
The Ethics Quiz

by Martha M. Smith

(If you want to send me your answers and comments (anonymously) by May 1, I will submit the tally in a Letter to the Editor in a later issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES. Send responses to Marti Smith, Kenan Library, Saint Mary's College, Raleigh, NC 27603 or FAX (919) 832-4831.)

1. You are the reference librarian on duty at a large public library. Two teenagers come in and ask for instructions to build a car bomb. Would you:
 - a. Help them all you could?
 - b. Call the police?
 - c. Ask your supervisor for advice?
 - d. Ask them why they want the information?
2. You are the director of a small academic library. An automation vendor offers to take you to dinner at a national meeting. Would you:
 - a. Accept with thanks?
 - b. Go but pay your own way?
 - c. Decline the invitation?
 - d. Ask if another director friend could come too?
3. You are the head of a large public library system with many branches. A group of young adult librarians come to you with a request for a sex education day in the library. They want to dress up like condoms, pass out condoms, and give out information about safe sex. Would you:
 - a. Agree and ask how you can help with the plans?
 - b. Suggest they plan some displays but not anything as elaborate as a whole day of activity and costumes?
 - c. Discourage them from getting involved with safe sex programs?
 - d. Fire them?
4. You are the head cataloging librarian for a large school district and notice some books of lesbian fiction which have rather explicit covers waiting to be cataloged for the local high schools. Would you:
 - a. Send the books off to be bound in plain covers?
 - b. Put the books on the backlog shelf hoping they won't be found?
 - c. Process the books with the explicit covers?
 - d. Mark the books for patrons over 16?
5. You are the director of the public library system in a large urban setting. A member of your staff has become involved in defending the rights of the Man and Boy Club — a group of known pedophiles — to use the library's meeting facilities. Members of your board and the city government have threatened to withdraw support from the library if the staff member's activities are allowed to continue: Would you:
 - a. Defend your staff member?
 - b. Fire the staff member?
 - c. Help the club find another meeting place?
 - d. Review and revise the policy statement concerning the use of facilities?
6. You are in charge of circulation at the Business/Professional Library in a large urban area. You receive a call from the FBI asking you to prepare a report on all those who have used materials relating to Eastern Europe or the Middle East. Would you:
 - a. Delete the records from the circulation system?
 - b. Prepare a print out?
 - c. Call ALA?
 - d. Call the newspaper?
7. Patrons in your small inner city public library branch have complained to you about homeless people taking baths in the library rest room and sleeping on the furniture. Would you:
 - a. Lock the restrooms and have people get a key from the staff so that the restrooms would be used by one person at a time and could be monitored?
 - b. Put signs up discouraging inappropriate use of the library?
 - c. Have the police remove persons who are sleeping or using the library to bathe?
 - d. Suggest that patrons start a shelter for the homeless?
8. A group of young people come into the library one Saturday afternoon seeking information about moonshine and drugs. They seem to be high on something but you are not sure what. Would you:
 - a. Ask them to leave?
 - b. Call their parents?
 - c. Show them information about drugs and moonshine?
 - d. Question them about their intentions to use the information?
9. Several members of your library staff have been threatened, both at home and at work, by someone who says she plans to kill one of them. The caller seems to be very well read because she makes reference to the latest murder mysteries which the library has received. You suspect a member of the staff or one the regular patrons. Would you:
 - a. Set a trap using the mysteries?
 - b. Call the police?
 - c. Do nothing?
 - d. Stop ordering mysteries?

