

*Research On
Contemporary Issues in*

**MEDIA RESOURCES AND INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY USE**

A Festschrift

in Honour of

**PROFESSOR IYABO
MOTOLAGBE MABAWONKU**



Edited by

**WOLE MICHAEL OLATOKUN
AMOS OYESOJI AREMU
AIREN ADETIMIRIN**

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Educating Library and Information Science Students for an Ethical Information Age

Airen Adetimirin

Abstract

Library and Information Science (LIS) students use information materials for their academic activities. However, in this information age, LIS students are faced with information overload, but are expected to use information appropriately. The way LIS students behave in the use of information is referred to as ethical behaviour. Students that abide by rules and ethics of a profession will behave ethically good, while those that exhibit behaviours that do not abide by such rules and ethics are said to have unethical behaviour. Students behave unethically in ways such as academic dishonesty, plagiarism, cheating, copying and infringement of copyright and should, therefore, acquire ethical knowledge and imbibe such to facilitate their job performance after graduation. Studies have revealed that ethics can be taught as a topic within a course, or throughout the LIS curriculum. The article investigated the ethical behaviour of students, why students should be educated on ethical behaviour, and ways of educating students on ethical behaviour. The acquisition of ethical behaviour to LIS students can be provided by lecturers and library and information professionals on a regular basis.

Keywords: LIS students, Ethics, Ethical Behaviour, Ethics education, Information Age

Introduction

Students including Library and Information Science (LIS) should be educated about ethics, as this will ensure good ethical behaviour while still as students and even after graduation. The word 'ethics' comes from the ancient Greek word 'ethikos' meaning 'pertaining to custom' (Johnstone, 2016). Ethics can be defined as the moral assessment or guidelines that judge what is right or wrong in a profession (Adebayo and Mabawonku, 2017) or can be averred to be the way individuals behave in a society (Mabawonku, 2010). Butts and Rich (2008) explained ethics as the study of ideal human behaviours using moral theories, moral principles, guidelines, and codes of conduct. From these definitions, ethics is implied to revolve around the acceptable behaviour of individuals based on some guidelines or regulations. Mehta (2015) concluded from a literature review of many studies that ethics could be seen as challenges that people have in identifying good or bad in different life situations they find themselves as they have to take a decision which may not be the best legally. The choice to do good or bad is based on their beliefs, religions, desires, and virtues of character or values.

Ethics can be categorised into information ethics, library ethics, computer ethics, cyber ethics, and so on. Information ethics involves the upholding of fundamental values of freedom, equality, tolerance and respect for human rights (Capurro, 2009). It is concerned with the right: to privacy; of access to information; and to intellectual property and quality of information (Britz, 2013). Library ethics means the appropriate use of information resources and protection of the library user's right to privacy, confidentiality, intellectual property rights by the library and informational professional (Adebayo and Mabawonku, 2017).

Computer ethics can be defined as the activities or behaviour of an individual in the use of computers. Computer ethics as defined by Young (2009) is the moral decision taken while using computer or information technology. The introduction of the Internet, where individuals can search and retrieve information from led to cyber ethics which Rama (2014) defined as regulations designed for responsible behaviour by individuals in the use of cyberspace. Igwe and Ibegwam (2014 p.102) explained cyber ethics as the "social responsibility in cyberspace", while it is seen as a "discipline of using appropriate and ethical behaviours and acknowledging moral duties and obligations pertaining to online environments and digital media".

Kundu (2018) discussed ethics as having three key branches: descriptive, normative and applied ethics. The Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society (2007) defined descriptive ethics as "the study of morality and moral issues from a scientific point of view" (Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society, p. 569). This means the way an individual behaves morally in the cause of carrying out his duties or relating to another person.

