

**Code of Professional Ethics for Bibliothek & Information Deutschland (BID) –  
Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Bibliotheksverbände e.V.**

Library and Information in Germany (BID) – Federal Union of German Library Associations  
(translated from the German by Janet MacKenzie)

**Preamble**

*Bibliothek & Information Deutschland e.V. – BID* (Library and Information in Germany) is the umbrella organisation for professional librarianship and information associations in Germany. Its members are the *Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V. – dbv* (the German Library Association), the *Berufsverband Information Bibliothek e.V. – BIB* (Association of Information and Library Professionals), the *VDB – Verein Deutscher Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare e.V.* (Association of German Librarians), the Goethe Institute and the *ekz.bibliotheksservice GmbH* (a library service provider).

BID has agreed with its members on the following code of ethical principles, which are designed to serve both as general guidelines on professional ethics and as principles of good practice not only for the association itself and its members but also for all library professionals, engaged in training, active professional service, research and teaching. The code is intended to stimulate reflection and discussion on fundamental principles and to ensure transparency towards both users and society at large.

Libraries are traditionally perceived as providers of information services designed to promote social, cultural and economic development while also supporting education and scholarship. Libraries thus fulfil basic information needs.

As institutions, libraries have no commercial interests. They are places of integration and communication – fundamental institutions of actively lived democracy, enabling responsible participation in society.

These are the tenets from which BID derives the idea of the fundamental responsibility of libraries and those active within librarianship towards society. This responsibility emanates

in particular from the right to freedom of opinion and expression as laid down in Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 5 of the Basic Law, and from the principle of equal treatment under Article 3 of the Basic Law.

BID and its members are committed to founding all professional activity on these ethical principles and to assisting those working in libraries to comply with them. Among other measures, this involves ongoing information provision and cooperation with related organisations. The umbrella organisation will also publish comments to the professional community on selected fundamental ethical issues based on resolutions passed by the Board of Directors.

BID will actively engage with the professional community in discussing these principles, will regularly review them in the light of international developments, and will revise them as necessary.

## **1. Accessing and communicating information**

- We provide public access to our physical and virtual spaces, to our physical collections and digital resources, and to other publicly available information sources.
- We are committed to the free formation of opinion, to plurality and to the free flow of information, since all democratic societies depend on unimpeded access to information. We reject the censorship of content.
- We select sources of information according to requirements and based on professional and qualitative criteria – without regard to personal preference and free from the influence of third parties.
- We underline the importance of resource transparency and the reliability of our information sources, which remain free from the influence of advertising.
- We promote and support freedom of scholarship and research by providing access to information, data and other related services.
- We act according to the principle of openness, as exemplified by such models as Open Access, Open Source, Open Educational Resources, Open License and others, in order to ensure optimum access to information while upholding the principles of participation and collaboration.
- We are committed to establishing a statutory framework for the protection of intellectual property rights, ensuring a fair balance between the interests of creators, copyright holders and users.
- We are committed to the preservation, documentation, communication, and public accessibility of both our cultural heritage and information openly available in the public domain.
- We support research and promote reading, media and information literacy.

## **2. Relationship with interest groups, partners and other participators**

### **2.1 Users, patrons and the general public**

- We treat all persons who use our libraries and information centres as fundamentally equal. We provide information and advice objectively, impartially and courteously.
- We structure, present and prepare content in a way that enables us to find and use information independently and accurately.
- We are committed to social participation through the provision of free or low-cost access to our collections, digital resources and services.
- We are conscientiously committed to compliance with the legal requirements governing our work, as exemplified by equal treatment, the protection of minors and data protection.
- We support the principle that libraries should be widely used as accessible and safe spaces for everyone and remain free of commercial interest.

### **2.2 Funding bodies**

- We enable our funding bodies to achieve their goals by working together with them in a spirit of trust and within the regulatory framework.
- We emphasize that both the professional and the content-related aspects of library work shall be independent of politically motivated or any other extraneous influences.

### **2.3 Partners**

- We only work with business partners who provide their services in accordance with statutory regulations.
- We work in partnership with authors, creative individuals, other creators of copyright works and the rights holders to uphold editorial freedom.

### **2.4 Colleagues and the professional environment**

- Professional independence, respect, fairness, readiness to cooperate, critical loyalty and a willingness to learn from our mistakes characterize our actions.
- We seek to foster a culture of cooperation, to take responsibility for our actions and to establish an attitude of mutual trust.
- We strive to pass on our professional experience and to support those setting out on their careers.
- We continue to develop our professional qualifications and consider continuing education and training as self-evident elements of our work.

- We encourage the involvement of our colleagues in professional and specialist associations, and in professionally relevant research, teaching and further education.
- We promote cooperation at regional, national and international level.

### **3. Integrity and professional competence**


- We are committed to the concept of compliance and place a high value on standards-compliant conduct both in our professional practice and within our associations.
- We are committed to improving the statutory regulations relevant to our work.
- We are committed to the provision of information literacy training and the promotion of the ethical use of information, thereby helping to prevent manipulation through the falsification of information.
- We regard libraries and information centres as places of lifelong learning and as learning organisations working continually to improve their service standards.
- We strive for diversity among our staff so that our services can be improved by the integration of a variety of cultural, social and professional perspectives.

The initial draft of this text was compiled by a working group comprising the following members:

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