10. A child in the third grade asks you, the school librarian, for information about using cocaine. Would you:
- Tell the teacher?
 - Talk with the guidance counselor?
 - Call the parents?
 - Help the child find the information?
11. A fellow staff member has been coming to work with bruises on his arms and legs about once a week for several months. When questioned, he asks you not to interfere. His mental state, however, is declining and you are having to cover for the work he is not able to complete. Would you:
- Insist he seek help?
 - Consult the head of the library?
 - Invite a counselor to have lunch with you and the person?
 - Do nothing?
12. You hear at a state library convention that anti-abortion groups are planning to ask libraries receiving federal funds to remove materials on abortion from their collections. Would you:
- Remove abortion materials before anyone asks you to do so?
 - Alert your Board of Trustees to the possibility of a challenge?
 - Rush out and buy all you can on abortion-pro and con?
 - Write up a special policy on controversial materials?
13. The KKK asks if they can put up a display during the week of the Martin Luther King holiday. Your library has a policy of being open to all public groups for displays or meetings. Would you:
- Allow the KKK to have a display but put it in a back of the library?
 - Allow them to have a display but encourage groups supporting racial harmony to have displays also?
 - Refuse the request?
 - Refer the request to the library board?
14. Your library has an extensive software collection for children. Would you:
- Allow staff members to copy freely?
 - Enforce copyright agreements?
 - Informally allow some copying of software if it could be done quietly?
 - Ignore copying and leave it to the discretion of the staff members?
15. A very mature ten year old has been reading books on genetics and reproduction in the adult section. He has been very quiet but some of the adults have complained and the staff members are wondering about the motives behind his reading. Would you:
- Have his parents sign a permission form to allow him to read and check out adult materials?
 - Ask the child to do his reading in the children's department?
 - Do nothing?
 - Ask the boy not to use the adult section?
16. You are in charge of library personnel for a large city system. A branch manager asks you what you think of her running for the school board so that she could do more to support school and library cooperation. Would you:
- Suggest she resign before she declares her intention?
 - Encourage her and offer to help her win?
 - Suggest she take a leave from her job?
 - Urge her not to get involved in politics?
17. You are in charge of collection development for a small town in a rural area. The director of your library has urged you to select more romance novels and action fiction to please the members of the Friends group. You, however, feel an obligation to the students in the area to balance the collection. In a time of very limited funds, you would:
- Order what you think is best and risk your job?
 - Encourage students and parents to fill up the suggestion box?
 - Ask for help from teachers in the community?
 - Order what the director wants?
18. You are the reference librarian in a research library. You have been asked by one of your scientists to get large quantities of material on interlibrary loan for a daughter who is in college but living at home. He has asked you to charge the photocopy costs to his research account. Would you:
- Do as instructed?
 - Refuse to do as asked?
 - Tell your immediate supervisor?
 - Tell the scientist's supervisor?
19. You are in charge of a building project for a small public library. Your Board wants a large Victorian parlor for receptions, teas, and other meetings. You want the floor space for public services. Would you:
- Seek to replace the board members?
 - Lobby for a small Victorian parlor?
 - Ask staff members to write letter to board members?
 - Comply with the board request and look for another job?
20. You are a new staff member in a large university library. After a few weeks on the job, you begin receiving invitations to lunch from a senior staff member. You politely decline, but the invitations continue. Alone in the staff elevator one day, this staff member tells you that he was responsible for your getting the job and if you will not go out with him, he will have you fired. Would you:
- Scream rape or fire in the elevator?
 - Go out with him and try to reason with him?
 - Threaten to charge him with sexual harassment?
 - Refuse to go out with him?
21. You are the director of a corporate library and you find out that your company is being sold and that the library will be closed. You have been asked not to reveal your information. Do you:
- Tell you staff and help them look for other jobs?
 - Tell your professional staff?
 - Start making job contact yourself?
 - Find another job and quit?
22. You are the director of an academic library/computer center in a large university. A committee is planning a retirement party for the head of collection development — a single female. The committee wants to hire a male stripper to entertain the staff and teaching faculty members who have been invited to the retirement party. Would you:
- Approve the money for the stripper?
 - Suggest they hire a clown?
 - Approve the money but have the stripper in the collection development office before the party?
 - Suggest the staff ask a student assistant to be the stripper so regular student assistant funds could be used?