Normative ethics, on the other hand, has been defined by the New World Encyclopedia as the ability to investigate or determine a good or bad action or character traits (Kaufmann, 2017). The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1995) explains normative ethics "as the ability to conclude about moral standards that regulate right or wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behaviour on others." Applied ethics, as explained by the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1995), is the use of methods to investigate moral decisions and to treat moral problems, practices and policies in any sector of the society. This explains that the way an individual behaves should be investigated to determine if such an individual adheres to the rules and guidelines (ethics) of that society. This emphasises the need to investigate the ethical behaviour of LIS students in this information age.

The present age can be referred to as information age, where there is an overload of information available to people (Tredinnick and Laybats, 2018), and information can be easily retrieved through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) irrespective of geographical location and time. Undergraduates need to fulfil their academic achievement, and this requires the use of information sourced from various sources such as libraries and the Internet. The retrieval and use of information, according to laws

guiding it in this present dispensation, can be referred to ethical information age. Therefore, it becomes important that information would be appropriately used without violating the rules guiding its use.

Library and Information Science (LIS) students in universities are also faced with information overload, and it is necessary that they know how to retrieve and use such needed and retrieved information according to the rules guiding such information. There is a preponderance of information, and this could be a challenge to LIS students if they do not have the knowledge of the right use of information. These students will graduate to become information professionals who should understand the ethics of information use and, therefore, educate their users on the appropriateness of using information correctly. The way to behave as a librarian is contained in the code of ethics document.

The paper is organised into the following subheadings:

1. Code of Ethics for Library and Information Professionals
2. Ethical Behaviour of Students
3. Why Educate LIS Students on Ethical Behaviour?
4. Ways of Educating LIS Students on Ethical Behaviour
5. Conclusion and Recommendations.

Code of Ethics for Library and Information Professionals

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015) defined code of ethics as “a set of rules about good and bad behaviour”, while the Business Dictionary (2016) defined it as a “written set of guidelines issued by an organization to its workers and management to help them conduct their actions in accordance with its primary values and ethical standards.” Every profession has a code of ethics for its members as a guideline on how to behave when carrying out their professional duties.

The Library and Information Science profession has a “Professional Codes of Ethics for Librarians” by International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions” (IFLA), which is the global voice for librarians and other information workers. The code of ethics has the following aspects: access to information; responsibilities towards individuals and society; privacy, secrecy and transparency; open access and intellectual property; neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills; and colleague and employer/employee relationship (IFLA, 2011). Each country also has a code of ethics for their librarians derived from the IFLA code of conduct, and Nigeria has its own as developed by the Librarians’Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). The purpose of the code of ethics is to ensure that library and information professionals behave in an acceptable and approved way while carrying out their responsibilities. Therefore, LIS students must be informed about the code of ethics so that they will know how to behave before and after graduation.

Ethical Behaviour of Students

This is the information age which is characterised with ease of access and use of information and communication technology for various activities by students such as academic, social, entertainment and others. Consequently, there has been an increase in the unethical use of these information resources by students which can harm individuals and society (Obanor and Kawasi-Effah, 2013). Unethical use of information includes plagiarism, academic dishonesty, cheating, hacking, spam, denial of service attacks, identity theft and improper uses of digital resources (Lee and Chan, 2008). Others include: computer crime and computer security, software theft and intellectual property rights, computer hacking and creating of viruses and information systems failure; invasion of privacy; the social implications of artificial intelligence and expert systems; and workplace computerization (Jamil and Shah, 2014).

Ethical behaviour is the way LIS students use information to satisfy their information needs, which may be good or bad. Brey (2007) asserted that students and teachers in higher educational institutions were involved in plagiarism, copyright and software theft, hacking and not using computer resources correctly. These are unethical behaviour that will have a negative influence on the students and teachers' morals and the society. Students violate copyright laws by photocopying more than the required number of pages of a document.

Academic dishonesty is another form of unethical behaviour by students. It is the violation of rules and regulations by students in a higher institution. This has been observed to be very common and has been taken to be a normal practice by students. Copying test responses from a classmate; taking exam for friends; failure to cite other people work; taking exam home and purchasing research papers and one assumes it is his/her work are examples of academic dishonesty perpetuated by students in higher institutions. Others include: breaking the office or the teachers' file to access the test or answer key; sabotaging peers ongoing work; or gaining illegal access to school computer to change official grades and plagiarism. Reasons adduced for academic dishonesty by students are insufficient time for revision, inability to understand the subjects well, peer influences, fear of failure and technology advancement (D'Silva et al, 2015).

