

Code of Ethics of the Association of Austrian Librarians

With this Code of Ethics, the Association of Austrian Librarians sends a clear signal of the social responsibility assumed by librarians and information professionals in Austria. The Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a contemporary guide, a source of inspiration and support for members of the profession.

People are at the heart of all we do.

Our professional conduct is grounded in high ethical standards. We are committed to delivering the highest possible quality in the services we provide, and we act with professionalism, objectivity, and sustainability in mind. By professionalism, we mean subject-matter expertise, transparency, prudence, and impartiality. To us, libraries are diverse spaces—among other things, places of knowledge, learning, encounter, and cultural significance. Promoting the responsible use of knowledge and ensuring free access to information are central to our mission in today's information society—we make a vital and irreplaceable contribution to democracy.

We stand for continuity as well as for innovation and are committed to bridging digital and physical spaces.

We advocate for a non-discriminatory library landscape by managing our collections and data with sensitivity and critical awareness.

Democracy, freedom of information and traceability in science

We are committed to ensuring the accessibility of our media and databases to all interested users in order to guarantee their freedom to form opinions and their freedom of expression, and thus to support democracy. We present our collections and services proactively, preserve cultural heritage, and catalogue and document the knowledge landscape for future generations. We ensure the traceability of scientific findings.

Diversity and barrier-free accessibility

We treat all users with respect and appreciation, and are committed to fostering plurality, comprehensive, barrier-free access, informational justice, and diversity in our professional community. In doing so, we contribute to creating inclusive spaces free from discrimination. We advocate for maximum diversity in our acquisition policies and support easy access

to our services. We facilitate dialogue and lay the groundwork for varied discourses in research. Diversity is essential for developing new solutions and approaches to current and future challenges of science and society.

Information literacy and AI literacy

We foster and support information literacy and AI competencies among our users through targeted learning opportunities and initiatives. In doing so, we contribute to informational self-determination.

Digital enlightenment – understood as overcoming what Kant described as “self-imposed immaturity” – is central to our professional ethos.

Training and innovation

We are firmly committed to the principle of lifelong learning and integrate it into our professional lives. We advocate for uniform standards in our professional education and aim to prepare aspiring librarians and information professionals to the highest standard for both present and future challenges. We value the wealth of knowledge and skills of our experienced colleagues and strive to keep our expertise up to date. Due to our professional competence, we are well equipped to take an active stand on emerging developments in the realm of knowledge and information, and to offer advice.

We integrate new methods and technologies into our areas of work and adhere to shared quality standards in all services and systems.

Collegiality and cooperation

We promote successful and innovative collaboration and maintain a strong culture of exchange with fellow professionals in Austria and internationally. Reflective practice is an essential part of our ethos and team-oriented work is at the heart of our profession. It is only together that we are able to achieve new goals and set new standards.

Data protection and privacy

Informed consent is central to our approach to handling personal data.

We are deeply committed to the careful and confidential management of sensitive data and actively promote awareness among both staff and users.

Transparency, openness and reusability

We strive for the highest level of transparency in data processing and disclosing underlying data.

We support open access, open data, open source, and open science to facilitate free access to knowledge and information.

Sustainability and preservation of cultural assets

We are conscious of our responsibility to future users and seek to consider the needs of coming generations in the decisions we make today. Through our work, we contribute to dialogue across both science and society, thus fostering discourse that bridges generations. We are committed to the sustainable use of all resources. We carry our cultural heritage safely into the future.

An ethics committee is to respond to emerging challenges and adopt an active stance. It is to update the Code of Ethics and offer training on specific topics using case studies as a foundation.

This document was prepared by the Information Ethics Working Group of the Association of Austrian Librarians during the winter of 2024/25. The Code of Ethics is based on data collected in the spring and autumn of 2024 through nationwide surveys across Austria, which invited librarians to help shape a shared code of conduct and to prioritize key thematic areas and values.

The final version was adopted at the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Association of Austrian Librarians, held during the 2nd Library Congress on 23 March 2025 in Vienna.

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