

# A Theoretical Framework and Practical Toolkit For Ethical Library Assessment

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## Abstract

Library assessment practitioners face dual pressures to demonstrate library value and adhere to library values. To support a practice of library assessment that addresses both library value and library values, this dissertation examines the practice of library assessment through the lens of practical ethics and applied values. The main research question asks, “How can library assessment be practiced ethically?” I followed a three-step research design: a literature review, a survey, and interviews. The literature review focuses on the ethics, values, dilemmas, and practices of library assessment practitioners. A vignette-based survey further investigated values and ethics in assessment. Survey data was analyzed through constructivist grounded theory, and the resulting set of codes established a new framework and toolkit for ethical library assessment. Finally, the toolkit—named the Values-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit—was validated through interviews with assessment practitioners. Research findings indicate that library assessment practitioners seek an ethical practice, but are challenged by a complex and decentralized values landscape that offers many competing choices for identifying and implementing values. The toolkit serves to model a value set that practitioners can apply to support an ethical assessment practice.

## Zusammenfassung

Praktiker:innen stehen bei der Bewertung bzw. Evaluation von Bibliotheken unter doppeltem Druck, den Wert der Bibliothek zu demonstrieren und gleichzeitig die Werte der bibliothekarischen Profession einzuhalten. Um eine Praxis der Bibliotheksevaluation zu unterstützen, die sowohl den Wert der Bibliothek als auch die bibliothekarische Werte anspricht, untersucht diese Dissertation die Praxis der Bibliotheksevaluation durch die Perspektive praktischer Ethik und angewandter Werte. Die Hauptforschungsfrage lautet: „Wie kann Bibliotheksbewertung ethisch durchgeführt werden?“ Ich folgte einem dreistufigen Forschungsdesign: eine Literaturrecherche, eine Umfrage und Interviews. Die Literaturrecherche konzentriert sich auf die Ethik, Werte, Dilemmata und Praktiken von Bewertungspraktiker:innen. Eine vignettenbasierte Umfrage untersuchte Werte und Ethik bei der Bewertung von Bibliotheken weiter. Die Umfragedaten wurden mittels der konstruktivistischen Grounded Theory analysiert und die daraus resultierenden Codes etablierten ein neues Rahmenwerk und ein neues Instrument für die ethische Bewertung von Bibliotheken. Schließlich wurde das Instrument mit dem Namen Values-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit durch Interviews mit Bewertungspraktiker:innen validiert. Die Forschungsergebnisse zeigen, dass Praktiker:innen der Bibliotheksbewertung eine ethische Praxis anstreben, aber durch eine komplexe und dezentralisierte Wertelandschaft herausgefordert werden, die viele konkurrierende Möglichkeiten zur Identifizierung und Umsetzung von Werten bietet. Das Toolkit dient dazu, einen Satz von Werten zu modellieren, den Praktiker:innen anwenden können, um eine ethische Bewertungspraxis zu unterstützen.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Library assessment practice typically relies on the collection of data in order to measure progress towards strategic objectives. When assessment measurements involve library services or spaces, data collection then involves library users. Libraries are also commonly called to contribute library user data and resources towards campus-level learning analytics and faculty activity assessment programs (Jones, 2017; Banihashem et al., 2018). At the same time, libraries maintain long-held values of privacy and intellectual freedom (Zimmer, 2014). The dual pressures of assessment and privacy have led to a crisis of identity (Jones & Salo, 2018). This dissertation is motivated by the complicated relationship between library assessment and library values.

Library values are articulated through professional organizations such as the ALA Code of Ethics and the IFLA Statement on Privacy in the Library Environment. Despite these guiding documents, however, library values represent contested ground vis-à-vis library value, because assessment is often focused on demonstrating value and impact to external audiences (Oakleaf, 2018b; C. Urquhart, 2018). As a result, library assessment can tend to take on the values of external audiences. Long-held library values are then less visible in library assessment discourse and practice. Sites of tension then emerge where different values come into conflict. When assessment is practiced at a site of tension, a practitioner is confronted with a decision about which values to prioritize. This decision about values becomes an ethical dilemma. Dilemmas can be located through real-world examples of value-driven assessment conflicting with library values. Examples include: market forces, learning analytics, university alignment, and library instruction.

### *Market forces*

Market forces of accumulation and quantification influence library assessment. These values exert themselves over traditional library values. Seale (2013) remarks:



The ALA, in its articulation of the core values of librarianship, carefully unpacks ideas of democracy, freedom, service, and social responsibility and subverts neoliberal ideology by framing these values as ‘public goods’ and as existing outside of the market system.

However, dominant discourse within librarianship, as well as in broader society, tends to elide distinctions between different varieties of freedom and so consumer choice becomes synonymous with democratic choice, and freedom in the market becomes democracy (p. 57).

This discourse in librarianship frames library services as market transactions and library users as customers, thus subverting the values of the public good and social responsibility. Seale (2013) notes that this discourse is often unchallenged. Further, Beilin (2016) argues that dominant notions of student success and learning assessment reflect individualistic, economic, market-based goals such as earnings-after-graduation. Capitalist values and goals are out of step with the stated values and goals of libraries.

### *Learning Analytics*

University learning analytics exert pressure on ethical library assessment practice. Jones (2017) summarizes:

“Learning analytics implicates privacy by surveilling behaviors captured by data-based systems and aggregating and analyzing personal information. Issues of privacy are often linked to concerns about intellectual freedom. Consequently, librarians fervently argue for surveillance-free spaces and places to promote the conditions they believe are necessary to support intellectual freedom” (p. 7).

In response to these pressures, Fisher (2018) has spoken out against the practice of student surveillance in support of university learning analytics. Hathcock (2018) describes this tension as, “the difference between exploiting a community to study and report on them versus collaborating with that community in studying their needs” (para. 7). Despite appeals to library values, the learning analytics conversation is dominated by researchers such as Oakleaf (2018a, 2018b) who

strongly advocate for the integration of library data and institutional data via learning analytics initiatives, and describe concerns about privacy as an obstacle to overcome.

### *University Alignment*

As parent institutions to academic libraries, university administration often imposes their specific perceptions, goals, and values onto the work of the library. Libraries are told to align with institutional imperatives in order to compete for funding and resources. Academic libraries are no longer the symbolic heart of the university; instead, they must provide evidence to support funding requests that support the priorities of the institution as a whole (A. Murray & Ireland, 2018). This site of tension is similar to the market forces example, except here we are more concerned with the specific pressures of university administration. How does the library maintain its own sense of identity and practice within the wider context of the university, especially when values are not aligned?

### *Learner-Centered Library Instruction*

Library instruction assessment often positions the student as a research subject, or as a one-way informant of their learning. This can be at odds with library values of democracy, openness, and empowerment. Alternative models are emerging that instead center the student as a co-creator in their own assessment, with power sharing and open dialogue between student and teacher (McCartin & Dineen, 2018).

These sites of tension provide the initial groundwork of the dissertation. In the next section, I provide more description of the motivation for looking closely at library assessment ethics.

## **1.2 Motivation**

My motivation for examining ethics and values in library assessment can be traced back to a conversation with a colleague in 2017. A fellow assessment practitioner and I were discussing the emerging practices of learning analytics and data warehousing, whereby student behavior activity is tracked, with the resulting data stored and analyzed in a centralized university data repository. My

colleague shared that their institution had requested that the library conduct assessment that would produce student activity data to support the university's learning analytics program. I posed a question related to professional library values, asking whether such a practice potentially threatens user privacy and the library's relationship with the student body. In response, my colleague commented that it was not the profession that hired them, but rather their institution. The library was in a position to demonstrate its value to the university by showing the impact of student library usage—that opportunity to convey value would take priority over values-related concerns like privacy. In this instance, my colleague made an ethical decision to prioritize institutional values over professional values. This tension among competing values struck me as a deeply compelling problem that held promise as a question of importance to the LIS field. I had sensed that other practitioners were similarly grappling with values-in-conflict, and would benefit from a close examination of ethics and values in library assessment.

Indeed, a look at the literature reveals that tensions among values and competing priorities is not an isolated case, but rather is encountered by practitioners across the field. The four sites of tension summarized above—market forces, learning analytics, university administration, library instruction—demonstrate the dilemmas faced by assessment practitioners when conflicts arise between library value and library values. The literature also reveals conflicting responses in terms of library assessment practice. Some of the literature advances a paradigm of assessment that prioritizes the pursuit of library value in such a way that threatens library values, while others propose alternative models that foreground library values in the practice of library assessment. As a key example of the value-forward approach, Oakleaf (2010) presented a model of library assessment practice that has matured into a well developed suite of practices that aim to demonstrate the value of the library to external stakeholders. As this approach has gained a place of prominence in the field, it has given rise to alternatives that serve as a counter-balance, such as the work from Jones & Hinchliffe (2020) reasserting privacy as a professional value that should be prioritized in library assessment.

The tension between demonstrating value and upholding professional values is a central problem that this dissertation seeks to address. In formulating a response, I am further motivated by others

who have underscored this tension as a problem that warrants attention. Bourg (2013), for example, describes this tension between value and values: “recent trends towards measuring everything and relying on metrics (usually business metrics) to defend our value is actually likely to contribute to a further diminishing of our true value to our institutions and to society in the long-term” (para. 8). Drabinski & Walter (2016) similarly assert that this problem is indeed important: “theory and practice should be mutually informative in our field, and inquiry into ‘values’ should occupy as privileged a place as inquiry into ‘value’” (p. 267). As Bourg and Drabinski & Walter demonstrate, there are calls from the professional community to address this question of value and values, and to generate a theory and a practice for equalizing the pursuit of value and values.

To date, however, a theoretical framework and a practical tool for ethical assessment has been elusive. The path toward resolution is not clear. And the field lacks a shared understanding as to which values are relevant to those decisions, and how conflicts among those values are resolved. Given the tensions between, on the one hand, conducting assessment that demonstrates library value, and, on the other hand, conducting assessment that adheres to library values—how can the assessment practitioner community find coherence of vision and clarity of decision-making for an ethical practice of library assessment? There is currently a gap in the field between a library assessment practice that centers value, and one that centers values. As a way to bridge this distance and achieve an assessment practice that speaks both to library values and library value, this dissertation seeks to produce a research-based tool that practitioners can apply in their work to attune themselves to values as they pursue value.

The main problem of the dissertation can then be summarized as follows: the library assessment community lacks a cohesive vision for ethical practice. Values and practices are diverse, varied, and sometimes positioned in conflict with one another. Local contexts present practitioners with unique priorities and pressures that further complicate ethical decision-making. Assessment librarians make decisions every day about what data to collect, how to collect it, who to involve in the assessment, how to engage users and research participants, how to account for social impacts, how to communicate results, and how to align with parent-entity expectations. These decisions are

not straightforward and often involve dilemmas or tensions among competing stakeholders and values. Library assessment practitioners must confront and resolve these tensions so that their practice accommodates both measuring library value and adhering to library values.

In response to this problem, this dissertation will interrogate existing library values and assessment practices, and will propose and test a new framework and tool for ethical assessment. I have developed a research plan that is designed to produce new insights into the ethical practice of library assessment, leading ultimately to the creation of a new theoretical model and a practical tool for ethical library assessment that can aid practitioners in elevating values in the pursuit of value. I discuss the research plan in the next section.

### 1.3 Research Questions, Research Goals, and Research Methods

The primary goal of this dissertation is *to produce a practical tool to support ethical library assessment practice*.

The primary question of this dissertation research is *how can library assessment be practiced ethically?*

To answer this question and to produce this outcome, I applied a three-step research design. Each step includes a specific method and a corresponding output that supports the goal of producing a theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical library assessment. As a researcher-practitioner, my approach to this project involves both research inquiries and practical considerations, with a strong focus on the *how* of the question. I aim therefore to produce both a research contribution that advances the field's understanding of this topic, while also developing a real product that can be used by everyday practitioners. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the three steps, with the relationship of each step in the research process mapped to each step in the development of the framework and toolkit.

#### **Table 1.1 Research Method Mapped to Framework and Toolkit Development**

Step	Research Method	Framework and Toolkit Development
1.	Inductive Literature Analysis	Deriving characteristics of ethical assessment
2.	Survey with ethical vignettes and content analysis	Developing the framework and toolkit
3.	Visual elicitation interviews	Validating the framework and toolkit

Step 1 of research design is the initial foundation-setting in answering this question. Within Step 1, I review and analyze the literature of Library and Information Science (LIS) as it relates to three main areas: the ethics and values of the LIS profession, the common ethical dilemmas encountered by library assessment practitioners, and the ethical practices that have been developed in response to the dilemmas. Step 1 is presented in Chapters 3, 4, 5. The sequence of these chapters is structured in such a way as to establish a ground upon which to build inquiry into ethical assessment practice: first we must understand ethics and values in Library and Information Science (Chapter 3), then we must become aware of the ethical dilemmas that are relevant to assessment (Chapter 4), and we must have a sense of the existing practices for supporting an ethical assessment, so that we can build library assessment practice around those examples (Chapter 5). The literature review that constitutes Step 1 of the research design resulted in a set of characteristics that can describe ethical assessment practice. This review informed the development of the survey that constitutes Step 2 of the research design, where I administered a survey that produced data related to the values and practices of library assessment practitioners. I analyzed the survey data using constructivist grounded theory, generating a set of codes that resulted in an initial theoretical framework and practical toolkit to support ethical assessment. This initial development was the subject of Step 3 of the research design, in which I interviewed a subset of the survey sample as a measure of validation for the framework and toolkit. This resulted in a final, revised framework and toolkit for practicing ethical library assessment.

## 1.4 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is structured into eight chapters. Following this introductory Chapter 1 is Chapter 2, which discusses the methodology and methods in detail. My main approach is constructivist

grounded theory, through the lens of practical ethics. I follow Charmaz (2006) in my application of grounded theory. In Chapter 2, I also discuss my process and methodology for developing the theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical assessment. Following Chapter 2 are three chapters that delve into the literature surrounding the research question. Chapter 3 establishes a theory of ethics in LIS and traces the history of professional values. Library values are drawn from a shared tradition of practice, codified in such documents as the ALA Core Values Statement. Further values are drawn from societal values, parent entity values, library values, and librarian values. This chapter locates a coherent set of values within the context of library assessment and library ethics, setting the foundation for subsequent chapters that discuss ethical library assessment as a path forward in achieving a story of library value that does not sacrifice library values.

Chapter 4 looks at a number of prominent examples of values-in-tension—or ethical dilemmas—that library assessment practitioners encounter in their work. The chapter chiefly examines the sites of tension and the external pressure points that are exerted on ethical library practice, aiming to answer a question of collision points involving library values and library value. Chapter 5 then examines responses that practitioners have developed for addressing the common dilemmas. This chapter looks closer at current ethical assessment practices, including 1) community-based assessment and critical assessment, 2) strategic planning, 3) co-design, 4) norms and regulations, and 5) care ethics. These current practices demonstrate efforts towards integrating and uniting library values with library value. Chapter 5 concludes with an inductive analysis of the literature surrounding the above five practices, resulting in a set of characteristics that begin to give cohesive shape to ethical assessment practice.

Chapter 6 then provides an in-depth analysis of data produced through the survey, and proposes a set of values and practices that can constitute an ethical practice—the framework for ethical assessment. In Chapter 7, I present my findings from the validation interviews, focusing on the framework and the *Values-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*, a practical tool that assessment librarians can use in their everyday practice. Chapter 7 includes detailed procedural steps for developing and validating the toolkit. Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of contributions, limitations, and future directions.

## 1.5 Summary

This research advances disciplinary understanding of professional values and ethical practices in the context of library assessment. In looking at library assessment through a lens of practical ethics, library assessment practitioners can conduct assessment ethically by articulating the values that matter and then enacting those values in practice. To aid practitioners in the process of articulating and enacting values, I first conducted original research into library assessment ethics involving members of the library assessment community. Subsequent data analysis produced a set of values and practices that are relevant for library assessment. This set of values and practices are given operational expression through the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*, a new tool for supporting an ethical practice of library assessment.



## 2. Methodology and Methods

### 2.1 Introduction

This dissertation investigates ethics in library assessment. Practitioners confront a number of sites of tensions involving conflict between measuring library value and adhering to library values. The literature is also conflicted on this topic, with much of the literature advancing a library value paradigm that threatens library values, while others propose alternative models that foreground values in the practice of assessment. As a way to bridge this gap and achieve an assessment practice that speaks both to library values and library value, this dissertation seeks to produce a research-based tool that practitioners can apply in their work to attune themselves to values as they pursue value. To accomplish this, I apply a 3-step research design. The main methodological approach is constructivist grounded theory through the lens of practical ethics, with the goal of developing a theoretical framework and practical toolkit that can support the practice of values-based library assessment. In this chapter, I describe the suitability of this methodological approach for the topic, and I describe the methods that were put into action.

### 2.2 Main Methodological Approach

The main methodological approach of this dissertation involves applying a grounded theory analysis through the lens of practical ethics to support the development of a theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical academic library assessment.

Grounded theory offers a useful methodological framework of analysis for understanding library assessment. As a research methodology, grounded theory aims to generate or discover a theory for a process as shaped by research participants engaged in that process (Creswell, 2009, p. 83). The purpose of grounded theory is to “inductively generate theory that is grounded in, or emerges from, the data,” with the goal of “generat[ing] or discover[ing] a theory of a process, an action, or an interaction grounded in the views of the research participants” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015, pp.

49–50). Grounded theory is often characterized by the development of a framework for further research or practice; the researcher integrates emergent categories of analysis into the theoretical framework in a way “that specifies causes, conditions, and consequences of the studied process” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015, p. 15).

In the case of this dissertation, the studied process is the ethical operations of library assessment, with a goal of developing both a theoretical framework and a practical toolkit to structure the ethical practice of library assessment. Further, as this dissertation is an inquiry into the values and viewpoints of library assessment practitioners, I integrate a constructivist grounded theory approach developed by Charmaz (2006) that critically engages notions of neutrality by acknowledging the context and perspectives of both the researcher and the research participants. As Charmaz instructs, the empirical world that is the subject of study does not exist in a fixed state apart from human experience; rather, we know the empirical world through the shifting contexts of language and action, thus: “No researcher is neutral because language confers form and meaning on observed realities. Specific use of language reflects views and values” (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 46–47).

The codes and themes produced by the researcher stem from an interpretive act that reflects the explicit and implicit assumptions of the researcher and the researched. Hence the grounded theorist does not construct an objective representation of reality so much as a subjective representation of the researcher’s particular view of the data. In short, this approach recognizes that the data does not speak for itself, but is given voice through the researcher.

In the sections below, I provide an overview of the specific methods drawn from the tradition of grounded theory.

### 2.2.1 Practical Ethics

It is important to discuss practical ethics here, as ethical decision-making in Library and Information Studies typically involves applying a lens of practical ethics (Budd, 2006, 2008b). Practical ethics is concerned with the application of abstract values to real-world scenarios such that

a decision can be made when confronted with conflicting paths forward (Singer, 1993; Buchanan & Henderson, 2009). Practical ethics prompts a process of principled reflection which leads to the clarification of assumptions, alternatives, and action (M. M. Smith, 1992). Essentially, practical ethics poses the question, “what is the right thing to do?” Practical ethics examines the principles or values that are relevant to a decision, and attempts to elucidate the ethical decision-making. For LIS professionals, “Values are strongly held beliefs that serve to guide our actions” (Rubin, 2016b, p. 534). Further, “Understanding these values improves our ability to recognize ethical situations and to make ethical decisions and balance the competing organizational factors” (Rubin & Froehlich, 2010, p. 1750). As a practiced-based profession with a long-standing sense of values, “the heart of a librarian’s professionalism...lies in putting these values into practice” (Buschman et al., 1994, p. 575).

In the context of library assessment, values are relevant because they can also function as standards of goal-setting and aid in decision-making (Budd, 2008a). The practical purpose of professional values is summarized by Peterson (1983, p. 137): “It is clear that ethical principles and professional values are indispensable both in defining long-range goals and objectives on one hand, and in setting policies and determining procedures on the other.” Ethics is a system of determining the right thing to do; values are seen as a key component in this system by serving as the basis of deliberation and decision-making (Koster, 1992; Blake, 1996). Ethics and values are interrelated elements that guide professional conduct. Attending to values in a process of ethical decision-making is an important element of professional practice: “For librarians, the heart of good practice lies in maintaining the core values of librarianship while adapting to continually changing information environments” (Diamond & Dragich, 2001, p. 413). Shared values then become the operational principles of an ethical practice, and a standard that can aid LIS professionals in resolving dilemmas and measuring professional success. Then to understand the ethical operations of library assessment, librarians can develop an understanding of 1) the specific decision-points that prompt ethical reflection, and 2) the specific values that are relevant to those ethical decisions.

The approach of this dissertation is therefore to apply the research methodology of grounded theory within the domain of practical ethics in academic library assessment. I discuss more details of the methods in the sections below.

### 2.2.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory: Researcher Remark on Perspectives, Problems, Solutions

In conducting the analysis of the data presented below, I follow the approach of constructivist grounded theory as described by Charmaz (2006). This approach involves a process of data analysis that centers subjectivity and complexity. It does not strive to present an objective or fixed view of the data. Rather, it acknowledges the role of interpretation and context, and strives instead to present a subjective and fluid view of the data. As a part of the interpretive process of data analysis, the constructivist approach underscores the researcher's position in creating their theory: "Constructivists acknowledge that their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187).

Following Charmaz, I wish to clearly mark out my perspective and my role in making sense of the data and constructing my theory of ethical library assessment. Charmaz (2006, p. 131) develops this idea further: "Because constructivists see facts and values as linked, they acknowledge that what they see—and don't see—rests on values. Thus, constructivists attempt to become aware of their presuppositions and to grapple with how they affect the research." This particular aspect of constructivist grounded theory—foregrounding the values of the researcher—is especially consonant with this dissertation, as a focus on values is a centerpiece of the dissertation. The presence of my own values necessarily affects my process of evaluating the values in the research data. As prompts for self-reflection, Charmaz (2006, p. 180) offers: "Who defines this main concern? With which criteria? Whose definitions stick?" Indeed, in the case of this dissertation, I am defining the concerns, the criteria, and ultimately the definitions. Charmaz calls us to make our vantage point explicit. To make explicit my values: my approach to library assessment involves values of student participation, community involvement, social justice, and human-centered design. The framework that I create will be inflected with these values.

My presence as the researcher reflects both the problem and the solution of my dissertation. The main problem of the dissertation can be summarized as follows: the library assessment community lacks a cohesive vision for ethical practice. Values and practices are diverse, varied, and sometimes positioned in conflict with one another. Moreover, local settings each offer distinct contextual priorities and pressures that complicate ethical decision-making. Likewise, my own perspective carries its own pressures, priorities, practices, and values. The kind of assessment that I wish to see in the library assessment community influences my decisions in the process of data analysis. Following a constructivist approach, I recognize that the codes and the framework that I produce is a construction that stems from and suits my particular interests. My unique perspective as the researcher-practitioner is therefore a representation of the problem of assessment ethics—I have my values and my context, while another practitioner will have their values and their context. In such an environment of competing priorities and multifaceted values, a unified ethics will remain elusive.

