Ethical Considerations in Representation
Or, Did Dui Do It?

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ABSTRACT
THE SEVERAL ROLES THAT contemporary American librarians may
play in cooperative organizations and library associations often places
them in situations in which their principal employer stands to gain,
or lose, from actions they may take in their role in such organizations
or associations. An examination of the potential conflicts that may
arise from such roles suggests the need for those involved to give
careful attention to appropriate ethical considerations even though
there may be no question of direct personal benefit. After a general
description of the extent and nature of the multiple roles that
librarians now play, the ethical questions that arise from such
situations, and a detailed examination of several actual cases, a few
general suggestions for at least minimizing the appearance of conflict
are discussed.

INTRODUCTION
In contemporary American society, there is an increasing
awareness of ethical issues—unquestionably heightened by various
recent national political scandals—and the extent to which those
issues require careful thought among all professionals, even
librarians. Although the American Library Association (ALA)
promulgated in 1981 a revised Code of Ethics to which all professional
librarians are supposed to subscribe, librarians are not immune to
the temptations that beset them when faced with a situation in which
professional employment may open the way, directly or indirectly,

to personal gain. Until recently, it appeared as though, in most cases, there was little cause for concern, perhaps in large part because librarians as a class are honest, primarily because library budgets were comparatively small, and libraries were not a part of the general commercial fabric of society. Various factors, including relative prosperity and the widespread application of technology by libraries, have changed that and increased librarians' vulnerability.

From time to time, and with what appears to be some noticeable increase in frequency, situations arise in which librarians are clearly guilty of using their professional position for private gain. Such situations, which often involve some kind of embezzlement, inevitably attract considerable professional and public attention since they appear to be, and are, so clearly out of character. In these cases, the dividing line is clear cut, violations are easily identified, and sanctions are readily applied. Still, either because of our essential professional honesty or simply limited opportunities, such conflicts of interest are a rarity among librarians.

There is an increasingly more common situation that often ultimately presents librarians with a very real potential conflict of interest in a professional, if not a personal, sense. That situation raises substantial questions about loyalty, conflicting institutional and organizational interests, and how those involved can act in a professional manner to adequately protect the rights of all parties. This is not a recent development—although here again the application of technology by libraries has helped dramatize the situation—but one that has existed, for the most part largely unnoticed, for many years.

Most librarians are employed and paid by a particular institution that assumes, and may even spell out in employment contracts or other official documents, that the librarian's principal responsibilities are to represent the best interests of the institution at all times, to see that the needs of the institution and its library are met, and to make sure that the library receives the goods and services it requires to operate effectively under the most favorable conditions. As a body of professionals with a strong commitment to cooperation as a primary means of achieving the goals of individual libraries and librarianship as a whole, librarians have consciously created a wide variety of formal associations, organizations, programs, and other activities that are designed to enhance library service. The growth, development, and proper functioning of those cooperative efforts is largely based on the premise that the governance and direction, and sometimes even the management, of those efforts is best controlled by librarians from the participating institutions. That approach has been adopted both as a cost-effective method of operation and as

a means of ensuring that the control and direction of such efforts will remain in the hands of those who understand the importance of cooperative activities and, significantly, those whose libraries stand to gain the most from such efforts.

A substantial number of American librarians now serve on the governing bodies and/or committees of regional, state, multistate, and national network organizations. They also serve on the governing bodies and/or committees of regional, state, multistate, and national professional associations that often play a direct role in the planning and development of cooperative activities. They may also serve on committees or review panels that assist state library agencies or federal agencies in the awarding of substantial grants for a wide variety of library programs. There are relatively few librarians involved in the administration and management of libraries in the United States who do not, in some fashion or another, also play a broader role in the profession and, especially, in cooperative activities that are directly linked to their own success or failure as well as to the growth and development of the library in which they work.

