is a fundamental starting point in understanding how to do effective advocacy. In [Section Three](#) we explore further the different ethical values audiences may identify with, in order to better understand their motivations.

Strategies for engaging effectively with **undecided or neutral audiences** are built around what is often referred to as the **classical argument**, another concept we can trace back to the time of Aristotle, and something that is a core skill in rhetoric. There are usually five elements attributed to the classical argument, which are:

1. Introducing your issue, problem, or cause.
2. Presenting your case.
3. Addressing the opposition to your issue, problem, or cause.
4. Providing your proof to support your argument.
5. Presenting your conclusion.

As we can see, a crucial element in the classical argument relates to engaging with your opposition’s arguments and how to refute those arguments to better present your own case. Some of the strategies for how to do this suggested by Ramage, Bean, and Johnson include:

Table 2 - Strategies for engaging with undecided or neutral audiences (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.147-151).

| Strategy | Activity |
|---|--|
| <u>Summarising Opposing Views</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Follow the <i>principle of charity</i>, which obliges you to avoid loaded, biased, or ‘straw man’ summaries that oversimplify or distort opposing arguments, making them easier to knock over” (p.146) |
| <u>Refuting Opposing Views</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You attempt to convince readers that [the opposing view] is logically flawed, inadequately supported, or based on erroneous assumptions” (p.147) • “You can rebut (1) the writer’s stated reason and grounds (2) the writer’s warrant and backing (i.e. underlying assumptions) (3) or both” (p.147) |
| <u>Rebutting Evidence</u> (Not all of these will apply in all cases, select appropriately) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deny the truth of the data. • Cite counterexamples and counter testimony. • Cast doubt on the representativeness or sufficiency of examples. • Case doubt on the relevance or recency of the examples, statistics, or testimony. • Call into question the credibility of an authority. • Question the accuracy or context of quotations. • Question the way the statistical data were produced or interpreted. (p.148-149) |
| <u>Conceding to opposing views</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You “must sometimes concede to an opposing argument rather than refute it.” (p.149). • Often entails switching to an alternative field of values that is opposed to that you are refuting to argue your case (p.149) |

Again, we will discuss a categorisation of values in [Section Three](#), however at this stage it is only important to note that **switching to an alternative set of values** requires a thorough understanding of types of ethical value that may be outwith your own.

Lastly, appealing to a **resistant audience** entails different strategies from those seen in the classical argument approach. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest that often when an audience holds an alternative view to that of the writer or advocate, the classical argument can be interpreted as being too critical to the worldview of that audience and can solidify

resistance (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.152). They concede that on some values-driven debates (they use examples such as gun control, gay rights, and abortion) the gulf between a writer or advocate and a resistant audience may seem unbreachable. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest that in these cases the goal “may be simply to open dialogue by seeking common ground – that is by finding places where the writer and audience may agree” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.152).

It is also important to note that engaging with a resistant audience may not be based on the goal of converting that audience to your viewpoint; as discussed above, this may be placed on a scale of *immensely challenging*, to *completely impossible*. However, what such engagement **can do** is potentially reduce the level of resistance your cause sees from the opposition. This is not a trivial matter, since if an audience that is resistant to your cause perceives you as dogmatic, stubborn, and completely antithetical to their values, they are liable to utilise their resources in resisting you. If, on the other hand, you attempt to engage with them and try to identify some common ground, they may well understand that you are acting in good faith, and thus tone down the rhetoric based on an attempt on their part to understand your position more fully.

One strategy that can be utilised in engaging with resistant audiences is known as the **delayed-thesis** argument. In the classical argument strategy, we state upfront our position and argue for it, while acknowledging and refuting the opposing argument. The delayed-thesis argument instead delays the thesis you wish to present until the end of your argument. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson state, “for resistant audiences, it may be better to keep the issue open, delaying the revelation of your own position until the end” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.153). Delaying the thesis in your argument can allow you to deeply engage your audience with the issues at play, presenting a range of viewpoints, before stating the one that is your thesis. Such strategies can potentially work because if the audience is engaged by you fully in the alternative debates around an issue, they can often more open-mindedly consider the range of viewpoints offered and empathise with these.

A final strategy that can be utilised in engaging with resistant audiences is known as the **Rogerian argument**, which is named after the psychologist who developed the strategy, Carl Rogers. This strategy entails what Rogers called, “empathic listening” which is based around the notion of engaging with another’s perspective on an issue sympathetically. In utilising this strategy, “the writer reduces the sense of threat in her argument by showing that *both writer and resistant audience share basic values*” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.156). As such the Rogerian strategy is argued by Ramage, Bean, and Johnson to be effective in issues that are emotionally heavy in terms of their impact on audiences since the strategy seeks to limit threats and instead highlight shared values. How can we summarise this strategy in a more practical way?

1. Do not attack the resistant audience’s stance as wrongheaded, instead respect their position and show an understanding of it.
2. Do not ask the resistant audience to capitulate fully to your point of view, but instead encourage just a shift towards your point of view. This in itself shows that your own position is not a hardened one. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson state, “By

acknowledging that she has already shifted toward the audience's views, the writer makes it easier for the audience to accept compromise (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.156).

As discussed above, in advocacy for public services or public policy issues it is important to be able to engage effectively with the cases posited by others who may be in opposition to you. However, it is also very important to note that, "not every dispute over answers is a rational argument" (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.75). It can be immensely difficult to determine in some cases whether others in opposition to your position are acting in good faith, especially in an era of *culture wars*, however we can start by recognising that rational debate about an issue requires two factors:

1. Reasonable participants who operate within the conventions of reasonable behaviour
2. Potentially sharable assumptions that can serve as the starting place or foundation for the argument (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.79)

It is important to recognise that, "Lacking one or both of these conditions, disagreements remain stalled at the level of pseudo-arguments" (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.79).

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson break down pseudo-arguments in terms of their cause in more detail. They suggest that one factor relates to what they term, fanatical believers and fanatical skeptics:

A reasonable argument assumes the possibility of growth and change; disputants may modify their views as they acknowledge strengths in an alternative view or weaknesses in their own. Such growth becomes impossible – and argument degenerates to pseudo-argument - when disputants are fanatically committed to their positions. (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.79)

They argue that fanatical believers simply believe that their claims are true and will hear nothing that contradicts this in good faith. There is a party-line they follow, whether political or cultural, and "their ideological convictions [are] often shaped by their favorite, not-to-be-disputed texts (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.79). A fanatical skeptic accepts nothing, and "dismisses the possibility of proving anything." Genuine engagement with ideas is impossible in engagement with fanatical believers or fanatical skeptics.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson also highlight another important source of pseudo-arguments as a lack of shared assumptions between parties. Engagement with an argument on behalf of the parties involved starts with the premise of shared assumptions, and without these in relation to the parties involved in the argument, "there is no 'bottom' to [the] argument, just an endless regress of reasons based on more reasons" (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2007, p.80).

2.4. Digital Advocacy

Inevitably the rise of information and communications technologies has provided new opportunities for advocacy in the modern age:

... the development of the Internet and social media platforms has changed the opportunities for political influence, as well as for expressing one's positions. Websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, and forums have become important platforms (Johansson and Scaramuzzino, 2019, p.1529).

The concept of digital advocacy incorporates the use of these technological tools in terms of framing advocacy messages and reaching diverse audiences. Johansson and Scaramuzzino argue that digital advocacy transforms traditional notions of advocacy from the analogue world and suggest that "we need to conceptualise digital advocacy as an act of seeking and claiming political presence" (Johansson and Scaramuzzino, 2019, p.1529). They have identified three logics of digital advocacy, namely:

1. Access politics: amplifying connections with politicians and other officials
2. Information politics: visualising your messages and opinions while shaping public opinion.
3. Protest politics: personalising your message and express claims through collective manifestations (Johansson and Scaramuzzino, 2019, p.1541).

Flowing logically from this, the importance of digital storytelling becomes crucial, allowing institutions to provide narratives utilising their social media channels that can be engaging for audiences and provide strong advocacy for their work. In the context of libraries, for instance, digital storytelling can encompass a range of potential topics, from narratives around the history of collections, to how individual library users and community groups have seen their lives benefit from engaging with the library service.

In their research Crisan and Bortun have found that a "key element [of digital storytelling] was that the stories led to reflection on the subjects presented so, in this respect, Digital Storytelling is clearly one means to engage an audience in a particular cause" (Crisan and Bortun, 2017, p.164). As McPherson has observed, "for a consumer of information to have an emotional reaction to a piece of information, the information has to reach him or her first" (McPherson, 2015, p.141).

Digital advocacy becomes more effective if the message can be imparted to as wide a range of audiences as possible, and this entails organisations setting out **not** to inhabit the silos that social media companies can often encourage and profit from them inhabiting. As Fisher et al discuss in the context of the USA:

Rival perspectives can be completely shut out from one's self-created media bubble. Making matters worse, outrage-inducing content is more likely to be spread on these platforms, creating a breeding ground for clickbait headlines and fake news. This toxic online environment is very likely driving Americans further apart and fostering unproductive exchanges (Fisher et al, 2018, p.52).

Haidt and Lukianoff discuss the polarising elements of social media extensively in *The Coddling of the American Mind*: "New-media platforms and outlets allow citizens to retreat into self-confirmatory bubbles, where their worst fears about the evils of the other side can

be confirmed and amplified by extremists and cyber trolls intent on sowing discord and division” (Haidt and Lukianoff, 2018, p.5).

Therefore, while digital advocacy offers immense opportunities for organisations, the techniques of rhetoric discussed in Section 2.3 above require to be translated to a medium that is not necessarily receptive to them, and this must always be borne in mind when utilising social media as part of an advocacy strategy.

Reflection on **who** digital advocacy is reaching also becomes very important to consider in terms of evaluation strategies. McPherson suggests two models that have been utilised in NGO digital advocacy:

1. The evidence model: focussed on the dissemination of accurate information. “Establishing veracity can help advocacy organizations bolster their reputations; pursue their advocacy mandates, including meeting standards for evidence in a court of law; and allocate resources” (McPherson, 2015, p.130).
2. The engagement model: focusses on participation, concentrating on manifestations of engagement in terms of both quantity and quality. As McPherson states, the “engagement and participation of members in advocacy organizations’ causes are essential to their reputations and the pursuit of their mandates” (McPherson, 2015, p.130).

The evidence model posits, then, that organisational credibility is built on ensuring compelling and trustworthy information is imparted through digital advocacy, the *ethos* and *logos* of the rhetorical triangle discussed earlier. The engagement model focuses on ensuring that the appropriate audiences are engaged with and in the correct ways, which reflects the *pathos* of the rhetorical triangle.

2.5. Conclusion

In this section we have considered what advocacy is, why values are a crucial element in advocacy strategies, and the types of technique and strategy that can be utilised in effective advocacy. We have considered classical concepts related to rhetoric, and how these can be adapted in the modern era for effective advocacy.

In the next section we will explore ethical values from a philosophical perspective to explore the differing ways that people consider social justice concepts.

3. Ethical Theories and Social Justice

While the key focus of this review is library and information ethical values and how they should inform advocacy, it is important to reinforce that discussion with a summary of the ethical theories that are present in wider society. Since library and information ethical values are informed by these specific ethical theories, an understanding of them at this higher conceptual level can significantly strengthen how this is considered in an applied context in library and information work. We will revisit these themes as they apply within library and information work in Sections [Four](#) and [Five](#).

The framework utilised for this section follows the categorisation of ethical theories applied to social justice produced by Michael Sandel in his book, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* While other frameworks for discussion could be utilised, Sandel's work offers an accessible and straightforward container for considering the key categories of ethics that prevail more broadly. Readers are encouraged to follow up on any of the key theories more fully by consulting Sandel's *Justice*.

Sandel asks a series of questions re social justice and the ethical frameworks that guide them and the considerations of citizens throughout the world:

Does a just society seek to promote the virtue of its citizens? Or should law be neutral toward competing conceptions of virtue, so that citizens can be free to choose for themselves the best way to live? (Sandel, 2009, p.9).

Essentially, Sandel suggests three approaches to justice as larger containers for the ethical approaches that predominate, and these are **welfare**, **freedom**, and **virtue**. As broad categories each of these can be utilised effectively to unpack the key elements of ethics.

Yet there is much complexity even within these three categories. Ultimately, "you might say that ancient theories of justice start with virtue, while modern theories start with freedom" (Sandel, 2009, p.9) but Sandel concedes, "that this contrast can mislead" (Sandel, 2009, p.9).

Devoted though we are to prosperity and freedom, we can't quite shake off the judgmental strand of justice. The conviction that justice involves virtue as well as choice runs deep. Thinking about justice seems inescapably to engage us in thinking about the best way to live (Sandel, 2009, p.10).

We will discuss some of these contrasts in the sections below, but also later in the review in terms of issues like human rights, group rights, and censorship. It is also important before we begin to reflect on the fact that these approaches often conflict and can be subject to significant disagreement between audiences who may view the world in different ways:

Some of our debates reflect disagreement about what it means to maximize welfare or respect freedom or cultivate virtue. Others involve disagreement about what to do when these ideals conflict. Political philosophy cannot resolve these disagreements once and for all. But it can give shape to the arguments we have, and bring moral clarity to the alternatives we confront as democratic citizens (Sandel, 2009, p.19).

3.1. Welfare

In the context of this discussion Sandel defines welfare as relating to happiness of citizens in a broad sense. The main ethical theory related to maximising welfare is **utilitarianism**, an ethical theory proposed by the 18th century legal scholar, philosopher, and social campaigner, Jeremy Bentham.

Utilitarianism is a **teleological** theory, meaning that it exists to further certain ends, and those ends are what should be the overarching focus, not necessarily how those ends are achieved. Utilitarianism's focus was happiness for the largest number, utility for Bentham meaning, "whatever produces pleasure or happiness, and whatever prevents pain or suffering" (Sandel, 2009, p.32).

Utilitarianism has been a hugely influential philosophy until well into the twentieth century, and arguably many professions remain sympathetic to its tenet of maximising happiness for the largest number. For instance, the growth in public institutions like parks, museums, and libraries in the nineteenth century can be traced to this ethos, and even today it is not uncommon to find people advocating for public services from a utilitarian standpoint. For example, the basic argument that libraries and museums are **good things** for society to provide for all is essentially at its core a utilitarian argument, given its focus is on maximising access to something for the benefit of the majority.

