

Joint CaMMS, CMSC & CIG Cataloguing Code of Ethics

Mission Statement:

At the request of their membership and for the benefit of all staff creating, sharing, enriching & maintaining metadata, the cataloguing communities of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are tasked with compiling a Code of Ethics for Cataloguers.

It will be a dynamic document embodying the collective experiences and wisdom of our community of practice and will consist of a framework, with guidance and examples of best practice, which can be shared across the cataloguing community.

The Code will be a collaborative and inclusive project managed by a Cataloguing Ethics Steering Committee directing a number of Working Groups consisting of individuals drawn from diverse geographical, ethnic and library sectors.

Background

Over the past 18 months, the Executive Board of the ALA Cataloging and Metadata Management Section (CaMMS) sought to ascertain if library staff saw the need for a document to provide ethical guidance for cataloguing and metadata creation.

The overwhelming response was a desire for the creation of a framework that provides guidance and examples of ethical dilemmas in our work in order to clarify best practices for ourselves, our colleagues, and our managers.

This need was mirrored by the cataloguing communities in the United Kingdom and in Canada. The effort to provide ethical guidance to cataloguers now encompasses representatives from the Cataloguing and Indexing Group (CIG) of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in the United Kingdom and the Cataloguing and Metadata Standards Committee (CMSC) in Canada.

Preliminary work by CaMMS has already identified some topics of general concern, e.g. creating ethical authority data; ethical use of classification schemes and controlled vocabularies which can contain outdated and potentially offensive terms; as well as professional continuing education on ethical concerns.

This is only a partial list, and it is clear that as the process of documentation evolves, additional topics and subtopics will need to be raised and addressed using the experiences of our diverse international cataloguing workforce.

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