At the same time, my unique perspective as the researcher also presents itself as part of the solution. I bring my own views and values to the question of ethical library assessment and to the grounded theory analysis. In making sense of the data and developing a functional model of practice, I have attempted to smooth over the bumpy landscape of library assessment and bring a degree of coherence to the many values in play. In transforming, through grounded theory analysis, the research data into a model of practice, I am constructing one interpretive expression of a complex dataset. So I present the framework of this dissertation not as an objective endpoint, but as a subjective contribution to what is already a continuing community effort. As a future direction, the library assessment community can continue to convene around the question of ethics, and to develop practical responses that can be implemented across the profession.

The framework presented here can be a point of reference or a prompt for that ongoing, community-led conversation. The larger community can determine our values as a professional body, and then how we can implement those values and resolve values-in-conflict in support of an ethical practice of library assessment. If it is not appropriate or possible for the community to

determine collective values, then a tool or process can be created that equips individual practitioners with an approach for identifying the values that are relevant in their local contexts. This is ultimately the rationale for the framework—as an advancement of or an example for what a cohesive ethical library assessment practice can be, either for an individual practitioner or the wider community.

In sum, there is currently disagreement across the profession as to ethical practice. We know that assessment practitioners make decisions everyday about their work, but less clear is which values are relevant to those decisions, and how conflicts among those values are resolved. There are many values, practices, and contexts—how do we find coherence of vision and clarity of decision-making for ethical practice? Ultimately this dissertation asks, “How can library assessment be practiced ethically?” To do so, we must first know our values, and secondly we must know how to recognize and resolve tensions among those values in the course of an ethical practice. The data analysis and the framework presented in this dissertation is one step in moving that conversation forward.

## **2.3 Methods**

This dissertation asks: “How can library assessment be practiced ethically?” In support of this question, the dissertation aims to produce a theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical library assessment. To answer this question and to produce the framework and the toolkit, I applied a three-step method centered around grounded theory. A multi-step approach that weaves together different methods is inspired by the characteristic data collection approach of grounded theory, in which “the researcher is constantly comparing data gleaned from participants with ideas about the emerging theory” (Creswell, 2009, p. 85). In the case of this dissertation, the theory of ethical library assessment emerged in stages as data was collected and analyzed in each step. Each of the three steps in the method corresponds to a developmental step for the framework and the toolkit: the inductive literature analysis of Step 1 allows me to derive characteristics of ethical assessment; the survey with ethical vignettes of Step 2 allows me to derive grounded theory codes that form the basis of the initial theoretical framework and practical toolkit; the interviews of Step 3 allow me to validate and revise the framework and toolkit. The qualitative methods of Steps 2

and 3 were selected because this approach supports an inductive and emergent research design for studying real-world situations; analysis reveals themes and patterns with results that authentically represent the subjective experiences of research participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015, p. Table 3.1).

In the sections below, I provide descriptions of the specific methods, procedures, sampling, and analyses for each step.

### 2.3.1 Deriving Assessment Characteristics via Inductive Analysis of the Literature

#### *Overview*

In order to understand the landscape of assessment practice, I first conducted a literature review that investigated three main areas: 1) situating ethics and values in the context of LIS, 2) common dilemmas or sites of tension among values that practitioners encounter, and 3) characteristics of ethical assessment practice. These areas are examined across three chapters: the first area has been discussed in Chapter 2, the second area has been discussed in Chapter 3, and the third area has been discussed in Chapter 4. This three-part inductive analysis of the LIS assessment literature comprises Step 1 of my method. To summarize these findings, I first found that values and ethics has a deep history in LIS, with practical ethics and applied values being the most commonly-understood ethical lens through which practitioners view ethics in LIS; many different values are potentially relevant for practitioners according to various contextual factors of different situations. Next, I found a number of sites of tension confronted by practitioners in their work, and they include value and impact studies, technology and privacy, learning analytics, social responsibility, critical librarianship, and cataloging and classification. From this point, I sought to understand the responses developed by assessment practitioners for addressing or resolving these sites of tension. To accomplish this, I conducted a third literature review that revealed common traits or characteristics present in assessment practices that explicitly seek to resolve the tensions found in the first round of literature review. This analysis produced a group of five practice areas in assessment, along with a set of characteristics shared across these practices. The inductive analysis was selected so as to identify the values and characteristics of assessment that are most relevant to

practitioners in addressing common ethical dilemmas. The combined findings from the literature review inform the development of Step 2 and Step 3 of the research design, described in their respective sections below.

### *Procedure*

To conduct the literature review, I followed the guidelines set forth by Cooper (2016) and Creswell (2009). I began by searching Google Scholar, one of the most comprehensive databases of scholarly articles (Gusenbauer, 2019; Harzing & Alakangas, 2016; Martín-Martín et al., 2018). I applied the following search terms:

- "core values" AND librarianship
- "ALA Core Values"
- "core values" librarianship

The references surfaced through these initial searches were then expanded upon via backward and forward citation chaining (Hirt et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2011; Min et al., 2021).

### *Sampling*

These search queries and citation chains yielded approximately 500 articles relevant to the research question. Appendix A shows the references that were included in the literature analysis, organized by ethical assessment characteristics as discussed in Chapter 5.

### *Analysis*

I coded each reference according to three main thematic areas related to the research question: 1) professional values, 2) ethical dilemmas, and 3) practical responses. The three main thematic areas are connected sequentially, with each containing several subthemes that were developed inductively as the articles were reviewed and analyzed. Please see Appendix A for a fuller presentation of the literature analysis. First, practitioners identify and discuss the values that are relevant to their professional work. Articles that were coded with the theme of professional values (n=204) contained the following subthemes:



- Core Values
- Diversity/Social Responsibility
- Privacy/Intellectual Freedom
- Democracy/Public Good; Service
- Access
- Professional Ethics

Next, dilemmas or sites of tension among competing values or practices are identified and discussed. Articles that were coded with the theme of ethical dilemmas (n=209) contained the following subthemes:

- Impacts and Outcomes
- Demonstrating Value
- Measuring Value
- ROI and Market Forces
- Cataloging
- Neutrality
- Technology
- Vocational Awe
- Power and Justice
- Learning Analytics
- Instruction
- Market Forces
- Student Success

Finally, practical responses are developed, applied, and analyzed as to their effectiveness in resolving the tensions and providing an ethical path forward that aligns practice with values. Articles that were coded with the theme of practical responses (n=82) contained the following subthemes:

- Community-Based Assessment
- Critical Assessment
- Norms and Regulations
- Design
- Feminist Ethics
- Strategic Planning

This process of theming and subtheming provided a view of the landscape of library assessment. With the data produced through the literature review and analysis, I established which values are relevant to library assessment, along with common sites of tension encountered by practitioners. These topics were addressed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Of particular relevance to the goals of this dissertation, the third thematic area of the literature review provided useful data for informing an ethical assessment practice, as the articles in this area demonstrate actual practical responses to ethical issues, either in the form of an explicitly-stated value or an explicitly-stated ethical dilemma to which the article responded. The articles in this thematic area provide examples of practitioners developing values-based assessment practices. With the research data derived from the literature, I then designed a survey that could further support the identification of a core set of characteristics or values that comprise ethical library assessment practice.

### *Limitations*

The literature review is limited in scope, insofar as my focus of inquiry draws a boundary around my topic areas. Interdisciplinary work may have been overlooked, in particular. Research databases contain variations and limitations to their indices (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). Hence my literature review is a far-reaching but imperfect representation of the conversation around this topic area.

### 2.3.2 Developing an Initial Framework and Toolkit via Survey

#### *Overview*

In order to more fully understand the ethical dilemmas and ethical decision-making of library assessment practitioners, I conducted a survey of assessment practitioners that prompted ethical

reflection and response. The results from this survey informed the development of an initial framework and toolkit for ethical assessment practice. Following Peterson (2000), the survey was designed in three main parts: 1) questions relating to values that are relevant to ethical decision-making; 2) questions related to ethical dilemmas in practice; 3) respondent demographics.

In Part 1, the survey design was based around the ALA Statement on Core Values. While not necessarily the primary document for ethical decision-making, this document is an important point of reference for practitioners. In this section, participants were asked to evaluate the *importance* and *frequency of consideration* for each of the 12 ALA Core Values, followed by free-text responses for supplying further values that are relevant for the work of library assessment.

In Part 2, the survey focused on practitioner responses to ethical dilemmas. I chose vignettes as an appropriate approach for understanding decision-making in certain situations (Alexander & Becker, 1978; Evans et al., 2015; Magalhães-Sant'Ana & Hanlon, 2016). Vignettes are “short descriptions of real-life situations that are employed in a survey to assess attitudes and intentions” (Eifler & Petzold, 2019, p. 393). A vignette approach “allows researchers to include factors that are relevant to the research question,” and, importantly for ethics-related research, “provides researchers with the ability to create hypothetical scenarios that address sensitive topics” (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014, p. 357). In this dissertation, the development of the ethical scenarios followed the guidelines set forth by Evans et al. (2015): the scenarios were brief and reflected real-world situations as discussed in the relevant literature. As further reinforced by Aguinis and Brady (2014, p. 362), I developed vignettes that followed an “actual derived cases” approach so as to “represent concrete values found in actual settings.” Ultimately, 6 vignettes were developed and presented to research participants. This number was chosen as it allowed a full range of dilemmas to be represented across the vignettes; the vignettes were each crafted to reflect the main themes related to ethical dilemmas as found in the literature and discussed in Chapter 3:

- Value and Impact
- Information Technologies, Data, and Privacy
- Learning Analytics and Student Success

- Social Responsibility and Neutrality
- Information Literacy
- Cataloging and Classification

These ethical topics areas were distributed across the vignettes, with the aim of achieving a balance of topics that could represent a variety of real-world situations. The survey design then prompted participants to produce the values that are relevant to those ethical topics. Table 2.1 shows the relationship between vignette and ethical topic.

**Table 2.1 Vignettes Mapped to Ethical Topic**

#	Ethical Topics	Vignette
1	- Library Value and Impact	There is a perceived need on campus for the library to demonstrate its value to university administration in order to receive continued financial support. The assessment librarian thinks about conducting a study that would produce a return-on-investment (ROI) measure for the library's e-resources. The librarian knows that this assessment would resonate with university administration. At the same time, the librarian thinks that dollars-and-cents calculations might not be appropriate for measuring abstract educational outcomes of learning and research. The librarian decides not to conduct the study.
2	- Information Technologies, Data, and Privacy	In order to assess the library website, the assessment librarian is considering implementing new analytics software that captures screen recordings of website visits. The analytics software is operated by a privately-owned e-commerce company, and the screen recordings would be stored on the company's cloud servers, which could affect the privacy of library users. But this company's software can provide advanced analytics that would be applied to improve library web services. The librarian decides to implement the software.
3	- Learning Analytics and	The assessment librarian maintains anonymous student data related to library gate counts. University administration has

	Student Success	requested that the library begin identifying this data using card swipe records, and then share the data into a centralized learning analytics data warehouse. University administration would analyze the data and develop interventions with students to improve retention. But the assessment librarian is concerned that this approach doesn't reflect library professional values, and considers raising an objection. Still, the librarian feels a sense of commitment to the institution, and ultimately decides to identify and share the data.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social Responsibility</li> <li>- Neutrality</li> <li>- Cataloging</li> </ul>	The assessment librarian is working with the university's prison abolition student group to assess the library's usage of subject headings related to incarceration. At the same time, the librarian recognizes that this project would affect the library's position of neutrality, since the topic is politically charged, the library's affiliation with this group could be controversial, and the results might be viewed as biased. Despite these reservations, the librarian sees the benefit of this project, and decides to conduct the assessment.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instruction</li> <li>- Student Participation</li> <li>- Social Responsibility</li> </ul>	The assessment librarian has formed a student working group to help inform a study of library instruction. The student group proposes a study that assesses how the library instruction program is experienced by students of different immigrant statuses. The librarian is hesitant because this assessment doesn't align with existing institutional priorities, and the results might not be received well by other librarians and administrators. But the assessment librarian feels that student voices should be meaningfully included in the assessment process, even if student viewpoints challenge existing perspectives and processes. The librarian ultimately decides to advocate for the student group, and to co-develop an immigration-focused assessment with the students.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archives</li> <li>- Community Participation</li> </ul>	The assessment librarian is assessing the accessibility of special collections finding aids. The librarian considers inviting disabled members of the university community to be participants in the assessment process, as they could provide relevant cultural perspectives. But the librarian doesn't have an existing

		relationship with this community, and isn't sure how to involve them or how much time it would take. The assessment librarian decides not to involve the community members.
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### *Procedure*

The survey procedure involved distributing a 3-part survey to a community of library assessment practitioners. The survey was first drafted off-line, then imported into the survey software Qualtrics. The main survey parts are presented in the following survey sections, or “blocks”:

- Blocks 1–3: Introductory content
- Block 4: Professional Values and Library Practice
  - This block includes questions related to the values that are relevant to library assessment practitioners.
- Blocks 5-11: Ethical Decision-Making in Library Assessment Practice
  - In blocks 5–11, respondents were guided through a set of scenarios that featured ethical decision-points, and were asked to comment on their decision for each scenario. Following an introductory block, each of the six vignette blocks presented a different ethical scenario that included a decision point. Following the description of each scenario, respondents were asked to comment on how they would respond to each situation.
- Block 13: Demographics
  - These questions provide details related to respondent demographics.

Overall, the survey was designed to produce data that would inform the development of the framework and toolkit for the ethical practice of library assessment while also recognizing the subjective experience of practitioners. The design of the questionnaire was guided by the grounded theory that had been produced during the Step 1 literature review.

The survey underwent 3 rounds of pre-testing with library assessment practitioners to ensure that the instrument was reliable and valid (Hank et al., 2017). Finally, I conducted an expert review to refine the structure and presentation of the questionnaire (Callegaro et al., 2015). The following sections contain an overview of the changes that occurred following Pre-Test 1 and Pre-Test 2, which together produced the most significant modifications.

### Changes to the Survey Following Pre-Test 1

- A new question added to the survey: “I refer to the ALA Core Values when making decisions about my assessment practice.” This question serves as a check on the relevancy of the ALA Core Values.
- A new question added to the survey: “Have you developed a local values statement for your assessment work?” This question prompts the respondent to share local values that are relevant for their assessment work.
- The likert scale for likelihood is reduced from 5 choices to 4 choices by removing the middle choice. This compels respondents to pick a side of likelihood.
- I regularized language around “relevancy” and “decision-making” so as to clarify the point of application of the values. For example, the question that was originally expressed as “In your opinion, which ALA Core Value(s) apply to this situation?” becomes “Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario.”
- In the demographics section, I removed the question about Job Title, as it may be identifying.
- In the demographics section, I removed the question that asked, “What is your library’s annual operating expenditure?” This question was designed to indicate the scale of assessment practice, so to better produce a useful response, it was revised to the following: “I have sufficient funding to conduct assessment.” Participants responded to this question with a five-point Likert scale of agree-disagree.
- In the demographics section, I added a further question to indicate size and budget of local assessment: “How many staff do you supervise?”

- Further description was added to the demographics question about primary job classification: “librarian (non classified, professional, or faculty).” This response choice is more inclusive of the different classifications that an assessment librarian may have.
- The demographics questions about race and gender were combined into a single question. “Are you a member of a traditionally minoritized group?” As I did not intend to analyze the data specifically about race and gender, a question specific to those identities was not necessary.

### Changes to the Survey Following Pre-Test 2

- As a final question of the survey, I added an open-ended, reflective prompt that asked participants to share any further thoughts about the topic or the survey.
- For clarity, I added a gloss on “assessment practice” to Part 1 of the introductory section.
- In the demographics section, I revised the question that asked, “Are you tenured?” The underlying motivation with this question was to understand how safe or secure a participant felt at work. Thus, this question was revised to: “I feel that I have job security.” Participants responded to this question with a five-point Likert scale of agree-disagree.
- I added clarifying language to the beginning of the scenarios section: “You will be asked to respond to each scenario with your own perspective.”
- In the demographics section, I further revised the question. “Are you a member of a traditionally minoritized group?” Instead of minoritized, the term “oppressed” was used, as this term speaks more directly from the perspective of the oppressed.
- To the list of professional memberships, I added three additional organizations: Canadian Association of Professional Academic Libraries (CAPAL), Progressive Librarians Guild, We Here.

Appendix D makes available a question-by-question description of the component parts of the survey with their respective rationales, along with the full survey as distributed to respondents.



I submitted my research plan to the Montana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which approved the survey instrument and consent agreement, and which designated my research as exempt under MSU IRB Exempt Protocol #SY103020-EX. See Appendix C for the survey consent agreement.

### *Sampling*

Survey respondents represent a sample of professionals actively engaged in the practice of library assessment. This sampling was identified based on the concept of theoretical sampling; following this approach, the sample focuses on collecting “theoretically relevant data” that will support the development of the framework (Glaser & Strauss, 2006, p. 58). “Theoretically relevant data” is research data collected from a sample that is relevant to the theory that will be produced through the grounded theory analysis. As grounded theory aims ultimately to generate a theory of the studied phenomenon as grounded in the data, the grounded theory method relies on a population sample that can produce data relevant to the theory. In the case of this dissertation, the studied phenomena is library assessment, and the theory that I sought to develop was a theoretical framework and practical toolkit to support ethical library assessment practice. To ground my theory in relevant data, I turned to the library assessment practitioner community. This sample allowed me to collect research data relevant to the production of a theory of ethical assessment practice. The views of library assessment practitioners are relevant to the theory of ethical library assessment. I then created a plan for building a sample composed of library assessment practitioners.

Respondents were recruited via prominent professional email listservs. The first invitation to participate was distributed on November 11, 2020 to the following listservs, with follow-up messages sent on November 23 and December 2, 2020. Table 2.2 shows the populations targeting during survey recruitment.

**Table 2.2 Survey Population**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Description</b>
ARL-Assess	713	This is the most prominent community of library assessment practitioners in higher education; organized by the Association of Research Libraries.
DLF-Announce	1192	The Digital Library Federation is “community of practitioners who advance research, learning, social justice, and the public good through the creative design and wise application of digital library technologies.” (Digital Library Federation, n.d.)
Code4Lib	3864	Code4Lib “is a volunteer-driven collective of hackers, designers, architects, curators, catalogers, artists and instigators from around the world, who largely work for and with libraries, archives and museums on technology.” (Code4Lib, n.d.)
Critical Assessment	7	This is a small group of assessment professionals working to critically evaluate and discuss assessment in libraries.

Appendix B makes available the email messages that were sent to these lists. Further, I presented a paper at the 2020 Library Assessment Conference, after which 27 practitioners expressed interest in participating in the survey following a call for participation that I included in my presentation. Invitations to complete the survey were then sent to these 27 practitioners on November 11, November 23, and December 2, 2020.

Following the initial outreach message on November 11, many respondents indicated membership in ACRL, so survey invitations were also sent to the following lists maintained by ACRL and other prominent divisions of AAL on November 23, 2020 and December 2, 2020:

- ACRL Assessment Discussion Group
- LLAMA Assessment Discussion List
- Collection Assessment

- ACRL Research Assessment and Metrics Interest Group
- LITA User Experience Interest Group

For only two of these lists were subscriber figures made available: the ACRL Assessment Discussion Group had 150 subscribers, and the ACRL Research Assessment and Metrics Interest Group had 535 subscribers at the time of the survey outreach. All together, these populations represent a diversity of practitioners working in the area of library assessment in North America. Since the survey responses will be used to inform the development of a practical toolkit that would be used in real-life settings by the populations represented in the survey response, the sampling methods used here are suitable for producing data to support the outcome of this dissertation.

The survey opened on November 11, 2020, and closed on December 11, 2020. The survey yielded 239 responses.

### *Analysis*

Following the completion of the survey's data collection period, data was exported from Qualtrics to a CSV file. Analysis of data from the non-free-text questions was completed using the built-in tools provided by Qualtrics. Free-text survey responses were coded for meaning following a grounded theory approach as outlined by Charmaz (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43): "coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data." Such content analysis has been applied in the field of library science (Spurgin & Wildemuth, 2017). I followed two main phases as outlined by Charmaz:

- In the first phase of *initial coding*, I identified each free-text response as a meaning unit, and, working quickly and spontaneously, I identified a code for each response that hewed as closely as possible to the language of the data itself. This phase involved analyzing each discreet piece of data on its own.
- In the second phase of *focused coding*, I analyzed the initial codes to locate and refine emergent themes with a view towards making sense of the data together. This phase

involved analyzing pieces of data in relation to each other, to emergent themes, and to a cohesive whole.

I then compared the codes from the free-text survey responses to the coded themes identified through the inductive literature review, and synthesized the codes from the two phases into the initial framework and toolkit for ethical library assessment. The results of this step are discussed in Chapter 6. In instances where I cite directly from the research data in my Chapter 6 discussion, I include a 6-digit alphanumeric code that corresponds to the response ID in the survey data.

### *Limitations*

The main limitation of the survey relates to the usage of vignettes. Scenario-based studies are limited in a few key ways. Since scenario-based studies create a miniature, artificial world for the sake of the research, results drawn from that world may not translate fully to real-world situations (Rice, 2017). Questions arise as to how accurately the vignettes represent real-world situations, and thus how accurately study results represent participants' real-world attitudes and behaviors (Hainmueller et al., 2015). Results necessarily speak to the specific conditions of the brief scenarios that exist within the study. The leading criticism of vignette studies is therefore that the vignettes may be unrealistic and the results not easily generalizable (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Eifler & Petzold, 2019). As mentioned above, this limitation can be mitigated by basing the scenarios on real-world situations that represent problems or situations described in the relevant literature (Evans et al., 2015). In my research design, the scenarios presented in the surveys were informed by a review of the literature so that the situations of the vignettes reflect a world that, while intentionally artificial, is still recognizable for participants.

### 2.3.3 The Process for Developing the Initial Framework and Toolkit

#### *Overview*

The survey data and analysis resulting from Step 2 of the research design (detailed in Chapter 6) supports two outcomes: a theoretical framework and a practical toolkit for ethical library assessment. Following the data analysis via constructivist grounded theory, the process resulted in a

set of 11 value codes to represent the values relevant to library assessment, and 17 practice codes to represent the ethical actions of library assessment practitioners. These 11 value codes and 17 practice codes form the foundation of the framework and toolkit. To establish the framework, I map the practice codes to the value codes, and these codes together are the constitutive parts of a theoretical system of values and corresponding practices for assessment practitioners. Then, in order to translate the theoretical framework into a practical toolkit, I configured the codes into a card deck designed to be applied by practitioners to support ethical assessment.

At this step of the research, I created an initial version of the framework and the toolkit, derived from the survey data. It will be useful here to describe the process of developing the framework and the toolkit, as these elements are an important inflection point between Step 2 and Step 3 of the research design. Step 2 of the research design culminates in the initial framework and toolkit. In Step 3, I validate the initial framework and toolkit, resulting ultimately in a final, refined framework and toolkit.