While utilitarianism has been hugely influential, and to this day continues to be a tool utilised by some in advocacy, it has fallen out of fashion due to the significant criticisms it attracted based on the potential of the philosophy to impact on individual freedom and rights. As Sandel puts it:

The most glaring weakness of utilitarianism, many argue, is that it fails to respect individual rights. By caring only about the sum of satisfactions, it can run roughshod over individual people. For the utilitarian, individuals matter, but only in the sense that each person's preferences should be counted along with everyone else's. But this means that the utilitarian logic, if consistently applied, could sanction ways of treating persons that violate what we think of as fundamental norms of decency and respect (Sandel, 2009, p.37).

Another key criticism of utilitarianism is that it can essentially lead to what Sandel has dubbed, "a single currency of value" (Sandel, 2009, p.37) in measuring all public goods, which means that often no nuance or consideration of quality or decency is applied. This is summarised in the famous quote from Bentham related to whether or not it is better for society to promote activities that are deemed to be of *higher quality* than others: his response, "Quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry" (Bentham, 1825, p.206).

It is important to note that while Bentham wished to maximise happiness for the majority of the community as the most effective means of social justice, he did not believe in the concept of community. He famously stated that:

‘The interest of the community’ is one of the most general expressions in the terminology of morals; no wonder its meaning is often lost! When it has a meaning, it is this. The community is a fictitious body composed of the individuals who are thought of as being as it were its members. Then what is the interest of the community? It is the sum of the interests of the members who compose it (Bentham, 1970; 1789, Chapter 1).

Despite the undoubted influence of utilitarianism on social justice well into the twentieth century, the criticisms of the philosophy from a freedom-centred perspective were arguably the most effective, especially considering the growth of human rights and the importance of individual freedom in the public consciousness from the Second World War onwards.

However, even before human rights became the political force seen in the post-war world, Bentham’s philosophy had already seen critique from German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, from the point of view of a perceived lack of respect for human being as individuals. We will explore this kind of critique in our discussion of freedom below.

3.2. Freedom

Sandel’s category of **freedom** encapsulates much of the modern ideas of social justice we will be familiar with, from competing notions as to the concept of human rights, to ideas of equality, and affirmative action. It is also fair to say that freedom is one of the most contested categories of social justice, with supporters approaching the idea from a range of political persuasions and consequently presenting manifestly different views of what the term should mean for citizens and groups.

The concept of freedom has been a bedrock of the **liberalism** tradition in political philosophy, which “seeks to maximize free choice for all individuals but recognizes that freedom must have limits” (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.3). Even one of the original 17th century advocates for the primacy of individual freedom, John Locke, stated that *liberty* does not equate to *licence*. More sophisticated ideas of what this means have emerged in the modern era, but it can be summarised as such:

The freedom of each individual must be balanced against the freedom of others. It also needs to be balanced against other values, such as equality, social stability, and security (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.3).

Important concerns related to freedom can be briefly summarised as relating to the **inviolability** and importance of the individual human being, which inevitably leads then to concepts of **human rights**, and individual **autonomy**.

A key advocate of the concept that humanity had an inviolability was Immanuel Kant who wrote in opposition to utilitarianism and argued that:

morality is not about maximizing happiness or any other end. Instead, it is about respecting persons as ends in themselves (Sandel, 2009, p.105).

For Kant, a utilitarian mindset did not respect the dignity of individual human beings, which he held to be inviolable. Kant believed that the notion that social justice could be framed

within the fleeting desires of the majority of a population at any point in time did not consider human beings in their best light:

Kant argues that morality can't be based on merely empirical considerations, such as the interests, wants, desires, and preferences people have at any given time. These factors are variable and contingent, he points out, so they could hardly serve as the basis for universal moral principles—such as universal human rights (Sandel, 2009, p.106-107).

To this day Kant is an immensely influential moral philosopher and his “emphasis on human dignity informs present-day notions of universal human rights” (Sandel, 2009, p.105).

Nickel summarises human rights as “norms that aspire to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal, and social abuses” (Nickel, 2021). Beitz observes that human rights are generally **claims** that impose **duties** or **responsibilities** on an addressee or duty bearers. The right usually focusses on a freedom, protection, status, or benefit for the rightsholders that they should be able to claim (Beitz 2009). As Parvin and Chambers argue, then:

Human rights are therefore different to legal rights: they are not derived from laws but are held by all individuals regardless of the laws which happen to exist in any country and regardless of the particular traditions or values which shape the public culture of those countries. Rights are therefore controversial (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.99).

Griffin summarises what he sees as the development of human rights over the years in terms of three specific generations:

The first generation consists of the classic liberty rights of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—freedom of expression, of assembly, of worship, and the like. The second generation is made up of the welfare rights widely supposed to be of the mid-twentieth century though actually first asserted in the late Middle Ages—positive rights to aid, in contrast, it is thought, to the purely negative rights of the first generation. The third generation, the rights of our time, of the last twenty-five years or so, consists of ‘solidarity’ rights, including, most prominently, group rights (Griffin, 2008, p.256).

In an international context, the codification of human rights can be found in two key documents, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) produced by the United Nations in 1948, and the *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) produced by the Council of Europe in 1950 and inspired by the UDHR. The ECHR has been formally integrated into United Kingdom law via the *Human Rights Act 1998*.

The UDHR begins with a vital premise that human rights are “inalienable” meaning that they cannot be removed, transferred, or ignored. The rights it sets out are universal from the point of view of all humanity. Therefore, it should not matter which country a person lives in, or which flavour of government they may live under, the rights that are set out should apply to all. What started out as a normative plea for international recognition, then, has seen rights enshrined in legislation around the world. An important element of the universality of

human rights was the understanding that these rights transcend any alternative set specified by a sovereign state. As Martha Nussbaum has summarised, “A human right, unlike many other rights people may have, derives not from a person’s particular situation of privilege or power or skill but, instead, just from the fact of being human” (Nussbaum, 1999, p.87).

An important aspect of rights that needs to be understood is the distinction between types of rights. Rights largely fall into three categories, *absolute, limited, and qualified*. These can be summarised as:

- **Absolute rights:** where a right should always be respected, such as the right to life, or the right to be free from torture, and inhuman treatment.
- **Limited rights:** where a right can be removed by the state under certain circumstances, such as the right to liberty if one commits a crime serious enough for imprisonment.
- **Qualified rights:** whereby a right that you can normally expect to be respected can be restricted if it is counter to the rights of another person, or if satisfying the right is deemed not be in the wider societal interest. This includes rights such as the right to privacy, the right to freedom of assembly, and the right to freedom of expression.

To clarify the concept of a qualified right further, we can consider the right to privacy, a right enshrined in Article 8 of the ECHR and the *Human Rights Act 1998*. Both state the right to privacy, and the limits that can be placed on it.

Article 8 states that: “*Everyone has the right to respect for private and family life, his home and his correspondence.*” Section 8 (2) of the ECHR covers the limits that are allowed to be placed on the right to privacy specified in 8(1): “*There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic wellbeing of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others*”

In library and information services, the rights that are generally supported by the services provided are all *qualified* rights, such as the right to access information, the right to freedom of expression, right to privacy, and the right to protection of intellectual property. These rights are not absolute and supporting them often means balancing the rights of wider society, or other individuals and groups, against each other. This is often a potentially controversial thing to do, as we will explore in section five of this literature review in much more detail.

Another important aspect of how freedom is perceived in society can be considered between those who view rights as a limitation on how much the state should interfere with a citizen’s autonomy, versus those who believe in state-bestowed rights designed to better a citizen’s position throughout their life. These ideas ultimately relate to the concepts of **negative and positive rights**. Positive rights consider the notion that citizens have a set of expectations as to the goods they should expect to receive from the state. Often referred to as welfare rights, they incorporate issues such as education, health, unemployment benefits, and other public goods. The opposition to positive rights, negative rights, are based around

the notion that peoples' interests should not be unjustly interfered with by the state, and that the over-riding maxim should be one of freedom to pursue one's own interests first and foremost.

The notion of **positive rights** received a massive boost with the work of philosopher, John Rawls, who had a major influence on liberal politics from the 1970s onwards. In his highly influential, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls proposed a range of ideas that remain a cornerstone of liberal politics for many. His approach respected human rights, but suggested that in doing so, states must help empower individuals through two principles of justice:

- First principle of justice: 'each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others' (Rawls 1971, p. 60)
- Second principle of justice: 'Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity' (Rawls 1971, p. 83).

For Rawls these were merely the logical choices that any rational human being would make for a just society if making the choice behind a **veil of ignorance**. This thought experiment he proposed in the book was based on the idea that if a human being was unaware of the lot they would be allocated within society, they would design a system of justice that favoured everyone by providing an equal set of rights. Behind the veil of ignorance, the human beings designing society would have no concept of their eventual social status, or specific talents that they may be born with, or any conception of the good. In such a position Rawls believed that they would be inclined to design a just society with a set of guaranteed positive rights for all. For Rawls this original position inhabited by the designers of the just society would lead them to "choose principles of justice that adjudicate fairly between different sorts of people" (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.156). As stated, Rawls' work has been highly influential on liberal values in the modern era and can be seen in such initiatives as progressive taxation systems and provision of other public goods.

Negative rights inform the thinking of many who label their beliefs as **libertarian** in origin, and can often mean mistrust of state intervention, publicly funded services, and taxation. For negative rights philosophers, the concept of self-ownership is of paramount importance, and the freedom to choose how their interests are advanced should be theirs and theirs alone. Modern day negative rights arguments have largely emerged in opposition to Rawls' egalitarian liberalism posited in *A Theory of Justice*:

Indeed, the pre-eminent libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick wrote his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* as a direct rebuttal of the liberal egalitarian redistributive state defended by Rawls. The book was published in 1974, three years after Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, and set in motion a fierce debate between libertarians and egalitarians about the nature of freedom and justice which dominated political philosophy in the 1970s and early 1980s, and continues to this day (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.69).

For libertarians, the state's interference with citizens should be as minimal as possible, and they believe that individuals own themselves and thus the fruits of their own labours. Thus, among other things libertarians have an aversion to redistributive taxation, which they argue is akin to slavery as it effectively takes property from a citizen (their labour) without their permission. For libertarians the individual is solely responsible for their own bodily autonomy and perceive themselves in the context of property. Even though both groups approach the concept of social justice from a human rights perspective, the clashes between egalitarian liberals and libertarians have been a significant and heated feature of much of recent political and social justice debates.

An important tenet of liberal philosophy, and adhered to by both Kant and Rawls, is the idea that the state should be "neutral with respect to competing visions of the good life" (Sandel, 2009, p.183). From the point of view of Rawls' vision:

Rawlsian state neutrality requires that the state does not make judgements about the relative value of competing ways of life. Policy and laws, according to political liberalism, cannot be justified by appealing to any comprehensive conception of the good. So, the state may not fund particularly valuable ways of life, cultures, art forms, sports and so on, because they are valuable (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.238).

The idea here is that individuals within a liberal state should be free to choose their own version of what they think is the good life, unencumbered by a state telling them how to live their lives. Sher (1997) summarises three distinct justifications for neutrality that have been posited by liberals:

1. Respect for individual autonomy: societies should respect the choices and values of each individual, rather than imposing any worldview or choices on them.
2. Prophylactic neutrality: neutrality is a protection for citizens against policies that may harm them: "bureaucracies can be insensitive, arrogant, and self-perpetuating... and efforts to suppress the bad can lead to the suppression of the merely unpopular" (Sher, 1997, p.107).
3. Respect for different perceptions of the common good: The notion of the common good can be a nebulous concept, but it is generally summarised as "facilities—whether material, cultural or institutional—that the members of a community provide to all members in order to fulfil a relational obligation they all have to care for certain interests that they have in common" and also "best understood as part of an encompassing model for practical reasoning among the members of a political community" (Hussain, 2018).

As we can see, the three key justifications for a neutral state, and therefore consequently neutral professions within those states, are intertwined in calls for respect for individual choices, protecting against coercion and imposition of any one groups' view over any others, with the subsequent respect this entails for plurality in society.

Critiques of the notion of the neutral state have emerged from the perspective of the idea that a state can never be neutral, but that instead neutrality conceals the state bestowing on citizens the views of a power hegemonic group, in the case of western states, the propertied

white male. In her seminal work in feminist critique, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Catherine Mackinnon argues that:

The state is male in the feminist sense: the law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women. The liberal state coercively and authoritatively constitutes the social order in the interests of men as a gender—through its legitimating norms, forms, relation to society, and substantive policies. The state’s formal norms recapitulate the male point of view on the level of design. (MacKinnon 1989, pp. 162–3)

Iris Marion Young makes a similar critique of neutrality from the point of other groups in society:

[T]he ideal of impartiality in moral theory expresses a logic of identity that seeks to reduce differences to unity. The stances of detachment and dispassion that supposedly produce impartiality are attained only by abstracting from the particularities of situation, feeling, affiliation, and point of view... [It is] an impossible ideal, because the particularities of context cannot and should not be removed from moral reasoning. Finally, the ideal of impartiality serves ideological functions. It masks the ways in which the particular perspectives of dominant groups claim universality, and helps justify hierarchical decision-making structures (Young, 1990, p.97).

For Young, “the ideal of neutrality that we find in the work of Rawls and other political liberals fails to take account of the differences between people, and forces people to reason in ways which ignore their felt emotions and experiences (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.247). Young argues that this matters immensely because it means that anyone not part of the dominant group has their interests ignored or side-lined:

... the result of a policy of supposed neutrality is the perceptions of the dominant group are presented as universal and objective, and that subordinate groups are silenced and portrayed as inferior. Moreover, because the dominant standpoint is presented as a neutral standpoint, it cannot be challenged (Parvin and Chambers, 2012, p.248).

Sandel summarised the dilemma early in his career when he stated that the “issue is not whether individual or communal claims should carry greater weight but whether the principles of justice that govern the basic structure of society can be neutral with respect to the competing moral and religious convictions its citizens espouse” (Sandel, 1982, p.x). In a later reflection on the issue, Sandel suggests that liberal neutrality, “makes it difficult to cultivate the solidarity and sense of community on which democratic citizenship depends” (Sandel, 2009, p.267) since it simply does not advocate the taking of sides on matters of moral importance.

The critics of neutrality, then, argue that rather than ensuring a morally arbitrary state that ensures fairness, neutrality instead imposes on every group the dominant views of the powerful, and rather than increasing diversity of viewpoint and ideas of the good life,

actually reduces these concepts, since it limits discussion of important moral and ethical issues prevalent in society.