Most of those librarians—even if asked—undoubtedly would not think that their participation in such activities, especially if that participation is clearly on behalf of their own institution, raises any ethical questions for two reasons. First is the fact that in almost every case there is no question of personal gain. Second is the fact that in almost every case there appears, on the surface, to be no conflict between the goals and objectives of their own institution and those of the activity, association, organization, or program in which they are participating on behalf of their institution. Indeed most such participation is clearly intended to help facilitate the development of programs and/or access to services that will benefit the individual's institution. Both of these reasons require careful analysis.

In most cases, there is, in fact, no question of any direct personal payment to the individual librarian, but there may often be perquisites such as the payment of travel expenses; time due to the parent institution may be directed to a cooperative effort; there is always prestige to be gained; consulting opportunities may present themselves; and participation in cooperative efforts may lead to new job opportunities including, in many cases, ones with an association or organization. Increasingly, as for example in the case of the OCLC Board of Trustees, individuals may receive direct payment for their service to a cooperative body.

It is by no means always clear that the goals and objectives of the individual library and those of a cooperative association or organization are identical. In another context, the National Collegiate

Athletic Association (NCAA) has certainly demonstrated that. Each
has its own mission. Each seeks to strengthen itself. It may not always
be appropriate to use the time and resources of an institution to
support an individual librarian's work on behalf of a larger
cooperative effort. Even when goals and objectives may be identical,
and even when a librarian's primary employer may fully support
a librarian's participation in such an effort, there remains the distinct
possibility that such participation will allow him or her to help
direct the goals and programs of the cooperative effort to meet the
needs and interests of his or her own library.

Simple answers no longer suffice in these complex situations
especially at a time when there is an increased emphasis on
accountability and ethics in all parts of contemporary society. Actions
and decisions that, at first glance, may seem simple and
straightforward are too often fraught with difficulty. A substantial
number of situations arising from the common practice among
librarians of assuming multiple professional roles present substantial
ethical questions that require careful attention. We can no longer
simply assume—if we ever could—that librarians are all professionals
of good will whose actions are automatically honest and above board.
Even if we as individuals assume or know that they are, others may
question their integrity. Librarians are, at the very least, obligated
to make every effort to minimize situations that appear to allow them
to take advantage of their own institution to work for other bodies,
allow their own institution directly or indirectly to benefit from the
work for such bodies, or—in rare cases—place them in the position
of appearing to support the goals and objectives of other bodies that
may not be in the best interest of their own institution.

Did Dui Do It?

These are by no means new issues for librarians. They are ones
that have existed since at least 1876. The subtitle of this essay—*Did
Dui Do It?*—is not entirely facetious. It is meant to suggest that just
as Melvil Dewey can be credited with many of the positive aspects
of the growth of librarianship in the United States in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he also can be credited with
having been among the first to find himself in the kind of situations
in which diverse institutional and professional—and sometimes even
personal—loyalties may create substantial conflicts of interest for
librarians. Throughout his professional career, Dewey played many
roles simultaneously. While employed primarily as secretary of the
American Library Association, he continued, of course, to develop
and market the Dewey Decimal Classification to libraries as a private
enterprise. He developed, as an outgrowth of the Supplies Committee

of the American Library Association, the Library Bureau as an independent commercial firm producing and selling equipment and supplies to libraries. While librarian at Columbia University, he established and operated—apparently without official sanction and with the admission of women students under circumstances that ultimately brought him into direct conflict with the Board of Trustees of Columbia University—the School of Library Economy. He presumably saw that school as meeting a broad professional need that he assumed was in the best interests of librarianship even though it was not necessarily in accord with what the trustees saw as the best interests of Columbia University. Ultimately Dewey was forced out of an active career in librarianship because of his leading role in the Lake Placid Club which discriminated in its membership. There is little evidence to suggest that Dewey ever considered any of those situations to raise ethical questions that he, or others, needed to be concerned about. Dewey's lasting legacy to librarianship in this regard may be his lack of concern about such issues. That lack of concern is no longer appropriate. As additional examples will make clear, librarians need to pay serious attention to developing appropriate standards of behavior in situations that arise when they undertake multiple roles.

