Chapter 7

Learner–Developed Case Studies on Ethics:
Collaborative Reflection Between School Librarians and Education Technology Learners

Lesley Farmer
California State University – Long Beach, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter explains how case studies can be used successfully in higher education to provide an authentic, interactive way to teach ethical behavior through critical analysis and decision making while addressing ethical standards and theories. The creation and choice of case studies is key for optimum learning, and can reflect both the instructor's and learners' knowledge base. The process for using this approach is explained, and examples are provided. As a result of such practice, learners support each other as they come to a deeper, co-constructed understanding of ethical behavior, and they make more links between coursework and professional lives. The instructor reviews the students' work to determine the degree of understanding and internalization of ethical concepts/applications, and to identify areas that need further instruction.

INTRODUCTION

As professionals, librarians are expected to behave ethically. Learning what ethical issues are encountered in school librarianship, and knowing how to address them, constitutes a core knowledge set. Case studies provide a grounded theory means to investigate authentic situations in order to ascertain ethical ways to deal with them.

Ethics in Librarianship

The library profession encounters ethical issues daily: providing accurate information, observing intellectual property rights, dealing with privacy issues, maintaining confidential relationship with clientele. With expanding technology comes expanded ethical dilemmas too, especially with the increase use of social media. As Ferguson, Thornley and Gibb (2016) pointed out, technology does not change ethical principles, but digital environments in the workplace do.

While ethics has played a role in librarianship for a long time, the first comprehensive study was done in 1998 by Robert Hauptman, who founded *The Journal of Information Ethics* in 1992. Another library ethics pioneer is Rafael Capurro, who directs the International Center for Information Ethics.

The American Library Association began talking about an ethical code in the early twentieth century, with the first code being adopted in 1938. Their core operational definition of ethics posits an "essential set of core values which define, inform, and guide our professional practice" (ALA, 2004). This Code of Ethics, which was most recently revised in 2008, provides a framework to guide ethical decision-making. It includes statements about excellence in service, intellectual property and freedom, collegiality, conflict of interest, and professional growth. In a more recent mapping of library and information science ethical principles and values, Koehler (2015) included the same elements as ALA but also explicitly added access and client rights.

In framing information ethics for 21st century librarians, Fallis (2007) asserted that codes of ethics were not sufficient. Explicit education is needed, tied to ethical theories, so that librarians will do the right thing for the right reason. Fallis also stated that librarians need to both model and teach their clientele ethical behavior, especially in light of technology-based information use.

In response, the Information Ethics Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) developed a position statement on information ethics in library and information science education, which was approved by ALISE in 2008, and approved a more general ethics guidelines statement in 2010. Building on the premises of the UNESCO University Declaration of Human Rights, the association asserted that it is their responsibility to discuss information ethics critically. They further stated that information ethics should

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