3.3. *Virtue*

In the modern world the term **virtue** has specific connotations, usually related to moral behaviours that are deemed either welcome or not. More commonly you might be familiar with virtue as a form of insult when a person is labelled as a *virtue signaller* by perhaps supporting a progressive cause on social media.

The truth is that the word had lost much of its original power, as from an ethical standpoint it incorporated a wide-ranging concept of human behaviours. As Sandel argues:

Modern theories of justice try to separate questions of fairness and rights from arguments about honor, virtue, and moral desert. They seek principles of justice that are neutral among ends, and enable people to choose and pursue their ends for themselves (Sandel, 2009, p.187)

For ancient philosophers like Aristotle the notion of a virtuous life informed the concept of living the good life and being a good person. The cultivation of virtue was the highest aspiration for a human being.

At the heart of the Aristotelian idea of virtue was **eudaimonia**, which can be translated in modern terms to be related to happiness, well-being, and flourishing (Crisp, 1998, 2011). Therefore, not happiness in a utilitarian sense as relating to pleasure/pain, but instead related to the cultivation of a life that one feels is well lived. As Benn has observed, “In contrast to Kantian and utilitarian approaches, Aristotle is not concerned to discover a supreme practical principle telling us what to do, or to derive any secondary moral rules from such a principle” (Benn, 1998, p.161). Instead, Aristotle’s ethical approach to virtue was about individuals developing specific **dispositions** to act in **virtuous** ways.

Aristotle considered individual dispositions to be relatable on a scale between excess and deficiency, with the ideal disposition being a mean for each category. For instance, when we consider the disposition of courage, Aristotle argued that it was the mean on a scale that had cowardice on one side, and excessive boldness on the other. The virtuous disposition, then, lay between two other dispositions, both believed by Aristotle to be vices: one of excess, and one of deficiency. Importantly, Aristotle also saw that the mean might adapt to specific situations. For instance, anger in some situations is warranted: when one witnesses injustice, perhaps. A virtuous person can respond to circumstances appropriately, demonstrating the appropriate disposition to meet the need of the situation.

Another key idea in virtue ethics relates to the promotion of civic values, that is, the values related to “people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities” (Crittenden and Levine, 2016). The alignment of the cultivation of virtue with the concept of being a good citizen is an important one to consider not only from classical philosophy but also when we consider contemporary policy issues.

This leads us to consider the topic of community: some of the key debates in political philosophy from the 1980s onwards have been related to community. Philosophers such as Michael Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer dubbed with the label of communitarians, argued that a societal focus on individual freedom and autonomy meant that citizens were viewed as atomised individuals, all involved in maximising their own position in opposition to others. The communitarians believed that this was a reductive way of looking at human beings and it ignored major influences such as family, community, and country that were a major part of someone's identity. Importantly for communitarian philosophers, the Aristotelian concept of virtue was inherent in a more community-focussed approach to social justice. The idea was that forming the good citizen to be a part of a strong and functioning community was a vital component of social justice.

MacIntyre's key "critique of liberalism derives from a judgment that the best type of human life, that in which the tradition of the virtues is most adequately embodied, is lived by those engaged in constructing and sustaining forms of community directed towards the shared achievement of those common goods without which the ultimate human good cannot be achieved" (MacIntyre, 1981, 2007: xiv-xv). This is a clear conflict with a rights-based approach that advocates no one single conception of the common good or morality that should predominate in society.

Sandel has similarly questioned whether a just society could emerge as a result of a focus on a neutral society that privileged the goals and aspirations of individuals over those of the community values that have emerged through a shared culture, narrative, and history:

At issue is not whether individual or communal claims should carry greater weight but whether the principles of justice that govern the basic structure of society can be neutral with respect to the competing moral and religious convictions its citizens espouse. The fundamental question, in other words, is whether the right is prior to the good (Sandel, 1998: p.x).

This communitarian approach began to have policy influence in the mid to late 90s in the UK, firstly with some elements of Blairism, but in the most recent past we have seen communitarian philosophy majorly influence both Conservative and Labour politics through the movements around The Big Society and Blue Labour. For instance, in a speech delivered in 2009, a year before he took power, David Cameron stated that, "because of its effect on personal and social responsibility, the recent growth of the state has promoted not social solidarity but selfishness and individualism" (Norman, 2010, p.1).

3.4. In Summary

An understanding of the key ethical theories that apply within discussions of social justice is immensely useful when we consider how to advocate for services. By understanding these differing standpoints, we can tap into the ethical values of people and organisations and make arguments to them based on those values, which are often not necessarily values that are shared by us. As discussed above in the article by Feinberg and Willer (2015) this can often be challenging for us, as we are often very strongly attached to our own values.

Recent history has seen social justice focus on welfare, and increasingly on freedom as the key arbiters of fairness, but the *virtue turn*, for want of a better phrase, is clearly evident both in public discourse and in policy circles:

These days, most of our arguments about justice are about how to distribute the fruits of prosperity, or the burdens of hard times, and how to define the basic rights of citizens. In these domains, considerations of welfare and freedom predominate. But arguments about the rights and wrongs of economic arrangements often lead us back to Aristotle's question of what people morally deserve, and why (Sandel, 2009, p.12).

Sandel asks, "If moral reflection consists in seeking a fit between the judgments we make and the principles we affirm, how can such reflection lead us to justice, or moral truth?" His answer is that "moral reflection is not a solitary pursuit but a public endeavor" (Sandel, 2009, p.28) and this is something that professions must keep in mind.

Advocacy is about engagement on matters of social justice with all interested stakeholders, and it is important for any profession to be aware of its own values, but also to be able to tap into the values of others and to try to influence them where they can be influenced, to achieve their strategic goals. This clearly entails professions also having a deep understanding of their values and oppositions to these values, in order to articulate them in an accessible way to others who may see the world differently.

4. Key Writers on Library Ethical Values and Professional Codes of Practice

In the first part of this section, we will summarise some of the key writings on library and information ethics and values, before focussing on the specific themes that predominate in the codes of ethics of the library profession.

There have been a good range of works related to library and information ethics over the years, indicating a strong focus on reflection on purpose for the profession. As well as providing an overview of some of the seminal texts that explore information and library ethics more broadly, we will also highlight several works that attempted to develop a philosophy of librarianship to guide practice.

4.1. Key writings on library and information ethics

We will consider several authors below who have attempted to provide a philosophy for librarianship, specifically Ranganathan, Foskett, Shera, Gorman, and Lankes. However, these are by no means the only authors who have considered library and information ethics.

For excellent explorations of the topic, the works of Robert Hauptman are integral, and his books, *Ethical challenges in librarianship* (1988) and *Ethics and librarianship* (2002) are worth seeking out for deep explorations of the themes present in this review. Alfino and Pierce's *Information ethics for librarians* (1997) is also an excellent exploration of the subject.

Case studies form a significant part of the literature on the subject, and White's *Ethical Dilemmas in Libraries* (1992) and Zipkowitz's *Professional Ethics in Librarianship* (1996), as well as Buchanan and Henderson's *Case Studies in Library and Information Science Ethics* (2009) and McMenemy, Poulter, and Burton's *A handbook of ethical practice: a practical guide to dealing with ethical issues in information and library work* (2014) provide a range of case studies that can be utilised for ethical reflection for those seeking such resources.

4.1.1. Ranganathan's Five Laws

One of the most well-known attempts at producing a philosophy of librarianship was Ranganathan's *Five Laws of Library Science*. Many librarians through the decades have found wisdom and guidance in the principles articulated by S.R. Ranganathan in 1931:

1. Books are for use.
2. For every reader, his or her book.
3. For every book, its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. A library is a growing organism (Ranganathan, 1931).

Although these principles were formulated with a historical focus on books, their ethical essence remains as relevant today as they were in 1931. While updating the terminology is necessary to encompass the broader range of resources in the 21st century, the ethical foundation provided by these principles remains intact.

Interpreted extensively over the years, Ranganathan's laws can be translated into a modern context by emphasizing the importance of encouraging all potential users to access

information, irrespective of their backgrounds. Libraries hold valuable resources for customers of diverse creeds and colours. The organization and storage of materials should prioritize user benefit over administrative convenience, and libraries should continue to expand their collections for public access. At the core of Ranganathan's laws lies the universal principle of equitable access to information for all.

Books are for use emphasises that the resources libraries hold are there to be utilised by the community, not as museum pieces, but as active resources, and that libraries should be proactive in communicating their value to users. **For every reader, his or her book** emphasises that communities consist of individuals who have a wide range of interests that libraries should seek to serve. This serves a mission of equity of access. **For every book, its reader** emphasises that resources are subjective, and just because one person in a community may disagree with what is in a book, there will be someone out there who wishes to hear the message. This value serves the concept of intellectual freedom. **Save the time of the reader** emphasises that librarians should make access to information as seamless and easy as possible. This value reflects a focus on openness of systems, and rational organisation of materials to facilitate access. **A library is a growing organism** emphasises that human knowledge is constantly evolving and that libraries should always seek to provide access to it.

4.1.2. Foskett's Creed

An influential contribution to reflection on the place of neutrality within the library profession was the work, *The Creed of a Librarian*, originally a speech delivered by D.J. Foskett to librarians in England, in 1962. For such a humble origin, it has had a significant impact on the notion of librarianship being viewed as a *neutral* profession. And, while it certainly offered this as a service paradigm, it also clarified this by stating that in being neutral, a librarian is able to better guide a library user towards ideas that may help them challenge their own views. In other words, neutrality is argued by Foskett to allow opportunities to engage citizens.

Foskett was concerned at the outset of the speech with what he saw as a limited engagement by the profession with discovering a philosophy of librarianship, suggesting that in the professional literature such discussions “consist of ponderous platitudes, pious hopes, complaints and criticisms, and, very occasionally, a quest for normative principles by whose light we can illuminate our practice” (Foskett, 1962, p. 1). Rather sharply he adds that, “Many librarians have maintained that we must not start dreaming about a professional philosophy, because it would interfere with our efficiency” (Foskett, 1962, p. 1). Such a *philistine* approach to the philosophy of the work undertaken is, Foskett believes, at odds with a true professional outlook:

one's attitude towards the body of knowledge and technique that constitute professional equipment is coloured by a sense of purpose; and that the putting in order of that knowledge, in the professional mind, is inspired and directed by the end for which it is acquired. If we say we have no philosophy, it may be that we deceive ourselves, that we are unable or unwilling to call our system of knowledge a philosophical system (Foskett, 1962, p. 2).

For Foskett “Librarianship is a social process inextricably bound up with the life of a community; a librarian is not some uninterested functionary standing guard over a collection of objects that might as well be bricks, or red and blue rags” (Foskett, 1962, p. 7).

The title of the speech/pamphlet is certainly guaranteed to raise some hackles as it is, in full, *The creed of a librarian: no politics, no religion, and no morals*. However, Foskett argued for a neutrality based on empathy for the worldviews of others but tempered with the importance of the knowledge and skills of the librarian helping guide the patron to alternative viewpoints: “if [the librarian] has no politics, no religion, and no morals, he can have all politics, all religions and all morals” (Foskett, 1962, p. 11).

Ultimately Foskett was writing at the time where liberal neutrality was a cornerstone of western states, and as such his speech reflects that. However, the nuance of *neutrality as empathy rather than neutrality as indifference* is absolutely essential to note. In opening up a citizen’s eyes to alternatives rather than merely not judging their personal choices, the librarian is better able to contribute to that individual citizen’s development, and that of wider society as a result.

4.1.3. Shera’s Sociological Foundations of Librarianship

Jesse Shera’s *Sociological Foundations of Librarianship* consisted of a series of lectures developed for the Third Sarada Ranganathan Lectures in Library and Information Science in the 1960s, and published as a book in 1970 (Shera, 1970).

Shera identified two threads that he believed a profession needs to be able to consider itself a profession, and these are (1) service to society, as in “a high sense of purpose and dedication” and (2) intellectual content, “a body of intellectual knowledge, a core of fundamental theory, as well as a corpus of practice” (Shera, 1970, p.29). It was in this second category that Shera detected “certain major problems” for librarianship, asking “What are the intellectual foundations of librarianship? What is its body of fundamental knowledge?” (1970, p.29). He suggested that “librarians have seldom asked themselves about the philosophy of librarianship” and in his lectures he attempted to address this issue (1970, p.29).

Shera saw the role of librarianship and the librarian as one of mediation:

What is it that librarians do that no one else does? I am convinced that the role of the librarian in society.... Is to maximise the utilisation of graphic records for the benefit of society. In other words, his function is to serve as the mediator between man and graphic records.... Whatever [form] contributes to the advancement of human knowledge” (Shera, 1970, p.30).

Shera utilises the triangle as an analogy for how he sees this mediation, with on one side of the triangle books, the other side people, and the base of the triangle *books and people* brought together.

An important point to note regarding Shera’s exploration of librarianship is his focus on both the individual *and* the community. We discussed in section three how philosophers more generally have contested the importance of the individual vs the community, and Shera is

engaging in this discussion at the time when it was becoming a significant issue in wider society. Importantly for Shera “the librarian works with the reader as an individual, and through the individual he reaches society” (Shera, 1970, p.32). The profession, then, “must be concerned with the impact of graphic records upon both the individual and society” (Shera, 1970, p.32). He argues that while there are similarities related to how individuals and the wider society relate to knowledge, there are also significant differences that cannot be lost when serving users, and that the profession “has in the past more or less overlooked” these (Shera, 1970, p.82). While the collective knowledge of humanity is essentially a store that belongs to everyone, and this is something the library profession must be mindful of, the relationship of the individual with knowledge “transcends the information store.” More artfully expressed, he states, “The individual can appreciate and comprehend the beauty and the texture of human life as it has been recorded in the transcript of human adventure in ways that society collectively can never understand” (Shera, 1970, p.83).

Shera also argues for the profession to embrace an understanding of the world as a series of cultures, not merely the one currently lived in:

I would emphasise *various* cultures because cultures are not alike in their utilisation of knowledge, and certainly we cannot understand our own culture if we regard it as an isolated phenomenon. We must look at our culture in terms of other cultures, other values, other forms of patterns of right and wrong, other moves.... And other ethical systems (Shera, 1970, p.89-90).

Overall, Shera’s philosophical approach was grounded in a sense of the importance of the recorded knowledge of humankind sitting alongside the fulfilment of the individual information needs of human beings in the present. This mix of service and stewardship is something that we will see occur again in our explorations of other philosophies of librarianship.