CASE STUDIES

In order to clarify the extent to which what may appear to be innocuous situations are, in fact, fraught with potential danger, it is important to examine in detail a number of typical cases that demonstrate, in both particular and general terms, the issues that one faces when he or she engages in an expanded professional role. It is important to demonstrate that these are indeed real day-to-day occurrences and not simply hypothetical situations. The discussion of these cases is intended only to illustrate the situations that frequently do arise and the questions that may be raised. It is not intended to suggest, in any fashion, that individual librarians—including this author—have not thought about the ethical implications of their actions, have in any way acted improperly, have acted for personal gain, or have acted solely in the best interests, or at times to the detriment, of their home institution. The discussion is intended only to be illustrative of situations that do occur with increasing regularity. It is by no means exhaustive. It should alert all librarians to the real necessity of examining carefully their behavior, and that of others, in situations in which they play multiple roles. It should alert librarians in particular to the need to act with due consideration not only for known motives and the reality of a

situation, but also for how others may regard those motives and the appearances of a situation.

A COPYRIGHT CASE

Frequently, as the first example demonstrates, librarians may have several different roles that create special challenges for them. In the mid-1980s, at a time when Nancy Marshall was an associate director at the University of Wisconsin at Madison Library, she was also chair of the American Library Association's Copyright Committee and a member of the OCLC Board of Trustees. As a library administrator and chair of ALA's Copyright Committee, Marshall presumably had a primary interest—since those two institutions shared common goals in this respect—in the maintenance of an interpretation of the Federal Copyright Law that allowed for the broadest possible latitude in the application of the fair use doctrine, always allowing, of course, for the fact that both of those institutions are publishers and, as publishers, might have interests to protect that would argue against, in some respects, a liberal interpretation of the fair use doctrine. More significant is the fact that, at that time, OCLC was seeking to copyright its bibliographic database in an action that brought widespread protest from many OCLC members and many library associations and organizations. It was widely felt that the question of ownership of the bibliographic records in the OCLC database was by no means clear and that OCLC's attempt to secure copyright in its name was not in the best interests of its members either as individual libraries or as members of a multistate network. As a member of the OCLC Board of Trustees, Marshall was publicly supporting that action—although presumably she might have been speaking against it in board meetings—and at a time when she was charged as chair of ALA's Copyright Committee with relaying information to the Legislation Committee "on the various aspects of the copyright law that are unsettled or on which there is a general lack of understanding among librarians." She was also doing so when, for example, the attorney general of Wisconsin was actively arguing against OCLC's proposed action. In that situation, Marshall was presumably faced with a complex problem in respect to reconciling her understanding and interpretation of the Federal Copyright Law with the differing interests and positions of the University of Wisconsin, the American Library Association, and OCLC as she simultaneously served and represented those three institutions.

OCLC

Since its founding in the late 1960s, OCLC has either created or contributed to a considerable number of complex situations, such

as that encountered by Marshall, in which librarians involved in its governance have been faced with difficult ethical decisions as they sought to meet the needs of OCLC while simultaneously representing the best interests of their libraries. Begun as a conscious effort to build a cooperative program that would offer a full range of automated services to libraries in Ohio, and supported financially primarily by its member libraries in Ohio with added support from the state, OCLC soon found itself with a highly successful cataloging system built around a shared bibliographic database to which libraries outside of Ohio wished to gain access. That left the Ohio membership, and in particular the original board of trustees, with a decision as to whether to adhere to their original plan of developing additional services built around that database for the Ohio members or to aggressively market its successful product to libraries outside Ohio. To what extent that issue was ever discussed in ethical terms is not clear, but it seems evident that even at that point, and certainly in hindsight, there was a discrepancy between what might have been in the best interests of the member libraries, and their investment and ongoing support of OCLC, and the best interests of OCLC as an independent organization. It could not have been an easy decision involving, as it must have, a myriad of financial, operational, legal, and systems considerations. That the final decision was in the best interest of OCLC is evident from its growth and development since that time. That the final decision may not have been in the best interests of the member libraries is evident from the current effort by academic libraries in Ohio to once again form a cooperative organization to develop a full-scale integrated library system for its members. That action clearly replicates the early goals of OCLC and suggests that the Ohio members of OCLC might have been better served had the earlier decision been to maintain OCLC as an Ohio based system. Whose interests did the then OCLC Board of Trustees and Ohio member libraries serve in making that decision?

