THE TEACHING OF INFORMATION ETHICS IN SELECTED LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE INSTITUTIONS IN UGANDA

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REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2010/HD05/263U

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARDS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION SCIENCE, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

2014

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the teaching of Information Ethics (IE) in the BLIS programmes at EASLIS and UCU. The objectives of the study were; to analyse the IE curriculum in the two institutions, to identify the gaps in what IE is being taught according to international practices, to identify the challenges in the teaching of IE, to propose appropriate strategies for IE and teaching in the two institutions. The study was carried out using both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches through a case study design employing the use of questionnaires and documentary review methods. Within the BLIS programmes at EASLIS and UCU, the departments' Heads, lecturers teaching the IE module, and the course hand-outs/outlines/study guides of the IE modules formed the target population. Respondents for the study were purposively selected. Data was collected via questionnaires that were administered to the Heads of the BLIS Departments, and a separate set of questionnaires was also administered to the lecturers teaching information ethics modules. Furthermore, the lecturers of IE Modules were requested to forward the study materials of their modules (i.e. hand-outs, notes, and study guides) for quantitative content analysis. Responses were received from all the respondents that were targeted, a response rate of 100%. Course outlines and hand-outs were also received from all the lecturers of the IE Modules. The study established that information ethics is regarded as necessary and should be taught in the BLIS programme. The study also established that both institutions offer some IE content albeit with no standalone IE course but some elements of IE are spread out in other modules taught at various levels in the BLIS programmes. Significant gaps were also discovered in IE content in relation to international practice. Furthermore, only one instructor from EASLIS had a background in both LIS and Computer Science and one instructor from UCU had a background in LIS and Public Administration; the rest of the instructors in both institutions had backgrounds only in LIS. The major challenges raised by the two institutions included;

the extensive of ethical content, and therefore leading to challenges in the allocation of time for teaching IE issues. Furthermore the lack of institutional strategies for integrating IE into the BLIS programmes was highlighted. The study acknowledges that LIS professionals are frequently the essential link between information users and the information which they require thus occupying a privileged position in society. However, the corresponding responsibilities to this position present numerous challenges and ethical dilemmas that can only be dealt with through ethical preparedness, commitment and reasoning. This therefore demands for LIS professionals to have a good working knowledge of information ethics that can be acquired through education and experience. IE therefore should be taught to all students in the BLIS programmes as a stand-alone course. Also the IE issues/ content covered should be benchmarked with international best practices.