In the sections below, I describe the process of transforming the research results into the framework and the toolkit. I begin by establishing a relationship among the codes produced by the grounded theory analysis of the survey data. The values and practices relevant for library assessment are mapped to each other, and this configuration represents the framework for ethical assessment. Then to create an operational expression of the framework that can be put into use by practitioners, I develop the toolkit, which takes the shape of a card deck. In creating an interactive deck of cards that support reflection and creativity, I draw on the tradition and methodology of participatory design.

### *Audiences for the Framework and Toolkit*

The framework and the toolkit each serve the same purpose, but are aimed at different audiences. The purpose shared by the framework and toolkit is to produce a cohesive model for conducting ethical assessment. Both the framework and the toolkit are based on the same research data and analysis, and they both aim to demonstrate a path forward for the ethical practice of library assessment. The two outcomes then diverge in their intended audiences. The framework is oriented

toward the scholarly community, and is rooted directly in the grounded theory approach of coding and model-making as derived from research data. The framework shows the universe of values relevant to library assessment, along with a set of corresponding practices for enacting the values.

The toolkit is then oriented toward the practitioner community, and takes a shape that can allow it to be usable in the everyday working environment of an assessment professional. The toolkit is planned to be designed for a user population of academic library assessment practitioners based in North American higher education. The audience of the toolkit reflects the population of the research study, which focused on the experiences and viewpoints of library assessment practitioners who work at universities in North America. The framework, and the underlying research of this dissertation, forms the extensive foundation for the toolkit. The toolkit provides a visual representation of the framework, including graphics, layout, and colors. The text of the toolkit aims to be written in clear, direct terms, with plain-language expression so as to be approachable by a wide range of practitioners.

The framework and the toolkit are interconnected, yet serve these two different communities—the toolkit is the operational expression of the scholarly-derived framework. The framework—aimed at a scholarly audience—articulates relevant values and models a system of values for ethical library assessment. Then, the toolkit—aimed at a practitioner audience—defines procedures for putting the values into practice.

### *Establishing the Framework*

The framework is based on the grounded theory analysis of the survey data. The grounded theory analysis produced a set of codes representing the values and practices relevant to library assessment. The framework is a construct showing the relationship among the values and the practices. The framework functions to demonstrate this model of ethical assessment by presenting a set of values relevant to library assessment, with corresponding practices for enacting the values. To accomplish this, I complete a mapping exercise to establish a relationship between the practice codes and the value codes that were produced through the grounded theory analysis. In Chapter 6, I present a full discussion of the codes and the framework.

*Designing the Toolkit*

The framework presents the values and practices for ethical assessment, but the framework itself does not contain within it any operational instructions or practical procedures. To accomplish the final step of producing a practical tool that can be used by real-world practitioners, I turn to developing the toolkit.

The toolkit functions to operationalize the framework. Through its structural design and instructional aspects, the toolkit communicates to practitioners how an ethical assessment can be achieved. The toolkit takes the shape of a card deck. The toolkit is composed of 16 cards: 1 instruction card, 10 cards that feature the values and practices from the framework, 1 blank value card for expanding the set, and 3 exercise cards for working with the values. The toolkit aims to transform the theoretical framework into a usable tool for assessment professionals. The toolkit is designed to generate thought and action in support of valued-based decision-making in the practice of library assessment. The basic goal of the toolkit is thus to reveal the values and priorities for each changing context of assessment, and to help the practitioner understand how those values can be applied in practice.

As a researcher-practitioner, my approach to this dissertation involves both research inquiries and practical considerations, with a strong focus on the *how* of this dissertation's main question: "How can library assessment be practiced ethically?" I aim therefore to produce both a research contribution that advances the field's understanding of this topic, while also developing a real product that can be used by everyday practitioners. Grounded theory is suitable for this purpose, as it aims to translate research insights into a theory of action. In my case, I have elected to develop a deck of cards as a way to give form and function to the research insights represented in the framework.

There are certain justifications for moving in this direction. From the survey data generated in Step 2 of the research design (discussed in Chapter 6), it was evident that many different values could be in play at different times, and that not every value was relevant for every situation. Yet it was also

evident that for many practitioners, a known set of values was available from which to choose, such as from a local values statement or a professional ethical code. In this way, values contain a balance of stability and flexibility. Stability may be found in a pre-defined set of values. This defined set forms a reliable ethical foundation of values. From there, flexibility is achieved in that the practitioner can choose which values to apply for a given situation. This characteristic—a mix of stability and flexibility—is expressed in the structural design of the toolkit as a card deck. Each card in the deck contains a value. The cards may be shuffled and selected in different ways. The deck as a whole is a controlled set of values, and thereby establishes a sense of stability. At the same time, a given card can be selected from the deck as relevant for a given assessment project, affording a degree of flexibility. Thus a card deck offers affordances that suit both stability and flexibility. Finally, a card deck can be “played” individually or in small groups or teams. This also reflects the real-world decision-making of the survey participants, as practitioners may work alone or collaborate with others to identify personal or shared values.

The main feature of the card set is the enumeration of values, along with a practical guide for putting the values into action. The card set includes three exercises to guide practitioners through a process of working with the value cards. When the exercises are completed in sequence, the final result of the toolkit is a ranked set of values relevant for a given assessment project. These exercises draw from the tradition of participatory design and co-design, whereby structured activities prompt creative thinking and collaborative work in group settings. In applying the concept and structure of a card deck for the purposes of reflection and collaboration, I am applying a methodology of participatory design. Participatory design offers a rich disciplinary tradition of creative collaboration and social engagement, with a methodology that involves applying tools and techniques—such as card deck with exercises—to generate new ideas (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2013; Robertson & Simonsen, 2013).

Related to participatory design is “research through design” (Gaver, 2012; Godin & Zahedi, 2014; Isley & Rider, 2018). This paradigm is also useful in the context of this dissertation. First, this dissertation stems from a practice-based profession, and aims to produce a practical tool. Second, the toolkit prompts practitioners to research, in a sense, their own values vis-à-vis their own



contexts. By “playing cards,” a process of “research-through-design” is applied, whereby the practitioner researches their own ethical context and designs their own set of ranked values as appropriate to their particular context. Clarke (2018) advances a research-through-design approach as viable for LIS practice and suitable for LIS professional values, specifically highlighting how a design artifact can be applied to solve a problem in a specific library context. To translate Clarke’s formulation for this dissertation: the toolkit is a design artifact that is being applied to solve the problem of professional values in the context of academic library assessment. In the wider design world, a deck of cards as a design tool has numerous parallels (Hazenbergh, 2013; Pascale, 2013; Digital Society School, Amsterdam University, 2020; L. D. Urquhart & Craigon, 2021; Climer, 2022). In the context of LIS values, an example of a card deck used for creative investigation is the *Envisioning Cards* (Friedman et al., 2011). The Envisioning Cards are designed to evoke consideration and discussion about ethical technology development. Each card in the deck presents a different point of concern for long-term technology design and development. The values are organized into five suits: Stakeholders, Time, Values, Pervasiveness, and Multi-lifespan. As discussed in Chapter 3, co-design and participatory design as examples of ethical assessment practice. The toolkit then builds on findings from the literature—by transforming the researching findings into a useful design tool, there is continuity from literature to research to output.

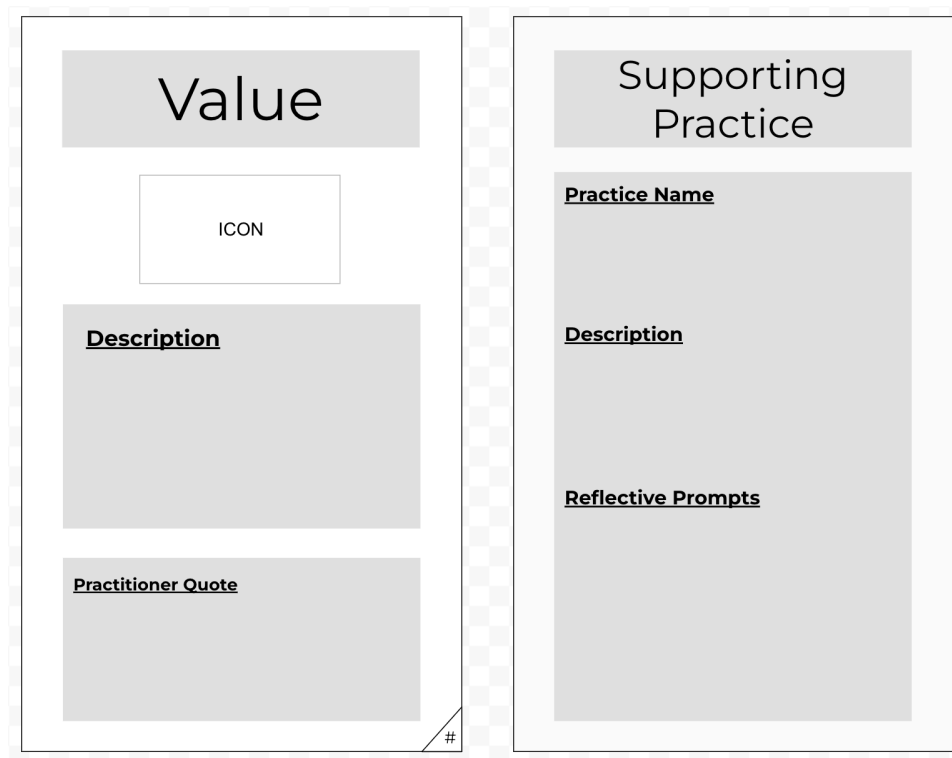
In the sections below, I detail the development process of the toolkit. In Chapter 7, I discuss further operational aspects of the toolkit. See Appendix I for a full presentation of the toolkit.

### *Building the Cards*

In order to build the toolkit as a set of cards, I completed the following three steps: 1) design the cards, 2) develop the exercises, and 3) document the instructions.

#### Giving the Cards a Visual Design

The toolkit takes the shape of a card set that contains values and practices relevant for library assessment. To impart a sense of creativity while expressing the serious content of the cards, I created a visual layout for each card that deployed a balance of graphics, colors, and text. Figure 2.1 shows the layout of the value cards.



**Figure 2.1 Visual Layout of the Value Card**

Figure 2.1 shows one complete card, with the layout on the left representing the front of the card and the layout on the right representing the back of the card. The background color indicates the different parts of the value: the white background is present on the front of all the value cards, and the green background marks the supporting practices.

### Developing the Exercises

To provide a structure and a guide for working with the cards, I adapted three exercises from the design world, each to serve a different purpose. Table 2.5 provides an overview of the exercise included in the toolkit along with their respective antecedents.

**Table 2.3 Toolkit Exercises**

Exercise Name	Purpose	Source Material
Values Freewrite	To define values	“Show Me Your Values.” (Gray et al., 2010)
Must-Haves	To prioritize values	“MoSCoW.” (Digital Society School, Amsterdam University, 2020)

Anchors and Sails	To implement values	“Speedboat.” (Hohmann, 2006)
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Three exercises were selected at this stage of the toolkit development so as to demonstrate three distinct types of exercises. First, *Values Freewrite* works as a defining activity, where the practitioner first interacts with the values and creates their own meaning and definition. Once the practitioner has established an understanding of the values through *Values Freewrite*, *Must-Haves* works as a sorting exercise, prompting the practitioner to consider a specific assessment project and prioritize the values in the context of that assessment. Finally, with the values having been prioritized, *Anchors and Sails* applies the metaphor of a boat to generate dialogue around the constraints and opportunities in implementing values. The exercises are intended to be completed either individually or in groups. Each exercise can be completed on its own, or the exercises can be sequenced together to form a cycle of value-sensitive library assessment: understanding, prioritizing, and implementing values.

#### Naming the Toolkit and Providing Instructions

The toolkit is given a name: the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*. This title indicates that the toolkit is focused on library assessment values, with a process for centering those values in the practice of assessment. Cards are assembled into an order aimed at facilitating a first-time way through the cards. The first card contains a set of instructions for the toolkit, explaining the background and purpose for the tool along with its constitutive parts and guidelines for use. See Appendix I for a full presentation of the toolkit, including the instruction card, the exercise cards, and the value cards.

Ultimately, the framework models a value system for library assessment. The toolkit functions as an ethical aid by providing a practical approach for articulating and applying the values relevant to a given assessment situation. The toolkit is flexible and extendible according to contextual factors and local conditions. Together, the framework and the toolkit represent an answer to the dissertation’s main question: “How can library assessment be practiced ethically?” The final step in my research design involves testing and validating the toolkit with library assessment practitioners. In the next

section below, I discuss Step 3 of the research design, involving a set of practitioner interviews to validate the framework and the toolkit.

### 2.3.4 Validating the Framework and Toolkit via Interviews

#### *Overview*

The initial framework and toolkit produced in Step 2 forms the basis for the third and final stage of the research: validating the framework and the toolkit through interviews. In the three subsections below, I first discuss the interviews as a form of validation, and then discuss the method applied to the interviews—visual elicitation—as well as the intensive, semi-structured approach to the interviews.

#### *Validation*

I aimed to achieve validation through triangulation, an established approach for validating results derived from qualitative data (Hoepfl, 1997). Triangulation occurs when similar insights are gained through different methods, thereby demonstrating a strong foundation from which results may be derived (Patton, 2014, pp. 316–317). With its three steps, my research design aims for triangulation by gathering data and producing insights through the literature, the survey data, and the interviews. I explored each of these data sources respectively in the sequential three-step process of my research design: first, the literature step formed a basis of understanding for the problem space of assessment ethics; second, the survey design—informed by the literature—produced data to support the development of the initial framework and toolkit for ethical library assessment; and third, the interviews—informed by the survey—form the third point on the triangle by providing a check and a confirmation of the results. It has been noted that visual methods are ideal in mixed-methods studies as a form of validation through triangulation (Pollak, 2017).

Since the interview sample comprises the same population as the survey (discussed more in the sampling section below), I conducted an additional validation approach known as member checking, or participant validation (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking occurs when data or results are presented back to participants to check for accuracy. Following the completion of the initial

framework and toolkit for ethical assessment, I returned to the assessment practitioner community to share and validate the framework and toolkit. If the values and practices from the interviews align with the values and the practices derived through the literature and the survey data, then the final model of ethical assessment is an accurate representation of the sample and can be a useful tool for practitioners.

### Visual Elicitation

For the interviews, I applied a visual elicitation method (J. C. Johnson & Weller, 2001). This procedure is particularly suitable for generating rich qualitative data that can be operationalized (Orr et al., 2020). This approach is summarized as follows: “Incorporating a visual task into a standard semistructured or in-depth interview can be very helpful for elicitation purposes, allowing participants to go beyond the verbal mode of thinking and connecting with wider dimensions of the experience of interest that may otherwise be disregarded” (Orr et al., 2020, p. 204). Visual elicitation is also applicable as an expression of grounded theory (Glegg, 2019). As such, its visual aspects are well matched for the final framework of this dissertation, which will take on a visual format as the final theoretical model of the data. The purpose of incorporating visual elicitation at this stage of the research is to test the toolkit, which is itself designed to elicit visual materials, as the toolkit will contain exercises that produce drawings and visual depictions. Within the wider context of LIS research, visual elicitation techniques are a small but growing approach for developing valuable insights about library experiences and information practices (Hartel & Thomson, 2011; Bedi & Webb, 2017; Greyson et al., 2017; E. Tewell, 2019).

Visual methods are also well-matched for the abstract topic of ethics and values. These approaches can help “participants to control the representation of information as well as to capture and express its intangible elements” (A. Hicks & Lloyd, 2018, p. 235). For example, asking participants to draw diagrams is good for getting an overview of an issue because it encourages more abstract kinds of thinking and talk (Crilly et al., 2006). Photo-elicitation encourages communication between researcher and participant that can capture otherwise ineffable aspects of a topic (Bagnoli, 2009). As ethics is highly contextual, abstract, and personal, visual methods can help participants give shape to their unique viewpoints and experiences. This approach is further apt for exploring the

everyday decision-making of practitioners, as Rose (2016, p. 316) states: “elicitation interviews with participant-generated visual materials are particularly helpful in exploring everyday, taken-for-granted things in their research participants’ lives.” The everyday act of making decisions can be taken for granted. Furthermore, this approach positions the participant as an expert in their own context (Rose, 2016). This is an important characteristic of the method at this stage, as the librarian participant is expert in their own decision-making.

The visual materials give a structure for the practitioner to explain their decision-making expertise, so that I, as a researcher, can understand how to introduce values-sensitivity into those decision-making workflows. A further subset of visual elicitation is visual collaboration, wherein responses are generated in relation to visual representations of the research topic, and researchers and participants can create and edit the visualizations together in the interview (Salmons, 2014). Since the interviews involve a visual representation of the research topic in the form of the toolkit, I will assume the role of researcher/facilitator vis-à-vis the participant/practitioner. Producing such research data through visual methods allows me to evaluate the visual sense-making of ethical decisions of the interviewees, and to integrate those insights into the validation process for the final framework and toolkit.

### Intensive and Semi-structured Interviews

The interviews were also designed as intensive and semi-structured. An intensive interview “fosters eliciting each participant’s interpretation of his or her experience...thus, the interviewer’s questions ask the participant to describe and reflect upon his or her experiences in ways that seldom occur in everyday life” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). This style of interview is suitable for studying the subjective nature of ethical decision-making. The structure of an intensive interview may range from a loosely guided exploration of topics to semi-structured focused questions. In this case, I selected a semi-structured approach as a way to balance the structure of pre-established questions with flexible emergent points of discussion. This was appropriate, as “researchers often choose to use semi-structured interviews because they are aware that individuals understand the world in varying ways. They want to elicit information on their research topics from each subject’s perspective” (Luo & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 249).

## *Procedure*

### The Interview Protocol

Following Orr, I selected a visual tool and created an Elicitation Guide with prompts to serve as the interview protocol. The “visual tool” is the toolkit itself, which depicts the research topic in a set of cards that contain values and practices related to ethical assessment. Orr (2020, p. 206) recommends the following: “Integrate the visual elicitation tool or strategy into the interview guide. For example, outline the activity for the participant as well as prompts to facilitate the subsequent discussion.” The interview protocol was therefore designed to prompt interaction with the toolkit and to elicit responses to the main parts of the toolkit: the Value Cards and the Exercise Cards. Participants first review each value and acclimate to the toolkit, and then complete one of the exercises that applies the values. Depending on the exercises completed, participants created a written description of a value, a physical arrangement of the cards, or a sketch drawing. The interview culminates in the exercise, which produces a final visual representation, based on the constituent parts of the toolkit. This final visual representation provides the conversational focus that allows the participant to speak to the functionality of the toolkit as a whole.

As with the survey, I developed the interview protocol through a pre-testing process. Following the first pre-test, I revised the Value Cards section to include specific instructions for reviewing each card for 2 minutes. Following pre-tester 2, I revised the instructions for clarity, otherwise making no major changes. Pre-test 3 resulted in no further changes to the protocol. Appendix H makes available the final interview protocol.

I submitted my research plan to the Montana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which approved the interview protocol and consent agreement, and which designated my research as exempt under MSU IRB Exempt Protocol #SY103020-EX. See Appendix G for the interview consent agreement.

### Interview Preparation

The interview focused on the design and operation of the toolkit. The toolkit takes the form of a physical card deck. So as to simulate a real-world use of the toolkit, I sent the prototype toolkit to participants via the United States Post Office or FedEx. In further preparation for the interview, I asked participants to consider a specific assessment project that would serve as a point of reference in the interview. I also asked participants to have a pen and paper ready, as the exercises in the toolkit involve writing or drawing (see Appendix F for preparatory communication with interview participants). In the days ahead of the interview, I emailed participants a link to an online informed consent form. The consent form was presented via a Qualtrics survey, and participants were asked to input their name and submit their form to confirm their authorization. All participants reviewed and authorized the informed consent.

### Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted via Zoom, the online video communication platform. I began the interviews by thanking participants for their time, and by verbally confirming that I had received their authorized informed consent. I provided a brief background of the overall goal of my research project, as well as the specific goals of the interview. Participants were asked to silently read the instructions for the toolkit. I then moved into the first of two main parts of the interview.

First, to test the Value Cards, I read the following prompt to participants:

We will now move through the Value Cards, beginning with Card 1, Alignment. We will spend about 1–2 minutes on each of the 11 Value Cards (I will keep us on time). For each card, silently read both front and back. We'll pause after each card to discuss the following questions:

- Is this value relevant to your practice of library assessment?
- How accurately does the card content reflect the value? Consider the description, quote, and supporting practices.
- Is there anything missing from the card? Anything vague or confusing?



The first question is an initial check on the relevancy of the value. I want to ensure that the value derived from the survey data is in fact a value that is recognizable as relevant for the interview participant. The second question aims to generate further feedback as to the representational accuracy of the value. I want to ensure that the value—as described on the card—resonates with the real-world practice of the participant. The third question is a final prompt for feedback.

Then, to test the Exercise Cards, I facilitated one exercise with each participant, rotating the 3 exercises of the toolkit through the 12 participants so that each exercise was completed 4 times. This allowed me to gather data as to the operations of the exercises while staying within a 60-minute timeframe for the interviews. In the interview, I read the following prompt to participants:

Please read aloud the instructions for the exercise, and then complete the steps described on the card. Talk aloud as you think and work through the exercise.

I observed the participant reading the instructions and moving through the activity. I observed points of success or frustration, noting where improvements or refinements to the instructions could be introduced. Finally, I asked participants to respond to the following question: “Is this exercise effective in achieving the goal stated on the card? Why or why not?” This question helped me gauge the effectiveness of the exercise in producing its intended outcome.

To conclude the interview, I asked participants to respond to two final questions:

Please reflect on the toolkit as a whole: the value cards, the exercises, and the potential application to your real-world work. Please complete the following two statements:

After practicing with this toolkit, I will be able to...

After practicing with this toolkit, I still felt that I needed...

In summary, the interviews proceeded according to a three-part structure, as shown in Table 2.6.

**Table 2.4 Overview of Interview**

Section Name	Section Description
<b>Values</b> , 35 minutes	<p>Participants reviewed each Value card individually, and responded to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is this value relevant to your practice of library assessment?</li> <li>- How accurately does the card content reflect the value? Consider the description, quote, and supporting practices.</li> <li>- Is there anything missing from the card? Anything vague or confusing?</li> </ul>
<b>Exercise</b> , 10 minutes	<p>Participants completed one of the three exercises, and responded to the following question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is this exercise effective in achieving the goal stated on the card? Why or why not?</li> </ul>
<b>Wrap-up</b> , 5 minutes	<p>Participants reflected on the toolkit as a whole, and completed the following two statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After practicing with this toolkit, I will be able to...</li> <li>- After practicing with this toolkit, I still felt that I needed...</li> </ul>

These questions allowed me to focus on the final remarks of the participants, and to gather information as to toolkit revisions. Interview sessions were recorded via video and audio, with transcription (see Appendix J for full interview data). The interviews were designed to be conducted within a period of 60 minutes. Of the 12 interviews, 9 were completed within 60 minutes, 2 were completed in 75 minutes, and 1 was completed in 90 minutes. The full interview protocol is available in the Appendix E.

