

MLIS 7650  
Information and Ethics  
Fall 2008

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**Texts to be purchased:**

Michael Gorman. *Our Enduring Values: Librarianship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.  
Chicago: American Library Association, 2000

Toni Samek. *Librarianship and Human Rights: A Twenty-First Century Guide*.  
Oxford: Chandos, 2007

**On-Line Resources:**

American Library Association Code of Ethics  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm>

American Library Association Library Bill of Rights  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm>

Canadian Library Association Code of Ethics  
[http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/Code\\_of\\_Ethics.htm](http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/Code_of_Ethics.htm)

Canadian Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom  
[http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/Statement\\_on\\_Intell.htm](http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/Statement_on_Intell.htm)

Association for Library and Information Science Education Position Statement  
on Information Ethics in LIS Education  
<http://www.alise.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=58273>

**Readings (electronic reserve):**

Sanford Berman "Foreword" in Toni Samek, *Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility in American Librarianship, 1967-1974*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2001.

Wallace Koehler, Jitka Hurych, Wanda Dole, and Joanna Wall, "Ethical Values of Information and Library Professionals -- An Expanded Analysis." *International Information & Library Review*, 32 (3/4) 2000: 485-506.

Wallace Koehler and J. Michael Pemberton, "A Search for Core Values: Towards a Model Code of Ethics for Information Professionals," *Journal of Information Ethics* 9 (1 Spring) 2000: 26-54.

## **Course hypotheses:**

The American Library Association's Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights and the Canadian Library Association's Code of Ethics and Statement on Intellectual Freedom begin to help define institutionalized concepts ethics in librarianship as it is understood in North America. In this course we shall take these four core statements as guidance as we begin to explore.

We are going to take the role of "constitutional library-lawyers" and explore the four statements and analyze them in the context of practice and theory. Samek's (2007) work provides a wide range of resources to point us toward ethics resources. We will use her book as guide to the many questions and issues the ALA and CLA documents raise for us. Gorman speaks to what he defines as enduring values, and these values are reflected in the ALA and CLA documents.

As a working hypothesis, the instructor believes that ethical practices can be "divined" from the works and writings of librarians (and others) that do not carry the word "ethics" in their titles. For example, in the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, the protagonist describes the establishment of subscription libraries in the American colonies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. What ethical precepts might we subsume from the widespread use of subscription libraries? Are there parallels in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **Assignments:**

### **(1) Short Papers**

Drawing on Gorman and Samek and resources they and others provide, address elements of the ALA and CLA documents. Keep papers to no more 4-6 pages.

Paper 1: On service. What do the ALA and CLA Codes of Ethics mean by service? How as service been treated as an ethical precept? Are there inherent conflicts between service and other ethical precepts, particularly stewardship? **Due September 30**

Paper 2: On intellectual freedom. Define intellectual freedom within the context of the ALA and CLA documents. If intellectual freedom is a premier guiding

precept, how does it square with perhaps other conflicting ideas – protection of intellectual property or diversity? Consider the relationship and the tension between copyright and fair use. How have librarians and libraries addressed intellectual freedom historically and today? **Due October 30**

Paper 3: On access. Define access in the context of libraries. Are there different “rules” for different libraries. How have libraries treated “access” in the 1650s, 1850s, 1950s, and today? **Due November 30**

## (2) Term Paper

A term paper is required at the end of the semester. It is to address one or both of the course hypotheses described above.

The paper is to be a well developed argument, hopefully an interesting proto-manuscript to be sculpted for publication. It is to be fully documented and in an appropriate citation style. I would suggest you consider examining a journal of choice that might be an appropriate venue for your article. Use the writing and citation style required by that journal.

There is no specific length. Your paper needs to be as long as it needs to be to make your argument. A guideline might be twenty or more double spaced pages.

Some journals you might consider

*History of Ideas*  
*Information Ethics*  
*Libraries & Culture*  
*Library History*

## Discussion & Face to Face Seminar

Saturday, October 24 – 10 am to 4 pm – at Odum Library in Valdosta  
Participation is **not** mandatory, but strongly suggested.

Discussion sections are established in WebCT. You may discuss the readings I provide and other readings, and other related matters of interest.

Several case studies are available in WebCT. These are “set up” as every day issues one might face in a contemporary library. Without extensive research, discuss among yourselves how you might respond to the cases.

# Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- (1) Understand and appreciate the basic ethical tenets of the LIS field(s)
- (2) Understand and appreciate the historical evolution of information professional ethics in North America
- (3) Understand and appreciate the professional codes of ethics and expression of values of different organizations and expositors
- (4) Analyze in the abstract and in the particular ethical conflicts and provide guidance to the resolution of the conflict

And to demonstrate these skills through their work and subsequent practice

# University Calendar

The University calendar can be found at

<http://www.valdosta.edu/vsu/calendars/academic.shtml>

Classes begin August 18 and end December 8.

Fall Break is October 13 and 14.

Thanksgiving Holiday is November 26-28.

Graduation is scheduled for December 13.

All term papers are due no later than end of the day December 11.

# Grades

Short Papers –	15% each
Final Paper –	35%
Discussion –	20%

A= 91-100

B=81-90

C=71-80

D=61-70

F= 0-60

# Student Ethics, Rights and Responsibilities

The MLIS Program and Valdosta State University take a dim view of plagiarism.

For a definition, see

[http://www.valdosta.edu/~cbarnbau/personal/teaching\\_MISC/plagiarism.htm](http://www.valdosta.edu/~cbarnbau/personal/teaching_MISC/plagiarism.htm)

As students you have certain rights and responsibilities. You should make yourselves aware of them. The following provides links to relevant VSU policy:

- [Access Office for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Academic Dishonesty, p. 263 of Graduate Catalog, 2007/08 \[pdf\]](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Statement](#)
- [MLIS Policy on Interlibrary Loan Requests for Textbooks \[pdf\]](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct \[pdf\]](#)
- [Sexual Harassment](#)