In a study carried out on undergraduates in Malaysia by D'Silva et al. (2015), it was reported that the undergraduates were involved in cheating in examination and also plagiarism in their assignment because they did not know the consequences of their action. Cheating includes bringing in notes or course materials into the examination, talking, showing scripts to colleagues, and passing materials to colleagues during an examination. Students may not see these indicators of cheating as cheating and serious bad behaviour. Another reason why students cheat in examinations may be because they are lazy, or they do not understand the course and afraid of

failing it. The diligence of students in their academic activities may reduce cheating in examinations as they will prepare adequately for examinations and will not need to pass such examinations.

Another bad ethical behaviour exhibited by students is plagiarism. Yadav et al. (2016) defined plagiarism as the art of using the ideas or the works of an author without acknowledgement. This is a common phenomenon among students in universities. Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science defines plagiarism as "Copying or closely imitating the work of another writer, composer, etc, without permission and with the intention of passing the results off as original work"(Reitz, 2004).

Lehobye (2010) defined plagiarism as the act of claiming of original authorship in whole or in part by incorporating another's work into one's own without adequate acknowledgement and failure to provide references and citations in a document that is used for academic activity. The author classified some acts of plagiarism as follows:

Failure to give references and citations in a case in which an author's work is used without permission or even in a case in which conveying common knowledge constitutes plagiarism. Using another author's phrases or sentences without the use of quotation marks is considered to be plagiarism even if the author cites in his/her own text the source of the phrases or sentences he/she has quoted (Lehobye, 2010; p. 498).

Students may not know that the act of using someone's work is unethical and against the policy of their university. With the era of electronic resources, the issue of copying and pasting of information from such sources has become easy, and this may have also increased the act of plagiarism among students. Amos (2014) attributed some factors that lead to plagiarism among researchers as peer pressure and parental pressure, lack of knowledge of professional ethics and its consequences.

Why Educate LIS Students on Ethical Behaviour?

Students should be educated on ethical behaviour so they can abide by the rules and codes of their profession. Garnar (2016) carried out a study in 97 library schools in USA to evaluate how professional ethics is inculcated to the Master's students in the LIS programmes. This study was carried out on behalf of the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE) of the American Library Association (ALA). The study sought to determine if and how ethics education is taught to Master's students in these schools and found out that ethics was taught either as a course or within courses and also taught throughout the curriculum. Adetimirin (2017b) affirmed that the teaching of ethics (cyber ethics) to students (postgraduate students) by lecturers and library and information professionals will ensure that they use information resources (electronic information resources) appropriately. However, this can only be achieved if the lecturers and the library and information professionals themselves have ethical knowledge to instil good ethical behaviour into the students.

Imran et al. (2014) reported that health care professionals in Pakistan are not behaving ethically, as there have been complaints of ethical misconduct and litigation against health care professionals which has been on the increase. This implies that health care professionals need to be educated on ethics to reduce their unethical behaviour. This was also the same observation among majority of faculty in a teaching hospital in India who were found not to be trained in ethics, and this affected their ethical behaviour in conducting research and it was recommended that they be trained in research ethics, (Munoli et al, 2017). This implies that ethics should be taught to students during their programmes in the university to facilitate good ethical behaviour before and after graduation.

LIS students should also be educated on ethics so that they do not behave unethically while in the university, which, if not curbed, will lead to the continuation of unethical behaviour (plagiarism, hacking, cheating and other academic dishonesty) even when they get employed after graduation (D'Silva et al, 2015). Ethics education should be given to undergraduates so they can behave right in the generation, processing, searching, retrieving and use of information to satisfy their various information needs. The ethical knowledge to be imparted on the students should be done by their institution. This is acclaimed by Kundu (2018) in a study of students in four colleges in India where half of the respondents reported that they got to know about ethics in their college. D'Silva et al. (2015) concluded that students should be continually educated so they do not get involved in academic dishonesty and not wait until the students are involved and caught in such acts and punish them. This was based on their findings from an investigation of undergraduates in Malaysia.

