

# Introduction to Library Leadership Ethics

1. Ethics is the study of moral issues: good and evil, right and wrong. It requires a heart and a brain: evidence (science) and wisdom (history).
2. Ethics is more than faith and belief; it requires investigation and evidence.
3. Library leadership must know the laws that impact their libraries, and the larger institutions and communities they serve. The spirit of the law should be obeyed, as should be the letter of the law.
4. Different ethical systems can conflict. Good people can and do disagree and make mistakes; the challenge is how we live together well despite the fact there will be dissent.
5. Organized religion equaled state politics and was used to justify dozens of European wars and deadly persecution at the time of the Founders of the United States, which is why we separate Church and State.
6. Contracts are written agreements; like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
7. In a republic that is founded on democratic process, the people vote for representatives. The representatives make laws at the will of the people and serve at the pleasure of the people.
8. The republic can become an oligarchy; the democracy can become a mob.
9. Sometimes the representatives are wrong, sometimes the people are wrong, sometimes everyone is wrong.

## Ethical Standards for Library Leadership

Iowa Small Library Online Conference 2009 - January 21, 2009  
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# The Rule of Law: Basis of Western Civilization

1. The procedure of the creation of the law is known to all:
  - a. Governance
    - i. Who makes decisions
    - ii. What decisions are made
    - iii. How decisions are made
2. The process is Accessible and Ordinary.
3. The law is known: Accessible and Ordinary.
4. The law applies to everyone equally.
5. The law is rational and reasonable: the Common Sense test.
6. It is designed to limit the powers of the state or elite against citizens.
  - a. The elite are not the source of law: “The King.”
  - b. The elite should not benefit: “The In-group.”

# Four Library Ethical Standards

## 1. Transparency

Written rules for library users and staff  
Open meeting laws followed in spirit  
Timely communication  
Everyone has access to same services

## 2. Equal treatment

Everyone has access to same services  
No special class of library users  
No insiders regarding contracts  
No special privileges for staff or board

## 3. Privacy

No discussions of individual library users' reading  
No sharing of records without court orders  
Refrain from comments on usage  
No discussions of personnel issues

## 4. Access of information for all

Library is safe for people with disabilities  
Well-lit and clean  
Outreach initiatives: immigrants, literacy  
Computer classes

# Library Staff Room Ethics

This list sometimes called the Golden Rules of Daily Life. We might smile at the antique wisdom, however, it is a practical example of everyday ethics: *My behavior has consequences*. You are welcome to download this document and adapt it your own library's staff or break room.

If you open it, close it.

If you move it or take it out, put it back.

If you turn it on, turn it off.

If you take it down, hang it up.

If you unlock it, lock it up.

If you drop it, pick it up.

If you track it in, mop it up.

If you spill it, wipe it up or sweep it up.

If it belongs to someone else, ask permission to use it.

If you use it, take care of it.

If you dirty it, clean it after you use it and before you return it.

If you break it, admit it, and,

If you break it or use it up, then fix it or replace it, or find someone who can.

If you bring it, share it.

If it is your turn, do it.

If it needs to be done, volunteer sometimes, even if it is not your turn.

If you don't know, ask, unless it is none of your business.

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