### *Sampling*

The final question of the survey prompted participants to share their email address if they wished to be contacted by the researcher for a follow-up conversation about ethics and assessment. If survey respondents chose “yes” for this prompt, they were directed to a separate survey to collect contact information. This procedure ensured that responses to the main survey remained anonymous. Twenty-one email addresses were collected via the survey. In March 2022, I contacted these email addresses, requesting participation in the interview stage of this research. I received 13

responses, and ultimately conducted 12 interviews. The recruitment email is included in Appendix F.

### *Analysis*

I produced interview data via structured dialogue around the Value Cards and the Exercise Cards that comprise the toolkit. Orr describes the analysis step of visual elicitation:

As visual elicitation strategies are primarily for the purpose of facilitating communication between the researcher and the participant, analysis is often conducted within the context of the interview by asking participants to describe and explain their depictions. The subsequent discussion is then analyzed as text according to the study's analytic design (eg, qualitative description, reflexive thematic analysis, grounded theory) (2020, p. 208).

For the purposes of this stage of my research design, I am focusing on analysis “conducted within the context of the interview,” rather than “subsequent discussion...analyzed as text according to the study's analytic design” (Orr et al., 2020, p. 208). This latter component can serve as a future direction for this research, where I analyze the full interview discussion as text, according to constructivist grounded theory methodology and the processes outlined by Charmaz consisting of initial coding, focused coding, theoretical coding, and memo writing. The interview data is rich with insight about the everyday pressures and priorities of library assessment practitioners. A full analysis of this data is, however, outside the scope of this dissertation. At this stage, I analyzed the interview data with an eye toward the framework and the toolkit, with the aim of producing a set of confirmations and revisions to validate and strengthen the toolkit. Within the current research design, analysis occurred in the context of the interviews, where I watched and listened for feedback related directly to the design and operation of the toolkit. In particular, the interview sessions were designed to elicit data that would help me understand: Should any part of the toolkit be removed? Should anything be added? What needs to be refined? The toolkit is designed to help library assessment practitioners conduct assessment ethically—does the toolkit accomplish that?

From the interview design, I collected data about each card in the toolkit. To complete my data collection and analysis, I recorded notes during each interview, followed by a reflective activity where I identified thematic patterns of feedback from the participants and completed analytic memo-writing to underscore the significance of the patterns (Miles et al., 2013). The approach to identifying thematic patterns was recursive throughout the interviews, in that after each reflective memo, I reviewed prior interviews and memos to compare emerging patterns before moving ahead with the analysis. This process was repeated for all interviews, with the themes in the final reflective memo having been reviewed and matched with all prior memos (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020).

Appendix J makes available all research data, including interview transcripts and interview analysis. This analysis ultimately revealed key areas where the toolkit needed further attention and revision. For the values, I focused the analysis on the relevancy of the value and the accuracy of its description. I ask participants directly whether a particular value is in fact relevant to their practice, and I ask whether the description of the value is accurate or missing any component. For the exercises, I focused on the clarity of the instructions and the effectiveness of the exercise in achieving its stated goal. For the toolkit as a whole, I ask what the participants will be able to do with the toolkit, and what they still need from the toolkit. These questions help me focus down on the descriptive and the operational aspects of the toolkit. From this analysis I was able to discern areas of improvement for the toolkit, focusing on each card individually and their operation together as a whole, with a view toward producing a functional tool that can be used by members of the study population.

Ultimately, interview data and analysis generated insights that validated the conceptual design and operational effectiveness of the toolkit. The final outcome is an ethical assessment toolkit that has undergone a design and testing phase to ensure that the toolkit first reflects the actual values and practices of library assessment practitioners, and second that the toolkit can work operationally to help build a values-sensitivity for practitioners. The interview results and the toolkit is described further in Chapter 7. In instances where I cite directly from the research data in my Chapter 7 discussion, I include a 3-digit alphanumeric code that corresponds to the Interview Participant code in the interview data.

### *Limitations*

Visual research methods carry their own set of limitations. Visual research methods are known to limit or constrain data collection, as the research investigation is focused around certain visual outputs and activities (A. Hicks & Lloyd, 2018). Visual methods require more resources, such as the time and energy of the participant to produce visual outputs, but also logistical components like a paper and pen are specific to this approach and present additional aspects to be accounted for (Pollak, 2017). Finally, data quality may be an issue for visual methods: “Subjects may draw what is easy to depict, may be affected by the proximity of others, or may desire to please the researcher” (Hartel, 2014, p. 1351). Given the guided nature of the toolkit, I believe that the interview design mitigates factors related to easily-produced drawings, though factors of researcher-participants social dynamics may have affected data collection. Sampling bias is also present at this stage of the research, as the interview population is composed fully of participants who self-selected into the interviews via the survey. This suggests that data at this stage may be biased toward those who are already more interested in ethics and values in the practice of library assessment. Some in the LIS field may not be interested in achieving an ethical practice from the perspective of values-based practical ethics, or there may be more critical views of values and ethics. The interviews do not capture these perspectives. This dissertation assumes that practitioners are seeking to achieve an ethical practice, and the interview sampling reflects this assumption and bias.

## **2.4 Summary**

In this chapter, I described the overview of my three-step research process: 1) inductive literature analysis, 2) survey with ethical vignettes, 3) interviews with visual elicitation. I also presented the development process of the initial framework and toolkit, which resulted from Step 2 of the research design. These research methods function sequentially to support the development of a new theoretical framework and practical toolkit for library assessment.. The results of Step 1, the literature review and analysis, are discussed in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5. Then in Chapter 6, I present the results of Step 2 of my research process: conducting a survey to inform the design of a theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical assessment. Step 3 of the research design, validating the framework and toolkit through interviews, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

## 3. Locating the Values of Library and Information Science

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a brief history of the development of values within Library and Information Studies (LIS), drawing on the literature of LIS, sociology, professionalism, value studies, and practical ethics. I begin by tracing the outlines of professional identity as a way of staking out a claim to values. I then turn to the definition and purpose of values, before enumerating the main values present in the discourse of library and information studies. Finally, I present an overview of the contemporary conversation and practical applications related to values, focusing on the American Library Association (ALA) Core Values of Librarianship (2004).

### 3.2 Defining a Profession

The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science describes librarianship as “the profession devoted to applying theory and technology to the creation, selection, organization, management, preservation, dissemination, and utilization of collections of information in all formats” (Levine-Clark & Dean, 2013). Starting with this claim that library work is part of a profession, we can briefly examine the attributes that define a profession. To help illuminate these characteristics, we can look to the sociology literature. Greenwood (1957) outlines five basic attributes of a profession: systematic theory, authority, community sanction, ethical codes, and a culture. The analysis presented in this chapter will focus primarily on the ethical code as a professional attribute, as this dissertation is focused on ethics and values. Greenwood describes an ethical code as a guide to occupational behavior that carries altruistic overtones and a public service-orientation. Such an ethical code can be enforced formally by a professional association empowered to censure members, or informally via pressure exerted from one colleague to another. Larson (1979) also includes a code of ethics as one of the basic elements of a profession, along with a professional association that can speak for the members of the profession. A code of ethics or other mode of ethical self-regulation continues to be an important professional marker into the 21st century (K. A. Roberts &

Donahue, 2000). Such values-based ethical behavior generates trust both among professionals internally and also between professionals and external parties such as clients or community members who receive professional services. A shared set of values is commonly included in these discussions of professional characteristics.

The LIS literature includes its own discussions of professionalism, focusing on professional definitions and professional ethics. Hansson (2016) claims that “it is possible to argue that librarianship is one of the founding professions of civilisation” (p. 307). The evidence brought to bear on this claim is a tradition of documenting ethical statements that render LIS activities as legitimate through history. The boundaries of the profession, in essence, are drawn by a self-defined standard of ethical behavior (Seminelli, 2016). Hansson (2017) furthermore states, “As a special niche in this research [of library ethics] we find the quest for a shared set of universal values for librarianship” (p. 1265). This niche represents a critical aspect of the identity of LIS practitioners. Sager (2001) articulates the motivation for this search for shared values: “Without common values, we are not a profession” (p. 152). This idea is echoed by Diamond & Dragich (2001): “Professionalism in librarianship should also be defined largely in terms of values.” Connecting ethics with professional identity has a long history in LIS literature, as demonstrated by Tyler (1949), who outlines a professional boundary according to two primary characteristics, both rooted in ethical theory and practice: first, the presence of a recognized code of ethics or statement of principles; second, the use of professional techniques that are based less on routine action and more on the application and interpretation of principles. This decades-long conversation reveals the definitional importance of ethics and values for the LIS profession.

Others, however, acknowledge the murkier boundaries of the LIS profession. For instance, Abbot (1998) categorizes librarianship as a semi-profession because it lacks the full scope of professional attributes—such as licensing bodies and fee-for-service models—that are present in law or medicine. For similar reasons, Hauptman (1988) describes librarianship as “anomalous” as a profession, since LIS professionals are neither purely consultants remunerated by individual clients nor purely scholars remunerated by professional organizing bodies. The ethical code itself demonstrates the nuanced professional status of information workers: Winter (1983) notes that

ethical codes per se are not of high significance to the LIS profession because neither sanctions nor legal ramifications can be applied by a governing body, as can occur with, for example, disbarment in the legal profession. As opposed to formal “structurally professionalized groups” such as law or medicine, Winter describes LIS workers as being members of a “normatively professionalized group,” for whom an ethical code is not a binding or enforceable document, but for whom “ethical issues” are still of great importance and are investigated within the profession (pp. 37–38). As a further example of this in-between professional status, the ALA offers accreditation for graduate education in library and information science, but does not offer accreditation, licensing, or ethical enforcement for library institutions or individual professionals. Libraries are also structured on an indirect fee-for-service model, in which a librarian is not directly compensated by a patron or a student for their services, but rather through public financing such as taxes or private financing such as university tuition. For reasons such as these, the LIS profession does not fit perfectly into established professional models.

The nuanced status of the LIS profession has drawn continued attention and criticism. Drabinski (2016) notes, “In library discourses about professionalization, writers tend to begin with a discussion of what constitutes a profession and then describe the ways that librarianship does or does not ‘measure up’” (p. 605). This attempt to measure up is related to status and compensation. Drabinski’s critique of library professionalism and status is then turned inward by Moeller (2019) through a lens of exclusion, examining why some library professionals such as credentialed librarians are paid more than other library workers such as front-line staff who may lack high-status credentials.

Still, a focus on the relationship between values and the library profession is present through these discussions. In an expansive work on library ethics, Preer (2008) tells us, “I believe that a measure of a profession’s development is its understanding of the values that govern its practice” (p. xiv). Rubin (2016a) articulates a “value model” of LIS professionalism, whereby “the professional foundation of LIS is not its knowledge or techniques, but its fundamental values. The significance of LIS lies not in mastery of sources, organizational skills, or technological competence, but in *why*



LIS professionals perform the functions they do” (pp. 283–284). The *why* of LIS work—rooted in shared values—is recognized as an essential attribute of the LIS profession.

Having established a connection between a profession and a set of values, we can turn to the nuances of a value: definitions, purposes, and enumerations.

### 3.3 Defining a Value

From the LIS literature we can identify an operational definition of a value. An early definition of a value comes from Yerkey (1980), who states that values “provide premises for understanding and communication” (p. 133). Rubin (2016b) says that “values are strongly held beliefs that serve to guide our actions” (p. 534). And Seminelli (2016) asserts that “the values of a profession are the beliefs of the group” (p. 64). These beliefs, however, can shift and change over time, as professional values and their definitions are dependent on contextual factors such as political and social change (Koehler, 2015). Drabinski (2016) reminds us that a value is not fixed, but rather “continually produced and reproduced in the library discourse,” and that professional values are “ideas to be struggled over in both discourse and practice” (p. 606). From these sources, we can derive a definition of a library value as a belief commonly-held and continually refined by members of the LIS profession that guides professional conduct. With this definition in mind, we turn next to the evident purpose of a value in the context of LIS practice.

### 3.4 Defining the Purpose of Values

The LIS literature has demonstrated an interest in articulating the purpose of a value in the context of LIS practice. It will be helpful to first outline basic categories of values. Koehler (2003) describes three basic forms of values: *regulatory* values that explicitly detail acceptable or unacceptable behavioral norms; *aspirational* values that are defined by abstract goals and represent a professional ideal; and *educational* values that provide specific instruction, guidance, and explanation. Koehler offers an interpretation of these value categories and their interrelation: “Regulatory values prescribe or proscribe behavior, aspirational values provide targets to quest toward, and educational values describe the reasons for prescriptions and proscriptions but also the map toward desired

ends” (2003, p. 104). Within LIS, values appear primarily as *aspirational*, as there is no explicit regulatory body nor are there commonly agreed-upon instructions as to how to enact a value in practice.

When investigating the purpose of aspirational values, a chronological framing provides additional nuance. The LIS literature features a notable focus on the timescape of librarianship and values. Through this lens, values function as a stabilizing element that situates LIS professionals in a past, present, and future of practice. We begin with Sager (2001), who outlines four applications of values:

- To aid [LIS professionals] in addressing the problems that regularly confront them.
- To improve the preparation of those who are entering the profession
- To better articulate to our public and users the important role that libraries and librarians play in society.
- To build a bridge between the past and the future

These four value applications are largely reflected in subsequent LIS literature, though with further readings as a reference, we can reconfigure these four applications around a chronological structure. Sager’s first and second applications can be combined under a heading based around present time, called “professional and practical ethics.” Sager’s third and fourth applications can be combined under a heading based around the past and the future, called “foundations and futures.” I explicate further below.

### 3.4.1 Professional and Practical Ethics

Professional and practical ethics LIS literature focuses primarily on the influence of values on current practice. This represents the principal purpose of articulating a set of values for LIS—as a foundation for professional ethics. In this way, values guide everyday action and decision-making for LIS professionals. Fister (2012a), for example, cites “our traditional values” as a way to guide the “practical steps” needed to build a more just world that LIS professionals wish to inhabit (p. 6). Weissinger (2003) argues that professional values rationalize collective action. Our professional

values can provide a framework for ethical conduct, policies, and services (Preisig et al., 2014; Wilkinson, 2014; Koehler, 2015; Rubin, 2016b; Dressler, 2018). Preer (2008) recognizes that practical library operations “all require not only professional competence but ethical judgment” (p. xiii), and that professional values can help determine right or wrong conduct. For Rubin (1991), “‘Ethical’ considerations are those involved in deciding what is good or right in terms of the treatment of human beings, human actions and values” (p. 1). This application of values presumes that people “want to do what is ‘right.’” (Buchanan & Henderson, 2009, p. 9). LIS professionals have been shown to be committed to doing the “right thing”, and see ethics as a key part of professional integrity (Ferguson et al., 2016). For Gorman, “values can be of practical utility” (2015, p. 2), and as professionals, “we must know, observe, and use ethical standards that embody our core values.” (2003, p. 137). Values are additionally useful because they can also function as standards of goal-setting and assessment (Budd, 2008a). The practical purpose of professional values is summarized by Peterson (1983): “It is clear that ethical principles and professional values are indispensable both in defining long-range goals and objectives on one hand, and in setting policies and determining procedures on the other” (p. 137). The literature indicates that ethics and values are interrelated elements that guide professional conduct. Ethics is a system of determining the right thing to do; values are seen as a key component in this system by serving as the basis of deliberation and decision-making (Koster, 1992; Blake, 1996).

In applying abstract and aspirational values to everyday scenarios, practical ethics is the main theoretical lens through which values are studied in the LIS literature. Practical ethics is defined as the application of ethical theory to real-world situations (Singer, 1993; Buchanan & Henderson, 2009). Practical ethics prompts the practitioner to ask how one should behave in particular situations, with all of the attendant contextual factors and conflicts. Notably, practical ethics is not necessarily rooted in an existing code or a moral system, but rather serves to prompt a process of principled reflection that leads to the clarification of assumptions, alternatives, and action (M. M. Smith, 1992). In the context of LIS practice, practical ethics is seen as vital (Budd, 2006). As Budd (2008b) describes of LIS work: “Professionals have to be cognizant of practical (or applied) ethics; that is, translating the theories of ethics into action” (p. 117). For Buschman, Rosenzweig, & Harger (1994), “The heart of a librarian’s professionalism...lies in putting these values into

practice” (p. 575). Diamond & Dragich (2001) similarly conclude: “For librarians, the heart of good practice lies in maintaining the core values of librarianship while adapting to continually changing information environments” (p. 413). And for Rubin & Froehlich (2010), “Understanding these values improves our ability to recognize ethical situations and to make ethical decisions and balance the competing organizational factors” (p. 1750). Shared values then become the operational principles of an ethical practice, and a standard to which LIS professionals can resolve dilemmas and measure professional success.

### 3.4.2 Foundations and Futures: Values as a Stabilizing Force through Times of Change

In addition to a focus on the influence of values on current practice, the library literature reveals an interest in examining the past and future of library values as a means of creating stability through time, especially in the face of change driven by technology or economic pressures. Enumerating and adhering to a set of professional values reflects a desire to root the unknown future of libraries in a knowable past. This concept of values as both the foundation and the future of ethical LIS practice is a concept that most clearly emerged toward the turn of the millennium (Koehler, 2002).

Hauptman (2002) observes that ethics “does not matter very much to librarians” and that only recently have “information specialists turned their attention to ethical matters” (pp. 132–133). The two decades leading up to the turn of the 21st century “have seen a dramatic increase in the number of articles dealing with ethics and librarianship” (Hauptman, 2002, p. 2). This view is also advanced by Lindsey & Prentice (1985): “Ethics...have not been burning professional issues during the several centuries of American librarianship. The question appears to have been irrelevant prior to 1900, and some would say that it has been of little relevance since” (p. 19). Koehler (2015) furthermore observes that, “For most of its history, librarianship was none too concerned with its own ethics” (p. 213). The LIS profession long demonstrated a cool approach to ethics—until a surge of technology-driven change at the end of the 20th century motivated a new professional engagement with values and ethics.

In Koehler's (2015) analysis of the history of LIS values and ethics, the computer and other networked technologies have redefined LIS practice, and have thus prompted a renewed focus on values as a means of achieving stability through change. Several writers similarly draw attention to the rapid technological change of the coming century, arguing that the LIS profession is being fundamentally redefined and restructured through technological, political, and social change (Christians, 1991; Dougherty, 1995; Danner, 1998; Symons & Stoffle, 1998; Koehler & Pemberton, 2000; Dole & Hurych, 2001; Gorman, 2003). With information technologies promising to transform the information professions, ethics and values emerged as a burning issue in the closing years of the 20th century.

Crowe & Anthes (1988) describe the expected impact of technology on ethical practice: "Academic librarians face a new working environment engendered by the rapid growth of information and advances in information technology...Value conflicts and ethical dilemmas arise from the more active, substantive role required of the academic librarian by technological developments" (p. 123). With the introduction of modern information technologies, the production of information dramatically increased in both amount and type, thus presenting new challenges for LIS professionals in terms of collection development, reference services, online and in-person access, and preservation.

Information technologies that developed toward the turn of the 21st century promised a sea change to the information professions, and so the decade of the 1990s was a time of concern for many LIS professionals related to the future of their practice. The contemporary history of this era and the intensity of its concern is recounted by Sapp & Gilmour (2003): "In librarianship, as indeed in almost all of modern society, the year 2000 was a numerically arbitrary but symbolically significant milestone...by 1995, librarians had been bombarded with a hailstorm of predictions about their future" (p. 23). One such prediction comes from Abbot in a 1993 Plenary Lecture on the President's Program at the American Library Association (1998): "To the profession as a whole, the central challenges lie in embracing the various information technologies of the future and the groups that service them" (p. 442). This was a central question for LIS professionals at this time:

how best to understand and evolve with the rapid change brought on by information technologies. In response, a renewed focus on professional values emerged as one path forward.

Through uncertain change, shared values are seen as a way to guide the profession into the future as the foundation of professional activities and services (Symons & Stoffle, 1998). In response to technology-conditioned change, Hauptman (2002), for example, appeals to professional values as a guide: “Understanding foundational structures and principles in addition to technological gadgetry and at least attempting to foresee where we are heading will help information workers to serve their constituencies in a productive, legal, and ethical manner” (p. 14). The foundational purpose of values in the face of professional uncertainty was further reflected through major organizing bodies, as evidenced by the then-President of the ALA Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) identifying the theme of 1997-1998 as *Facing the Millennium: Values for the Electronic Information Age*, and asserting that “traditional values are still relevant in the electronic information age.” (Hisle, 1997, p. 764).

While technology was viewed as the primary driver of change in the 1990s, other forces such as market pressures and business logic have been viewed as a threat to alter LIS practice (Fister, 2012a; Bourg, 2013). Budget reductions and resource scarcity, for example, prompted difficult decisions related to services and collections (Bushing, 1993). LIS professionals in the 1990s did not have an agreed-upon set of shared values, and through their absence Bushing (1993, p. 52) recognizes the steadying purpose of professional values, reiterating that there should not be “different ethical considerations in hard times such as these when values and principles are harder to identify and prioritize.” Hauptman (2002, pp. 136–137) reiterates the call for a more values-based practice: “Ethics matters because it allows us to implement our divergent values,” and that “if we adhere to traditional values, we will not be seduced into believing that when institutions change so must our commitments.” In times of perceived change such as with technology in the 1990s and political forces of the 2010s, LIS professionals seek to reclaim and reaffirm values in order to reestablish norms of professional practice and identity. Indeed, then-President of ALA Barbara J. Ford conveyed this idea directly in her president’s message of 1998:

Ethical principles and professional values guide the work of librarians. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas now and to generations in the new millennium. In the emerging Digital Age, the identity and integrity of our profession are being challenged, and we must constantly reexamine our professional vision in order to seize every opportunity to put our values and ethics into practice. (Ford, 1998, p. 54)

This call to a values-based practice is carried forward in 2014 by the then-president of the ALA's Reference and User Services Association, who—in an article titled “Continuity and Change, or, Will I Ever be Prepared for What Comes Next?”—remarks, “The enduring principles that are the foundation of the library reassure me that libraries have a future, no matter the changes around us” (Kern, 2014, p. 285). Through periods of professional uncertainty or difficulty, values are seen as a grounding element for the LIS professional.