The rapid growth and development of OCLC in the early 1970s placed heavy demands on the time of those librarians in Ohio who served on that board of trustees. That presumably placed them in a position, to one degree or another, that might have raised questions about their use of institutional time on behalf of OCLC, especially as its focus shifted to the development of a national program, and whether that use of their time was in the best interests of their own institutions. At OCLC and subsequently at other multistate networks, several members of the board of trustees went on to accept full-time positions with OCLC for which they were qualified primarily on the basis of the expertise that they had developed as members of the board and on the time and effort that they had volunteered to

OCLC. Such job movement represents, in general terms, the kind of "revolving door" situation that now raises serious ethical questions when an individual moves from a governmental position to employment with a private firm with which he or she had previously been dealing. It should perhaps raise the same kinds of questions for librarians.

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

The rapid development of networks in the early 1970s placed many librarians in the position of direct participation in the decision-making processes for those networks with relatively little experience and/or training in such matters. That was especially true in regard to decisions involving the marketing of OCLC services and the pricing of those and other network services. As they sought to balance the welfare of their own institution with the welfare of a multistate network as a whole, as well as with the welfare of all of its existing and/or potential members, those involved in network governance had to deal with complex issues with little guidance. As a member (1969-1979) and officer (vice chairman 1972-1973, chairman 1973-1975, controller 1977-1978, and president 1978-1979) of the NELINET Executive Committee and later the NELINET Board of Trustees, this author can, in this case, offer comments and observations based on direct active participation in the process. There were at least three major issues, typical of the issues faced by other networks at the same time, on which choices had to be made by those making the decisions that, at least in retrospect, raised serious ethical questions. I cannot recall that the NELINET Board ever specifically addressed the ethical implications of those situations, but, in each case, we certainly agonized over questions of equity throughout the process. In each instance the underlying question, as seen in retrospect, was whether we were acting in the best interest of our institutions or of the network as a whole. In each case it was evident at the time, and continues to be evident, that the individual librarians involved in the decision-making process at NELINET were motivated, for better or for worse, to act in the best interests of the network as a whole, and of all of its members, largely on the assumption that the long-term growth and development of NELINET was ultimately in the best interests of their institutions. That was often done without regard for, and frequently in direct conflict with, what would have clearly been in the best short-term interests of their institutions.

The first such issue at NELINET dealt with the possible recovery of the initial financial investment that the founding members of the network had made in establishing the organization. The possibility of recovering some of that investment by a charge-back to new

members was discussed but ultimately, as true in most other networks faced with this issue, the decision was made not to attempt to recover those costs despite the fact that to do so might have been of direct financial benefit to the libraries of those making the decision.

A second such issue at NELINET, and also in other networks, dealt with the apportionment of telecommunications costs and, in particular, whether or not telecommunications charges should be established with or without regard to the geographic location of the participating libraries. For individual libraries centrally located in respect to the network site, a decision to base telecommunication charges in direct relationship to geographic location would have been to their economic advantage; for libraries less favorably located, that same decision would have resulted in substantially higher charges that might have even prohibited them from participating in the network. Largely for reasons having to do with the felt need to promote the widest possible membership in the network from within all of New England, NELINET, like most other networks, elected to make telecommunications charges distance independent. Several librarians whose institutions stood to benefit, and in some cases substantially, from a different decision readily supported that action.

