"An Islamic View of Professional Ethics in Internal Relation between the Librarian and User within Reference Process"

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Abstract: Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to introduce some of ethic codes that reference librarians, especially Muslim librarians, must possess to provide complete services to their users, and also to show the importance of skills to set an efficient relation between the reference librarians and the user within reference interview. This article aims to focus on Islamic ethic codes, extracted from Quran and Hadiths and Prophet Mohammed and Imam said to instruct librarians. Design/methodology/approach: This article places emphasis on the rule of Islamic ethic codes within training reference librarians that occurs by study on Islamic ethic codes in general and compare with librarian information ethics, in particular. Findings: The study demonstrates that teaching library and information ethics from an Islamic point of view clearly contributes to ethical behavior of Muslim reference librarians. According to this study, some of ethic codes for a Muslim librarian are: being trustee, God fearing, humility, being confident, respect to freedom and politeness, truthfulness, wisdom and awareness, speaking softly, good listening and... Research limitations/implications: Islamic sources are too spread, thus this study might be incomplete. Practical implications: the newly developed Islamic codes of library and information ethics and its proposed implementation methods can be utilized by organizations for their benefits. Originality/value: The study is the first to address the issue of library and information ethics and Islam for reference librarians. This paper presents the first Islamic professional ethic codes for library and information sciences. It also presents some of skills for reference librarians, from an Islamic point of view.

Key words: Ethics, Islam, Library and Information Sciences, Professional Ethics, Reference Process.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is supposed to be a complete way of life. A Muslim is bound by Islamic rules and hence is obliged to follow the instruction as prescribed in the Quran and Hadiths. Islam is the religion based upon the surrender to God (Allah). The very name of the religion, Al-Islam in Arabic, means submission and peace, for it is in submitting to God's will that human beings gain peace in their lives in this world and in the hereafter (Al-A'ali, 2008). Islam is considered to be a comprehensive religion and its ethical system its ethical system is considered to be one of the major ethical systems. The importance of establishing an ethical system in the field of library and information sciences, especially at our present time which is witnessing an ever increasing ethical problem has gained attention from the professionals in the field of library and information sciences. Many specialized organizations have prepared code of ethics to be compiled with by members of those organizations. This is what the associations of library and information sciences have done in accordance with rules, systems and ethical manifestos.

It is good to note that the issue of ethics in relation to library and information sciences was totally disregarded by Islamic countries. But, directing Muslim public opinions to the ethical aspects of some very important and crucial issues from the perspective of the Islamic Sharia, especially in professional fields, can be one of the objectives of this paper.

Ethics encourage individuals to think through their attitudes and beliefs and thus be able to decide in advance whether their opinions are appropriate or not, and once this is decided, individuals should then be prepared to accept full responsibility for the actions (Langford, 1995). Library and information can be defined as a category of professional ethics, similar to computer ethics, medical, legal, teaching and accounting ethics. Reference department is one of the more important parts in present libraries. In this department, the librarians is face to face with the user, and it can take a short or long time, thus learning ethical behavior is crucial for reference librarians.

Islam does not talk about reference librarian's ethics in particular, but there are many instructions about consultancy and advisory ethics; therefore, because of the consultant like concepts of the reference services, in this study, we used what Islam says about ethics in consultancy.
2. Reference Librarian’s Ethics as an Interviewer:

There are many ethical futures in Islamic sources can be extracted as reference librarian's ethic codes. For example the Holy Quran and Hadiths say, as an interviewer or respondent we should be polite and sociable, a good listener, and also we have to speak slowly and softly, and keep away from polemic…

Because of the kind of reference librarian relations with the users, these features are essential.

The Holy Quran about these features said: "It is due to the blessing of Allah you behave with affection toward them; Were you hot-tempered and cruel, they would leave you alone. Hence, forgive them, and request for their forgiveness. Consult them and trust Allah after you made the decision. For, He is kind to all those who trust him" (Aal-e-Imran, Ayah: 159).

According to the Quran in this case we should be kind and respectful, and we have to speak softly and slowly.

About a scientist's behavior in reference place Imam al-Ali said: "A scientist doesn't shame to say 'I don't know' when he doesn't know the answer of the question" (Barqi, V. 1). This is the origin of refer to the best advisor: If the reference librarian doesn't know the answer of the users question or he is not sure, he has to refer the user to someone more conscious.

Imam Al-Ali also said: "consult with one who is God fearing" (Al-Ameli, Shaykh Al-Sadoogq. 250/8). According to this, the Muslim reference librarian should be God fearing because it helps to improve the others nature.

The Muslim librarian has to say the truth within answering users and help them to find out the information they need, because: "be benevolent and truthful with someone who consult with you" (Imam Al-Ali: Noori, 2/66) and also Imam Al-Sadeq said: "if he is religious and noble, he will not spare any effort to give consult" (Al-Ameli, V.8).