4.1.4. Gorman’s Enduring Values (2000, revisited in 2015)

Michael Gorman makes it clear in his first edition of *Our Enduring Values* that he is a great admirer of the work of Shera, discussed above. Gorman first presented his enduring values of librarianship in a book published in 2000, which he has revisited in a second edition in 2015. Originally, he identified eight themes which he refers to as the enduring values of librarianship:

1. Stewardship
2. Service
3. Intellectual Freedom
4. Equity of Access
5. Privacy
6. Literacy and Learning
7. Rationalism
8. Democracy (Gorman, 2000)

Stewardship: For Gorman this encompasses three key components. Firstly, it involves safeguarding knowledge to ensure its transmission to future generations. Secondly, it entails developing and implementing librarian training programs that uphold core values. Lastly, it centres on cultivating trust within the communities served (Gorman, 2000, p.58–66).

Service emphasises the commitment to creating user-friendly libraries, demonstrating courtesy and approachability, and evaluating all projects and plans with a focus on service. This value strongly aligns with Foskett's principles of supporting the disadvantaged, particularly evident in public libraries where the young and economically challenged senior citizens are the most prominent users – groups that hold less power within society (Gorman, 2000, p.82).

Intellectual freedom Gorman stresses the significance of intellectual freedom as defining a value that must be actively safeguarded, especially as laws may change over time, potentially restricting free speech on various subjects. Currently, sexual expression faces such limitations, while in the past, blasphemy or political expression experienced similar constraints. In advocating intellectual freedom, librarians should act impartially, disregarding personal opinions or pressure from parties seeking to restrict access to knowledge. However, Gorman acknowledges the ongoing challenge of censorship, particularly in smaller communities or school libraries where interest groups may exert influence. In such cases, he suggests pragmatic compromises instead of librarians leaving their positions, as long as they still work towards greater intellectual freedom and oppose censorship, especially when it arises in reaction to new technologies like internet filtering, which may be perceived as dangerous but are not entirely negative (Gorman, 2000, p.90).

Rationalism: Libraries, as products of the Enlightenment and rationalism stand for the belief that knowledge and information enhance humanity, and no barriers should obstruct access. Rational organisation of libraries through sensible bibliographic control and practical management structures, rather than unnecessary bureaucracies, is vital. Librarians should also foster rational thinking among users, teaching not only basic skills like resource retrieval but also critical thinking and resource evaluation to ensure appropriate selection of sources. Gorman also points out that his critique of irrationalism is not an attack on spirituality but a rejection of irrational beliefs in all their forms (Gorman, 2000, p.103).

Literacy and learning: this value sees Gorman expressing concern about the potential division of society into three tiers: a reading elite, the alliterate (who rely on television for information), and the illiterate. He views literacy as more than just reading but as the ability to express oneself fully and a means of empowerment, enabling individuals to become as knowledgeable as anyone else. Gorman warns against commercial interests dictating information access, emphasizing the social element present in many of these values, particularly equity of access. According to Gorman, social justice dictates that everyone, regardless of their background, deserves access to the recorded knowledge they seek, necessitating a continuous effort to remove barriers to information access (Gorman, 2000, p. 13 and p.133).

Privacy: Gorman acknowledges that technological advancements have inadvertently compromised privacy. He likens cyberspace to a medieval village, lacking privacy, and stresses the importance of librarians remaining vigilant against potential abuses of personal data from electronic resources to protect the legal right to privacy (Gorman, 2000, p.145).

Democracy: For Gorman, ultimately, democracy underlies all the values of librarianship, encompassing intellectual freedom, the common good, service to all, preservation of knowledge for future generations, free access to information, and non-discrimination. Gorman asserts that being a democrat is essential for librarians, as these values provide citizens with the information they need to participate in democratic processes (Gorman, 2000, p.160).

Gorman's values have been highly influential, although they could be recognised as being particularly Western in terms of their broader focus. A comparative study of 36 ethical codes from different countries in the world found that on average five of Gorman's values were present, but not all across countries. The values of service, privacy, equity of access, stewardship and intellectual freedom were largely universal in nature, however even within these some limitations were observed. For instance, some codes emphasised the power of the state over libraries, which is not something that fits the democracy value (Foster and McMenemy, 2012). It is fair to say, then, that there are a few values that the profession globally shares, but even within these, there are nuances.

4.1.5. Lankes' New Librarianship

Lankes' *New Librarianship* is ultimately a call for a profession in the modern era that is far more engaged in the lives of the communities they serve:

Too many librarians see our profession as a passive occupation: they stay safely in the background, ready to serve, but only within their libraries. That is wrong. Good librarians, the kind our communities need, see our profession as a chance not just to promote reading or inform their communities, but to make a positive difference there (Lankes, 2016. P.4).

At the heart of his new vision for libraries is a more **radical** approach to service, however Lankes makes it clear that the word radical is too often seen as a pejorative term, either as a call for an extreme left-wing viewpoint, or as a call to violent extremism. In the context of librarianship and citing examples of the profession defending citizens against surveillance and censorship, he instead interprets the term as meaning "implied action: whether political or institutional, or simply how you behave and comport yourself.... to seek action and change (Lankes, 2016, p.6).

Later in the work Lankes defines what he sees as the values of librarianship (Lankes, 2016, p.66):

- **Service:** In this value Lankes focuses on the strengthening of communities we service, focusing on providing what the community needs from a basis of understanding of their needs: "in enhancing or building our community members'

literacy, librarians are empowering them – giving them greater power to control their situations” (Lankes, 2016, p.67).

- **Learning:** In this value Lankes sees librarians as both professionals dedicated to constantly learning and supporting the same in their users. “Lifelong learning is a core value of librarians... We are constantly learning both about the subjects of interest to the communities we serve and also about librarianship itself” (Lankes, 2016, p.69).
- **Openness:** Here Lankes considers the value of openness in context of the diversity of the people and ideas we serve (“Differences in race, gender, social status, and educational background should be welcome and celebrated in the work of librarians”), as well as in ensuring transparency and access to materials for user (librarians always push for the maximum distribution and access to ... information” (Lankes, 2016, p.69-70).
- **Intellectual freedom and safety:** Lankes argues that “To be a professional is to make decisions, work through ambiguity, and balance competing priorities” (Lankes, 2016, p.70) and this involves prioritising rights that library users have to privacy and confidentiality when accessing resources: “there will be a time when one community member needs to engage with people and resources that might be frowned on by other community members. We protect our members’ rights to engage with these ideas” (Lankes, 2016, p.70-71).
- **Intellectual honesty:** For Lankes, being aware of and honest about your biases is a vital component of professionalism. “As a reflective professional, you must constantly seek out alternative views and try to understand how your viewpoint might affect the services you provide to others” (Lankes, 2016, p.71). Importantly he also reminds us that, “this doesn’t mean that you have to see all views as equally valid” (Lankes, 2016, p.71) and that a rational or scientific method is well known and understood to enable humans to discover truth. We do this cognisant of the realisation that “we must always provide a safe place to explore and discuss unsafe ideas” that may not lend themselves to a scientific approach (Lankes, 2016, p.72).

Lankes does not believe these values represent any single political viewpoint or vision of the good life, instead they represent an agreed approach to service that has filtered through generations of library professionals:

The values of librarians are not those of liberals or conservatives, Democrats or Republicans, they are the values of knowledge professionals seeking to improve our communities. And they represent the collective, agreed-upon biases of our profession (Lankes, 2016, p.66).

Lankes’ vision for a more active and engaged profession has certainly struck a chord in recent times, and his ideas have been presented in various countries as a new approach to practising librarianship in the modern era.

4.2. Universal Concerns in Library Ethical Codes

Ethical codes serve two distinct purposes that make them valuable. Firstly, they provide members of a professional association with a clear model of expected behaviour. Koehler and Pemberton highlight the significance of ethical codes, stating that they go beyond mere symbolism or abstract principles. Instead, these codes establish the boundaries of acceptable conduct and offer professionals a reference point to guide their actions. They also provide support and guidance in navigating conflicts between professional obligations and societal or corporate demands (Koehler and Pemberton, 2000, p.29).

Secondly, ethical codes effectively communicate a set of values to a broader audience, including employers and stakeholders. This aspect is particularly crucial in defining the professional standing of individuals. When the values and principles upheld by a profession are not explicitly stated, it becomes challenging for those outside the profession to fully comprehend the nature of their work.

Drawing from their examination of 37 ethical codes within the discipline, Koehler and Pemberton identified six key categories that these codes commonly addressed:

1. Client/patron rights and privileges
2. Selection issues
3. Professional practice
4. Access issues
5. Employer responsibility
6. Social issues (Koehler and Pemberton, 2000, p.34).

Ethical Codes and Codes of Practice provide professions with a benchmark for their professional standards. Jimerson summarises as such:

In defining the moral components of professional actions, a formal code of ethics may either prescribe or proscribe certain forms of behavior or define the outcomes desired by members of a profession as they carry out their responsibilities. These forms of ethical statements derive from deontological theory and teleological theory (Jimerson, 2013, p.23).

Jimerson goes on to state that the deontological (or duty based) element relates to the ethics of the action itself, and the teleological (purpose-based) theory relates to the impact of the action on wider society from a benefit perspective. This reflects the notion that professions are mindful not only of the behaviour of the members of that profession, but also the impact their actions may have on the communities they serve.

It is important to note that, “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” (Buchanan and Henderson, 2009 p.13).

4.3. CILIP’s Ethical Framework

It is fair to say that despite the profession’s undoubted commitment to service and ethical practice, and despite the presentations of a philosophy of librarianship seen in the wider

literature from Ranganathan, Foskett, and Shera from the 1930s to the 1970s, and the adoption of a code of ethics by the American Library Association in 1938, that librarianship was late to adopt an ethical framework in the United Kingdom. The precursor to CILIP, The Library Association, adopted its first code of ethics in 1983, which was 106 years after the organisation was formed.

CILIP's revised Ethical Framework was launched in 2018 and is the current code that applies for all CILIP members. The Framework is built around seven ethical principles, which are:

1. Human rights, equalities and diversity, and the equitable treatment of users and colleagues
2. The public benefit and the advancement of the wider good of our profession to society
3. Preservation and continuity of access to knowledge
4. Intellectual freedom, including freedom from censorship.
5. Impartiality and the avoidance of inappropriate bias
6. The confidentiality of information provided by clients or users and the right of all individuals to privacy.
7. The development of information skills and information literacy

The principles are presented in a useful infographic that simplifies the message but continues to get the main themes across:



Figure 1 - CILIP'S 7 Ethical principles – Infographic
(www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/policy/new_ethical_framework/ethical-principles-infograph.png)

As principles these seem straightforward, however the set of clarifying notes that accompanies them goes into more detail as to how we can interpret each of the principles in a deeper way (CILIP, 2022).

Human rights, equalities, and diversity: The notes state that, “Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on those differences. This is strongly linked with promoting human rights and freedoms, based on principles such as dignity and respect”. The notes remind the reader that as well as being an ethical principle, there are legal elements to rights and equalities too, with the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and *Equality Act 2010* both

cited as providing guidance for practice. In terms of what it means for practice, the notes remind library and information professionals that the principle supports standing for diversity and challenging prejudice, as well as promoting and defending diversity across the workforce.

Public benefit: the notes remind readers that public benefit is an important element of the Royal Charter that CILIP has received, its specific focus as such “to work for the benefit of the public to promote education and knowledge through the establishment and development of libraries and information services and to advance information science.” The notes further emphasise that the principle relates to the “good or well-being of society as a whole” and the specific public benefits identified for the library and information professions are, “health and wellbeing, literacy levels, education and job prospects, social inclusion and cohesion and economic prosperity.”

Preservation: the notes clarify that preservation is an ethical issue because underpinning it is the decisions that need to be made around what materials are kept for posterity, and why, as well as how these are stored and handled. In terms of access, the ethical element relates to the opportunity citizens have to utilise the materials. The notes remind us that, “the core mission of library and information professionals is to ensure access to information for all; therefore due regard should also be given to ensuring continuity of access to preserved materials.”

Intellectual freedom: The notes begin by some definitions to clarify terms, defining intellectual freedom as, “the right to access and share information, to intellectual activity and creativity, to expression and debate” and censorship as “the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons find objectionable or dangerous on political, religious or moral grounds.” The notes further clarify that in terms of censoring materials, materials “should not be restricted on any grounds except that of the law” and that “The legal basis of any restriction should always be stated.”

Impartiality: Again, the notes begin by clarifying terms, firstly that impartiality, is “unbiased, equal treatment of others” and inappropriate bias are, “Value judgments that are not suitable or proper in the circumstances.” The importance of reinforcing these themes within professional practice is emphasised.

Confidentiality: Is defined in the notes as the “state of keeping or being kept secret or private” and the legal basis of this is reinforced with reference to Article 4 (11) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. The reader is guided to the Information Commissioners Office for further clarification on these issues.

Information skills and information literacy: The importance of being able to find and utilise information well is reinforced in this principle, emphasising the “ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use.” The notes further clarify that the “development of information skills and information literacy are central for information professionals as we create, curate and enable the use of diverse types of information in an ethical manner, and we have a crucial role in advocating for these skills.” The range of contexts in which information literacy is needed are listed, which are:

- Education
- The Workplace
- Health
- Citizenship
- Everyday life.

The Ethical Framework and clarifying notes provide a useful toolkit for practising library and information professionals, and strongly reinforce some of the key ethical debates discussed in the summaries of the literature above.

Of crucial concern here is how to balance the rights of different people from the point of view of an adherence to human rights, equality, and diversity versus one of the key areas where this can often be challenging to uphold, intellectual freedom. The tensions inherent in this cannot always be predicted in advance, of course, but it is extremely important to acknowledge that a stance whereby materials should not be restricted other than on the basis of law may well clash when legally available materials may offend specific individuals or groups. Nor is this, is it important to note, a new dilemma for libraries. In 1978 the then Library Association published a statement reflecting that:

Librarians recognize the need for an appropriate balance to be maintained within the materials which they make available to reflect differing extremes or shades of opinion on matters which might be thought to be contentious.... In providing reasonable access to a representative range of published material, a librarian is required to take note of the needs and interests of the public as a whole (Cited in Malley, 1990, p.5).

The challenges faced in modern librarianship from so-called *culture wars* are not new, and the professional dilemmas they present have been ruminated on by librarians for generations before the current generation faced them. The nuances of how we face them may well change based on how society perceives what is at stake, but the ethical questions that are extant remain the same:

- What does equity of access to information actually mean?
- How can libraries facilitate this?
- How can libraries provide a service to a diverse population of peoples with differing social, religious, and cultural viewpoints?
- How can librarians resolve tensions when offence is taken at resources that may be legally acceptable but culturally insensitive?
- How can the profession communicate this complexity in its framework of ethics both for the profession itself, and arguably just as importantly, the populations we serve?