Far more complex, both because in most cases it had less direct influence on the growth and development of the network and because there were numerous possible gradations in the scale of charges, were the decisions—plural because as network charges were reviewed annually, this factor was examined carefully several times—as to how to apportion costs, including telecommunications, among libraries on the basis of size. Charging member libraries, for example, for telecommunications on a per terminal or a per institution basis was one option that was frequently reviewed. The decisions in this area, at least within NELINET, should have raised serious ethical questions perhaps largely because of the way in which they were most typically addressed. As the NELINET Executive Committee struggled with this issue, the process began with the development of the total operating budget required to support NELINET's programs and services for the coming fiscal year. That, in turn, led to a discussion of how best to apportion charges to produce the level of income needed to support the requisite budget. Most often the NELINET staff produced several detailed algorithms describing how charges might be assessed on the basis of various factors always including, in particular, the size of the participating libraries. There was always a serious effort to arrive at a balanced decision that would, in general, allow the network to accommodate and support membership by smaller libraries. Unlike the distance-related telecommunications issue, it was never an outright yes or no decision. It was always

a question of fine tuning to arrive at an appropriate point on a
continuum that would balance the needs of smaller and larger
libraries. In that respect, the members of the executive committee
were faced with a continuing ethical challenge as they sought to
arrive at a decision that directly affected their budgets and the needs
and interests of their institutions as well as the budget and the needs
and interests of NELINET.

The underlying concept of encompassing the needs of the
individual library within the needs of the larger organization—on
the grounds that the long-term growth of the larger institution is
always in the best interests of the individual library—is how network
decisions may have most often been rationalized, but whether or not,
in fact, that principle has guided individual votes and particular
decisions is by no means certain. The possibility of votes and decisions
being arrived at primarily on the basis of self-interest always exists.

The issue of network governance rapidly became extremely
complicated in the late 1970s as more and more network organizations
came into existence and as OCLC changed its governance structure.
In that process, many participating librarians found themselves
involved in a multitude of roles that made it difficult, if not impossible,
to keep a sense of balance or proportion. It soon became possible
for an individual librarian, who began with and maintained a basic
responsibility for the effective oversight of his or her own libraries'
finances and operations, to serve simultaneously on the board of a
multistate network, the OCLC Users Council (on which this author
served from 1978-1981), and/or the OCLC Board of Trustees and,
indeed, to be an officer in two or more of those network organizations
at the same time. The somewhat later development, in the early 1980s,
of a variety of smaller regional shared automated systems within
individual states, almost all of which have also typically developed
a shared governance structure of some kind, has only served to expand
such opportunities.

The most difficult issues regularly faced by individual librarians
in such situations, whether or not they fully recognize the ethical
implications involved in the decision-making process, have to do
not with the immediate question at hand but with the broader
question of which set of interests they represent in their involvement
in the decision-making process in various organizations. Neither the
assumption that there is a common set of goals and objectives—witness
the questions involved in the effort to copyright the OCLC database—
nor the assumption that the goals of the "higher" level organization
always take precedence—witness the fact that an institution
employing an individual librarian generally does so with the explicit
understanding that the person's primary responsibility is to represent

the needs of that institution—are adequate guides to action. Each issue is likely to be somewhat different, especially in respect to the convergence or identity of interests, and each individual is likely to respond in a somewhat different way.

HARD CASES

As complex as the issues of representation in network governance may be, they are by no means the most difficult ethical situations that have arisen from the growth and development of networks in the past two decades. They are, at least, issues in which it is presumed that individuals have acted in the best interest of one or more of the parties that they represent. At worst they involve issues in which it might be suggested that an individual had sought to influence a network decision to the direct economic benefit of his or her library to the detriment of other participating libraries. The development of networks, however, has also created situations in which it is possible for individuals to use a network's services to the advantage of his or her library without disadvantaging other members or the network as a whole—and indeed perhaps even substantially benefiting them—but in ways that raise serious ethical questions.

The recent case, which attracted widespread national attention for its ethical implications, in which individuals in the Department of Defense (DoD) used the Pentagon library's membership in FEDLINK to expedite nonlibrary related consulting contracts, in apparent violation of DoD's procurement regulations, is the most noteworthy example. A considerable portion of FEDLINK's budget, including overhead costs that supported the overall operation of the network and reduced the costs to other participating libraries, came from such contracts. That inappropriate use of a library network, despite the fact that it benefitted the network and its members, represented a kind of obvious unethical behavior that was quickly stopped by the Librarian of Congress when he was made aware of it. This is perhaps the only clear cut case of unethical library network organizational behavior that has yet come to light.

