

Professional charter for librarians in public libraries

Netherlands

Accountability

The members of the Public Library Section of the Netherlands Association of librarians, gathered at the assembly on 13th of May 1993, accepted the following Charter as the basis for their personal professional work. Membership of the Public Library Section implies adherence to the Charter.

Every librarian, regardless of his specific tasks within the library is personally responsible for adhering to this charter and acknowledges that he is held accountable for this both internally and externally.

I WHY A PROFESSIONAL CHARTER?

In December 1990, the Assembly of the Netherlands Center for Libraries and Literature adopted the Charter for the Public Library. The Professional Charter for Librarians in Public Libraries, differs in that it focuses on professional activity. In every organization, conditions must enable its members to follow the Charter and management has a role to play in this respect.

The Professional Charter clarifies the professional tasks and responsibilities of the librarian. The Charter is a means of legitimizing and raising the profile of the profession. It also distinguishes Librarianship from other professions. In addition it stimulates further professional development and promotes the bond between librarians.

The Professional Charter is the foundation for professional thinking and acting. It is the librarian's task to contribute efficiently and effectively to the information services in the catchment area of the library. Professional activity has to lead to better results.

II THE PROFESSION

At the heart of the librarian's professional role is the information mediation between inquirers and suppliers of information. The information mediation process consists of the following steps: an in depth analysis of the question, searching for, selecting, and transferring information. The collection and presentation of what is available is vital for efficient and effective information mediation.

The term 'information' here includes all recorded cultural expressions, in word, image and sound.

1 Information mediation

The librarian mediates between the demand and supply of information. The starting point is the information need of the user.

The librarian contributes to a goal-oriented input into what the library can provide in order to efficiently meet the needs of the library user. This means that he contributes to a continuous evaluation of services.

The librarian is not passive, but acts proactively, teaching users how to use information and stimulating information use. This is especially important in cases where the user has no clear expectation of the service to be delivered and is not able to adequately formulate his question.

2 Collection and presentation

The librarian builds up a collection and preserves it, according to the information and media needs of users, and the role of the library within the community.

In addition to the library's own collection, the librarian consults and makes use of collections of other information supplying institutions and libraries.

The librarian takes care to provide a guide of what his collection has to offer to its users. He presents the collection in a way that matches how users ask for and seek information.

III EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Librarians in public libraries have received an education specific to their profession and keep their professional knowledge and other relevant knowledge up to date.

3 Professional competence

The librarian has specific knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- a. Information production and information sources (in printed, audio-visual and digitized forms);
- b. Information needs and information-seeking behavior;
- c. Presentation, including making information accessible;
- d. Analysis of queries;
- e. Retrieval techniques;
- f. Organizational and administrative processes;
- g. Communication with users and professional colleagues.

4 Other relevant knowledge and skills

The librarian is able to formulate policy goals with respect to information mediation, acquisition, and presentation, and to present these goals in a creative way with activities that promote reading and the use of information.

The librarian possesses a broad social interest and pays attention to regional and local concerns. He follows new developments, through professional literature, study meetings, courses and other information sources.

IV RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LIBRARIAN AND CONDITIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL WORK

5 Responsibilities

The librarian has the freedom to act in his professional work according to own judgement. He is aware of his responsibilities with regard to library users, colleagues, the organization, the profession and society.

In the execution of his tasks, the librarian acts in a professionally accountable way. Negligence and carelessness in his tasks is contrary to his duties, in terms of both the library users and the organization in which he works. The librarian points out the negative impact on the reputation of the profession, to colleagues who behave negligently or carelessly.

6 Free flow of information

The librarian respects the right of every individual to free and equal access to information. He promotes the free flow of information between suppliers and users, and between libraries. In this way the librarian contributes to the processes of emancipation of certain groups in society. With regard to the development of services, the librarian takes into account the supply of other information providers and libraries. He strives for cooperation based on the knowledge that each organization has limited means.

7 Integrity

The librarian executes his tasks according to the principles of openness, public accountability and impartiality.

In giving information, he uses clear criteria to select information and information sources.

The librarian chooses suppliers exclusively on the basis of the quality of goods and services.

The librarian strongly denounces censorship in all measures.

8 Quality of information

The librarian strives to give reliable information. Topicality, community representation and plurality are other decisive criteria.

9 Privacy

The librarian safeguards, within current law, the privacy of users at all times.

In relation to the protection of the private domain, the librarian acts according to the directives given in the 'Act on Person Registration' and the regulations based on it.

10 Objectivity

The librarian acknowledges that the user decides for which purpose he uses the information and whether he uses the services of the librarian.

If certain information is against the personal view or conviction of the librarian, this will not influence the evaluation of the information. The personal views of the librarian are subordinate to his professional principles.

Based on his professional knowledge of information sources and their quality, the librarian will give an evaluation of the given information, if the user wishes him to do so.

If a question requires specific professional knowledge, the librarian will refer to external experts.

11 Profiling the profession

In carrying out library policy, the librarian strives to make his professionalism apparent.

12 *Contacts with colleagues*

The librarian promotes inter-colleague evaluation as part of both his professional role and the quality assurance policy of public libraries. Inter-colleague evaluation has to be seen as an instrument for quality control and improvement in the profession, demonstrating personal responsibility and commitment.

The librarian acknowledges that an open and unprejudiced attitude among colleagues is a prerequisite for the efficient functioning of the organization and the whole professional community.

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The Professional Charter was formulated by an editorial commission 'Professional Charter', of the Public Library Section of the Netherlands Association of Librarians (NVB), consisting of: Irene, Annegarn, Martin Berends, Noor Evertsen, Jan Gommer, Arnold Greidanus and Philip Helder.

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