As Gorman discusses:

Libraries, library services of all kinds, and librarianship are inextricably of the world and cannot exist without context. They are part of, and affected for good and ill, by the societies they serve, the communities in which they live, the countries in which they exist, and the wider world (Gorman, 2015, p.2).

Therefore, librarians will always get caught up in wider societal panics, culture wars, and the like; it is how they respond to them both individually and collectively that determines whether or not professional values are being maintained. And consequently, if it is deemed professional values need to be amended or adjusted for new times, this is something that should be debated as a collective endeavour, in the gaze of public scrutiny, and even more importantly, communicated clearly and concretely to the people served by libraries.

4.4. In Summary

As we can see there has been a wide range of writing on library and information ethics, and CILIP members have an ethical framework that is designed to guide their own ethical deliberations and practice. There is a common set of themes that emerge from the literature and that can be viewed in the Ethical Framework itself: equity of access, intellectual freedom, public benefit, service, and supporting equality and diversity. These themes are manifested in the literature, the Ethical Framework, and as we will see in the next section, the day-to-day ethical dilemmas of modern librarianship.

5. Contemporary Ethical Concerns in Library and Information Work

In this section of the review, we focus on some of the contemporary concerns of library and information professionals related to ethics and values. The discussions above provided the wider theoretical context, and we now consider how these theories and perspectives apply within libraries.

Discussion within the profession of the values that underpin it are vital, especially in a world where these values are being contested in real time and members of the profession need to be able to respond articulately and ethically to these challenges. This also helps the profession discover where any fault lines or misunderstandings might exist and understand the stances of alternative viewpoints that may need to be considered or countered. As Berg and Jacobs state, “Conversations about the values that provide the framework for librarian’s work as individuals, as institutions, and as a profession are critical to highlight both our points of convergence and points of divergence” (Berg and Jacobs, 2016, p.462). As Sandel has argued more broadly, “moral reflection is not a solitary pursuit but a public endeavor” (Sandel, 2009, p.28). The themes discussed in this section are:

- Freedom of access to information and freedom of expression
- Privacy
- Gatekeeping and intellectual property
- Ethics of classification and organisation
- Wider societal concerns of communities such as equality and diversity, wellbeing, and sustainability

5.1. Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression

Freedom of access to information and freedom of expression are very closely aligned rights. Indeed, the International Federation of Library Associations special interest group, FAIFE, represents both rights, stating that the “Advisory Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) is at the heart of IFLA’s efforts to promote intellectual freedom and achieve the vital mission of supporting libraries in their role as gateways to knowledge and ideas.” It is logical, then, that the ability to seek out information on a topic of interest is a major component of a citizen’s intellectual freedom. As Warburton argues, “All human beings have an interest in being allowed to express themselves and in having the opportunity to hear, read, and see other people’s free expression (Warburton, 2009, p.2). Freedom of expression often becomes a catch-all umbrella phrase for topics like free speech, as well as the right to seek out the ideas of others, as well as concerns around self-censorship, whereby an individual may seek to keep quiet on a topic or not seek out a book or another form of information for fear of being judged, or criticised, or worse.

5.1.1. Debates in freedom of access to information and freedom of expression

Equity of access to information thus becomes an important foundation stone for freedom of expression. As one of the main areas of potential controversy for libraries, we will explore this value in detail.

Gorman defines equity of access in the following way:

Equity of access...means that everyone deserves and should be given the recorded knowledge and information she wants, no matter who she is and no matter in what format that knowledge and information is contained. It means that one should be able to have access (either to a library building or from a remote location), that library services should assist in the optimal use of library resources, and that those resources should be relevant and worthwhile (Gorman, 2000. p.133).

It is incumbent on libraries to make access to information resources as seamless as possible, and to not restrict access to information unless compelled to do so for legal purposes. As CILIP state in their notes explaining the ethical framework, access to information via libraries "should not be restricted on any grounds but the law and the legal basis of any restriction should always be stated" (CILIP, 2022).

As stated, the notion of freedom of expression encompasses several important ideas. Forming opinions, expressing opinions, and being able to access information that helps make you informed are inherently related concepts. The arguments put forward to defend and protect freedom of expression are usually presented as a counter to those who wish to restrict it for various reasons. Barendt (2006) defines some core defences frequently used to justify the protection of free speech. These defences can be summarized as follows:

- Argument from truth
- Argument from autonomy
- Argument from democracy

The *argument from truth* is closely associated with John Stuart Mill's approach to individual freedom in *On Liberty* (1869). Campbell summarises the argument from truth as such: "we cannot deny currency to any expression of opinion without reducing the efficiency of the knowledge market" (Campbell, 2006, p.143). Campbell also suggests that the argument from truth can be classified as a consequentialist justification for freedom of speech, focusing on societal benefits rather than individual rights (Campbell, 2006, p.143). However, Barendt argues that truth can be seen as "an autonomous and fundamental good" in itself (Barendt, 2006, p.7).

According to Mill, truth is "justified belief," and this justification is only valid when ideas and viewpoints have been thoroughly tested through argument and debate within society. Suppressing freedom of expression on a topic assumes the falsehood of an opinion before it is even heard, which is an epistemological mistake (Campbell, 2006, p.143). Therefore, all perspectives, even false ones, should be allowed as they contribute to the quest for truth. Mill argues that no one has the authority to decide for all mankind and exclude others from judging their views (Mill, 1869, p.11-12). For Mill, even if we are certain of the error of an expressed viewpoint, stifling it would still be an evil (Mill, 1869, p.11).

The *argument from autonomy* is based on the concept that freedom of expression is a fundamental right for individuals to achieve their potential as human beings. It is a prominent justification of free speech from a liberal and freedom standpoint, valuing speech

for its own sake rather than its indirect results (Campbell, 2006, p.147). However, this justification may be seen as contradictory to consequentialist arguments, as it does not consider the impact of free speech on wider society.

Barendt suggests that restrictions on speech can inhibit our personal growth as human beings. This justification also intersects with other fundamental human rights, such as the rights to freedom of religion, thought, and conscience (Barendt, 2006, p.13). However, the argument from autonomy can lead to clashes between one person's right to freedom of speech and another's right not to be insulted or defamed.

The *argument from democracy* is built on the notion that in a democratic state, access to information and the ability seek out opinions and express opinions is crucial in being able to hold governments to account: "In a democracy voters have an interest in hearing and contesting a wide range of opinions and in having access to facts and interpretations, as well as contrasting views, even when they believe that the expressed views are politically, morally, or personally offensive" (Warburton, 2009, p.3).

More contemporary concerns suggest that the autonomy of the individual can be incumbent on her cultural or religious group background being respected, even to the extent that access to any expressions against said background should be limited in the public sphere. This applies to materials that may be said to demean the group in question, through blasphemy, satire, or at the extreme end, instances of bigotry or hate speech (McKinnon, 2006). Cohen has argued that this: "replaced Mill's harm principle with an 'offence principle', which held that societies are allowed to punish speech that people find exceptionally offensive" (Cohen, 2012, p.229). Such concerns can lead to calls for free expression and access to ideas to be limited or restricted, to prevent offence. There is a potential clash, then, within society between traditional liberal conceptions of freedom of expression and those that espouse greater tolerance and respect for cultural differences.

There are other important considerations related to freedom of expression that must also be borne in mind:

... liberty should not be confused with licence. Complete freedom of speech would permit freedom to slander, freedom to engage in false and highly misleading advertising, freedom to publish sexual material about children, freedom to reveal state secrets, and so on (Warburton, 2009, p.7-8).

Unrestricted free speech can be for a form of harm, such as child pornography or hate speech (Levin, 2010). Intellectual freedom can be one of the most challenging rights to uphold in terms of advocacy for libraries, since freedom of expression can also entail people wishing to express opinions that many in society may find offensive, and may seek to access such views via library resources.

One approach of the kind suggested by Warburton is popular: "Commitment to free speech involves protecting the speech that you don't want to hear as well as the speech that you do (Warburton, 2009, p.1). Nevertheless, there are limits placed on freedom of expression, and

where these limits sit can be one of the most contested aspects of the human right. Thus, we can likely all agree with Warburton that:

There are foreseeable and dangerous consequences of many types of expression. There are cases where other factors may be more important than free speech. Where national security is seriously threatened, for example, or where there is a risk of serious harm to children, many people are prepared to restrict freedom of speech to some degree for the sake of other ends (Warburton, 2009, p.1).

In terms of censoring more broadly, Warburton acknowledges the challenges:

deciding precisely where to draw these limits is no easy task. It means deciding when some competing value has priority over [intellectual] freedom (Warburton, 2009, p.1).

Another specific example from libraries also happens to be a case that sparked a significant body of work from one of the pioneers of writing in information ethics. Robert Hauptman conducted an experiment in 1975 when he visited 13 libraries and requested from the reference librarian information on how to create a bomb capable of destroying a suburban home, and all 13 libraries responded with the information requested. Not by accident did Hauptman title the article discussing his small experiment, “Professionalism or Culpability?” (Hauptman, 1976).

Hauptman acknowledged later that information ethics was “dynamic and complex” but that the ethical issues faced could be straightforwardly “reduced to two diametrically opposed positions” (Hauptman, 1988, p.3). The first is that the information professional should never allow their personal beliefs to interfere with their responsibilities in information provision. The second is that in providing access to information we have an ethical responsibility to ensure that the information provided is not in any way dangerous to the individual or to society.

5.1.2. Exploring Selection and Censorship in Libraries – Asheim revisited

Censorship is clearly a word that is often perceived pejoratively in many peoples’ minds, as it relates to restricting access to something someone else does not want others to see. The American Library Association define censorship as:

Limiting or removing access to words, images, or ideas. The decision to restrict or deny access is made by a governing authority. This could be a person, group, or organization/business.

Writing over 30 years ago, Malley suggested that “Censorship is a recurring problem in libraries, and there is no issue in librarianship which is more likely to bring libraries on to the pages of the Press, frequently in a damaging and trivial representation of the library profession” (Malley, 1990, p.1). While acknowledging press obsessions with such stories as largely related to sensationalism and titillation, it is also not difficult to agree with him when he concludes that, “more can be done and should be done to avoid the negative image of the profession that emerges with each story” (Malley, 1990, p.1).

It would also seem that the *culture wars* have increased that need quite significantly. At the time of writing this review an article appeared in *The Telegraph* highlighting what the author of the piece perceived to be restrictions on access in some libraries to materials that were deemed to be offensive to LGBTIQ+ library users, despite their legality and potential popularity within the wider community (Simpson, 2023). It is important for librarians to be aware, therefore, that selection and censorship issues around contested resources is not straightforward and may pose ethical challenges, and that any guidance followed must be based on core ethical values that can stand up to scrutiny. When advice from parties outside of the profession or who approach subjects from a specific political stance is received by libraries, it must be weighed against the core values of the profession before being implemented.

A seminal article on **censorship versus selection** was published in 1953 by Lester Asheim, and even to this day it provides pause for thought as to regards the role of the librarian in such matters.

The real question of censorship versus selection arises when the librarian, exercising his own judgment, decides against a book which has every legal right to representation on his shelves. In other words, we should not have been concerned with the librarian who refused to buy *Ulysses* for his library before 1933 – but we do have an interest in his refusal after the courts cleared it for general circulation in the United States (Asheim, 1953).

Asheim argues that:

There is a very real danger, almost impossible to combat, that a point of view with which the reader is in agreement will seem to be more sincerely held than one with which he disagrees. When a book attacks a basic belief or a way of life to which we are emotionally attached, its purpose will seem to us to be vicious rather than constructive; dangerous rather than valuable; deserving of suppression rather than of widespread dissemination (Asheim, 1953).

Summarising Asheim more succinctly, Jones suggests that:

- The selector Views the work in its entirety and is able to assess the appropriateness of the inclusion of each of its elements within the context of the entire work. The selector seeks to expand the intellectual possibilities for the users of the library. The censor always seeks to limit them.
- The selector expresses implicit belief in the intelligence of the library's clientele and in its potential for growth through the experiences provided by library materials. The censor is fearful that readers lack intelligence, judgment, and virtue.
- The censor is elitist; the selector knows that the provision of many intellectual options is the only appropriate behavior in a democratic environment (Jones, 1983, p.117)

We must always be careful not to cross the line between selector and censor, and the line is not always easy to gauge, especially when multiple groups in society are vying for libraries to

represent *their* values and *exclude* the values of those they oppose. Gorman summarises such approaches:

It is the censors who insist on imposing their values, not the believers in intellectual freedom. The distinction lies right there—the point at which beliefs become rancid is when they are imposed on others, something common to fundamentalists of all stripes (Gorman, 2015, p.5).

Recent times in libraries have seen significant calls to censor from the wider community, with particular contemporary bones of contention related to the provision of Drag Queen Story Hours in libraries in both the USA and the UK. In [Section Six](#) we provide an exercise in how to address such objections by reflecting on how the multiple range of audiences would perceive the events, and how the library professional can engage with them.

5.1.3. Contesting Neutrality

It has been argued that neutrality “has become a dirty word for many librarians committed to social justice” (Wenzler, 2018, p.55). The term “post-neutrality librarianship” has been used to label the period we are now in (Mathiasson and Jochumsen, 2022), and McMenemy among others has reflected on the increasing challenge to neutrality as an ethical stance for the profession and considers what might replace it in the future in terms of a values, suggesting a communitarian/virtue approach may be a good fit (McMenemy, 2021).

Nevertheless, neutrality remains a powerful tool if adapted to suit the circumstances. This potentially reflects what Alfino and Pierce present when they argue that while neutrality may require “excluding one’s personal convictions” it does not mean “excluding one’s knowledge, even though one hopes that there is a substantial overlap between the two” (Alfino & Pierce, 1997, p. 131). Scott and Saunders identified a similar picture in their research. They found that within the public library sector in the USA:

conceptualizations of neutrality are more nuanced and can include non-partisanship or abstaining from giving opinions on political figures and striving for a balanced collection representing a diversity of viewpoints... While most librarians seem to believe that they should not take sides or express opinions with regard to political figures, they seem more comfortable with taking positions on scientific issues such as climate change, or social issues such as police brutality and hate groups in their meeting spaces” (Scott & Saunders, 2021, p. 164).