Ethical education is important to LIS students, because they will eventually graduate to become information professionals and it is expected that they should know about the ethics of library and information science profession so they can take the right decision when they are faced with ethical issues. This is affirmed by Dahl-Michelsen and Groven (2017) that all professionals must practise their profession according to the ethics of the profession. Therefore, LIS students must learn the ethics of their profession so they can practise as good library and information professionals on the jobs after graduation. Mehta (2015) affirmed that the need to teach ethics in higher education has been reported by many researchers to be important for students so that they behave ethically right while in school and even after their graduation from the university. Ethics education will ensure that students are aware of unethical acts and are taught how to avoid being involved and the consequences for such actions.

Students should be educated on what plagiarism is, the consequences, and why they should not engage in it. To reduce plagiarism, students should be made aware of plagiarism detection software by their lecturers and library and information professionals. This can be effected through making sure that all assignments and other academic documents such as projects and dissertations should go through plagiarism test and the acceptable

percentage is made known to students and the penalty for violating this. Library and information professionals should also educate the students on how not to engage in plagiarism for their academic activities. The introduction of plagiarism software by the institution and a plagiarism policy will reduce the issue of plagiarism by the students (Boehm et al, 2009; Caroll, 2009; Ryan et al, 2009). Therefore, students can also check their documents using the plagiarism software before submission.

Aghatise (2013) stated that over three quarters of violators of computer ethics are students, and education is an important way of correcting this behaviour. Igwe and Ibegwam (2014) also reiterated the role of educating students on the appropriate behaviour in the use of the cyber space to reduce cyber crimes such as plagiarism, hacking, copyright, cyber bullying, privacy and others that are commonly committed by youths. Gondal (2014) reported the relevance of teaching ethics to medical undergraduates in Pakistan so as to deal with ethical issues when they graduate. However, Gondal (2014) concluded that there is need to revise the current medical curriculum to include knowledge and skills on ethics education on a regular basis to equip the medical doctors when they graduate. This will assist them in making the right decisions when they encounter ethical dilemma when they begin to practise as medical doctors in the society. The results of these studies on different undergraduates reiterate the importance of educating LIS undergraduates on ethics because they will graduate to become information professionals who will need to educate undergraduates on ethics.

Ways of Educating LIS Students on Ethical Behaviour: A Joint Venture by Lecturers, University and Information Professionals

LIS students should be educated on appropriate use of information resources to reduce unethical behaviour such as plagiarism, academic cheating, and the like. Students can be educated on ethical behaviour in different ways such as lectures, training, seminars, orientation, user education, and assignments. The education of students on ethical behaviour lies on the part of universities, lecturers and library and information professionals. A university should design a plagiarism policy stating what constitutes plagiarism, how to implement it and penalties for violating it, and this should be documented. Thereafter, a university has a role in creating awareness to the LIS students of the plagiarism policy and also provide regular instructions to the students to reduce the acts of plagiarism by the students (Oyewole, 2017).

Lecturers have an important role to play in educating LIS students on ethical behaviour as they interact with the students regularly. This is done through different academic activities such as seminar presentations, assignments, term papers, and project writing which involve the use of information sources such as print and electronic materials. Fallis (2007) buttressed the importance of ethics education and concluded that library schools should make these LIS students offer courses on ethics, as this will create their awareness on good ethical behaviour expected from them based on the code of ethics by the

profession. This view is further emphasised by Ocholla (2009) who investigated information ethics education in 60 library schools in Africa and concluded that information ethics needs to be taught to students in these library schools in order to equip them with ethical behaviour.