Reflecting the aspirational purpose of values, Froehlich (2000) says that values represent an abstract, ideal professional, and that the habitual actions of librarians and library users are the measure of realizing values. In this way, articulating and adhering to values is a means of connecting the past and the future. This approach seeks to establish a recognizable LIS professional through a continuum of practice, what Gorman (2003) calls a “golden thread” that defines librarianship as a profession no matter where it is practiced. Gorman's major contribution to this discussion is titled *Our Enduring Values Revisited: Librarianship in an Ever-Changing World* (2015). The language of “enduring values” seeks to confer to the profession a timelessness, the need for which is expressed in the subtitle language of an “ever-changing world.” Sager, Baker, Burke, Hilyard, and Welles (1999) use additional metaphor to describe values as the “cement that holds the profession together,” and “a global positioning system” that serve as “landmarks” directing LIS professions toward a shared future. The quest for LIS values is motivated by a desire for stability, with a shared set of values functioning as a compass to current and future LIS professionals. Values then function as a way to maintain a tradition of library practice into a future that is uncertain and quickly changing.

In addition to signaling internally, professional values can also serve as a tool for coherent communication and engagement with those outside of the LIS profession. In this there is a

secondary call to share our values to external stakeholders such as publics, campus entities, and the wider community so as to communicate our traditional and lasting value as a profession and to build trust (Finks, 1991; Oppenheim & Pollecutt, 2000). Sager's (2001) description of library values that can be used "to better articulate to our public and users the important role that libraries and librarians play in society" (p. 149) is reinforced by Seminelli (2016), who argues that LIS values themselves represent the value that libraries can bring to the community, and that librarians can focus on communicating values to our external communities as a bulwark against, for example, budget cuts. Gorman (2003) explicitly ties a change-orientation with the internal and external signal function of values: "We need to examine and affirm the core values of our profession if we are to flourish in a time of change and maintain the ethic of service to individuals and society that distinguishes our profession" (p. 80). Likewise, Sager et al. (1999) say by adhering to a set of traditional and aspirational values, LIS can gain a "greater understanding of our role in society, and society gains a clearer understanding of the importance of the library and information science profession" (p 218). And Foster & McMenemy (2012) state that, in addition to providing standards for professionals to adhere to, values are important for communicating a professional identity with the wider world.

We have now established a sequence of points: LIS possesses the characteristics of a profession, notably a set of shared values; values are defined as commonly-held beliefs of members of a profession; values function to guide ethical action during everyday situations, and to connect past and future practice. Now let us turn to enumerating the values present in the LIS literature.

## 3.5 Enumerating the Common Values

### 3.5.1 Value Studies in the 20th century: Toward Shared Values

The earliest published set of values for the LIS profession is most commonly cited as Ranganathan's *Five Laws of Library Science* (Ranganathan, 1931):

- Books Are For Use



- Every Reader His/Her Book
- Every Book Its Reader
- Save The Time Of The Reader
- The Library Is A Growing Organism

Following Ranganathan, discussion of professional ethics and shared values appeared infrequently throughout the 20th century (McMullen, 1957; Bengé, 1970; Atherton, 1973). During this time a few LIS writers issued calls-to-action for other members of the profession to commit greater attention and resources toward value studies. *Library Journal* editor Eric Moon (1968), for example, insisted that “the [LIS] profession does have ethical questions to grapple with and should find a way to formulate a position on some of them.” Moon offers a number of potential ethical questions for consideration, such as “automation and its potential for massive invasion of privacy” (p 131). To resolve our professional dilemmas, Moon proposes a renewed definition of the LIS ethos, a fresh ethical code, or some other mechanism that can help LIS professionals better enact a values-based practice. Cohen (1971) furthermore tells LIS professionals that “we would deal better with our daily tasks if we thought a little more often and a little harder about the principles and purposes that underlie our work” (p. 1). As evidenced in the literature, however, the LIS profession did not demonstrate a wide-spread interest in the underlying principles of the work for another two decades—not until the fundamental change of automation and information technologies more fully showed itself as the century drew to a close.

At this time, members of the library profession began to express concern that the rise of technology would alter the work of librarianship, with a renewed appeal to define and emphasize values as a stabilizing force. In a speech marking the 20th anniversary of OCLC—the library technology, research, and community organization—information school dean and ALA president F. William Summers (1989) captures this urge when he remarks on “the challenge that we face in trying to embrace technology without losing our basic values and how technology can alter those values” (p. 26). Summers enumerates a set of professional values—individual autonomy, privacy, equality, freedom, and access—closing with, “It is those values which we must seek to preserve in the years to come” (p. 30). With this speech, Summers inaugurates the modern conversation around the

enumeration of professional values. Summers' call is then picked up by Finks (1989), who offers a "fresh look" at values by encouraging LIS professionals to "to call [values] to consciousness and criticize and question them, to apply them to our problems and quandaries, to invoke them as we plan and make decisions, and ultimately to cherish and celebrate them" (p. 356). Finks searches for values that are the "essence of our calling," and "inherent in librarianship," and that "originate in the nature of our mission." The literature at this time calls attention to a perceived need to articulate professional values in practice (K. G. Peterson, 1983; Baker, 1992; W. G. Johnson, 1994).

The urgent question of values that are inherent, original, essential, or "core" then becomes fertile ground for debate throughout the following decade leading up to the turn of the millennium (Buschman et al., 1994; St. Clair, 1997; Rodger, 1998; Sager et al., 1999; Froehlich, 2000). Gorman is a prominent voice during this period; he attempts to speak for the profession in a series of publications. In *Our Singular Strengths* (1997), Gorman offers 144 meditations on librarianship, including eight values and five updated laws to match Ranganathan's original set. Gorman's centerpiece contribution is *Our Enduring Values*, originally published in 2000 and updated in 2015. In this work, Gorman draws primarily on the work of Ranganathan (1931), Rothstein (1968), Shera (1970), and Finks (1989) to propose 8 professional values: stewardship, service, intellectual freedom, rationalism, literacy and learning, equity of access, privacy, and democracy.

Gorman's enumeration has been recognized as the "most ambitious attempt to define a core set of values for the library profession since Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science." (Foster & McMenemy, 2012, p. 251). And the response to Gorman shows that he mostly hits the mark in his enumeration. Burd (2003), for example, says that Gorman's values are "intrinsic to the profession." Hauptman (2002) states that "Gorman's values are our values" (p. 134). Follow-up research comparing Gorman's values to ethical codes and value statements across the world, however, shows that while there is some degree of broad consensus around a small core of values, Gorman's values reflect a particular American cultural perspective (Foster & McMenemy, 2012). The small core of LIS values shared across the globe include service, privacy, and equity of access, while Gorman's American sensibility uniquely includes rationalism, democracy, and literacy and learning.

At the same time that Gorman is developing a set of values, others are attempting a more empirical approach to determining LIS values. Koehler & Pemberton (2000) examine values statements and ethical codes from across the information professions. In an attempt to deduce a model code that contains a core set of ethical principles for LIS, they identify five values:

1. Whenever possible, place the needs of clients above other concerns.
2. Understand the roles of the information practitioner and strive to meet them with the greatest possible skill and competence.
3. Support the needs and interests of the profession and the professional association(s).
4. Insofar as they do not conflict with professional obligations, be sensitive and responsive to social responsibilities appropriate to the profession.
5. Be aware of and be responsive to the rights of users, employers, fellow practitioners, one's community, the larger society.

As an extension of this work, Koehler, Hurych, & Dole (2000) identify leading values for LIS professionals via a profession-wide survey. Nearly all librarians identify patron service as their first order ethical principle. The leading values for academic librarians in the United States are service to the patron, preservation, and intellectual freedom. As a follow-up to this research, Koehler, Hurych, Dole, & Wall (2000) distributed a similar survey to a wider study population, reaching more geographical regions and types of LIS professionals. They find service again is the top-rated value for LIS professionals, followed most commonly by a combination of information literacy, intellectual freedom, equality, and preservation. Finally, Koehler (2003) concludes this line of inquiry by proposing the following six core values for the LIS profession: intellectual freedom, privacy, intellectual property, professional neutrality, preservation, equity of access. Koehler cautions, however, that it is difficult to express a single set of values across the information professions. Similarly, Dole & Hurych (2001) observe that despite growing interest at this time in values studies, no standard definitions have emerged. Nearly 20 years prior, Peterson (1983) notes the same lack of professional consensus: "Librarianship, claiming status among the professions, has struggled over the years to clarify and arrive at a set of ethical principles." This decades-long struggle to find shared principles is demonstrated by the wide range of values proposed during the period

between Ranganathan's *Five Laws* in 1931 and the publication of the ALA Core Values Statement in 2004. Table 3.1 shows the 15 values that appear twice or more in the published literature from 1931–2003.

**Table 3.1 LIS Values appearing multiple times in published LIS literature, 1931-2003 (n=21), in descending order of commonality**

Value	Count	Citations
Service	12	Ranganathan, 1931; Rothstein, 1968; Shera, 1970; Finks, 1989; Baker, 1992; Buschman et al., 1994; Hisle, 1998; Sager et al., 1999; Koehler & Pemberton, 2000; Koehler, Hurych, & Dole, 2000; Koehler, Hurych, Dole, & Wall, 2000; Gorman, 2000/2015
Access	9	Ranganathan, 1931; Finks, 1989; Summers, 1989; Rodger, 1998; Sager et al., 1999; Koehler, Hurych, & Dole, 2000; Koehler, Hurych, Dole, & Wall, 2000; Koehler, 2003; Gorman, 2000/2015
Intellectual Freedom	6	Rothstein, 1968; Baker, 1992; Buschman et al., 1994; Hisle, 1998; Koehler, 2003; Gorman, 2000/2015
Literacy and Learning	6	Rothstein, 1968; Shera, 1970; Finks, 1989; Rodger, 1998; Sager et al., 1999; Gorman, 2000/2015
Professionalism	5	Rothstein, 1968; Peterson, 1983; Baker, 1992; St. Clair, 1997; Koehler & Pemberton, 2000
Stewardship	5	Ranganathan, 1931; Shera, 1970; Finks, 1989; Buschman et al., 1994; Gorman, 2000/2015
Privacy	4	Summers, 1989; Gorman, 2000/2015; Froehlich, 2000; Koehler, 2003
Social Responsibility	4	Rubin, 1991; Buschman et al., 1994; Koehler & Pemberton, 2000; Rubin & Froehlich, 1996/2010
Individual Autonomy	4	Summers, 1989; Rubin, 1991; Baker, 1992; Rubin & Froehlich, 1996/2010

Democracy	3	Ranganathan, 1931; Finks, 1989; Gorman, 2000/2015
Preservation	3	Koehler, Hurych, & Dole, 2000; Koehler, Hurych, Dole, & Wall, 2000; Koehler, 2003
Justice	2	Baker, 1992; Johnson, 1994
People	2	Peterson, 1983; Rodger, 1998
The Public Good	2	Shera, 1970; Rubin, 1991
Truth	2	Finks, 1989; Rubin & Froehlich, 1996/2010

In addition to the 15 values presented in Table 3.1, a further 20 values appear only once in the literature. These values include:

- Scholarship (Shera, 1970)
- Honesty (Peterson, 1983)
- Equality (Summers, 1989)
- Survival (Rubin, 1991)
- Care (Baker, 1992)
- Integrity, Humaneness, Fairness, Excellence (St. Clair, 1997)
- Diversity, Passion (Sager et al., 1999)
- Minimal Well-Being, Protection from Injury, Recognition for One's Work (Froehlich, 2000)
- Tolerance, Beauty (Rubin & Froehlich, 1996/2010)
- Rights (Koehler & Pemberton, 2000)
- Intellectual Property, Neutrality (Koehler, 2003)
- Rationalism (Gorman, 2000/2015).

In total, the literature reveals that 35 different values have been put forward for consideration as core values, with more than half of those values only appearing once. This shows some agreement among the LIS professional community as to the most commonly-accepted values, but also a lack of agreement as to a set of shared values as a whole. Despite a long tail of unique values, relative

agreement at the top of the chart suggests the potential for arriving at an agreed-upon set of “core” values. In arguing for the need to establish core professional values, Baker (1992) maintains that identifying profession-wide guidelines is not the work of an individual, but rather a task “best left to a broad-based committee of persons knowledgeable about library administration and about ethical principles” (p. 5). The urgency of the time motivated the quest for shared values, and so it happened that the American Library Association entered the discussion with the goal of articulating a set of core values for the LIS community.

### 3.5.2 Value studies in the 21st century: ALA Core Values Task Force and Core Values Statement

As a response to the growing but inconclusive debate around core values, the question of professional values was elevated to a national level with the formation in 1999 of the ALA Core Values Task Force (CVTF1), which was followed in 2001 by the Second Task Force on Core Values (CVTF2). The work of these two committees ultimately produced a document published in 2004 and codified in 2005, “Core Values of Librarianship.” This document represents a key inflection point for the practical and scholarly conversation around enumerating LIS core values. In publications that pre-date the Core Values statement, researchers debated the definitions, purposes, and enumerations of LIS professional values. Following its publication, the Core Values statement has become the primary point of reference in discussing and debating LIS professional values. It will be helpful to provide a brief historical background as to the development of the ALA Core Values Statement.

The effort to craft a core values statement for the LIS profession was led by Don Sager, who remarked in 2001, “One of the most contentious professional issues that arose during the past year was the question of whether the American Library Association should adopt a set of core values for the profession, and if so, what those core values would be.” Among the already-available, ethics-related documents, Sager finds nuance that justifies a stand-alone Core Values statement. He remarks of the following documents:

- The *Code of Ethics* (American Library Association, 2017b), first published in 1939, describes LIS professional obligations and standards
- The *Library Bill of Rights* (American Library Association, 2006b) first published in 1939, describes obligations to those served
- The *Libraries: An American Value* statement (American Library Association, 2006a), first published in 1999, describes LIS commitment to the community

In contrast and complement to the above documents, a Core Values statement would “summarize the basic beliefs that the members of this profession hold in common.” This need was derived from a recommendation that emerged in Spring 1999 at the First Congress on Professional Education. At that meeting, members of ALA identified professional values as an area for further discussion, with a motivation of “defining librarianship for the new millennium.” (American Library Association, 1999). Existing documents were not sufficient for this purpose: “Although the Association has issued a number of documents that imply values for the profession (e.g. the code of ethics, the statement on intellectual freedom, the affirmation of libraries as an American value) there is no clear explication to which members can refer and through which decisions can be assessed; the resulting statement should be developed with partner groups or endorsed by them as the values of librarianship.” (American Library Association, 2002c). To lead the drafting of such a statement, Sager served as chair of the first Core Values Task Force. The CVTS1 was appointed “to clarify the core values (credo) of the profession.” (American Library Association, 2002a). The task force met in person in 1999 to draft a statement, then distributed a sequence of drafts through a variety of communication channels such as email listservs and ALA bureaucratic structures. After receiving hundreds of comments, the task force released its fifth and final draft in 2000. The CVTS1 sought to create a jargon-free, comprehensive, and concise list of values (American Library Association, 2002b). The initial enumeration included the following values:

- Connection of people to ideas
- Assurance of free and open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works
- Commitment to literacy and learning
- Respect for the individuality and the diversity of all people

- Freedom for all people to form, to hold, and to express their own beliefs
- Preservation of the human record
- Excellence in professional service to our communities
- Formation of partnerships to advance these values

Upon release, this initial set of core values was not well received by the wider LIS community. The editor of *Library Journal* objected to the process and the result, saying that the CVTF1 applied a flawed committee-based approach to draft a statement containing “vague generalizations” that “weakly” convey how deeply and strongly the LIS community holds these values (Berry, 2000). The process of the CVTF1 was seen as exclusionary and inconsistent with efforts to further diversify the profession (Weissinger, 2003). In an email thread following the release of the draft statement, members of ALA governance and the wider community expressed concern, including the following responses to the statement: it is disappointing, headed in the wrong direction, does not comprehend current issues, is not worthy of endorsement, lacks significance, and adds nothing to the understanding of values (Rosenzweig et al., 2000). Contributors to this email thread viewed the ALA Core Values statement as a potentially important document that deserved scrutiny and intense development. One ALA Councilor wrote that the Core Values statement, “as the result of much hard labor, promises to become a PRIMARY POINT OF REFERENCE for a good long time in matters of much moment to the profession and its publics” (Rosenzweig et al., 2000, para. 29). This impassioned response from the community highlights the anticipated major impact of the ALA Core Values statement.

In response to the continued desire for a clarified Core Values statement, combined with the need for a better process and outcome, ALA convened the Second Core Values Task Force with Patricia Glass Schuman as chair just a few months after the work of the CVTF1 concluded (American Library Association, 2004a). Whereas the first committee worked for about one year, the second committee worked for 3 years, and employed a more inclusive process with intentional facilitation of profession-wide contributions (Sullivan, 2004). The goal of the CVTF2 was to “help librarians and library school students discuss their understanding of, and commitment to, the values that librarianship represents” and that “contribute to our unique perspectives as librarians. [These



values] represent essential and enduring beliefs that we uphold over time.” (American Library Association, 2004b). In summer 2003, the CVTF2 delivered a set of values, which were adopted in summer 2004 and codified as an official ALA document in January 2005 (Schuman, 2005). The Core Values Statement articulates the function of values: “The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values which define, inform, and guide our professional practice.” The Core Values Statement produced by the CVTF2 is still in effect today. It enumerates the following values (descriptions are quoted directly from the Core Values Statement):

#### Access

All information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users.

#### Confidentiality/Privacy

Protecting user privacy and confidentiality is necessary for intellectual freedom and fundamental to the ethics and practice of librarianship.

#### Democracy

A democracy presupposes an informed citizenry. The First Amendment mandates the right of all persons to free expression, and the corollary right to receive the constitutionally protected expression of others. The publicly supported library provides free and equal access to information for all people of the community the library serves.

#### Diversity

We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve.

#### Education and Lifelong Learning

ALA promotes the creation, maintenance, and enhancement of a learning society, encouraging its members to work with educators, government officials, and organizations

in coalitions to initiate and support comprehensive efforts to ensure that school, public, academic, and special libraries in every community cooperate to provide lifelong learning services to all.

#### Intellectual Freedom

We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

#### Preservation

The Association supports the preservation of information published in all media and formats. The association affirms that the preservation of information resources is central to libraries and librarianship.

#### The Public Good

ALA reaffirms the following fundamental values of libraries in the context of discussing outsourcing and privatization of library services. These values include that libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies.

#### Professionalism

The American Library Association supports the provision of library services by professionally qualified personnel who have been educated in graduate programs within institutions of higher education. It is of vital importance that there be professional education available to meet the social needs and goals of library services.

#### Service

We provide the highest level of service to all library users. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

### Social Responsibility

ALA recognizes its broad social responsibilities. The broad social responsibilities of the American Library Association are defined in terms of the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society; support for efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States on these problems and to encourage them to examine the many views on and the facts regarding each problem; and the willingness of ALA to take a position on current critical issues with the relationship to libraries and library service set forth in the position statement.

There has been one modification to these eleven values. Reflecting the evolving nature of values, the Core Values Statement was revised in 2019 with the endorsement of thousands of LIS professionals to include “sustainability” as a newly added core value, with the following description quoted directly from the revised Core Values Statement:

### Sustainability

ALA is supporting the library community by showing its commitment to assisting in the development of sustainable libraries with the addition of sustainability as a core value of librarianship. This consists of practices that are environmentally sound, economically feasible and socially equitable. Libraries play an important and unique role in promoting community awareness about resilience, climate change and a sustainable future. They are also leading by example by taking steps to reduce their environmental footprint.

The additional value of sustainability will “inspire, cultivate and encourage” professional action, and will “guide decisions for the future of our society.” (American Library Association, 2019a). This language reinforces the concept of a value as an aspirational, time-oriented, and practice-based tool for directing the ethical conduct and future development of LIS professionals. The Core Values continue to be a point of discussion within the governance of ALA, with renewed effort in 2021 to revisit the Core Values Statement with a re-constituted Core Values committee (Bowling-Dixon et al., 2021). This Core Values committee has reaffirmed that the ALA Core Values are intrinsic across most aspects of ALA, reporting further that in a survey of ALA

Councilors, 76% (n=81) of respondents marked “yes” to the question, “Are the ALA Core Values currently reflected/ incorporated to your satisfaction in the work done by ALA?” (Bowling-Dixon et al., 2021, p. 16). Still, the report identified a few areas of concern that a reconstituted Core Values committee could address: ensuring that Core Values language is not dated, ensuring that all values are realized (especially diversity and social responsibility), ensuring that all values are centralized in ALA decision-making, ensuring that there are not so many values as to be unworkable, and ensuring that there is alignment between the values and the mission of libraries.

## **3.6 The Core Values in Practice**

### **3.6.1 Core Values as a Practical Guide**

Core values continue to interest practitioners and researchers. Since 2004, attention has been focused on interpreting, critiquing, and operationalizing the ALA Core Values Statement. The Core Values “articulate professional beliefs” for LIS practitioners (Van der Veer Martens, 2017), and thus represent “the mission of our profession.” (Vinopal, 2016). In terms of relevancy and purpose, the Core Values have been recognized to “fairly represent the values of LIS professionals in general and provide a sensible framework for how US professionals should conduct themselves” (Rubin, 2016b, p. 544). Connaway and Faniel (2014) connect the concept of core values back to Ranganathan’s original five laws, while also pointing to the continued purpose of professional values as a stabilizing element: “[Ranganathan’s laws] establish a framework that keeps us focused on the core values of librarianship—values that have remained remarkably consistent across a time that has seen incredible change in information technology” (p. 107).

In practice, the values are most often invoked when grounding and guiding the work of LIS professionals (Berg & Jacobs, 2016). This includes professional activities such as outreach and advocacy (Berry III, 2016; D. Hicks, 2016), social engagement and responsibility (Jaeger et al., 2015; Oliphant, 2015; Burgess, 2016; Gibson et al., 2017; Racelis, 2018), LIS education (Shockey, 2015; S. T. Roberts & Noble, 2016; Walther, 2016), information literacy (Jacobs & Berg, 2011; Gregory & Higgins, 2017b; Saunders, 2017), hiring (Vinopal, 2016), disability and access (Fox &

Reece, 2012; Kumbier & Starkey, 2016), cataloging and classification (Shoemaker, 2015), leadership (Farrell, 2016), technology and web development (Campbell & Cowan, 2016; Puckett, 2018; Yoon et al., 2018), digital collections and infrastructures (Dressler, 2018; Owens et al., 2018), intellectual freedom (Knox, 2014; S. M. Oltmann, 2016; S. Oltmann, 2017), labor issues (Moeller, 2019), professional identities (D. Hicks, 2014), and library administration (Shorb, 2004).

Reflecting both the aspirational nature and also the practical application of values, Schroeder & Hollister (2014) observe that with “scores of articles devoted to [the values]...it is heartening that librarians, as a professional group, created and abide by the Core Values of Librarianship statement.”

Despite the evident usefulness of the Core Values, some have noted their limitations. Some view Core Values as overly idealized or too aspirational, to a point that “erases power relations, obfuscates social inequalities, and denies history” (Seale, 2016b). The Core Values are also not necessarily accepted as essential. This is evident in studies that attempt to locate a different set of values more relevant for specific areas of practice, such as instruction (Ziegenfuss, 2016). In reaching for a more transformative LIS practice, Kumbier & Starkey (2016) cast a critical eye on the pragmatism of the Core Values statement, noting that the values reflect already-extant, dominant commitments and functions of librarianship in a way that forecloses other possible avenues for theory and practice.