Nevertheless, there is a strong argument from both within the profession and without that we are either in, or approaching, a post-neutrality world with regards to ethics, and if so, we must expend much more effort in shaping what that world will look like.

There is arguably a significant vacuum on this debate at the moment that is troubling, as it happens in pockets of the profession, but it is not yet a mainstream and all-encompassing conversation that is engaging the entire profession, and even more importantly our engagement with users. Such a fundamental change to the ethical values of a profession where certain things that are taken as absolutes within the wider public are to be fundamentally altered, cannot be a conversation that happens solely in small pockets of

social media, or library conferences, or professional journals. Subsequent changes in policy that are only revealed when a newspaper decides to explore them are significant potential pitfalls for library advocacy, and thus need to be widely understood, articulated, and planned if they are to be able to be defended by the profession as a whole.

5.2. Rights to Privacy

Wacks (2010) suggests that privacy encompasses the desire to have personal space, where we can freely express ourselves without the intrusion of others. As such it plays a crucial role in individual autonomy.

Within the private sphere, we interact with others and engage in activities that shape our humanity, assuming that no one is observing. Privacy relates to our words, actions, and even emotions. If we cannot trust that we are in a private setting, our autonomy may be compromised, and we might withhold essential aspects of ourselves. As Griffin (2008) observes, open and honest communication requires the shield of privacy, protection from prying eyes, eavesdropping, surveillance, and interference with personal correspondence. Without the right to privacy, we cannot fully be ourselves.

However, privacy can present challenges to national security. When an individual seeks to commit a crime or engage in terrorist activities, privacy may afford them greater opportunities to do so. This tension between the right to privacy and the legitimate interests of others and the state forms a central dilemma.

It is important to recognize that privacy, like many of the rights we uphold in library services, is **qualified** by other interests. This notion is reasonable because unrestricted privacy could potentially enable individuals to engage in activities that harm the interests of others or society as a whole.

5.2.1. Privacy and library services

As a right, privacy is linked closely to freedom of access to information, and freedom of expression. The freedom to seek out ideas is of vital importance in the development of a human being, and there may well be a chilling effect if individuals are not free to seek out information or read certain books if they are conscious that others may be aware of what they are reading. An example of this occurred in a late 2015 controversy, where a Japanese newspaper, *Kobe Shimbun*, published some of the childhood library borrowing records for acclaimed author Haruki Murakami from his time at school. The records gave an insight into the reading undertaken by the young Murakami, and the argument posited by the newspaper was that given he was such a significant cultural figure, the knowledge of what he read was of cultural importance, and therefore public interest.

The library profession reacted negatively to the disclosure, with Japan Library Association member Yasuhiro Nishigochi quoted as saying, "It is not right if people cannot use a library free from anxiety" (Schaub, 2015). The case is very notable as it hits a professional nerve for librarians, whereby the importance of the privacy of the reading habits of patrons is often classed as sacrosanct. The defence provided by the newspaper could be argued as being valid from the standpoint of a greater good: arguably knowledge of the kind of reading that formed a cultural icon's literary education allowing society to understand what some of his

influences may have been. However, from a privacy point of view, what right do we have to know what another person has read when they were a teenager, whether literary icon or ordinary citizen? As we go through life, we may read something that could be regarded as distasteful to gain an insight into a viewpoint; we may read something that forms our opinions at a point in time, but completely change our view on it when we read something else. Would we read such materials if we knew that the reading of it would be revealed to the public?

The privacy to seek out knowledge is a crucial element in human development and from that point of view the release of library records, in this case by a volunteer working in the school library, risks breaching a crucial trust between library and patron that would be difficult to repair once lost.

Linked to the policy of protecting borrowing records, we can also consider the importance of patron confidentiality in a more general sense, even when doing so may present a significant challenge. Several cases can be cited that place librarians in public libraries in a gatekeeper position with regards the privacy of patrons who are suspected of crimes, or whose library borrowing data was of interest to authorities. In two cases from the United States, the public library was called on to provide information on patron usage from the point of view of a criminal investigation.

In the BTK killer case, a suspect in a serial murder case was a library patron, and there was evidence he had used library computers to type letters to the police taunting them about his activities. In the Brooke Bennet case law enforcement officials investigating the disappearance of a local girl suspected she had been using social media accounts in the local public library to communicate with an abductor, and with time of the essence requested that the librarian on duty allow them to seize five public access computers without a warrant. The librarian refused, asking that they obtain a warrant first. It was a brave decision that respected fundamental ethics, but one that could have caused the librarian in question some criticism from those who placed the investigation of a missing child over the right to patron privacy in a library.

Ethical dilemmas are often of little concern to us until something serious happens in our practice: the challenges faced by the librarians in the BTK killer and Brooke Bennet cases illustrate that doing the right thing from an ethical point of view may not always be an easy decision to make, as others may well perceive a decision as wrong from their ethical frame. Both the BTK killer case and the Brooke Bennet case highlight how challenging it can sometimes be to respect fundamental rights from a professional ethics perspective while the gaze of the law and the wider community may be on you for doing so. As stated by Deborah-Caldwell-Stone in the Brooke Bennet case, "It's one of the most difficult situations a library can face" (NBC News, 2008).

It must always be remembered, however, that as a qualified right there are mechanisms to ensure that privacy can be invaded legally and that this must be the default for us when we endeavour to do so. No one is likely to suggest that privacy is a right that must never be

allowed to be interfered with, but the limits of where and when it should be so are crucial to understanding and debate.

5.3. Gatekeeping and Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual property rights present a fundamental challenge to access to information since the right to protect intellectual property on the part of rightsholders can lead to restrictions on access due to pricing and licensing. As such, intellectual property regimes present challenges to the library profession based on both legal and moral grounds.

Bonadio and O’Connell argue that restrictive intellectual property regimes, “contribute to creating an environment where more and more people are led to hate IP and view it as a protectionist regime which discourages creativity in innovation and ends up safeguarding the owners of monopolistic rights which restrict trade, competition and people’s freedoms” (Bonadio and O’Connell, 2022, p.1). Libraries are essentially caught within this dilemma as facilitators of access to users, while at the same time requiring engagement and good relationships with publishers and electronic resource vendors. This is a tension that entails the balancing of essentially competing rights.

5.3.1. Background to intellectual property

Intellectual property law emerged in the early 18th century as an arguably necessary state intervention to prevent the widespread copying of books that was emerging as a result of ever-cheaper printing. The *Statute of Anne* of 1709 is widely recognised as the first intellectual property law, and it was: “*An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned.*” The Statute created legal protection of 21 years for existing books, and 14 years for new books. Copyright law in the UK has been updated on several occasions, and the most recent act in place remains the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988*, although this itself has been updated several times to clarify aspects of the law.

As Frosio notes, the *Statute of Anne* set in place some fundamentals related to intellectual property law, (1) that rights to protection should be limited in terms of time, and (2) that once protection has expired that the public should be able to utilise the content freely, otherwise known as the concept of public domain (Frosio, in Bonadio and O’Connell, 2022, p.10).

Intellectual property law has three main functions that are usually understood:

1. To offer protection to the creator of a work for their creation: to allow the creator of a work to challenge misuse or abuse of their intellectual creation through the courts.
2. To encourage new work: to ensure that people were incentivised to create new works due to the protections the law provided, and conversely not disincentivised because their work could be copied with no recourse.
3. To provide creator with recompense for work: linked to both above functions, that the creator can earn financial rewards for their intellectual creation.

Intellectual property rights are usually categorised into **moral rights**, related to the intellectual aspect of the creation and the right of the creator to challenge derogatory

treatment and the like, and **economic rights** which relate to the financial aspects of the creation. Economic rights are usually **waived** by a creator; for instance, an author waives the economic rights of a creation to their publisher when writing a book, while moral rights are always retained by the creator and cannot be waived.

As stated above, the tensions that exist within intellectual property rights relate to their clash with rights to access information. Wheeldon discusses what he calls the *contested narrative of copyright*, which on one side as multi-faceted and incorporating emphasis on everything from entitlement to rights, to political goal, to differences in emphasis between protagonists and antagonists involved. On the one side we have what he dubs the **wiki discourse**, which emphasises the view that intellectual property right as one that is privilege bestowed by the state, one that ignores that knowledge is built on the works of those who have come before, and that should be about unlocking human creativity for the benefit of wider society. The alternative to this is what Wheeldon dubs the **prevailing discourse** which sees intellectual property as a natural right, with intellectual property have the same status as physical property, based on economic benefits for individuals and companies (Wheeldon, 2014).

The tensions, then, between the benefits intellectual property protection brings to creators and companies who publish the creations, and citizens and organisations like libraries who wish to make access as freely available as possible is an ongoing challenge.

5.3.2. Electronic materials – the challenges

One of the most challenging aspects of delivering modern library services is the increasing costs of delivering digital materials. In traditional libraries before the rise of technology it was straightforward to procure stock, as a library would buy the appropriate number of books needed to serve the community. The rise in electronic books, however, has meant that the publishers have complete control of the materials and are able to charge significant sums to libraries for such provision.

In addition to costs, there are also other fundamental differences in how libraries provide access to information for users in the digital age. In an analogue world, the library purchases a physical copy of a book or resource, and it is usable by one person at a time, but ultimately the physical copy is owned by the library. In the digital world, access to resources is usually provided by a vendor of digital materials to the library, and the users access the materials via this third-party vendor's website or app. Access is usually based on a license provided by the third-party vendor to the library, which may allow multiple users to access the resource at any one time, but also place restrictions on this access, such as limits on amount of the material that can be downloaded and/or copied. In essence, the app or website of the third-party vendor limits and controls the experience of the user.

The costs of electronic resources are often more expensive than single physical copies too, since the argument is that electronic resources are value-added, usually 24/7 access, including access remotely from home and the like. Clearly such costs in terms of licensing and infrastructure can have a significant impact on libraries attempting to maximise access for users.

The #ebookSOS campaign (<https://academicebookinvestigation.org/>) has been immensely successful in raising the issue of the fees charged by some publishers for providing access to their electronic resources. A campaign initiated by librarians in the UK, it has sought to make the politicians and the public aware of just how expensive providing such access has become for libraries, especially in the university sector, where the pressure of increasing student numbers and meeting their needs necessitates the usage of electronic resources much more than in some other sectors.

The crisis in the funding of electronic resources highlights the clash between library as a gatekeeper and the intellectual property rights of publishers. On one hand publishers will argue that they are fairly seeking to maximise their income from their intellectual property, while librarians will argue that libraries are being priced out of providing access to users. One of the many excellent advocacy tools used by the #ebookSOS campaign is a spreadsheet highlighting how much individual titles are priced for electronic access. Just selecting one example of an education textbook, which is priced at £480 for a single user licence for the electronic book, meaning only one borrower can read the title at any one time. The same book is available on Amazon for £28.99 in paperback format, and £23.68 in Amazon's own electronic book format, Kindle. Such differentials in price are clearly difficult to justify.

As discussed earlier, the clash between intellectual property rights and access to information has been an issue for society since the first copyright laws were introduced in the UK in the 17th century. Introduced to stop widespread copying of material that was costing publishers and authors, the laws can obviously be used to limit access to information, and in the electronic domain where access entails utilising a proprietary system to read materials, the gatekeeping we increasingly see before we can access information is a constant concern for libraries and society. You can support the #ebookSOS campaign by visiting their site and following their work on social media.

In closing, there are perhaps also some more fundamental concerns related to how the new relationships between electronic vendors, libraries, and communities have been impacted by the rise of e-resources. Gorman quotes librarian Adam Feldman who when reflecting on these transformations stated that: "the complex webs of intellectual property law and vendor contracts guarantee that this "e-branch" is a pale shadow of the spectrum of human publishing represented by a real-life library curated by librarians who know their communities" (Gorman, 2015, p.48). Notwithstanding the real issues related to funding of electronic resources in libraries, the fundamental shift in relationships between services and users need to be more fully explored, and issues such as ownership, access, and inclusion all reinforce the competing rights elements that interact. Perhaps unresolvable clashes of rights are at play, the right to maximise benefits from intellectual property on one hand versus the right to access information and the benefits that entail from that both for wider society and individuals, are essentially the key clashes at play.

However, it is important to reflect on the point that intellectual property law, "was crafted out of broad civic purposes as well as strong anti-monopolistic sentiments" (Frosio, in Bonadio and O'Connell, 2022, p.10) and a rediscovery of this ethos may well be the solution to some of the challenges we currently face.

5.4. Ethics of Classification and Organisation

The importance of cataloguing and classifying materials in libraries cannot be over-stated, even though it may be one of those areas both library workers and the general public can often take for granted. Essentially finding aids, and ways of organising resources together for easier access, cataloguing and classification has been argued to be one of “the more cerebral areas of librarianship” (Gorman, 2015, p.24). Essentially in organising materials for users, librarians make decisions about where resources fit into the knowledge structures of society, thus where an item is placed is taken by the user as reflecting the content.

Reflecting on cataloguing issues in the 1950s, D.J. Foskett suggested that “signs have appeared in professional literature of an antagonism between those who make a study of the science of classification, and those who are occupied directly in personal service to readers (1964, p.110). How information professionals organise and present the content they store and make available to the world can be an immensely controversial area. On its face, cataloguing and classification may merely be seen as a finding aid to add a rational system of access to aid users (Ranganathan: *Save the time of the reader*). However, how libraries organise materials can communicate values around hierarchies and priorities that can be deeply offensive and regressive.

From situations such as book displays on topics deemed controversial, to how a sacred text is placed on a shelf in relation to other texts, to how specific cataloguing systems organise the world’s knowledge, the ways that libraries present their contents to users is always of a significant concern. For instance, in 2009 the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, advisory body to the then government, issued guidance related to religious texts in public libraries and suggested that to avoid offence the books from all denominations should be displayed on a top shelf to indicate their importance: “This meant that no offence is caused, as the scriptures of all the major faiths are given respect in this way, but none is higher than any other” (Doughty, 2009).

This guidance led to criticism from the think-tank Civitas, whose spokesperson was quoted in the *Daily Mail* as saying:

Libraries and museums are not places of worship. They should not be run in accordance with particular religious beliefs. This is violating the principles of librarianship, and it is part of an insidious trend (Doughty, 2009).

The same article also cited the views of several representatives from religious organisations, and it is evident that among the different religions there was no clear agreement on the policy. Clearly such policies can be regarded as minor accommodations to sensitivities, however they also raise potentially challenging ethical questions that require previous forethought and justification for such challenges that may be received.

