An Islamic Directory of Library and Information Professional Ethic Codes

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Abstract: Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to introduce some of ethic codes that librarians, especially Muslims, must possess to provide complete services to their users, and also to show the importance of Islamic resources in the field of ethics, to instruct and train the librarians. This article aims to focus on Islamic ethic codes, extracted from Quran and Hadiths and Prophet Mohammed and Imam said to achieve the goal. Design/methodology/approach: This article places emphasis on the rule of Islamic ethic codes within training 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 librarians. According to this study, some of ethic codes for a Muslim librarian are: being trustee, God fearing, humility, being confidant, 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 librarians. This paper presents the first Islamic professional ethic codes for library and information sciences.

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

INTRODUCTION

Through the blessing of obedience Allah and virtue of his following Holy Word, the Gracious One has bestowed the singular favour of His converse upon this humble one. Islam graces us with spiritual knowledge, and reveals many hidden secrets to us. Islam fills the bosom of this humble one with countless verities and points of wisdom and informs human being repeatedly that all these gifts and favours, and all this grace and beneficence, and all this kindness and attention, and all these bounties and support. 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 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. Libraries are some of the more important parts in present society that, the librarians are face to face with the users, and it can take a short or long time, thus learning ethical behavior is crucial for them.

Islam does not talk about librarian's ethics in particular, but there are many instructions about social ethics; therefore, in this study, we used what Islam says about ethics in general.

2. Librarian's Ethic Codes:

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

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In our profession, one of the more important natures is trusteeship which has different meanings, like safekeeping, timesaving, and confidentiality of the user and the main organization. Borrowing a book or book loan is different from the concept of trusteeship in library science. Book loan is a process to hand over a book to the user, whereas trusteeship is being confidant, trustee, and keep secret of users, main organization, and the others. This topic will be discussed from the Islamic instructions.

Islam has difficult rules in case of trusteeship and places it as one of the faith indications of a true Muslim. Imam Al–Ali said: "being trustee is the highest level of faith" (Al-Amadi, P. 534). The Holy Quran says: "I am a confidant and trustee messenger for you" (Sho'ara, Ayah: 107). Another important point is the importance of trusteeship from Islamic view. Allah ordered the Muslims to be trustee: "Allah ordinance you to give back the deposits to their owners" (Nesa, Ayah: 58). Allah also hesitates people from treachery like the other sins: "O ye who believe! Do not treachery to Allah and [his] Prophet [also] in others deposits" (Anfal, Ayah: 27).

Like the other social concepts, the subject of trusteeship has a spread meaning, and could be applied in particular cases. Public properties are public deposits; because people are being trusted by the officials to hand over the goods, therefore, if someone uses of the public property as personal property or waste them, he treacheries to the owners, whom are the members of public society. Imam Al–Ali said: "These properties are not mine and are not yours, these belong to Muslims" (Nahj-Al-Balaqa, P. 728). Therefore, it could be concluded that what from public properties are with librarians, belong to the society and have to be used to complete serve to the library users and librarians can use the Islamic instruction in this case.

Because of the librarian's close relations with the users, being kind and having soft behavior 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, like a librarian, 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 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-Sadooq, 250/8). According to this, the Muslim librarian should be God fearing because it helps to improve the others nature. In valuable Islamic system, the job position is not the goal, but it could be the public duty and obligation. The example of Islam's attention in this field could be "choosing the best". Positions should be given to one who is wise, trustee, and efficient. If it does not happen, both of the giver and the receiver are treacherous, as Imam Al–Ali said: "If a Muslim exceeds to achieve a position when he knows there is someone better than himself, he betrays to the Allah, the prophet and all other Muslims" (Al-Amini, P.271).

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 librarian is rationality or wisdom, which 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 he 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 features, 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 features 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/opinion/origin and social position.
The other necessary character in librarianship is trusteeship about the knowledge, which in pure culture of Islam is the concept of human beings wisdom (Al-Amadi, P.36). Knowledge gaining, it's teaching and learning is mandatory for everyone. The prophet Mohammed to blame someone who resists science dissemination said: "Everything curses the withholder of knowledge, even fishes of the sea and birds of the sky" (Al-Majlesi, V.2, P. 68). These Hadiths and the same sayings are the clear indications of importance of valid knowledge and information dissemination in Islamic culture. It could be proud of library and information professionals that their job is in indirect attention in Islam. Another point to be understood from these sayings and Hadiths is Islam's protection of "free flow of information": the subject that is newly discussed by the western scientists in the field of library and information sciences. 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).

He also 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 librarians, especially reference librarians. Imam Al-Sadiq said: "don't expressions crude answer and avoid from improvisation" (Al-Majlesi, V.72, Al-Halavani, P.113).

As a librarian we have to be able to make trust with our library users. The user has to trust on us to have a comfort relation. The librarian can make this trust 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.

Good listening to the user's questions results 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).

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).

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).

Humility, the other important character for librarians, could be defined as a concept that one is considering himself in a low grade that what he really is, so the humility is the opposite of being proud. Humility should not be mistaken with misery. In addition to this point that the humility can attract the user's satisfaction, the necessity of cross respect and humiliation behavior is two conditions of social life. Islam Platonism has the effective instructions in the field of humility. Imam Al-Ali said: "Have humility, because it is one of the important worships" (Al-Majlesi, V.72, P. 119) and he also said: "The noblest condition for human beings is having humility, forbearance and soft behavior" (Al-Amadi, V.2, P. 442).

According to these Hadiths, humility could be considered as one of the worthy character of Muslims and it is more competent for scientist due to having more highly-valued position.

Importance of humility in library from the librarians is clearly demonstrated. If the librarian is proud, he cannot set good relations with the users and he can't use his knowledge as a scientist to serve his users. As a librarian, the only tool to be effective is providing the highest level of service to all library users.

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).

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.

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).

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

**Conclusion:**

Muslim librarians are bound by Islamic rules and hence are obliged to follow the instruction as prescribed in the Quran and Hadiths. Islam is the religion based upon the surrender to God (Allah). Muslims generally tend to adhere to Islamic teaching as understood from Quran, Hadiths and Imam sayings. The goal of this article was to introduce some of Islamic ethical codes for Muslim librarians, which investigated how this adherence can be utilized to improve the level of ethical conduct of Muslim librarians. To achieve this we proposed the Islamic ethic codes related to librarianship in reference department.
The study findings clearly demonstrate that Islam has a complete treasure of ethics and we have to use this
guidance to improve the professional ethics in our services. The paper shows that the Muslim librarian should be
god feared, polite, kind, religious, truthful, trustee, intelligent, respectful, modest, etc.
This paper hopes for being the first step for the next studies, because the Islamic sources of ethics are very
extend.

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