But what of another far more common example, which has become a standard practice in many networks and that benefits both the network and its member libraries? In the initial development of financial policies in most of the OCLC affiliated networks, a decision was made, primarily for operational reasons, to offer participating libraries the opportunity to pay for OCLC and other services on an annual-in-advance basis with an appropriate discount for prepayment. Those pricing policies generally have remained in effect even though OCLC's pricing policies have made it just as economical for a network to pay OCLC on a monthly-after-the-fact

basis. By offering a discounted price for these services, payment for
which may represent a substantial portion of a library's operational
budget, the networks have become, in effect, bankers. This policy
decision has allowed individual libraries to augment their budget
in a way that is not available to it within its own institution by
depositing funds in a network account where these funds can earn
interest for the network before being expended for OCLC or other
external services. The library then shares in that interest income both
through reduced costs and through the ability of the network to
develop a reserve fund that may be used to generate additional income
that in turn may keep price increases down, support network growth
and development, or fund the establishment of new services. That
appears to be a reasonable network policy decision and a sensible
library operational decision that benefits both parties. Since most
libraries are a part of another institution and do not have direct
control over their own funds, that policy decision—especially to the
extent that individual librarians may be involved in the establishment
or application of that policy at the network level—and its application
within an individual library raises serious ethical considerations. If
reviewed carefully by auditors and/or other institutional officials,
that approach to the funding of networks and the payment for network
services might well be called into question. Investment policies are
typically handled at the institutional level, or, in the case of many
publicly supported institutions, at a governmental level. An
individual library is not generally free to take funds allocated to it
for operational purposes and place these funds in a bank account
to earn interest for the library—not the institution—during the year.
By utilizing the network's payment-in-advance policy, which it may
have helped establish, the library is gaining an economic advantage
in what may be a questionable fashion at the expense of its own
institution or of the governmental body that provides the institution's
financial resources. This is now a commonly accepted practice that
appears to be a perfectly reasonable way for a library, in accordance
with its internal goals and objectives, to make the most effective
use of its resources. It may well be a questionable practice when
viewed from the broader perspective of institutional policies,
procedures, and goals. It certainly raises serious ethical questions
in respect to the extent to which individual librarians involved in
the development and application of network policies may be able
to manipulate those policies to their advantage—and to the advantage
of the network and other member libraries—at the expense of their
own institution or the governmental body that supports it.

THE CONNLINET COUNCIL

A story in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (January 10, 1989, pp. 11-12) reported on the conflict of interest issues raised by the relatively common practice of allowing the staff and board members of a foundation awarding grants to serve on the boards of nonprofit organizations that may be seeking grants from that foundation. The issues raised are serious and substantial. While the particular issues may not be directly applicable to libraries, there are certainly a number of analogous instances in librarianship that raise similar questions. There are many situations in which librarians, representing individual institutions, serve on a policy-making body, and/or a grant-awarding body, that places them in a position to influence the development of policies and/or the awarding of grants—even if they may abstain from voting when the issue directly involves their own library—that directly or indirectly benefit their own library.

The work of the Connlinet Council, established by the Connecticut State Library Board in the mid-1980s pursuant to state law, is an example of how complex these matters can become and of the serious ethical issues that may develop. The Connlinet Council was responsible for the development of policies and plans relating to the establishment of automated library services in Connecticut, the drafting and preliminary approval of regulations governing the awarding of state automation grants, and the review of applications for those grants in order to make recommendations to the State Library Board. As a member (1984-1988) and officer (chairman 1985-1988) of the Connlinet Council, this author once again had first hand experience in working through what turned out to be a series of issues in which the council faced ethical considerations. In contrast to the earlier experience in NELINET where ethical considerations largely remained in the background and were seldom raised directly, the Connlinet Council frequently discussed ethical considerations directly and at some length. Policy statements governing potential conflict of interest situations not covered by state law were drafted and, although ultimately never fully adopted, served as the basis for individual actions particularly in respect to participation in the discussion and review of grant applications.