The main current of conversation regarding professional values and the ALA Core Values statement is characterized by a balance of practical application and contemplative self-reflection. Recalling Drabinski’s argument that a value is “continually produced and reproduced in the library discourse,” and that values are “ideas to be struggled over in both discourse and practice” (2016, p. 606), Berg & Jacobs (2011) see the Core Values as an important point of reference in developing practices and policies through collaborative dialogue: “the ALA Core Values are reflective of librarians’ professional strengths and librarianship’s possibilities and thus are a generative place from which to start conversations” (p. 388). Continual examination is necessary, say Berg & Jacobs, because the Core Values—while powerful and inspiring proclamations—are not workable plans of action. A certain amount of translation is required to operationalize the ideas expressed within the

Core Values statement. Continual reexamination, reinterpretation, and defense of core values is necessary due to ever-shifting conditions of the wider world (Preer, 2008). And Budd (2008a) tells us that “as reflective practitioners we are obliged to examine the assumptions, stated and unstated, that underlie values in general and the values of professionals in particular” (p. 46). Despite these calls for ethical self-examination, Anderson (2006)) notes that LIS as a discipline has not followed through with action: “It seems that librarians and other information professionals are falling behind in the field of ethics, in that there is little critical reflection on the customs and traditions (morals) of our profession in light of the changes in the world around us” (p. 120). In following the recommendations of Drabinski, Berg & Jacobs, Preer, Budd, and Anderson, I will continue to examine LIS values and practices in subsequent chapters, applying a lens of practical ethics with a view towards the external pressures and conditions that influence the work of LIS professionals.

### 3.6.2 Core Values and Vocational Awe

The emerging concept of “vocational awe” adds a useful critical dimension to the conversation around core values. The theory of vocational awe presents three main points of critique—that LIS values are canonized, idealized, and weaponized. I briefly discuss these three areas below.

First introduced by Ettarh (2017), vocational awe is “the idea that libraries as institutions are inherently good. It assumes that some or all core aspects of the profession are beyond critique, and it, in turn, underpins many librarians’ sense of identity and emotional investment in the profession” (para. 4). One of the core aspects of the profession is core values. Vocational awe theorizes that LIS is seen as a sacred calling, and that its values are canonical and thus incontestable. The core value of access, Ettarh points out, has not been achieved equally in American society, as Black citizens were systematically denied access to libraries for much of the 20th century. When LIS values are positioned as an unquestionable canon, Ettarh argues that such a positioning prevents the profession from examining and addressing its historical and contemporary flaws, including practices that perpetuate race- and gender-based oppressions. Quoting Ettarh (2018a): “in fact, each value on which librarianship prides itself is inequitably distributed amongst society” (para. 9).

Vocational awe further shows that LIS values represent a hegemonic ideal of practice that excludes those who may object to or expand beyond the core set of values. Just as certain values are included in the canon, so are others excluded. LIS Core Values reflect a Western, enlightenment perspective (Froehlich, 2000; de Jesus, 2014). Rather than expressing universal truths from a neutral point of view, the LIS Core Values contain inherent cultural biases that over time have been idealized into a dominant norm of behavior. This normative behavior can exclude LIS practitioners of historically minoritized identities, resulting in negative effects for those who do not conform to the ideal (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Similarly, Moeller (2019) has applied vocation awe in the context of disability studies, arguing that “the concept of ‘vocational awe’ within librarianship, like professionalism, is also based upon unacknowledged expectations of normative bodies and minds and thus reinforces this process of displacing those who do not represent the ‘ideal’ professional” (p. 461).

When values are canonized and idealized, they can then become weaponized against dissenting views that seek to change or challenge dominant modes of librarianship. The analysis presented above shows service to be the leading value in LIS. And indeed service may be said to be the dominant mode of LIS work, even to the detriment of LIS workers themselves. Ettarh (2018a) describes how overwork and undercompensation can result from expectations that the library professional be compensated not in material goods or a healthy workplace, but rather the good feelings of working in a profession that espouses good values and delivers good service. Notably, LIS professionals are compelled into self-sacrificial working conditions in order to uphold the service value, even in cases involving personal health (Kendrick, 2020). When service is upheld as the highest priority—taking precedence over healthy relationship-building or workplace democracy—negative impacts can be seen in staff retention, morale, and productivity (Ortega, 2017). Service first becomes a canonized and irreproachable value, then its expression is idealized through a normative practice of self-sacrifice, and finally those who uphold the value may face diminished personal health while those who challenge the value may face professional exclusion. Through the lens of vocational awe, Gorman’s “golden thread” of professional continuity begins to look more like the binding tie of professional conformity.

Taken together, the canonization, idealization, and weaponization of the Core Values complicates the Core Values as potential pathways for professional and societal growth. In this way, Ettarh's theory of vocational awe illuminates the landscape of values-in-conflict. Professional commitments to service, for example, can lead to trade-offs with other values, as when user privacy is affected by tracking software that promises to improve library services. In a case such as this, privacy and intellectual freedom are in conflict with service—but vocational awe blocks the practitioner from considering the harmful implications of this conflict, because a commitment to the service value is seen as inherently good and therefore not in need of critical examination. This and other values-in-conflict are described in depth in the following chapter.

### 3.7 Summary

Library and Information Studies is recognized as a semi-profession. Within that context, professional values serve as commonly-held beliefs about the profession that guide practitioners towards ethical and consistent professional conduct. Values serve as the underlying principles that inform a practical ethics for the LIS profession. After much debate in the 1990s as to the enumeration of specific values, the American Library Association in 2005 codified a set of professional values that reflect the history and ongoing development of LIS practice. These values include: Access, Confidentiality/Privacy, Democracy, Diversity, Education and Lifelong Learning, Intellectual Freedom, The Public Good, Preservation, Professionalism, Service, Social Responsibility, and Sustainability. Since that time, the Core Values statement has been a primary point of reference in discussing and invoking LIS professional values, often with the focal point of analyzing professional practice vis-à-vis one or more values. The ALA Core Values, however, have also been criticized as overly idealistic, too aspirational, excessively pragmatic, or contributing to effects of vocational awe. Either as a guiding light or as a point of criticism, the Core Values are an important point of reference in understanding ethical practice in LIS. In the next chapter, I will examine several prominent sites of tension that complicate the realization of LIS professional values.



## 4. Identifying Sites of Tension for Ethical Decision-Making

### 4.1 Introduction

The ALA Core Values Statement represents an important point of reference for connecting professional values with professional practice in the context of North American libraries. The predominant approach to a values-based practice in LIS is through the lens of professional ethics, or practical ethics applied within a professional environment. In the LIS context, practical ethics is understood to be LIS professional values applied to LIS professional practice (Buchanan & Henderson, 2009, p. 95). Professional ethics are connected to the core values of the profession, and serve to guide practitioners towards appropriate professional conduct (Walther, 2016).

Understanding these values improves our ability to recognize ethical situations and to make ethical decisions and balance competing factors (Rubin & Froehlich, 2010, p. 1750). Ethical concerns in LIS have almost always been seen as having a strong practical aspect (Wengert, 2001). And in the practice of everyday information work, a variety of scenarios challenge the LIS practitioner to act in accordance with stated values. These challenges stem from tensions between values and practice, and thus prompt ethical reflection. Many sites of tension exist that compel ethical reflection and ethical decision-making on the part of the practitioner. Sites of tension represent real-world pressures that challenge or prevent a values-based practice, and therefore represent fruitful areas of investigation for developing a framework for ethical action. In the LIS literature, sites of tension are practical conflicts that exert pressures on library values or prevent LIS practitioners from fully operationalizing stated professional values. In this chapter, I investigate ethical dilemmas and decisions in the LIS profession. I begin by providing an overview of two main types of ethical dilemmas—competing external value systems, and competing internal values. I then discuss a number of prominent sites of ethical reflection and action, presented according to these two main types of dilemma. First, tensions internal to the LIS profession: professional neutrality, library instruction, cataloging and classification, and diversity and equality. Second, tensions external to

the LIS profession: market forces, technology, learning analytics and student success, and values assessment and impact studies.

## 4.2 Defining Ethical Dilemmas

Before discussing ethical dilemmas, it is helpful to first consider the idea of values-in-conflict. At the center of an ethical site of tension is some sort of conflict—typically between competing stakeholders who have differing views on values and practices. When different factors compete for priority, ethical analysis can provide a path forward for action by clarifying assumptions and alternatives (M. M. Smith, 1992). Ethical conflict, reflection, and resolution “represents every person’s struggle to make the right decisions” (Marco, 1996, p. 34). Striving towards “the right decision” marks the presence of ethical dilemmas. The LIS literature reveals two main areas of interest in relation to ethical dilemmas—external and internal to the professional—presented in Table 4.1 and discussed in more depth in the following sections.

**Table 4.1 Ethical Dilemmas Present in LIS Literature**

Dilemma Type	Description	Example
Value systems in conflict—external	Disagreements involving competing value systems: personal, professional, institutional, societal.	A librarian’s professional values may conflict with the values of a parent-entity institution. A university, for example, may wish to implement student tracking for the purposes of learning analytics or web analytics, thus enacting the institutional value of <i>student success</i> , but doing so would be in conflict with the LIS professional value of <i>privacy</i> (Jones & Salo, 2018)
Values in conflict—internal	Disagreements involving competing professional values.  In these situations, practitioners are faced	Example 1: A library can contract with a prison to conduct large-scale digitization at a low hourly wage. On the one hand, the library can enact the value of <i>access</i> by creating digital objects at a low cost. On the other hand, the library can

	with multiple paths of action for enacting different professional values. Decisions focus on which value(s) to prioritize to inform action, or whether and how to complete a professional task that is perceived to be in violation of professional values.	<p>enact the value of <i>social responsibility</i> by not engaging in exploitative labor practices (Logsdon, 2019).</p> <p>Example 2: A library vendor maintains a popular database, but the database also includes invasive tracking software. On the one hand, the library can enact the value of <i>service</i> by offering this highly-used database. On the other hand, the library can enact the value of <i>privacy</i> by not contracting with this vendor and thus preventing user tracking (Magi, 2010)</p>
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#### 4.2.1 Value Systems in Conflict—External

Different value systems can be in conflict. This type of dilemma is commonly discussed through an analysis of the different contexts from which values are developed: personal, professional, institutional, and societal. When faced with competing values, LIS professionals have long encouraged themselves to prioritize professional duties ahead of personal beliefs, and to remain objective in professional service to all users (Foskett, 1962). Objectivity is justified by the service value of LIS, and to the desire to deliver service of similar quality for all library users: “A good librarian must be able, as a professional, to undergo rapid, chameleon-like, changes as one enquirer follows another” (Foskett, 1962, p. 11). But as a complex human actor operating in a particular setting, a librarian must balance competing demands in a complicated, multi-stakeholder environment. This complicated environment is demonstrated in a 1954 LIS education report that counts 30 different activities and attitudes that constitute the “characteristics of professional librarianship” (Asheim, 1954). This range of expectation and circumstance highlights the complexity of LIS work. The 1954 report also touches briefly on practical ethics, saying that a librarian should possess the “ability to adapt principles to local situations.” This point is carried on through the decades, as today’s LIS literature includes calls to continuously examine, interpret, and

apply professional values within institutional and community contexts that include intersecting political, economic, and cultural factors (Newton, 1998; Budd, 2006, 2008b; Preer, 2008).

The contemporary LIS landscape is now recognized as ethically complicated, in the sense that competing demands present multiple opportunities for values-based discussion and resolution (Rubin, 1991; Marco, 1996; Budd, 2006; Rubin & Froehlich, 2010).

As individual actors within larger systems, and even as one profession among many, LIS professionals make ethical decisions in response to multiple external pressures and value perspectives, as expressed by Budd: “If we take [the ALA Core Values Statement] to be genuine expressions of the professional ethos, then the reality of external forces—politics, economics, information production, and the public good—must be considered” (Budd, 2006, p. 257). The ethical complexity of LIS work is further expressed by Smith (1992): “As moral agents (ethical selves) who assume responsibility in their personal, private, professional, and public lives, information professionals balance conflicting loyalties” (p. 553). Smith outlines four main areas of conflict: loyalty to self, loyalty to patrons, loyalty to the profession, and loyalty to the employing institution. McMenemy, Poulter, & Burton (2007) similarly outline five ethical influences on librarians: pressure from the patron to provide service, an employer’s ethical code, personal ethical beliefs, profession association’s ethical code, and society’s ethical norms. Jefferson & Contreras note that “professional ethics and principles of an organization may often conflict with societal and personal ethics” (2005, p. 66).

Such external factors exert pressure on ethical professional action—what Buschman calls the “structural contradiction” between traditional LIS values and contemporary adaptations of practice to suit new demands (2005, p. 6). Budd explicates further: “Too often the choice we face is between the rock of reduced resources or the hard place of compromised principles. Awareness of the choice can contribute to a conversation among professionals that addresses the fundamental ethical challenge head on” (2008b, p. 127). In response to today’s media, cultural, and political climate, the LIS profession faces new and additional pressures to act in accordance with professional values (Buschman, 2017).

In analyzing the disparity between the values and actions of librarians, Hauptman (2002) offers a number of useful insights. First, Hauptman states, “It is sometimes inconvenient to further [professional values] in the real world” (2002, p. 134). Further: “When two opposing principles vie with each other, it is much easier to capitulate to necessity” (Hauptman, 2002, pp. 139–140). Finally, Hauptman observes that LIS professionals “often fail to fully respect or implement” professional values (2002, p. 133). In this line of thinking, Hauptman recognizes the difficulty that the LIS professional faces in enacting professional values in a broader environment that contains competing value systems that are not aligned with the LIS professional value system. Yousefi (2017) builds on these points and identifies this dilemma directly, “We routinely make decisions that oppose our declared values” (p. 92). Yousefi contends that pressures to act in accordance with external values prevent LIS professionals from enacting internal values. In practice, making an ethical choice among competing value systems involves a considered balance of personal and professional ideals within the perceived constraints and values of external systems.

#### 4.2.2 Values in Conflict—Internal

Different professional values can be in conflict. Where there are multiple values that are considered relevant and applicable for guiding action, professional practice can be in conflict with one or more professional values. This type of ethical dilemma is a choice between two or more paths of action that are similarly acceptable (Severson, 1997). Rubin (1991) offers a description: “Ethical considerations are those involved in deciding what is good or right in terms of the treatment of human beings, human actions, and values.” In discussing the process of making the right or good choice, Preer (2008) directly connects professional practice and professional values: “Ethics is about choices. As a system of principles determining right or wrong conduct; ethics defines the parameters of those choices” (p. 1). Ethical decision-making presumes that an individual actor wants to do what is “right,” that they can make thoughtful and reflective decisions, and that their capacities are not diminished or compromised (Buchanan & Henderson, 2009). From that point, the “right decision” may not be clear or obvious, and there may be more than one right decision. The nature of the dilemma is in prioritizing one value over another. The prioritized value then defines a path forward that prioritizes one action over another. It is not always clear which value should be of primary concern, and disagreements may arise between individual practitioners as to

the preferred value and preferred course of action (Hauptman, 1988, p. 7; Fallis, 2007). In such cases, professional practice may agree with one value but disagree with another, or there may be a disagreement or lack of alignment among values and action. As a result of competing values and multiple choices, the path forward is ambiguous.

Froehlich suggests that ethical ambiguity can be a stimulating aspect of professional practice, in that a diversity of values can illuminate multiple resolutions in response to an ethical problem (Froehlich, 2000). Walther (2016) recognizes that ethical dilemmas in libraries are difficult and complex, and must be confronted on a routine basis. Furthermore, as technology has complicated professional practice, ethical tensions have also become increasingly more complex (Severson, 1997). Today's LIS professional experiences ethical dilemmas that are made difficult by a lack of clarity about when and how to apply competing professional values towards ethical action. The stakes of ethical action are seen to be professional integrity and the trust of our public community. When stated values are not consistently adhered to, our professional integrity may be called into question (Hauptman, 1988, p. 15; Budd, 2008b). This line of discussion reveals the difficulty of "fully respecting or implementing" values in actual practice (Hauptman, 2002). With so many values and value systems contending with the practical constraints of a modern workplace and political climate, enacting all of the values at the same time becomes exceedingly difficult.

LIS literature is often service-oriented and practice-based professional literature, and is therefore focused on ethical dilemmas that prompt practical action. The literature often called for information professionals to increase awareness of their respective situations and sensitize themselves to ethically acceptable ways of doing their jobs (Hauptman, 2001), let us turn to an examination of specific sites of tension and ethical dilemmas present in contemporary LIS practice. For LIS practitioners, ethics exist in the context of action—a complex arrangement of stakeholder needs and concerns (Wengert, 2001). In the following sections, I analyze the scholarly conversation relating to ethical dilemmas. I review the literature through the lens of two overarching pressures on ethical LIS practice. The first section examines *market forces and the LIS profession* as an external pressure that represents value systems in conflict. The literature highlights three specific sites of tension that relate to market forces: 1) value studies and impact assessment, 2) information

technologies, data, and privacy, and 3) learning analytics and student success. The second section examines the idea of *professional neutrality* as an internal pressure that represents values in conflict. The literature highlights three sites of tension that relate to professional neutrality: 1) social responsibility, 2) critical information literacy, and 3) cataloging and classification.

## **4.3 Value Systems in Conflict: Market Forces and the LIS**

### **Profession**

#### 4.3.1 Overview

The United States operates with a global capitalistic system (Engerman, 2013). People and entities within this system—such as academic librarians and libraries—are influenced by the pressures and values of the market economy (Hayes & Brown, 1994; Sessions, 2020). The values of a market economy, including efficiency, flexibility, and competition, can stand at odds with stated LIS professional values (McDonald, 1997; Quinn, 2000). This conflict of value systems represents a lens of analysis through which ethical dilemmas may be viewed. As revealed in the LIS literature, a key question that emerges related to this conflict can be stated: “Are we valuing our values?” As background to this question, Nicholson (2015) outlines the growing influence of market aims and values—identified as competition, profitability, risk, value for money, entrepreneurship—in public-sector organizations such as libraries and universities. Practicing LIS in a way that enacts LIS values is becoming increasingly difficult in light of continued market pressures in the form of the commodification of information and the erosion of the public sphere (Trosow, 2014). Fister (2012b) analyzes the market forces that pressure libraries to act against their values, arguing that in the face of pressures to “prove our value,” libraries have created success measures that run counter to LIS values—but that align with the market values of parent universities.

These tensions have today been amplified through a hyper form of capitalism known as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is rooted in economic principles of private property and unregulated markets, with the central idea that individual actors can prosper best under conditions of intense market competition (Harvey, 2007). The thinking of neoliberal economics has become embedded

in global political and societal structures (Alvarez, 2019). Its influence extends to the American university (Seal, 2018). In this way, neoliberalism is a particularly useful concept for analyzing the ethics of library practice, as it represents the marriage of the practices and values of free trade with the practices and values of democracy. This same tense marriage—between the market and the public—is reflected in the history of libraries (Popowich, 2018).

Melvil Dewey founded the ALA in 1876 with the motto, “The best reading for the largest number at the least cost” (Weigand, 1996). Even in his own time, Dewey’s alignment with market values of return-on-investment and resource efficiency was met with resistance from within the profession, as Mary Salome Cutler Fairchild, Vice Director of ALA, remarked in 1895 that Dewey’s motto “smacks of arithmetic and commerce” (Weigand, 1996, p. 207). Gregory and Higgins (2017a) trace this century-long, unresolved tension: on the one hand, the commercial ideals of efficiency and profit; on the other, competing LIS ideals of social responsibility and community. Yet Gregory and Higgins also note the long-standing entwinement of LIS practice with market values. Through the history of LIS, there has been a predominant focus on efficient process over abstract purpose, because such a focus aligned with the prevailing logic of business and commercially-oriented outcomes. But altering LIS practice to align with market values is an existential compromise, what Buschman (2005) calls the “structural contradiction” between traditional LIS values and current LIS practices as shaped by contemporary market pressures. Tensions deriving therefrom are described as “bone-deep contradictions between our liberal creed and the violent entailments of industrial capitalism” (D. Smith, 2020, p. 470). Despite such deep contradiction, there is ample evidence of libraries operating in service to market values.

In the context of contemporary LIS practice, neoliberal capitalism is expressed in the ideas of education as a commodity, the student as customer, and the importance of measurable evidence in support of delivering economic value (Seale, 2013). Return-on-investment, for example, is becoming more common as academic libraries integrate a more market-based and entrepreneurial approach to information services, yet such economic measures require a level of precision that does not suit the work of education and libraries (Neal, 2011). This tension is also revealed through the argument of describing library users as either *patron* and *customer*. For some, framing information



services as customer services is natural and right, and even aligns with library values (Matteson & Boyden, 2014). For others, perceiving students as customers introduces a consumer-oriented model of value based on the economic exchange of information; such a model presents the library as a material good that conflicts with stated library values of the public good (Budd, 1997). Moreover, applying the term and concept of *customer* reflects a market-orientation, with the associated goal of achieving customer satisfaction; such a framing is potentially in conflict with the teaching and research mission of a university and library, which involve challenging students through growth and education rather than satisfying customers through product or service delivery (Holley, 2020).

The literature conveys two main opposing aspects that define this overarching conflict of value systems, namely whether LIS organizations operate as a *public good* or a *market good*, with the attendant values and practices that characterize each. This tension is definitional for ethical practice in LIS. In the subsections below, I describe three specific sites of tension that demonstrate the ethical pressures of market forces in the practice of LIS professionals: 1) value assessment and impact studies, 2) information technology, data, and privacy, 3) learning analytics and student success.

#### 4.3.2 Site of Tension 1: Value Studies and Impact Assessment

This site of tension is concerned with the rise of and response to value studies and impact assessment in academic libraries. Work in this area was initiated by the president of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Division of ALA, who in 2009 established the focus of ACRL in response to the question, “what is our value and who values us?” (Goetsch, 2009, p. 502). In response to increased competition for diminishing resources, the president of ACRL remarked, “Demands increase for proving our worth and justifying our existence, resulting in efforts on many of our campuses to demonstrate the value of higher education. In turn, we are being asked how libraries and librarians contribute to that value. How will we respond?” (p. 502). The groundbreaking response to this question is recognized to be *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report* (Oakleaf, 2010). In this report, Oakleaf describes and sets forth the practices of studying the value of libraries through the assessment of outcomes and their impacts. This report has been described as “set[ting] the agenda for assessment in

libraries” (Arellano Douglas, 2020). Oakleaf outlines the main areas of library value: use, return-on-investment, commodity production, impact, and alternative comparison. Practitioners have since diversely applied Oakleaf’s concepts of value studies, including in the areas of information literacy (Catalano & Phillips, 2016), faculty research productivity (Hollister & Schroeder, 2015), student engagement (Scott, 2019), student retention (A. L. Murray & Ireland, 2017), graduation rates (Logan, 2018), and grade point average (Tewell, 2015).