Ethics can be taught to LIS students as a course or embedded within a course, as this knowledge is required for them to take the necessary ethical decisions whenever they face ethical dilemma when practising as library and information professionals after graduation. The inclusion of ethics in the curriculum for LIS students will facilitate the acquisition of good ethical behaviour in the use of information (Adetimirin, 2017a). Mbofung and Popoola (2014) and Phillips et al. (2018) recommended that information ethics should be taught to prospective library and information professionals (LIS students) during their programme in Nigerian library schools to improve the level of awareness of ethics by the librarians when providing library services.

Lecturers must constantly instil into LIS students the need to behave ethically in the use of information materials and sources for their academic activities such as assignments, class work, seminars, project reports, dissertations and theses. The students must be trained on how to carry out their various academic activities in accordance with ethical principles. This can be done through plagiarism test on all assignments and tests submitted electronically, and any student that fails the plagiarism test should be penalised in accordance with the university ethical policies. This will instil good ethical behaviour into the students.

Studies have been carried out on the relevance of ethics education to undergraduates in different disciplines. It can be inferred that ethics education will also be useful to LIS undergraduates. In a study carried out by Imran et al. (2014) on health care professionals in Pakistan, over 95% of the respondents reported that ethics education is important for their profession, but it should be given to them at the undergraduate level. They reported that workshops/lectures (38%), case conferences (32%), panel discussions (18%), media (15%), ethics books (9%), ethics journal (7%) and general text (7%) were the most helpful means to acquire ethical knowledge by the health care professionals.

Ethics education can be offered to students as separate modules within the discipline or included in the existing modules (Healey, 2014). In a study carried out on French LIS students in 2014, Schöpfel (2016) reported that formal education can enhance the ethical thinking and standards of the students alongside their personal experience. The acquisition of ethical knowledge by students will enhance their decision in making the right choices. However, Martinov-Bennie and Mladenovic (2015), in a study of the impact of ethics education on accounting students, averred that students should be exposed to a number of ethical issues through an integrated ethics education, and this will enhance their ethical decision making.

Dahl-Michelsen and Groven (2017) in a study on teaching professional ethics to physiotherapy students in universities in Norway reported that universities introduce ethics to the students in their first year and then have it in

modules for the other years, and others introduce it in the first year and then as an ethics seminar in the second year of their study. This emphasises the importance of ethics education to undergraduates irrespective of their course. Computer and Information Technology ethics has been included in the curriculum for undergraduates in Pakistan, where it is taught as a compulsory course to equip students and also teachers with the knowledge of using the Internet and computer resources properly (Jamil and Shah, 2014). The findings of the study revealed that 99% and 75% of the teachers and students believe that the importance of computer and IT ethics is necessary for them.

The library and information professionals should educate the students on good ethical behaviour in their use of information sources through user education programmes, information literacy programmes, and notice boards (bulletin boards). This should be done on a regular basis to continuously create the awareness of good ethical behaviour and ultimately inculcate acceptable ethical behaviour into the LIS students. This is buttressed by Adetimirin (2017b) who recommended that library and information professionals should educate Nigerian LIS doctoral students on cyber ethics to ensure good ethical behaviour while in the university and after graduation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Library and Information Science students use information to satisfy their information needs. The current information age allows for access to and use of electronic information resources; however, such access and use requires the need to abide by ethics. Ethics is, therefore, important to Library and Information Science students as they need to know the guidelines on how to behave as students when using information resources and when they graduate and take up employment as library and information professionals in various organisations. The awareness and knowledge of ethical codes will inform their ethical behaviour when they encounter ethical dilemma in performing their professional duties when they graduate. Ethical knowledge can be acquired in the library schools through ethics education in the form of topics within a course, a course, or throughout the curriculum.

The acquisition of ethical knowledge can be provided by lecturers and library and information professionals in the universities, and it should be continuous throughout the duration of the programme in library schools. However, it is recommended that ethics should be more inclusive in the LIS curriculum and not a one spot instruction programme to be provided by the lecturers and library and information professionals to instil good ethical behaviour into the students.

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