By the time the Connlinet Council was established, libraries in Connecticut had already had considerable experience with a wide range of automated programs and services. In addition to substantial participation in NELINET and OCLC, there were five well-established shared automated systems in operation and extensive independent use of various kinds of library automation. The passage of the state law authorizing automation grants and the establishment of the Connlinet Council was the direct result of extensive work

involving a variety of individuals and libraries, including the
Connecticut State Library, over a period of years. Appointments to
the Connlinet Council were, as one might have expected, made with
careful attention to the deliberate inclusion of individuals with
considerable experience in the application of automation to library
services in the state with a particular emphasis on those who had
been involved in shared systems and other cooperative programs.
From the start, the majority of members of the Connlinet Council
were individuals who had at least dual, frequently triple, and
sometimes quadruple interests in the outcome of the council's work.
Individual librarians, for example, most typically represented libraries
that actively participated in one of six Cooperating Library Service
Units (CLSUs) as well as in one of the five shared automated systems.
In addition, staff members of one or more of the CLSUs and/or shared
automated systems served on the Connlinet Council throughout its
existence. At all times, the membership of the Connlinet Council
consisted predominantly of individuals who had a direct institutional
and/or organizational interest in the growth and development of
automation in Connecticut not only from the perspective of the
information welfare of the citizens of the state as a whole—a fact
that was never questioned—but from the perspective of their
individual libraries as well as various cooperative associations and
organizations.

In the initial formulation of policy by Connlinet, for example,
a decision was made—based primarily on the language of the
authorizing legislation that was a direct outgrowth of earlier library
planning efforts—to concentrate on support for automated programs
and services of a cooperative nature and to exclude, or minimize,
support for stand-alone automated systems in individual libraries.
That policy decision effectively precluded support to several large
public libraries in Connecticut that had stand-alone systems and that
were not represented on the council. That decision, which was
formally accepted by the State Library Board, governed the work
of the Connlinet Council. It was presumably in the best long-term
interests of the citizens of Connecticut and of the state government
in respect to the sharing of library resources. It was also clearly in
the best interests of those libraries and organizations whose
representatives constituted most of the Connlinet Council.

Over several years, as the Connlinet Council reviewed and
recommended substantial automation grants, the grant review process
itself presented interesting dilemmas for virtually every member of
the council at one time or another. The simple question, for example,
of what information it was, or was not, appropriate for members
of the council whose institutions were applying for a grant to share

with other members in the discussion of grant applications—a discussion that always took place, as required under Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act, in an announced public meeting, although others seldom attended those meetings—was frequently a matter of concern especially if the application was not clear or some adjustment in the amount of awards was called for.

Abstention from voting on grant applications was, of course, the accepted practice when it involved a member's own library or organization or any library that participated in a member's organization. In addition, librarians representing libraries served by a shared system typically abstained from voting on *any* grant application that involved the shared system, including the funding of new members, since their library might gain some direct or indirect benefit from the awarding of a grant. There were few grant applications in which there were not several abstentions; in fact, the broad application of potential conflict of interest rules might have required, in some cases, a majority of the members to abstain. The process called only for the Connlinet Council to review grant applications and to make recommendations to the State Library Board (whose membership was always less directly involved in library programs), which had ultimate responsibility for awarding the grants. The State Library Board never questioned the council's recommendations, and there were no formal appeals to the State Library Board involving any of those recommendations.

Throughout the course of its work, the Connlinet Council regularly and frequently discussed various ethical questions especially as they involved potential conflicts of interest raised by the application of its policies and procedures. All of its members made a serious and conscientious effort to be guided primarily by the overall needs and interests of sound statewide automation planning. Yet, because of the intricate existing pattern of library automation and network services in Connecticut, it was virtually impossible to ascertain the extent to which any individual involved in the Connlinet Council could easily determine whom he or she might have represented at a particular point in time or on a particular issue. Nor was it possible to determine the extent to which the goals of a particular policy or program were truly shared goals of broad benefit to all libraries and all citizens as against the extent to which they were more limited goals of benefit only to a particular library, network, shared system, or other segment of the library community. Today, only a few years later, it would be even more difficult to develop policies and plans for broad-based shared network services in Connecticut without the active involvement of a wide spectrum of individuals who already have one or more sets of vested interests.