The past decade of value studies have been continuously motivated by the perceived need for libraries to prove value to external stakeholders such as university administration and state boards of regents in order to receive financial resources (Hufford, 2013; Oakleaf & Kyrrilidou, 2016; A. Murray & Ireland, 2018). Following Oakleaf, new assessment practices have been developed and applied, because “traditional measures of library success no longer resonate with university leaders, causing academic librarians to seek new methods of determining and demonstrating library value to student success” (A. Murray, 2015, p. 486). As the value proposition is typically presented as an exchange for continued financial resources, library value is predominantly presented as a financial matter, with business metrics framing impact assessments (Bourg, 2013). Gregory and Higgins (2017b) summarize: “Assessment is criticized as a form of neoliberal accountability, as a project that disciplines and controls the workforce and specific communities, and abandons the goal of achieving equitable educational opportunity. It is an attempt to reduce complexity to a quantifiable metric, to link learning to returns on investment and the marketplace, and to fill reports for assessment auditors” (p. 47). In this context, the assessment effort is concerned less with improving services or creating new services, and more with demonstrating the worth of existing services to external, market-oriented audiences for the sake of continued or expanded financial support.

As these impact areas are drawn from an economic, market-based perspective, Oakleaf acknowledges, “some authors warn that financial values do not mesh easily with the values of higher education” (Oakleaf, 2010, p. 21). Indeed, much of the counter-discussion around library value studies stems from the tension between the values of the financial system that drives assessment and the values of the educational system that produces the work being assessed. Some have voiced concern and criticism of value studies in general and of Oakleaf specifically. Nicholson

(2017) states of Oakleaf's 2010 report: "The use of capitalist language in higher education is normalized: education is a national resource, learning is a commodity, and degrees are credentials to be exchanged on the job market" (p. 4). For Nicholson, the underlying ideology of market-based metrics that rely on dollars-and-cents calculations is not appropriate for measuring abstract educational outcomes like learning and research. Such arguments further undermine the concept of the library as holding inherent value to a learning and research institution (Drabinski & Walter, 2016). Because library services are not generally built to produce a stream of revenue, there are conceptual problems for cost-benefit analysis (C. Urquhart & Turner, 2016). Seale has also contributed to this critique, contending that neoliberal structures are antithetical to the missions of both higher education and libraries (2016a), and that the core values of libraries are not reflected in dominant impact assessments that focus on efficiency and economic value (2013). More bluntly, Fisher (2017) remarks, "We need to push back on demands to use library data to prove our value" (p. 36).

The assessment tool LibQUAL+ serves as a representative example of this tension. LibQUAL+ is an assessment tool developed from the commercial sector, and it views libraries as a customer service, emphasizing efficiency, timeliness, and customer satisfaction; it further encourages libraries to competitively rank their scores in relation to those of other libraries (Thompson et al., 2008). LibQUAL+ is a widely-implemented tool for understanding service quality as measured by user satisfaction (Atkinson & Walton, 2017). LibQUAL+ has been criticized, however, for narrowly or inaccurately measuring library impact, and for centering market values ahead of academic values (Seale, 2016a; C. Urquhart & Turner, 2016; Lilburn, 2017). As an ethical dilemma, LibQUAL+ is a useful point of analysis. Libraries are compelled to prove their value, and LibQUAL+ is presented as a standard, easy-to-implement tool for doing so. But at the same time, LibQUAL+ may not be accurate in the context of LIS practice, and implementing the tool may further entrench a market-based paradigm that undercuts the values and mission of libraries.

In summary, the concept of library value and impact is complex and often abstract. Due to societal and parent entity pressures, librarians are compelled to quantify and measure library services and usage in ways that may go against organizational values and missions. The ethical dilemma

described above comes to life when a librarian feels compelled to measure and demonstrate value, but is unsure of how to practically accomplish this without compromising their own values as an LIS professional.

#### 4.3.3 Site of Tension 2: Information Technologies, Data, and Privacy

Privacy has become a well-established value among librarians, to the point of being described as a cornerstone of the profession's ethical foundation (Witt, 2017). Information professionals express high levels of concern for information privacy, with a stated desire to control the access and use of personal information in order to protect library users' ability to read and research without unwanted or unintended surveillance (Zimmer, 2014). At the same time, LIS professionals actively seek out and integrate information technologies so as to improve service and enhance access (Nicols Hess et al., 2014). As a product of human effort, technology is recognized not as neutral, but rather as value-laden by their creators (Owens et al., 2018; Reidsma, 2019). Information technologies used in LIS settings are often produced and provided by third-party vendors that do not share LIS values related to privacy and are therefore more likely to expose user data (A. S. Galvan, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2018; Lamdan, 2019). LIS practitioners have recognized certain ethical tensions resulting from third-party information technologies, particularly regarding the potentially invasive collection of data related to user behavior.

At the center of this tension are competing professional commitments to privacy, access, and service, each of which is included in the ALA Core Values Statement. Third-party vendors, typically operating as for-profit companies, are compelled by market forces to collect and monetize user data, yet many of these technologies—while promising better access—also compromise privacy. In these instances, the core value of access is overweighted and misapplied vis-à-vis privacy (Buschman, 2018). A few examples can illustrate this tension. First, librarians were shown to be strong defenders of privacy following the passage of the USA PATRIOT ACT and subsequent requests for user information from United States governmental agencies such as the National Security Agency (Carpenter, 2015). In this case, librarians demonstrated clarity on this issue because the USA PATRIOT ACT did not also appear as beneficial to service or access.

When a technology also enacts values such as service or access, the ethical uncertainty with respect to privacy becomes more apparent. Assessment technologies and practices such as data warehousing, for example, offer a more complicated case. In these instances, the financial pressures of data-driven decision making in support of service improvements and impact assessments drive libraries to leverage technologies for user data collection. Libraries are encouraged to resolve this tension by acting responsibly to protect user privacy while at the same time attending to organizational needs for service evaluation (Yoose, 2017). In another example, the third-party search tools used by libraries to enhance access may not operate in accordance with values such as privacy or social responsibility. Reidsma (2019) provides an in-depth examination of the search algorithms that drive the operation of a third-party Integrated Library System (ILS): “Algorithms are sold to us as disinterested, objective, neutral information gathering tools that find us answers. But a closer look at algorithms shows us that corporate profit motives, the nature of computer science and mathematics, reductive models of the world, and a fetish for speed and efficiency are also factors that help shape how they are designed and how they work” (p. 26). While offering high quality web service and access to thousands of library records, search algorithms also produce results that include cultural biases and harmful stereotypes, all while passively tracking and collecting activity data on users.

LIS professionals have proposed a number of responses to this ethical tension between the values of service/access and privacy. Professional organizations and initiatives such as the Library Freedom Project (2017), Data for Black Lives (2020), and the Digital Library Federation Privacy and Ethics in Technology Working Group (2020) demonstrate that professional trainings, collective actions, and public awareness can be one path forward for critically engaging with information technologies. Organizational policies in support of privacy are another option, including public statements on patron privacy and identifying behind-the-scenes issues with the collection, storage, and disposal of library patrons' private information (Nicols Hess et al., 2014). Others have called for the profession to refine and strengthen notions of privacy in light of contemporary technologies such as linked data and big data (Campbell & Cowan, 2016). Professional discourse focuses chiefly on critical engagement as a way to approach ethical tensions. But when privacy is in tension with service or access, the path forward is murkier as compared to the more straightforward case of the

USA PATRIOT ACT, in which the predominant response was a clear-cut denial of records requests. For example, very few librarians advocate that libraries deny the outright implementation of an ILS that enhances access, or of an assessment program that improves service, even as both come at a cost to privacy. Ultimately, the way to ensure tools and services reflect LIS values is for LIS professionals to deeply engage in the design, implementation, and administration of information technologies (Matz, 2008; Owens et al., 2018; Reidsma, 2019).

Across the history of the LIS profession, privacy has been an enduring value. But contemporary information technologies threaten privacy even as they offer advantages for service and access. Where new technologies promise to enhance access and improve service—but at the potential cost of user privacy—a site of tension emerges. While LIS organizations do not typically operate for profit, they often implement technologies built by for-profit third parties that track user behavior, thereby forcing LIS organizations into a larger business model that supports some LIS values while simultaneously being antithetical to others. Despite the increasing difficulty in achieving privacy, however, LIS professionals continue to think critically and ethically about privacy, and work to protect the privacy of library users.

#### 4.3.4 Site of Tension 3: Learning Analytics and Student Success

Tensions around technology extend to a specific practice of assessing student success in higher education—learning analytics. Learning analytics is the practice of aggregating and analyzing data related to student activity so as to better understand student success and improve services (Jones & Salo, 2018; Jones, 2019; Travis & Ramirez, 2020). In order to maintain alignment with university strategic goals and initiatives, academic libraries have pursued and implemented learning analytics software and practices (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2011; A. Murray, 2015; Jones, 2017). The motivation to implement learning analytics stems from perceived market-style competition for limited resources and the related pressure to demonstrate library contributions to student success so as to justify resource allocations within the larger context of the university (Oakleaf, 2018b). Professional discourse indicates a mainstream acceptance that university efforts to collect student data—including libraries' participation in such efforts—are important to student success, thus framing learning analytics as necessary for ensuring the health of both the library and

the wider institution (Nicholson et al., 2019). Many examples of learning analytics studies are present in the LIS literature, including those attempting to relate student library usage to retention (Haddow, 2013; A. Murray et al., 2015), first-year student success (Soria et al., 2014), graduate rates (Soria et al., 2017), grade point average (Wong & Webb, 2011), and improving library services (Beile et al., 2017).

Despite its prevalence and appearance of inevitability, others have argued that the ethical dimensions of learning analytics have not been given sufficient attention (Viberg et al., 2018; Rabinowitz, 2019). Learning analytics have been shown to complicate ethical practice across several dimensions. Foremost among these dimensions are LIS professional commitments to privacy and intellectual freedom. Learning analytics can compromise intellectual freedom when its results are applied as interventions that limit students' access to learning materials; the practice also impinges privacy when student information related to the use of research materials is recorded, analyzed, and shared with a variety of first-party and third-party entities (Jones & Salo, 2018). Learning analytics potentially affects learning and democracy, either positively by supporting students and achieving learning outcomes, or negatively by alienating students and undermining educational goals (Oliphant & Brundin, 2019). Learning analytics have been criticized as detracting from pedagogical aims by simplifying the student into a quantifiable numerical entity, thereby commodifying learning for the sake of competitive analysis among institutions and departments (Nicholson et al., 2019). Learning analytics reinforces a market-oriented view of student success, which in turn limits the assessment approaches that libraries can implement (Beilin, 2016). Moreover, the datasets, tools, and processes related to learning analytics are often modeled or borrowed from the private sector, and thus are not suitable for measuring the complexities of educational outcomes, nor do they reflect the values of educational institutions (Oliphant & Brundin, 2019). A leading voice in learning analytics, Oakleaf, acknowledges a number of limitations in the approach, noting especially that learning analytics is correlational, and thus cannot "definitively demonstrate that student library interactions cause students to learn more or attain success markers" (2018b, p. 21). It has been shown that library involvement in learning analytics has increased over time, even as the outcomes of learning analytics have produced findings of limited efficacy, thereby calling into

question whether learning analytics justify the loss of privacy and risk borne by students and institutions (Viberg et al., 2018; Robertshaw & Asher, 2019).

Collecting and analyzing personal data presents an uneasy balance of ethics and privacy, with the potential disaster of data leakage and misapplication of analysis (Travis & Ramirez, 2020). From this place of uncertainty, an emerging ethical question for learning analytics is how to pursue the potential benefits of academic data mining while accounting for the potential harms (Jones & Salo, 2018). To some in the profession, learning analytics should be embraced (Oakleaf & Kyrillidou, 2016). To others, the current model of learning analytics does not align with ethical standards for a values-based LIS practice (Fisher, 2017; Hathcock, 2018; Jones, 2019). Though there are no clear steps or profession-wide ethical boundaries, practitioners desire a definite path forward that offers “bright-line rules” for either the ethical practice of learning analytics or a response strategy for choosing not to implement learning analytics (Jones, 2019).

A number of such responses have been proposed for engaging with or countering learning analytics. The first is to outright reject learning analytics and other passive surveillance techniques, and instead work more closely and directly with research subjects such as students in order to determine and measure success (Beilin, 2016; Hathcock, 2018). Students have been shown to be generally unaware of the data and information their institutions have access to about themselves, and students think such data should be more restricted than current practice accommodates (Jones et al., 2019). Approaches that recognize student agency are more in accordance with LIS values of learning, democracy, privacy, and intellectual freedom. If libraries choose to move forward with learning analytics, Jones & Salo suggest that LIS professionals advocate for embedding LIS values into the systems, policies, and programs of learning analytics so as to aid in their ethical implementation (Jones & Salo, 2018). Additional professional development is needed to help LIS workers become fluent and effective in the practices of learning analytics so that sound procedures are put into place (Robertshaw & Asher, 2019; Travis & Ramirez, 2020).

In summary, learning analytics represent a clear ethical tension. On the one hand, market forces of contemporary higher education demand accountability and always-improving services, and student



tracking software has emerged as a key method for achieving these results. On the other hand, libraries wish to preserve privacy and other values. Robertshaw & Asher express the tension of learning analytics: “since we are presently in an era where the businessification of higher education is quickening, academic libraries will likely find it difficult to completely resist the quantification of their impacts” (2019, p. 95). Despite much debate and continued pressure to implement learning analytics from parent entities, no consensus has yet emerged for ethical guidelines or responses among the LIS professional community.

## **4.4 Values in Conflict: Professional Neutrality**

### **4.4.1 Overview**

Within the LIS profession, the concept of professional neutrality is a fertile ground of discussion and dispute related to ethical professional practice. Libraries have a long-held position of neutrality in the design and delivery of LIS services and systems; such a position is understood to be a basic assumption underlying modern librarianship, dating to Dewey’s founding of the ALA in 1876 (Mai, 2013). Though not counted among the ALA’s core values, neutrality serves as a precondition to officially-recognized core values of intellectual freedom and democracy (Burgess, 2016). The positioning of neutrality as possible and desirable is driven by a multi-faceted motivation.

Neutrality is seen as a way to maintain objectivity and eliminate bias in the relationship between library professional and library patron (Berninghausen, 1972; Wilson, 1983). Foscett (1962) sets a firm foundation on this point in arguing that the personal beliefs of a librarian must not influence professional duties so as to ensure a continuity of service for patrons of different cultural identities. Foscett’s position is viewed as an enduring standard by Brewerton (2003), who calls Foscett’s arguments “timeless” because they look to the core purpose of the profession. Some literature suggests that neutrality is an achievable standard because it supports library claims to be a public good (Matz, 2008), ensures equal concern and respect for patrons (Wenzler, 2019), and promotes political choice and freedom (Burgess, 2016).

Professionals today are re-engaging with and re-evaluating the concept and application of neutrality. To view a library as neutral is to “view it as ‘beyond’ the reach of politics (Santamaria, 2020, p. 435). But a library is not beyond politics, nor is it out of reach from critical self-examination (Ettarh, 2018b). The ALA President’s Program at the 2017 Midwinter Meeting (American Library Association, 2017c) centered on neutrality, prompting self-examination through a series of questions:

- Were libraries ever neutral?
- Has the time come to question neutrality?
- Are libraries through their practices, collections, services and technologies able to be neutral?
- Can libraries be neutral as part of societies and systems that are not neutral?
- Rather than neutral, should we advocate for a distinct set of values?
- How can we do so and maintain trust in our communities?

These questions are representative of the contemporary, critical reexamination of LIS neutrality (Chiu et al., 2021). The question of values is particularly relevant for practical ethics and professional practice. From a values viewpoint, neutrality is defined as not taking a stand or a side in a debate (Bourg, 2018). The neutrality discussion in the LIS literature is itself polarized, with discourse focused on first scrutinizing the coherence of neutrality as a concept and second whether neutrality has a positive or negative effect when applied in practice (Macdonald & Birdi, 2019). Some hold that neutrality is achievable, positive, and reinforced LIS values; others hold that neutrality is nonviable, negative, and undermines LIS values. The values-oriented frame of neutrality will be the main structure of analysis in the remaining sections of this chapter.

The contemporary view of neutrality begins with a re-examination of its history and social context. Blanke (1989) argues that neutrality is a contrived posture meant to maintain financial support in an unstable market environment in which the appearance of political objectivity renders libraries unobjectionable to established and powerful stakeholders such as federal funders. But “by perpetuating the myth that their profession should be politically neutral, librarians have created a

value vacuum . . . being filled by the prevailing political and economic ethos” (Blanke, 1989, p. 40). The main thrust found in recent LIS literature on this topic involves challenging the myth of neutrality. Samek argues that LIS is a profession of values and political action, thus rendering the notion of neutrality “an impossible construct” (2007, p. 1).

The apparent impossibility of neutrality is thoroughly expounded by others. Neutrality is seen to be an incoherent and untenable position, because LIS is a profession with a specific social history that includes specific political and social contexts (Jensen, 2004; Honma, 2005; Rosenzweig, 2008; Ettarh, 2014; Nowviskie, 2019). Specifically, LIS comes from a Western, enlightenment tradition (Froehlich, 2000; de Jesus, 2014). LIS stems from and reinforces the values and sensibilities of a socio-economic middle-class (Popowich, 2019). With this history in mind, it is argued that neutrality functions not as an objective stance, but rather as a position that reinforces and encourages already-dominant worldviews and values, and in such a way that obscures the dominance of those values (Sparanese, 2008; Macdonald & Birdi, 2019). Since it passively reinforces the status quo, a posture of neutrality in fact takes as clear a stand as directly addressing social issues (Ferretti, 2018).

By implicitly upholding historically dominant societal values, neutrality hinders LIS practitioners from enacting professional values with intention and effectiveness (Gibson et al., 2017; Nicholson et al., 2019). In order to achieve a more ethical practice, Wengert (2001) implores LIS professionals to take a stronger stand against neutrality and in favor of enacting professional values for the betterment of the wider communities: “Our sole goal ought not be to be morally blameless; we would also like to contribute to making better the lives of those around us and who share our communities” (p. 500).

The conversation today indicates that LIS cannot be a profession of values and also a profession of neutrality. Enacting professional values explicitly requires taking a stand (Good, 2006). Neutrality therefore gives rise to a number of ethical dilemmas, stemming from the following question: how can LIS professionals resolve the tension between, on the one hand, adhering to a sense of neutrality, and, on the other hand, enacting a values-based practice? In the subsections below, I

describe three sites of tension that highlight the pressures of professional neutrality: 1) social responsibility, 2) critical information literacy, and 3) cataloging and classification.

#### 4.4.2 Site of Tension 4: Social Responsibility

LIS professionals demonstrate an interest in enacting the stated professional value of social responsibility, notably through social justice—the practice of addressing a historical imbalance of rights, resources, and representation among different groups in our society, often focused on race, gender, and class (Sparanese, 2008; Morales et al., 2014; Jaeger et al., 2015; Mehra, 2015; S. T. Roberts & Noble, 2016). As related by Schroeder & Hollister (2014), “many librarians are concerned with social justice issues as they relate to the library...It is heartening that librarians, as a professional group, created and abide by the Core Values of Librarianship (ALA 2004) statement, which includes a commitment to social responsibility” (p. 113). More broadly, “the information professions have long been associated with inclusiveness, civic-mindedness, and concern for the poor and underserved” (Rioux, 2010, p. 9). Academic libraries’ main pathway to social justice is through the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which focuses on increasing cultural representation and the capacity for understanding and supporting different cultural identities, leading to an equality of outcomes (Mathuews, 2016; Hudson, 2017).

As a counterweight to social responsibility, neutrality stands in tension to the aims of social justice, diversity, inclusion, and equity: “The extent that the LIS profession can claim to be politically neutral decreases as efforts to right political injustices increase” (Burgess, 2016). It is further argued that maintaining positions of neutrality and addressing social injustice are incompatible (Jensen, 2004; Samek, 2007; Nowviskie, 2019). Porter (2017) points out that wider social and political conditions are continually and inescapably acting upon the work of LIS, and that postures of neutrality enable a marginalization that in turn limits equity, intellectual freedom, and democracy for vulnerable populations; moreover, to uphold LIS professional values, LIS professionals “must be advocates against marginalization and inequity, and for justice and equity” (Porter, 2017, para. 6).

To uphold library values is to engage directly with social inequality. Enacting the justice-oriented LIS value of social responsibility means being attuned to power dynamics and materially improving the conditions of traditionally marginalized people (de Jesus, 2014; Stoytcheva, 2016). Conversely, in advancing the position of neutrality, LIS professionals fail to confront harmful racial injustices and colonial oppressions (de Jesus, 2014; Gibson et al., 2017). In these instances, neutrality acts to remove LIS workers from the issues that are important to their wider communities (Jensen, 2004; Good, 2006). As expressed by Gibson (2017): “Libraries have clung to a colorblind philosophy of neutrality that has allowed for disengagement from communities of color” (p. 11). Still, others argue that social issues are outside of the realm of LIS issues, and that neutrality should be upheld and defended (Berninghausen, 1972; Wenzler, 2019).

This site of tension is therefore defined by the embrace or rejection of neutrality as it applies to the values of social responsibility and social justice. Two key examples illustrate this tension in practice: 1) diversity, equity, and inclusion, and 2) library spaces. Beginning with diversity, one avenue towards accomplishing diversity is through diversifying the cultural profile of the LIS profession itself—in the field and in the classroom—through recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse LIS students and professionals that can serve diverse populations. Leaving social responsibility out of the LIS curriculum, for example, does not equip students for their real-world working environments (S. T. Roberts & Noble, 2016). In analyzing diversity-related content of LIS program websites, Ndumu & Betts-Green (2018) find that much can be improved, and that “rather than approaching diversity as the right thing to do. . .it must be positioned as a value so integral to our profession that it is grafted within LIS programs and workplaces” (p. 92). Some in the field call for deeply embracing social responsibility by confronting past historical injustices such as white supremacy: “Interventions in public libraries, academic libraries, law libraries, and medical libraries are also needed, sending a strong message that equity and inclusion are library values” (Espinal et al., 2018, p. 156). Kendrick and Damasco (2019) note that, as a way to enact its values of diversity, equity, and social responsibility, the ALA has acknowledged and recalibrated the disproportionate whiteness of the LIS field by engaging in diversity work.

Yet despite such measures, others find that results have not materialized: “Given that three decades of discussion of the urgent need for diversity in our field in order to make good on our professional ethics and commitment to equity has nonetheless yielded little direct action or change” (Collins, 2018, p. 49). Indeed, although a number of programs exist to recruit minorities to academic librarianship, the number of visible minorities in the field has remained stagnant for decades (Kung et al., 2020). Neutrality is relevant again here as a factor that impedes progress towards diversity and equity. It is difficult to confront and counteract white culture in LIS because many in the field perceive white culture to be invisible and neutral (Brook et al., 2015). In this context, neutrality manifests as unacknowledged whiteness in such a way as to prevent urgency or action that would impact diversity or advance social justice (Honma, 2005). Neutrality is seen as an underlying default—a subaltern yet more powerful value that supersedes the more espoused value of diversity (Espinal et al., 2018).