Another proper attribute of a Muslim reference librarian is rationality or wisdom, that makes the research beneficial and useful. Imam Al-Ali said: "if you consult with aware person, you will be conducted to the truth" (Shaykh Mofid, V.1) and also to mention the necessity of consulting with aware person said: "the best people to consult with are the masters of awareness and sciences" (Al-Amadi, V.3) and on the other hand, he avoid us from consulting with negligent people: "corruption of the questioner, comes after ignorance of the replier" (Al-Amadi, V.3).

The value of what the librarians say relates to their experiences and empiricism, and their answers will be more complete, as Imam Al-Ali said: "the experienced people are the most competent person to be consultant" (Al-Vaseti, P.123).

Being truthful and honest are the futures, that both are mentioned in Islamic doctrines.

If the librarian does not be honest and truthful, we can't trust him to give the information about the main organization and users and also we can't trust on his guidelines and accountability.

Imam Al-Ali said: "Don't consult with a liar because he is like a mirage that shows the opposite" (Al-Vaseti, P.525).

The librarian has to have good futures and methods and also has to abide by professional ethics, because his users are human people. The Holy Quran says: "We have sent all over messengers with the languages of their own people" (Ibrahim, a part of Ayah 4).

Therefore, the librarian has to respect user and abstain from ostentation; a part from who is the user, what is his nationality/opinion/origin and social position.

Being trustee is the other necessary character in librarianship, particularly in reference services. As the exigency of being trustee in Islamic culture, breach of consultation is one of the biggest sins. Imam Al-Ali said: "betray to someone who receive your consultation is one of the most obscene sins and result in hell" (Al-Vastei, P.242).

The reference process that is a cross process between the librarian and user should be a sincere relation to facilitate the procedure. Imam Al-Ali said: "be kind to receive to what you want from people" (Al-Ameli, V.11).

Accordingly greeting, shaking hands, humility, thanksgiving and … helps to make these relations stronger.

Trying to obtain to the right and beneficial answers is one of essential part of reference process. Imam Al-Sadiq said: "don't expressions crude answer and avoid from improvisation" (Al-Majlesi, V.72, Al-Halavani, P.113).

3. Methods and Skills in Reference Interview:

The reference interview is an effective element to find users need to answer. Thus, possessing necessary skills and methods is crucial for a reference librarian to speed the process.

3.1: Making Trust:

The user has to trust on the librarian to have a comfort relation with him. The librarian can make these trusts with greeting and smiling eagerly. Also when the librarian is conversant with his job and the topic, the user can trust on him stronger. The other way to make trust is introducing himself by librarian that helps the user
to fill comfort. The librarian also has to avoid from self-centeredness, because the reference process is a cross procedure and it is contradictory to self-centeredness.

3.2: Listening Carefully:
Good listening to the question is one of the skills in reference interview that result to help librarian to guess users real question from his words. In Islam Sharia, negligent in consultation is a treachery. Imam al-Sadiq said: "Listening carelessly is a treachery from an advisor" (Noori, V.8).

3.3: Similarity To The User:
The librarian should harmonize his behavior with the user's behavior, as the Quran verses: "We have sent all over messengers with the languages of their own people", (Ibrahim, a part of Ayah 4).
The librarian has to know that he can't guide a child like a scientist. The Prophet Mohammed said: "if you are with a child, act as a child to train him" (Al-Ameli, V.15).

3.4: The Cross Respect And Politeness:
Being polite and respectful to the user are the first conditions to set an efficient and constant relation, and the opposite of this behavior result to weariness with visiting library or even study books.
Imam Al-Ali aid; "when you are not polite, do not speak" (Al-Majlesi, V.68).

3.5: Being Confidant:
Being confidant is one of the most important features of the librarian that shows his trustee and awareness; Imam Al-Ali aid; 'the chest (Heart) of an intelligent person, is the box of his secrets'. (Nahj-al-Balaqa, P. 361).

3.6: Using Tacit Skills:
The librarian's face is one of his tools to make relations with users. Imam Al-Ali said: "the present's language is more rational than oral language" (Al-Amadi, P.153).
Therefore, right use of tacit symbols is important to have a good relation with the users.

3.6.1: The Smiling Face:
When the librarians smile, the user feels good and he understands that the librarian respects to him. The Prophet Mohammed always spoke smiley (AL-Majlesi, V.16, P.298).

3.6.2: Shaking Hands:
The Prophet Mohammed advised to: "meet each other with saying hello and shaking hands" (Al-Koleyni, V.2, P.181).

4. Conclusion:
Muslims generally tend to adhere to Islamic teaching as understood from Quran, Hadiths and Imam sayings. This paper investigated how this adherence can be utilized to improve the level of ethical conduct of Muslim reference librarians. To achieve this we proposed the Islamic ethic codes related to librarianship in reference department.
The study findings clearly demonstrate the complete riches of Islam in ethics and we have to use this guidance to improve the professional ethics in our services. The paper shows that the Muslim reference librarian should be god feared, polite, kind, religious, truthful, trustee, intelligent, respectful, modest and... He also has to skilled by: making trust, listening carefully, being confidant, similarity to the user, and usin tacit skills, like smiling or shaking hands.
This paper hopes for being the first step for the next studies, because the Islamic sources of ethics are very extend.

REFERENCES