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## Introduction

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### ABSTRACT

ETHICAL CONCERNS HAVE always played a seminal role in the traditional professions, but it is only fairly recently that librarians have manifested any interest in ethics. Prior to the publication of the present editor's bomb experiment in a 1976 *Wilson Library Bulletin*, there was virtually nothing available in the literature. Subsequently, sporadic articles began to appear and as the eighties progressed, due in part to the general *zeitgeist*, the floodgates opened and a plethora of articles and two books poured forth. Additionally, conferences, seminars, and meetings, all devoted to various aspects of ethics and information dissemination, began to take place. Indeed, these activities have stimulated researchers to investigate areas that heretofore were not considered within this context—e.g., “the ethics of book preservation.” Finally, it should be noted, the state of Michigan employs a lawyer whose primary responsibility is to help librarians who have legal questions and dilemmas of a professional nature.

Libraries are the traditional storehouses of information, but, with the recent dramatic change to a postindustrial society, one that values information more than any other individual commodity, new sources of information have arisen. The editor of this issue takes a broad approach and thus one will find herein articles on such standard topics as confidentiality (Garoogian) and medical reference (Wood), but also discussions of the censorious practices not of political nor religious groups, but instead of scholarly cliques and their charges

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LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 40, No. 2, Fall 1991, pp. 199-200

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(Swan), the relationship between ethics and technology (Froehlich), the conflict of simultaneous service or public and private employment (Stevens, Bjørner), and the process of disseminating new knowledge (Moran, Serebnick).

This issue of *Library Trends* is not meant to be a comprehensive overview of the broad and diverse range of subjects subsumed under the rubric of ethics, but rather a series of essays on some of the most important and intellectually stimulating of these topics. Many of the authors have already contributed to the growing body of literature on information ethics, and it is hoped that these new essays will stimulate further discussion of those topics that will be most influential during the coming decade. These include the dissemination of scholarly information and a reevaluation of the peer review process; patron confidentiality; conflict of interest; technology; and information liability, including the possibility of malpractice suits.