

Info 204: Information Professions – Ethics Case Studies

Discussion

- Id dilemma
- Consider professional codes of ethics & personal values (bias)
- 2 courses of action & possible outcomes

My Assessment

This discussion will use the Decision Making Framework to review the problems that occurred at the Vinton Public Library from summer 2021-2022 in an ethical standpoint and consider actions that could have been useful for the situation as reported by the article What's Happening with the Vinton Public Library.

Reading the article, the problem seems to be a disconnect between the library's mission and parts of the community they serve. What started as informal complaints about book displays turned into theft and personal attacks against library personnel (Rushing 2022). On the one hand you have the library and its personal trying to stick to their mission statement of "provid[ing] the community it serves with free and open access to all its collections without prejudice or judgement, thereby encouraging personal, profession, and educational growth," (Vinton Public Library 2022) by providing inclusive books. On the other hand, some members of the community took issue with what they perceived as a hostile change.

Relevant sections of the ALA Professional Code of Ethics include principles 1, 2, 5 & 9. These focus on providing service and equitable access to communities, resisting censorship, and creating safe working conditions for employees according to the ALA website (2021). As for how my personal values affect my thoughts on this matter, I am very liberal and have ties to the LGBTQAI+ community. With that being said, I grew up in a religious household and have had to walk the line between liberal and conservative world views for most of my life.

There are a number of directions that one could go with a situation like this. Certainly, a business-as-usual approach could be used in the beginning. This would include: engaging with the public as normal, replacing books as they go missing, having conversations with upset patrons as they happen while continuing to serve all members of the community by keeping the selection of books diverse. Another option would be to deal with the issue more directly. While the article steers clear of directly naming the issues and viewing underlying world views that are at play, I think it's important to note that this type of reaction can be rooted in fear and thus might be helped by providing space for conversation and education. This may or may not reach the upset conservative individuals, but hopefully would bring attention to the issues at hand allowing other members of the community to potentially learn and eventually support the inclusive environment the library is trying to uphold.

Providing safe space for open communication and discussion when dealing with these types of divides can be quite tricky. There are a lot of personal feelings and beliefs that are tied to political and religious themes, but I think action may be necessary in this situation. Evaluation on this action might look like keeping an eye on if the more "liberal" themed books keep disappearing, monitor suggestions/complaints,

maybe take a head count or tally at any of the events you put on or booths at other events that might engage with providing conversation about LGBTQIA+ topics.

I will end with a note that these issues are much bigger than a small discussion post can fully grapple with; it is an ongoing process to help bridge divides between members of a community and should be evaluated with careful consideration of all parties involved.

References

Vinton Public Library. (2022) Mission Statement. Retrieved September 5, 2022, from <https://www.vinton.lib.ia.us/about/mission-statement>

American Library Association. (2021) Code of Ethics. Retrieved September 5, 2022, from <https://www.ala.org/tools/ethics>

Rushing, T. (2022, July 13). What's happening with the Vinton Public Library. Iowa Starting Line. Retrieved September 3, 2022 from https://iowastartingline.com/2022/07/13/whats-happening-with-the-vinton-public-library/?utm_source=suabstack&utm_medium=email

Response to others:

Hi Student 1:

In your discussion it's striking how there were so many different guidelines and codes that were talked about but none that exactly seemed to fit the situation. It really brings home the idea that was brought up in the chapter readings that these are tool sets to be used not rules to be blindly followed. With that being said, that entire back and forth between Kyle and Palentina doesn't exactly sit right with me. They seem to make a lot of assumptions, we should help if x and then but what if we do then y. It doesn't strike me as being their job to make a call based on what they do or don't know about the investigation and who the police might have in custody.

From the standpoint of safe workplace environments, I agree with both you and Heather that Kyle should never have been put in the situation he was put in. It's kind of unbelievable to have one person put on the spot in a separate room with all those people without being able to contact a legal advisor in a situation such as this.