Suggestions

The general description of some of the ethical issues generated by the multiple roles that so many librarians assume as they represent their libraries in cooperative activities, along with the specific examples presented earlier, serves to illustrate the complex situations that we face. That description and those examples should help heighten awareness among librarians of the extent to which the multiple roles that we all so frequently now play do raise serious ethical challenges. As is so often the case, an awareness of those issues, and a willingness to take them into account in our actions, is an important first step. There may, indeed, be relatively few additional specific steps that librarians can take to make certain that they act in an ethical fashion when confronted with situations in which the various roles that they assume raise questions of potential conflicts of interest.

There are, however, a few suggestions based on or derived in large measure from the examples cited earlier, that can be offered. Together these suggestions may form the beginnings of a code of practices to augment ALA's Code of Ethics, which fails to address these issues. It also seems clear that the ALA Council's Committee on Professional Ethics should be encouraged to develop a revision of that code that speaks directly to the ethical considerations raised when librarians serve on representative bodies. It also seems reasonable to suggest that individual networks, shared systems, and other cooperative activities, committees, and organizations should develop their own formal statements of ethical behavior to describe their expectations of the way in which representatives from member libraries should conduct themselves.

The primary responsibility for these matters continues to reside, as it always has, with the individual librarian. As professionals, it is up to us to abide by high standards of behavior and to avoid situations and/or actions in which personal integrity may be called into question.

Librarians should accept, as a general principle, the idea that our primary loyalty and obligation is to the library or institution by which we are employed. Librarians should comply fully with the policies and regulations of the library and institution especially in respect to those governing such matters as the use of time or payment for external services. We should assist in the development of, understand, and accept the mission statements of the library and institution and their goals and objectives. In serving on other bodies, librarians should recognize that we are doing so as a representative of our own library and institution and should make every effort to be certain that there is no conflict between the mission and the goals

and objectives of that body and those of our library or institution. The decision to serve in some capacity with an external organization or association should be reached only after there is a clear understanding that such service is in harmony, and not in conflict, with our primary employment and assignment. Where there is an obvious conflict, we should not serve or at least be prepared to explain to all concerned, the nature of any potential conflict of interest. In some cases it may be desirable to review the possible conflict beforehand with an immediate supervisor.

Clearly librarians should abstain from voting, or otherwise taking any direct action, on any matter before an association or organization on which they serve when it is evident that either they or the library or institution for which they work may benefit, directly or indirectly, from that vote or other action. Librarians should, in every case, be careful, at the very least, to make certain that all involved are fully aware of the various groups and interests that they may represent.

The generally accepted principle of making a decision that serves the greater good or the "higher" organization, which is especially prevalent in cooperative associations and organizations, needs to be carefully thought through. Potential conflict between the needs of a cooperative body and the needs of its members' libraries should be identified and discussed thoroughly to determine appropriate courses of action. Librarians should be careful not to use their role in an external association or organization to help shape policies or procedures that can be seen as enabling themselves or others to somehow circumvent established institutional policies and procedures to the benefit of their library. Nor should they use their role in such a group to shape policies and procedures that can be seen as providing direct or indirect benefit to them or to their library. We should, again, be certain that all involved know and understand how a decision in which we are participating may affect the library.

Since the issues are so complex, and since there is a lack of clear guidelines to govern current practices, it is, above all, the free and frank discussion of these issues that is critical. All who are involved must understand these issues and act thoughtfully and responsibly in offering guidance and direction to themselves and others. That we have come a long way toward a better understanding of these issues is amply demonstrated by the sharp contrast in the work of the NELINET Board in the 1970s and the Connlinet Council in the 1980s. Although both faced what were, in fact, serious ethical considerations as they dealt with important policy decisions, there was little or no direct discussion of those considerations in NELINET, but there was lengthy and protracted discussion in Connlinet. We still have, however, a long way to go especially in more clearly

articulating the issues and in developing formal statements to guide our behavior rather than continuing to rely on individual librarians to exercise sound judgment.