5.4.1. Intelligent design debate

For instance, going back to the early 2000s, we can consider the ongoing ethical debate concerning intelligent design and creationism versus evolution, which had become a significant concern for numerous librarians, especially within North America. Depending on your ethical stance, you might perceive intelligent design as a rational explanation for the

planet's development, or as an effort to cloak theology in scientific attire. Nonetheless, the placement of intelligent design books beside scientific works on library shelves sparked a heated controversy.

Multiple school districts in the United States mandated that Intelligent Design, a variant of Creationism challenging evolutionary theory by proposing the involvement of intelligence in the world's and humanity's creation, be presented in science classes as an alternative scientific hypothesis to evolution. In Pennsylvania's Dover School District, it was mandatory in ninth-grade science classes to read a statement to students suggesting that while evolution was being taught, it was just one theory, and that Intelligent Design was another plausible viewpoint. In various other school districts, librarians were required to insert notices in all science books discussing evolution, conveying a similar message to the Dover statement. The Dover case saw eleven parents filing a lawsuit against the school district, and in late December 2005, the courts ruled in their favour, deeming the teaching of Intelligent Design in schools unconstitutional.

In the Dover situation, 60 copies of an Intelligent Design textbook were donated to school libraries, and the school superintendent instructed the librarian to place them on the shelves (O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan, 2005). Being compelled to classify an item as a scientific text when the librarian in their professional role considers it to be a religious text, raises a significant ethical quandary, yet such situations have occurred in recent history even in the world's largest democracy. It is also worth noting that in the UK, a 2012 study of how public libraries were classifying creationist materials found divergence in how the very same materials were being made available to the public across the country, some as science, some as religion (MacDonald and McMenemy, 2012). How libraries present content matters, then, for citizens to fully understand what that content is going to be communicating to them.

In January 2022 a *Cataloguing Code of Ethics was launched*, which was developed by an international range of librarians involved in cataloguing and classification work: "A subset of critical librarianship, *critical cataloguing* focuses on understanding and changing how knowledge organisations codify systems of oppression" (Chan et al, 2022). The statement of ethical principles contained in the Code emphasises core cataloguing concerns like discovery but built around a framework that considers more fully issues around individual and institutional bias, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and understanding community needs (Chan et al, 2022, p.801).

5.4.2. Decolonising Collections

Decolonisation is a major concern of modern times, with much more reflection now evident within societies on how colonialism and empire have shaped narratives around societal discourse, and as such led to biases and prejudices that maintain to this day. Bhabra defines decolonisation in the following terms:

First, it is a way of thinking about the world which takes colonialism, empire and racism as its empirical and discursive objects of study; it re-situates these phenomena as key shaping forces of the contemporary world, in a context where

their role has been systematically effaced from view. Second, it purports to offer alternative ways of thinking about the world and alternative forms of political praxis (Bhambra, 2018, p.2).

Wilson explains that “Libraries are increasingly reflecting on their collection development strategies and determining whether they are compatible with addressing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) concerns” (Wilson in Crilly and Everitt, 2021, p.227). Edwards argues that “Decolonizing libraries and the library profession means that library services, collections, and classification systems need to be examined for instances of colonial oppression (Edwards, 2019, p.8).

The website of the Cambridge University Libraries Decolonisation Working Group (DWG) provides a useful insight into the range of activities that libraries can undertake in terms of promoting decolonisation work. The DWG focuses on a range of initiatives including staff training, as well as cataloguing issues, and collection development policies. How they see their role is clearly articulated:

Decolonisation has become an important global debate in libraries and archives, and is stimulating librarians, archivists, and library users to question existing policy and practice, and see their collections in a new light. Interest in the subject is widespread in the University, influencing research and teaching, curriculum design, and library practice (Cambridge University Libraries Decolonisation Working Group, 2023)

Clearly undertaking such work entails exploring a wide range of aspects of the traditional service that may need to be considered, from staff attitudes and understanding, to finding aids for users, and policies related to how the library is moving forward to ensure practices are reflective of modern societal attitudes.

5.5. Wider Societal Concerns – Diversity and Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Sustainability

In this section so far, we have highlighted some ethical concerns that are very much a core of the librarianship values system. Nevertheless, there are wider societal concerns that apply across public policy and public services that also have ethical dimensions that we must be mindful of.

5.5.1. Diversity and Inclusion

We have discussed issues around decolonisation above, but it is also important to reflect on issues related to equality and diversity more broadly.

Regardless of sector, libraries can serve a significant purpose for the communities they serve by being a space where people from different walks of life and cultural backgrounds can gather to interact and engage with ideas, take part in social and cultural events, and open their world to new insights (Audunson, 2005).

Increasing public focus on issues round equality and diversity have led to professional bodies reflecting on their codes to ensure that they are representative of equalities issues. We have highlighted the new Ethical Framework introduced by CILIP in 2018 above, which sought to place human rights, equality, and diversity more explicitly as a cornerstone of the values of the profession.

The American Library Association's addition of a ninth principle in 2021 to their Code of Ethics related to racial and social justice was an important output from the Social and Racial Justice subgroup of the Committee on Professional Ethics. The ninth principle reads:

We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces (ALA, 2022).

The explicit nature of the changes to both CILIP and ALA's codes reflects the increasing public interest and concern with issues of equality and diversity within society.

From a theoretical perspective the emergence of *critical librarianship* has informed much of the reflections on how libraries can both exclude and include minorities. Building on the wider critical theory movement, critical librarianship focuses on issues related to power structures and imbalances in society and how they impact on institutions and professions, and as a result of this, wider society:

For critical theorists, the "critique is rooted in a shift in emphasis to aesthetic, textual, and quasi-political strategies, demonstrating a commitment to celebrating those who have been defined as the Other by those with power. Pluralism has thus become a primary value, justifying movements to dismantle processes and hierarchies of power that have enabled the divisive selecting and sorting of people, thus creating the Other (Leckie, Given, and Buschman, 2010, p.viii).

This renewed focus on equalities issues has given the profession new impetus to ensure their services are focused on all users and reflect the diverse needs different groups may have.

A professional impact this has clearly had relates to the development of equalities policies that enhance the mission of library services to be more inclusive. For example, Suffolk Library states in their policy that:

Suffolk Libraries aims to enrich everyone's the quality of life. To do this equality and inclusion must be at the heart of all we do.

We create safe, welcoming spaces for everyone in our communities regardless of age, gender, race, socio-economic background, or beliefs. Libraries can play a part in fostering strong and cohesive communities by promoting understanding, trust and respect. Libraries facilitate this through running events and activities, providing relevant content and information and giving different people the chance to meet and come together (Suffolk Libraries, 2022).

Such policies as public-facing documents can be especially valuable as advocacy tools.

In dealing with legal issues around equality and diversity, the key focus of libraries should be the *Equality Act 2010*, which highlights the importance of ensuring organisations consider equality when providing their services. The Equality Duty is:

is a duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees (Government Equalities Office, 2011).

Public bodies must be mindful of a set of protected characteristics:

- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- marriage and civil partnership,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- sex,
- and sexual orientation

In doing so organisations must be mindful of both direct and indirect discrimination, the latter issues relating to when a policy that is introduced may impact a group disproportionately. The government guidance provides an example:

When reviewing the services it provides, a public transport service provider finds that Sunday services are often used by people going to religious services. Reducing the Sunday service would therefore affect the ability of people belonging to certain religious groups to attend those services. The transport service provider considers this evidence along with any other relevant factors, such as the cost of providing the service, when arriving at its conclusions following the review (Government Equalities Office, 2011).

The legislation can be utilised where bodies do not adequately perform equality impact assessment for new policies or procedures they may introduce, and thus library services need to be mindful of the Act and its potential power. In 2022 Nottingham Council in England were forced to apologise to campaigner, Julie Bindel, for cancelling a talk she was due to undertake in a local library, because they argued her views on transgender rights were at odds with their Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy (Clinton, 2022). The banning of the event was deemed unlawful, and highlights that organisations need to be careful in such cases to ensure that the rights of all citizens are considered from an equalities perspective. The Act reinforces the challenge that the rights of some groups may clash with the rights of others, and that resolving such clashes may not always be straightforward.

5.5.2. Sustainability

On their face libraries are good for the environment, they provide access to resources that are shared, meaning less waste. Libraries are also well-placed to help to inform the public about sustainability and environmental issues more broadly, regardless of sector.

But what exactly do we mean by sustainability, and why is it something that is of ethical concern for libraries? Henk suggests that “Sustainability is built on the idea of intra - and intergenerational justice— the notion that those currently living have an obligation to themselves and to future people to ensure everyone has equal opportunities in life” (Henk, 2014, p.20). In addition to the universality of this, then, we can also identify such sentiment in the values we have previously discussed, for instance in the notion of preservation and stewardship (CILIP Framework and Michael Gorman), and the notion that as a profession we have a prime concern for the future and preserving the past. A sustainable society is a concern for us all.

Aldrich argues that a shift for librarians to one of sustainable thinking is a crucial element in libraries addressing the issues, and it is values-based:

Sustainable thinking refers to the alignment of a library’s core values and resources— which can mean staff time and energy, facilities, collections, and technology— with the local and global community’s right to endure, bounce back from disruption, and thrive by bringing new and energetic life to fruition through choices made in all areas of library operations and outreach. This definition is a call to action for libraries of all types to think differently, with intent, about everything that we do (Aldrich, 2018, p.62).

The emphasis of libraries related to sustainability can be defined in terms of two important areas of focus (1) making libraries more sustainable and (2) helping communities understand sustainability issues more fully. Clearly, both of these are at their heart exercises in advocacy.

In February 2002 CILIP launched the Green Libraries Partnership in collaboration with Arts Council England with the concept that:

Public libraries are hubs of sustainability. Reusing and recycling books and providing information to communities to underpin their own climate action, is at the core to what we do (CILIP, 2023).

The first Green Libraries Conference took place in March of 2023. In Scotland this initiative has been built on via the Green Libraries Scotland Grant Fund in 2023 which has funded a series of projects in Scottish libraries, including supporting public discourse around sustainability, with workshops and events, as well as funding an *environmentalist-in-residence* in one library service.

Clearly libraries are in a good place for promoting sustainability advocacy given their place in the public mind as being focused on reusing resources. However, Chowdhury rightly reminds us that digital information, a cornerstone of modern library provision, is a potential environmental issue:

Digital libraries and information services make extensive use of ICT infrastructure and devices throughout the lifecycle of information – for creation or digitization, management, and preservation of content; and for accessing, using, downloading, printing and sharing content and data. ICT infrastructure and devices generate a

significant amount of GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, and thus contribute to the environmental costs of digital libraries and information services (Chowdhury, 2016, p.2379).

Thus, libraries need to be mindful of their role as both advocates and venues for sustainability, and at the same time assess and try to ameliorate their role in environmental damage due to the use of technologies that utilise large amounts of power and impact the environment as a result. Henk argues that we all have a role in this:

Reimagining the ethos and practice of librarianship to ensure that sustainability is brought to the forefront is a monumental task, and it is one that we need to undertake as a group, with voices from across the profession. Voices from small libraries and large, rich libraries and poor, and experienced librarians and newcomers to the profession. (Henk, 2014, p.20).

The shift in thinking for libraries to a sustainable agenda should not be a challenging one, given it is something that the ethos of libraries is essentially built on. Initiatives like Green Libraries allow the profession to tap into advocacy efforts that blend the local with the national for a coherent programme. In addition, Henk's work provides useful templates for a Sustainability Plan, as well as a Sustainability Assessment Worksheet to measure the sustainability readiness of an organisation (Henk, 2014) while Aldrich provides a range of resources including case studies and policy statements that may be useful (Aldrich, 2018).

5.5.3. Wellbeing

Promoting the wellbeing of citizens and communities is a good thing for society, and it might seem strange to raise it as a potential issue of controversy to be aware of. Being aware of where critiques may come and how to balance these is, however, a useful reflective exercise.

The branch of behavioural economics known as "nudge economics" began to emerge in the 1990s, and it was brought into the mainstream via Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) work, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Sunstein was actually brought into the Obama government as a "regulatory tsar" to help shape policy.

Thaler and Sunstein described the role of *choice architects* as people involved in delivering public policy or public services who could help shape the public and their choices: "A choice architect has the responsibility for organizing the context in which people make decisions" (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008, p.3). In doing so, Thaler and Sunstein were addressing the concept of state neutrality, as they perceived no choices in the design of policies to be neutral:

There are many parallels between choice architecture and more traditional forms of architecture. A crucial parallel is that there is no such thing as a 'neutral' design (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008, p.3).

Their thesis is that peoples' lives can be improved by subtle nudges made by policymakers encouraging citizens to make choices that are better for them, their lives, and their communities.

.. small and apparently insignificant details can have major impacts on people's behavior. A good rule of thumb is to assume that 'everything matters.' In many cases, the power of these small details comes from focusing the attention of users in a particular direction (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008, p.3-4).

They argue that "Since no coercion is involved, we think that some types of paternalism should be acceptable even to those who most embrace freedom of choice" (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009, p.12).

Now you might query why this could be something that may draw criticism, and for the most part it may not. However, reflecting back on our consideration of the three key categories of ethics, there are elements of one of those, freedom, that balk at any attempts to interfere with individual autonomy. Therefore, while nudging citizens to activities or policies that are ultimately good for them is clearly something that can be perceived positively, it is possible that some in society may see such policies as paternalistic and not respectful of their individuality. Notably, however, Thaler and Sunstein see their ideas as a form of *libertarian paternalism* because the emphasis remains on personal choice. You guide people towards positive places but leave them free to make that choice themselves.

In advocacy terms, the benefits of such initiatives are easy to be able to prove, but being mindful of any potential criticism is a good thing, as it may also provide the reflective elements that inform where the limits on such policies should be. For example, Jones and Salo cite the example of a university in the USA that encourages the use of Fitbit devices for new students, and that actually attaches academic grades to their use:

.. arguing that measuring student movement is part and parcel of fulfilling the institution's mission of educating the mind as well as the body and spirit. Step and heart-rate data from the Fitbits are automatically sent to the LMS and graded, but grades are lowered if they opt out (Jones and Salo, 2018, p.308-309).

Knowing where the line is to be drawn can be challenging to measure.

Nudge economics have been influential in the UK, with David Cameron's government actually having a Nudge Unit as part of his team at 10 Downing Street (Halpern, 2015) and we can see the influence of nudge economics in many public policy programmes across various areas, including those focused on wellbeing. Again, your approach to these may well vary based on your own ethical approach, but they remain potentially useful as policies, even when we must be careful not to take them too far.