23. You badly need to upgrade your library's online system but have no budgeted money for the project. Recently, with the settlement of an estate, the library has received \$250,000 as a gift designated for books. Since the will was written in 1963, you might be able to justify using the money for the system upgrade. Would you:
- Call the heirs and see if they would support you?
 - Move money from the book budget to the system budget to disguise the use of the gift funds?
 - Forget using the gift money for the upgrade?
 - Let the library board decide?
24. You have developed a software program on the job in your spare time to keep track of archival materials. You are under no contractual agreement at work to surrender rights to your software. Would you:
- Try to market your program and give the proceeds to your employer?
 - Split the profits 50%-50%?
 - Get a lawyer and try to keep the profits for yourself?
 - Wait to market the product until you leave that job?
25. You are asked to advise the automation committee in another city on the purchase of the integrated system which you have had for several years. You have been told in confidence by the president of the company that they have plans to go out of business in two years. Would you:
- Refuse to advise the committee?
 - Tell the committee what you know?
 - Tell the library director what you know?
 - Ask the company president to be honest with the committee?
26. You are asked to serve on a national ALA committee to advocate equality of employment, including diverse races, ethnic groups, gays and lesbians, persons with AIDS, and the disabled. You know that this would be controversial among your colleagues, especially your boss. Would you:
- Accept the appointment but not request travel money for attending meetings?
 - Ask your boss first and abide by her/his decision?
 - Accept the appointment and use your vacation hours to go to meetings?
 - Refuse the appointment?
27. You find out while searching a database for a client that a company is likely to have a huge increase in the value of its stock. Would you:
- Forget the information?
 - Buy the stock before it goes up?
 - Tell all your friends about the good deal?
 - Warn the database providers about potential abuse of the information?
28. You are a stamp collector and work in the acquisitions department of a large library. You often see envelopes with stamps which you would like to have. Would you:
- Take the stamps out of the trash?
 - Ask if anyone else wants the stamps and share?
 - Ask your supervisor?
 - Ignore the stamps?
29. You have been working for an automation vendor for a long time when you discover that a fellow employee is passing company secrets to a competitor and receiving money. Would you:
- Tell the president of the company?
 - Tell the person that you will report him/her if the practice does not cease?
 - Ask for a cut of the money?
 - Do nothing?
30. Because you are an information professional, you are asked to serve on a committee in support of a county public information system. Would you:
- Decline because of your desire to maintain professional neutrality?
 - Accept with pleasure?
 - Ask permission of your employer?
 - Suggest that several information professionals advise the group?
31. A regular patron confides in you that she/he wants to commit suicide and asks for resources. Would you:
- Suggest she/he buy *Final Exit* at the bookstore?
 - Give her/him your personal copy of *Final Exit*?
 - Urge her/him to seek counseling?
 - Call a family member and have the person committed to a mental institution?
32. You are in charge of interlibrary loan in a large library. The demand for copies of journal articles has far exceeded fair use under the copyright laws. Your supervisor has told you to ignore the law. Would you:
- Do what you are told?
 - Call the ALA for help?
 - Report the situation to the proper government officials?
 - Find another job?
33. As the systems librarian for a large consortium, you know a great deal about the libraries in your group. For example, you know that two catalogers from different institutions are spending personal time together while they are supposed to be at consortium meetings. Would you:
- Confront the couple?
 - Ignore the situation?
 - Tell the director?
34. Your community has a large number of senior citizens who are politically active, including advocacy for library funding. Over the years your branch library has built a good collection to support their needs. Now there is a large Spanish speaking population moving into the community. Would you:
- Enlist the seniors to raise money for appropriate materials for new members of the community?
 - Form an advisory committee from the new community?
 - Seek new money from the county or state for new materials?
 - Add a Spanish speaking staff member?
35. As the head of the reference staff in a large academic library, you notice that one of your younger librarians is not successful in interacting with the culturally diverse student population. In some cases, the staff member is offensive and even rude. Would you:
- Volunteer to take the person's desk time?
 - Ignore the behavior?
 - Plan an in-house training activity on cultural diversity?
 - Speak directly to the staff member and make clear the implications of the behavior for raises and promotion?

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