5.6. In summary

In this section we have explored a range of contemporary ethical issues that face libraries. We have focused on issues around freedom of expression, selection and censorship, privacy, equality and diversity, sustainability, and wellbeing.

All of these important issues provide both challenges and opportunities for libraries, but they all also have ethical dimensions which need to be understood by the sector, reflected on, and where possible debated and honed. In airing such potentially controversial topics

and weighing the dilemmas against what we know and believe about library ethics and values, we can better service our users and society.

What is vital, however, is that we have these ethical conversations, and not rely on others to dictate what the ethical conversations should be. As we have seen both in this section and in Section Four, these issues have been ruminated on by generations of librarians, some facing even starker challenges than those we face in the modern era. We should synthesise their wisdom alongside our own contemporary and emerging approaches to ethical challenges to build the strongest possible frameworks for effective advocacy.

6. Advocacy, Ethical Values, and Libraries

Bringing all the elements of our discussion together, how then can we consider the techniques of advocacy, reflect on applying core ethical values in librarianship to these, and turn this mix into recognising effective advocacy for libraries that is aimed at the range of viewpoints we will encounter in wider society?

We will begin this section by considering the application of Sandel's three categories of ethical approach, welfare, freedom, and virtue (Sandel, 2009) to how you might recognise or make arguments for libraries within a traditional ethical framework you are likely to encounter.

We will then consider how the three elements of rhetoric, and the fourth related to timing and moment, can be effectively used as a tool for framing an advocacy argument (in this case on advocacy against censorship).

We will conclude this section and the review itself by exploring how you can engage and advocate towards a diverse range of viewpoints on potentially controversial topics, in this case the hosting of Drag Queen Story Hour events in libraries.

6.1. Persuading people about the *value* of libraries

Being able to articulate arguments in the ethical frame of the people you are trying to influence is an important skill for advocacy. In [Section Three](#) we discussed the different approaches to ethics and social justice that predominate, and we will now revisit how you might recognise arguments for and against libraries presented under these frameworks.

Arguments from welfare are based around the concepts of maximising happiness for the widest number of people in society. Thus, advocacy for public libraries for instance can find such an approach a useful tool in the armoury.

The downside of such arguments is that they are not necessarily reflective of where political philosophy is currently at in terms of wider society, although admittedly as arguments go, they can sometimes have an emotional connection that resonates with parts of the community, especially around services that are essentially civic goods that all can feel belong to them.

A popular technique used for arguments from welfare are economic arguments like cost/benefit analysis, which suggests that the cost of funding something is far outweighed by the benefits accrued by society. Such arguments can be persuasive as they can give politicians or funding bodies a straightforward measure of success that they can understand. The downside of such arguments is that they risk having libraries seen in a one-dimensional way that focuses on reductive elements of the service. For instance, the contribution of libraries being valued simply for the financial impact on the community they might produce rather than other outcomes.

Another downside of such methodologies, of course, is that if valued in such a way, there is a danger of a methodology being adopted that calculates libraries as *drains* on the public purse that cost more than they actually contribute to it.

Arguments from freedom focus on the empowering elements of libraries for individual citizens. The concept that libraries provide citizens with social goods that allow them to reach their potential is a **positive rights** justification for library services suggesting that the services they offer aid individual autonomy. Positive rights arguments can be made for libraries in the public sector, especially public and school libraries, but also other types of educational libraries where access to knowledge is seen as enriching the individual.

Arguments against libraries can also come from the freedom category, however. **Negative rights** are the area of rights-based ethics that entail citizens expecting a limited relationship with the state, including low taxes and no requirement or expectation to fund civic goods beyond services like police, fire, and roads. Clearly someone who believes in such an ethical framework would be unlikely to wish to fund library services, and as such arguments from negative rights proponents are common when library funding is proposed, usually from stakeholders or citizens who have a libertarian political philosophy that underpins their belief.

Arguments from virtue relate to the cultivation of virtuous character within human beings and communities. The importance of individual citizens working on behalf of strong communities is a cornerstone of one of the key manifestations of this political philosophy, communitarianism. Communities become arbiters of societal and moral value, and in this context civic goods become something that add to community wellbeing. Arguments from virtue strongly support initiatives like volunteering, something seen increasingly in libraries, and also the idea of communities owning their own resources. In the UK we have seen community-run libraries become a significant provider of library services, and this is built on the communitarian ethical frame.

The downsides of such approaches to the supply of civic goods are that some communities may have a stronger ability to deliver services like libraries than others. The capacities within communities to both fund and manage civic goods is contingent on those skills and resources existing within that community. Communitarian approaches to public services also lose the element of universality that is present in both welfare-based approaches and positive rights-based approaches to public service provision. The communitarian approach to libraries is one of the extant policy developments of our times, and it is important to be able to understand advocacy for it on its face.

You may encounter some or all of these arguments and even in some cases mishmashes of the concepts together when you encounter arguments both for and against library services. Being able to recognise the ethical frame or frames at play can be immensely useful in terms of pitching your advocacy properly for the ears you are aiming that advocacy for.

6.2. Speakers, message, audience, and context

Reminding ourselves of the techniques of rhetoric discussed way back in [Section Two](#) of this review, how can we combine these techniques with our understanding of library values, and our understanding of how wider society might synthesise and consider public policy issues?

Let us utilise the three categories, logos (reason or logic of argument), ethos (the quality and knowledge of the speaker), pathos (the emotional argument), and the additional category of kairos (moment, time, or placing of the argument) in considering how we might advocate against censorship in libraries.

Table 3 - The three rhetorical themes (and kairos) applied to advocacy against censorship.

| Rhetorical theme | Potential activity/approach | Potential risks |
|--|--|---|
| Logos (Appeal to logic or reason) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide evidence such as that presented in “Banned Books Week” e.g., number of items challenged, what is being challenged in terms of theme, results of challenges. - Reinforce the rights of a citizen to intellectual freedom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence must be accurate, up to date, and understandable. - Profession must be consistent about application of values or logos is diminished. Policies must support advocacy claims. - Dangers of “over-claiming “to credibility – (i.e., libraries never censor”) |
| Ethos (Appeal to speaker) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional body highlighting importance of access to information and dangers of censorship. - Respected celebrity or public persona highlighting dangers of censorship from their own professional space (e.g., author, actor, journalist) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Profession must be consistent about application of values or ethos is diminished. - Spokesperson must have a broad appeal and not be someone who is unpopular or otherwise limited in public awareness, otherwise appeal is one-sided argument of limited utility |
| Pathos (Appeal to emotion) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Censorship limits what you want to know about”. - “Who gets to decide what you are allowed to read?” - “Your understanding of the world and/or that of the people you care about will be limited by those who can limit your access to information”. <p><i>Specific examples of harm caused. e.g., young people accessing information on issues around sexuality, or other personal growth issues. Health matters, bias, or prejudice-based limitations on access</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional appeals can be overplayed and be off-putting. - Emotion appeals can be countered with emotion appeals – e.g., “this book is offensive”, “it doesn’t matter if its legal, it is demeaning”. - Emotion can be used to mislead and manipulate |
| Kairos (Timing, and placement of appeal) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific calendar moment – e.g., Banned Books Week, or Library Week - When topic is featuring in press frequently or otherwise in public consciousness (TV, news, or book, or film elements evident in public discourse) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press coverage can also highlight when libraries are seen to be “censors” – this is very damaging to both future ethos and logos |

You can utilise a table or system such as this to consider all of the elements necessary for effective advocacy. The strength of considering all three of the rhetorical themes when planning advocacy initiatives alongside the timing or place of the arguments, is that the developed arguments are likely to be stronger, and considerate of all essential elements that are likely to engage an audience effectively. The classic elements of rhetoric are still around today because, frankly, they work.

6.3. Advocacy and controversial issues – ethical values and rhetorical techniques.

Finishing off this review, we will deal with perhaps the thorniest aspect of the equation to discuss; we will now explore some approaches to dealing with advocacy around contentious topics!

We have referenced above the issue of Drag Queen Story Hours, which have become a focal point for the culture wars and thus thrust libraries into the mainstream press regularly in recent times (Jonze, 2022). Setting aside our own initial reactions to the controversies and the attitudes of the different agents involved, is there a way we can utilise the **Scale of Resistance** tool proposed by Ramage, Bean and Johnson to allow us to frame advocacy for the initiatives more fruitfully? What are the ranges of viewpoints that might exist?

The groups identified below are all presumed to be able to be engaged with on good faith terms in advocacy for Drag Queen Story Hours, even those vehemently opposed, or slightly concerned with the programme. What kinds of positions might you find need to be addressed and understood if advocating for events like this?

Table 4 - Scale of Resistance on Drag Queen Storytimes

| Accord | | Undecided/Neutral | | Resistance |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <u>Strongly supportive</u> | <u>Supportive with conditions</u> | <u>Uncertain</u> | <u>Mostly opposed</u> | <u>Strongly opposed</u> |
| Group A. See the events as highly valuable and progressive opportunities to communicate to children the importance of diversity | Group B. Broadly supportive, as long as the content at the events remain appropriate for children | Group C. Unsure if an act usually identified with adult entertainment is suitable for children’s education or entertainment, but open to persuasion if seen | Group D. Feels the type of act is fine for adults, but simply never appropriate for a young audience | Group E. Vehemently opposed to alternative lifestyles and non-conforming gender roles but acting in good faith. |

Within each of these groups there may well even be more nuance, however for the sake of this exercise if we break down each category, we can consider how rhetorical techniques can be utilised to engage with each group:

Table 5 - Potential techniques for Advocacy on Drag Queen Story Times

| Group | Is advocacy needed/possible? | Rhetorical approach |
|---|---|---|
| Group A – See the events as highly valuable and progressive opportunities to communicate to children the importance of diversity. | Yes , in doing so the group would see the institution as progressive due to hosting such events, and the goodwill obtained is worth the effort | One-sided argument , straightforward message about the event and purpose will be received well |
| Group B - Broadly supportive, as long as the content at the events remain appropriate for children. | Yes , but the group is largely on board and just needs evidence | One-sided argument may work but be open to a variant of the multi-sided argument , acknowledging any concerns but refuting them. |
| Group C - Unsure if an act usually identified with adult entertainment is suitable for children’s education or entertainment, but open to persuasion if seen to be effective and fit for audience. | Yes , and the group may need much more evidence of both the event and the bona fides of all involved | Multi-sided argument , utilise all strong evidence as to how event will be managed, effectiveness of the events previously ran, and the positive impact on the community. |
| Group D - Feels the type of act is fine for adults, but simply never appropriate for a young audience | Yes , and the group needs much more evidence of both the event and the bona fides of all involved. More enhanced version of arguments put to Group C | Multi-sided argument , utilising all strong evidence may work. Otherwise, might involve switching to a dialogic approach and a new set of values in arguments put forward and utilising a Rogerian argument acknowledging their view that <i>some</i> Drag acts are not suitable for young audiences, but the Story Time artists are all excellent at work with young people, have been selected specifically for the role, and the events are worthwhile. |
| Group E - Vehemently opposed to alternative lifestyles and non-conforming gender roles but are acting in good faith. | Yes (<i>although you may feel No</i>) | Dialogic argument – you are most likely not going to persuade the group of the value of the event, but you should advocate to them starting on shared assumptions (e.g., your goal is to enrich the community with events for young people, promote reading to children) not with assumptions that they may be opposed to (e.g., EDI), regardless of how you feel about that opposition. |

You might also think of other potential arguments that could be utilised, and other groups to advocate to, but the crucial thing to remember here is that the groups who do not agree with your event need to be engaged with and not automatically thought of as an enemy, or

have their concerns trivialised. The caveat to that is, of course, what we discussed in [Section Two](#) related to good faith actors and rational arguments. Avoid getting involved with pseudo-arguments where you can once you know this is what is happening, as these will normally involve people or groups who simply do not wish to understand your case or have their minds influenced or changed in any way.

However, and this is crucial, **do not assume** that everyone who objects to your event or policy is in that category. This is a significant strategic error to make, and also highly unethical, as it places your own ethical viewpoint in primacy over those of others who may believe they have legitimate ethical concerns they are raising. It can be difficult to sometimes decide if objections you receive are in good faith or not, but you should begin the process by assuming that any objections come from a good faith position until you are clear that is not the case. As a reminder of how La Rue summarised his reflections on practice; often what we are dealing with in terms of objections to events or challenging of content is a fear, or another emotional reaction that can be engaged with:

The issue wasn't really about the culture wars or extreme political agendas. It was about the difficulty many of us have when our children cross the threshold from infancy to childhood (4-6), or childhood to adolescence and maturity (14- 16). In an attempt to cope, parents went through paroxysms of anger, grief, self-righteousness, and a grasping for control (LaRue, 2018, p.7).

Meeting what you rightly or wrongly perceive as **their** intolerance with your own is not a recipe for ethical service, especially if, as in some cases re challenged content, the objections have some merit due to an erroneous purchase or the like. Instead, try to empathise with their position until you can be **sure** it comes from a place that does not merit such empathy. In the end, LaRue's summary response for such occasions is worth remembering:

we seek to serve you well. But you are not the only one we serve. (LaRue, 2018, p.8).

6.4. Concluding thoughts

In this review we have attempted a thorough ranging exploration of advocacy, ethics and social justice in society, ethical values in librarianship, and contemporary ethical concerns. It is a lot to cover and to do justice to, but hopefully it provides a grounding for the reader in how different people and groups approach such topics, and how an understanding of these approaches, your own, and those of your profession, can be reconciled.

Concluding this discussion with the words of Michael Gorman seems an apt way to summarise the overall issues:

In thinking about values and taking action based on values... we walk an intellectual tightrope that stretches between lives made dreary and unfulfilling by the absence of beliefs and ideals and the lives of those to whom values have become absolutes and ideals and beliefs have curdled into fanaticism. We must, in my view, have beliefs and ideals, but we should never seek to impose those beliefs and ideals on the unwilling. There is a vast difference between defending one's values and making others conform to those values (Gorman, 2015, p.5).

It is hoped that this review provides the guidance, and discussion of the contextual background of providing a library service in the midst of a world cursed with increasing polarisation of opinion and *culture wars*. It is hoped that this review document provides enough reflective discussion for librarians and interested stakeholders of all backgrounds to understand their own position more fully and also reflect on the positions of those they may disagree with, with the ultimate goal to consider how best to serve their users amidst the tensions and dilemmas they face.

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