The second case for review—library spaces—follows a similar trajectory of tension, with neutrality serving as a counterbalance to stated values. Numerous cases demonstrate that the physical space of a library building is politically-charged territory: when a library space is occupied by one group that expresses hostility to another group, an operational difficulty arises and an ethical tension emerges. On the one hand, the ALA maintains a position of neutrality with respect to room reservations, saying that no person should be denied space usage due to origin, age, background, or views (American Library Association, 2019b). This approach of objectivity is presented as supporting equity and fulfilling social responsibility by allowing library space to be used by all (Bowles, 2020). But such a posture is a discursive twist that distances library services from the needs of library users. Here, “neutrality is framed as disengagement from community crises, and is defined in opposition to active engagement with community” (Gibson et al., 2017, p. 6).

Many marginalized groups have in historical fact been oppressed and continue to be oppressed, and “to claim libraries are neutral, in aspiration or practice, is to be blind to the realities of violence and oppression that marginalized groups face every day” (Jones, 2018, para. 6). Instead of achieving social responsibility, library space neutrality functions as a political stand in favor of the dominant groups. When one group actively advocates for the disenfranchisement of another group, and both

are treated as equivalent when occupying library space—as when a far-right hate group organizes against non-white users or when a Transexclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) group organizes against transgender users—neutrality is shown to be a fiction that is socially harmful, not socially responsible (Teal, 2018). The issue of space is instructive for values-in-conflict: for some, opening library space to hate groups is an ethical stance that upholds the value of intellectual freedom and diversity; to others, the same action is a violation of the value of social responsibility and indeed the same value of diversity (Thomas, 2019).

The examples of LIS diversity and library spaces both demonstrate the complexities and contradictions of enacting the library value of social responsibility in practice. Fister (2020) encourages LIS professionals to be thoughtful in balancing competing priorities. Professional neutrality and social responsibility will remain an ongoing site of complexity and tension as librarians continue to debate the proper role of LIS in society.

#### 4.4.3 Site of Tension 5: Critical Information Literacy

Critical information literacy is a socially-engaged, politically-aware mode of library instructional pedagogy. Critical information literacy differs from traditionally-accepted definitions of information literacy (such as locating, evaluating, and applying information) in that it centers the social, political, economic, and corporate systems that have power and influence over information (Gregory & Higgins, 2013). This approach to teaching about information is a profession-wide response to perceived failures of traditional information literacy to address the social and political dimensions of information and education in libraries, specifically “taking issue with the notion of libraries as ideologically neutral spaces, arguing for an understanding of information literacy that accounts for sociopolitical dynamics, and seeking ways to involve library users in the politics of information access and use” (E. C. Tewell, 2018, p. 12). Critical information literacy aims to understand how libraries participate in systems of oppression and to find ways for LIS professionals and students to act upon these systems (Pagowsky & Wallace, 2015).

In explicitly engaging with political issues and taking a stand against historical injustices, the practice of critical information literacy is in tension with a neutrality position. Critical practitioners

note this tension, and address it directly. Ferretti (2018) argues that practicing neutrality implicitly upholds dominant cultural narratives such as white patriarchy, saying,

If discussions of race, gender, sexuality, economic status, etc. are not discussed when information literacy and critical thinking are main objectives, you're making a conscious decision to leave [women of color] out, thereby not actually being neutral, but effectively privileging one group over others (para. 68).

For Ferretti, neutral librarianship intentionally ignores marginalized communities and experiences, and is thus incompatible with social responsibility and equity values that could be fulfilled via critical information literacy. Likewise for Tewell (2018), who underscores this ethical dilemma with the following prompt:

The question is whether librarians will fight inequalities alongside the rest of the world, or whether we wish to pretend that we can maintain neutrality in the midst of social issues that affect us, our patrons, and our planet (p. 27).

LIS professional values are seen as a guiding light that can illuminate this question, with the ALA Core Values serving as a foundation upon which LIS professionals can examine and achieve the broader social goals of information literacy (Jacobs & Berg, 2011). In this way, a crucial aspect for ethical LIS practice is which values a practitioner chooses to apply in their setting. An LIS practitioner can choose to embrace and apply neutrality, or to embrace and apply social responsibility, diversity, and equity.

A few examples in practice showcase the potential of critical information literacy for those LIS practitioners who choose to reject neutrality. Pagowsky and Wallace (2015) describe an initiative to create race-aware, politically-conscious learning and outreach content that takes an explicit stand in support of the Black Lives Matter social justice movement. Pagowsky and Wallace call on LIS professionals to more critically examine their own practice by looking inward and considering what policies, practices, and systems replicate systems of oppression and are hostile to marginalized



groups. Neutrality is in direct conflict to this approach of critical librarianship, for in “trying to remain ‘neutral,’ by showing all perspectives have value—even those that violently disregard black existence—is harmful to our community and does not work to dismantle racism” (Pagowsky & Wallace, 2015, p. 198).

LIS practitioners have seen further connections between LIS values and the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (American Library Association, 2015). By eschewing rigid, reductive educational standards in favor of local, contextual approaches, the Framework allows critical information literacy to be applied by those who choose to do so (Drabinski, 2017). But social justice does not appear explicitly in the Framework, which marks a related site of tension regarding values-in-practice. When asked directly to take a stronger stand on social justice, the Task Force authors who drafted the Framework replied, “The Task Force members are sympathetic to the views expressed about social justice. . .the Task Force felt that social justice was not its own frame” (Task Force, ACRL Framework, 2015, para. 43). This omission was criticized; Battista et al. (2015), for example, notes that despite a relationship between social justice and information literacy previously articulated by many LIS scholars, the Framework lacks a cogent statement that connects information literacy to social justice.

While not appearing explicitly, the LIS core value of social responsibility can be mapped to phrases in three different frames—Authority Is Constructed and Contextual, Information Has Value, Research as Inquiry—thus mapping the Core Values to the Framework can be a means to put into practice LIS values (Gregory & Higgins, 2017b). And by allowing practitioners to develop learning outcomes specific to their local contexts, the Framework gives space for social justice interpretations (Branch, 2019). Saunders also sees social justice in the Framework, as the Framework acknowledges and explicates “social justice issues related to information” and describes “how information literacy can address those issues.” (Saunders, 2017, p. 64). For example, the “Information Has Value” frame indicates that value may be wielded by powerful interests in ways that marginalize certain voices. Still, Saunders recognizes that the Framework could go further in explicating the connection between social justice and information literacy, and proposes a new, additional frame that focuses specifically on “information social justice.”

In summary, the critical information literacy site of tension demonstrates that ethical practice in LIS is a matter of choosing which values to apply in a given situation. Rather than marking a clear path forward, practical ethics in LIS are framed by a question—which paths should be followed? In this case, the choice is twofold: follow a theory of neutrality to practice traditional information literacy, or follow a theory of social justice to practice critical information literacy. From this viewpoint, library instruction can be an expression of professional values—whichever ones we choose.

#### 4.4.4 Site of Tension 6: Cataloging and Classification

Classification is a core information task of the LIS profession. The work of building and maintaining an access catalog is highly impactful for a library's user community. Catalogers are trained to organize information by encoding, describing, analyzing for subject content (naming), classifying, controlling, and sharing (Bair, 2005). In the course of this work, catalogers have what Olson (2002) has notably described as “the power to name”—the ability to describe and represent an information object, which in turn affects access and use of the object. The function of the classification systems is to serve as a conceptual and practical structure in which relationships among objects are identified, recorded, and made accessible to users (Furner, 2007). Throughout the complexities of these classification procedures, “the decisions that catalogers have to make are not always so clear” (Bair, 2005, p. 17).

The ethical decisions of cataloging and classification are many. Catalogers first consider various groups when making decisions: other catalogers, other LIS professionals, their institution, the public, and wider community of users who access the library's materials through the catalog (Ferris, 2008). Decisions related to assigning subject headings, in particular, can help or harm a user and thus represent a key ethical point of reflection (Bair, 2005). From this point of reflection, a practice of ethical cataloging has emerged as a means of reexamining and reclassifying library materials with a critical view towards the assumptions and perspectives of the world and society (Mai, 2013).

Neutrality is again at the center for this site of tension. For some, neutrality operates as a guiding principle through these decision points. In the work of deciding subject headings, “objectivity is generally valued” (CannCasciato, 2011, p. 413). As LIS professionals, catalogers respond to the “the basic assumption underlying modern librarianship—that libraries and librarians should embrace the position of neutrality” (Mai, 2013, p. 246). Adler & Harper (2018) see neutrality as especially entrenched in information organization due to the desired appearance of a positivist, rational, scientific, and technical objectivity for a key professional practice in information science. Such a knowable and known universe of knowledge from which a book could be drawn was a practical construct seen as beneficial from the viewpoint of customer service efficiency, an approach dating back to Dewey (H. A. Olson, 2002; Mai, 2013; Maret & Eagle, 2013; Gregory & Higgins, 2017a).

In counterpoint, others view classification schemes as a product of individual human effort, thus inherently subjective and political. The appearance of a logical system, however, elides and obscures any subjectivity: “In its fixity, every classification scheme is an objective representation of a subjective point of view” (Furner, 2007, p. 154). In striving towards neutrality and objectivity, catalogers of eras past have failed “to accurately and respectfully organize library materials about social groups and identities that lack social and political power” (Drabinski, 2013, p. 95). Mai (2013) argues that LIS classification systems in fact reflect a point of view based in a reality that is biased, unjust, and full of contradictions. For catalogers who wish to engage the ethical dilemmas and contradictions of classification, “There is no view from nowhere. Any act of naming or classifying is an act of saying something about the world, and such an act is always done from a particular perspective” (Mai, 2013, p. 246). The classification and the organization of information are directly connected to issues surrounding social justice, diversity, and inclusion, with researchers observing racism, imperialism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism in the stacks (Adler, 2017; Adler & Harper, 2018). Hobart (2020), for example, describes how libraries’ attempts at neutrality obscure a long history of racism in cataloging practices. Neutrality is therefore unattainable and undesirable in the context of information organization, and “librarians who understand libraries as spaces that advance equality and justice often view neutrality as an obstacle to those goals” (Adler & Harper, 2018, p. 57). To engage critically with reclassification as harm reduction or as an act of

values-based anti-oppression is to stand against neutrality. Indeed, classifications are a powerful technology, and deserve political and social sensitivities (Bowker & Star, 1999). When ethical decisions are confronted, catalogers also look to the stated core values of the LIS profession—such as social responsibility, diversity, and equity—which can come into tension with positions of neutrality.

In further examining the ethical decisions of catalogers we can look to a number of leading classification schemas and organizations: Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), Dewey Decimal System (Dewey), Resource Description and Access (RDA), and the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO). Each of these areas offer different demonstrations of the ethical complexities of cataloging. Biases and subjectivities have been found to be present in a number of LCSH headings, including those related to religion (Idrees & Mahmood, 2009), nationality (Ferris, 2008), gender and sex (M. Johnson, 2010), and social justice movements (Adler & Harper, 2018). One of the earliest to draw attention to the cultural injustices embedded in subject headings is Berman (1993), who as a cataloger working in Zambia in 1960s came to understand that certain LCSH subject headings—created from the American perspective and presented as a universal vocabulary—in fact perpetuated harmful racist language in the Zambian context.

Likewise, the Dewey Decimal System contains its own cultural biases. Information objects relating to religion, for example, are overwhelmingly Christian (Berman, 1993). More broadly, Olson (2002, p. 142) describes how Dewey's appearance as an objective information system is in fact "a harmful characteristic in the sense that it marginalizes and excludes Others—concepts outside of a white, male, Eurocentric, Christocentric, heterosexual, able-bodied, bourgeois mainstream." Upon further examination, the aim of classification schemes such as LCSH and Dewey to provide a value-neutral snapshot of an objective reality is revealed to be unattainable (Furner, 2007). Other systems of information organization are revealed to be similarly faulty, as with RDA and gender bias (Billey et al., 2014), and SACO with race (Espinal et al., 2018) and immigration (Adler & Harper, 2018). In one instance, an academic library updated their local catalog to replace the subject heading for "illegal aliens" with "undocumented immigrants" following a rejection to do

the same across the nationally-shared LCSH catalog (Proctor, 2020). Such an act of local resistance illustrates the real-world ethical decision-making of catalogers.

In summary, the classification systems used with the LIS profession have historically been constructed by members of the dominant group, and can perpetuate certain biases and stereotypes that harm or exclude users of traditionally marginalized identities. Maintaining a posture of neutrality does not allow for these exclusions to be addressed. Classification schemas have been built as objective tools for accessing a stable universe of knowledge, but they should now be reexamined as sites of political and ethical work (Mai, 2013). There is no way to fully correct a catalog, as cultural ideas and vocabularies are constantly in flux, but a more socially-aware approach to classification opens new possibilities for more inclusive, accurate collections (M. Johnson, 2010; Drabinski, 2013).

## **4.5 Summary**

LIS professionals are challenged to act ethically by two primary factors: market forces and the concept of professional neutrality. In this chapter, I examined six sites of tension that demonstrate the effect of market forces and professional neutrality on ethical LIS professional practice. Regarding market forces, LIS values are often superseded by the values of a parent institution and of the larger society of the United States and the global economic system of capitalism. Market forces compel librarians to act against their values in three key areas: measuring success according to externally-defined economic principles as opposed to internally-defined professional principles, implementing privacy-invading technology services, and collecting behavioral data related to student activity—all in conflict with professional values to some degree. Regarding neutrality, the LIS professional stance of neutrality prevents the LIS professional from taking a values-based stance in three key areas: social responsibility, information literacy and pedagogy, and cataloging and classification. The main question of this dissertation relates to the practice of ethical assessment. In the next chapter, I present a literature review and inductive analysis of ethical assessment practices.

## 5. Deriving Characteristics of Ethical Assessment Practice

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents discussion and analysis of five areas of practice related to library assessment. Having established in prior chapters that library assessment practice faces pressures related to market forces and neutrality, this chapter turns toward ethical responses to those pressures. Library assessment practice is multi-faceted and includes a wide variety of tools, techniques, and proficiencies (American Library Association, 2017a; Association of Research Libraries, 2017; Schwertfeger & Swaren, 2017). Among these many proficiencies, ethics is a key aspect of assessment that practitioners should cultivate and strengthen (Kyrillidou, 2018). There is also an interest in investigating the degrees to which assessment practitioners understand and apply ethical principles, such that the definitions of an ethical assessment can be better understood (Horst & Prendergast, 2020). In an LIS context, ethical assessment involves building on traditional values (Delaney & Bates, 2015). But in actual practice, the precise resolutions to ethical dilemmas and value tensions are less clear (Kendrick & Leaver, 2011). In response, this chapter discusses five approaches to values-based, ethical library assessment practices: critical assessment, co-design, strategic planning, norms and regulations, and care ethics. Following this discussion, I present an inductive analysis of the five areas that reveals a set of characteristics that begins to draw the contours of an ethical assessment.

### 5.2 Ethical Approaches to Library Assessment

In the subsections below, I examine five ethical approaches to library assessment. These ethical assessment practice areas share a common appeal to values, particularly to professional values of LIS. For this reason, these five practice areas are suitable for further examination through the lens of practical ethics. Through this examination, a set of characteristics are uncovered that begin to mark the boundaries of ethical assessment in LIS.

### 5.2.1 Critical Assessment

Critical assessment in libraries is a newly-emerging area that focuses first on bringing forward critical views and practices related to established library assessment. From this place of critical inquiry, critical assessment seeks to build new communities of practice for library assessment. Critical assessment has been summarized by Magnus et al. (2018) in calling on practitioners to self-reflect on issues of individual and institutional power and privilege, to seek qualitative methods in critical balance with quantitative approaches, and to foreground subjects of assessment as co-equal participants in the research process. Magnus et al. capture the dual modes of critical assessment: in the first instance, reflecting on and reexamining established practice with a focus on power relationships; in the second instance, working to build new practices into library assessment such as qualitative methods and participatory approaches. I will expand further on these two modes below.

In the area of reflection and reexamination, critical assessment stems from the wider foundation of critical librarianship, which provides the groundwork for examining the structures and systems that shape LIS work (Drabinski, 2019). Fisher et al. (2019), for example, prompt a critical reconsideration of established library assessment practices such as EZ proxy logins, ID card swipes, article downloads, circulation records, and tracking the amount of time students spend in physical and online spaces. For Fisher et al., these practices—many of which have been developed from Oakleaf's (2010) influential report on library assessment—are surveillance efforts that work more to achieve a visually attractive but ultimately reductive reporting dashboard than to accurately capture a student's experience in the library. Such self-reflective, self-critical viewpoints are applied towards a useful questioning of prevailing practices, as with Hodge (2019), who encourages LIS practitioners to work from a place of cultural humility and self-reflection: "To provide the best possible service, we must start with ourselves first" (p. 268).

Through a process of self-reflection, a number of critical self-insights are possible. Sentance (2018), for instance, illuminates the long history of extractive methodologies common in libraries and archives that have resulted in harms to Indigenous populations while benefiting Western

researchers and practitioners. A key point of self-reflection is that assessment practice cannot be divorced from history and context, and that assessment is always a political and social act, whether the socio-political agenda is made explicit or not (DeLuca Fernández, 2015). DeLuca Fernández (2015) offers four main aspects that define critical assessment: 1) expose and address power, privilege, and structures; 2) consider thoughtfully histories and contexts; 3) make explicit assumptions and intentions; 4) eschew colorblind and ideological neutral claims. DeLuca Fernández's work builds on Wall et al. (2014), who offer a comprehensive critical analysis of assessment and call on practitioners to deeply reflect on the ethical and operational aspects of assessment, particularly focusing on who benefits from prevailing norms, standards, and hierarchies:

By raising consciousness of the ethical and value-based decisions implicit in any assessment context, the practice of assessment truly becomes a complex social practice rather than a collection of technical data gathering approaches that might unwittingly serve power interests unintended by well-meaning individuals (p.13).

In situating assessment as predominantly a tool of managerial and market-based accountability, Wall et al. describe a revised assessment practice that is socially-aware, politically-attuned, and functions "first and foremost as an ethical and valuing practice" (p. 11). Where traditional assessment approaches have focused on technical methods and a neutral objectivity of result, the critical assessment practitioner considers the effects of wider systems of power, privilege, and market forces in a way that surfaces the social position and political viewpoint of the practitioner (Wall et al., 2014; DeLuca Fernández, 2015). Critical assessment is an important but challenging turn for LIS professionals, because librarians are often not already oriented toward a reflective practice, in part because LIS professional values of objectivity and neutrality inhibit critical self-reflection (Graf & Harris, 2016). But LIS is a profession of values, as established in prior chapters, and assessment is an area of practice that can develop further in support of justice when practitioners transparently acknowledge and apply values (Doucette, 2016).



From this place of self-reflection, we can look to action. As outlined above, critical assessment can be defined by the following aspects: self-reflection, participation from different stakeholders, and qualitative measures that focus on social justice and social impacts—all in support of advancing an alternative vision and practice for LIS assessment. Critical assessment should be rooted in ongoing conversations around the challenges and successes of those communities who are researched, expressed through qualitative, ethnographic, and longitudinal methods (Fisher et al., 2019).

Critical assessment shifts the focus from the institution to the participant through community-oriented, empathic approaches that reinforces *power with*, rather than *power over* as a way to inscribe new, more equitable power relations (Douglas et al., 2018; McCartin & Dineen, 2018). Assessment research should be developed with and from the community in question, with results flowing beneficially back to the community (Gaudry, 2011). Critical assessment is further defined through the continual act of reflection in action, and with the alignment of method with goals and values, especially with an investment in qualitative approaches to counterbalance quantitative methods (Macaluso, 2014; Badia, 2017; Reale, 2017; Deitering et al., 2018).

Participatory approaches are another mark of critical assessment, the motivations for which are captured by Montenegro and Jankowski (2020): “One of the easiest means by which to check assumptions is to actively involve participants in the process of assessment” (p. 10).

For community-based, participatory assessment practices, helpful examples can be found in the field of archives and digital collections. Archives professionals have been critically re-evaluating the history and practice of archives, and offering alternative conceptualizations of an archives as open and empowering to more stakeholders, as articulated by Gilliland (2014): “Participatory archives acknowledge that multiple parties have rights, responsibilities, needs and perspectives with regard to the record” (p. 80). LIS professionals in the archive have focused a critical lens on the long history of exclusion, misrepresentation, oppression, and injustice in the archives, as well as the more recent pressures of neoliberal market forces (Caswell et al., 2017; Drake, 2019). Critical assessment is expressed in the archives through participatory archives (Iacovino, 2015; Rolan, 2017) and community-based approaches (Jules et al., 2018). The emerging ethical response involves bringing in members of the wider community to the process of creating, maintaining, and assessing archival descriptions and digital collections (Zavala et al., 2017).

In the context of assessment, there is an effort to identify and include a wider range of stakeholders and apply more community-attuned measures to the process of assessing digital collections. In moving beyond counting clicks and likes, Punzalan et al. (2017) demonstrate an approach for assessing ethnographic digital collections that focus on narrative storytelling and change-oriented impact areas as a more community-attuned practice. Beyond numeric metrics of use that reinforce colonial practices of objectification, this approach involves qualitative research with those impacted by the use of the collections, thereby offering more nuanced portraits of engagement that focus on material benefits and social change (Marsh et al., 2016). The rationale for a participatory, community-determined assessment practice is expressed by Shilton & Srinivasan (2007): “By approaching appraisal in collaboration with community members, archivists are given the chance to assess the value of community records as the community understands them” (p. 93).

Further examples of community-oriented archival assessments include the collections reuse project, which seeks to assess the impacts not of use (defined by, for example, the download count of an object), but of reuse (defined by the application of an object) (Muglia et al., 2019). For this assessment project, “ethical considerations and community values should be at the forefront of all discussions” (O’Gara et al., 2018, p. 138). Critical assessment in the archives is comprehensively summarized by Caswell et al. (2017) in describing a vision for putting forward an alternative practice of archival activity and assessment:

The ultimate goal to which we hope this research contributes in some small part is to ‘imagine otherwise,’ that is to conceive of and build a world in which communities that have historically been and are currently being marginalized due to white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, gender binaries, colonialism and ableism are fully empowered to represent their past, construct their present and envision their futures as forms of liberation (p. 6).

Looking very briefly to an adjacent field to illustrate this concept, we can see that museum professionals have also applied the principle of *otherwise* as a practice of “think[ing] and do[ing]

museums and heritage differently from the ways in which they have more recently or more usually been done” (Macdonald, 2018, p. 3). Archives professionals, archives scholars, and related practitioners offer promising models for ethical assessment, especially related to participatory and community-based assessments that think beyond currently established practice.

In sum, critical assessment offers a promising framework for ethical assessment in LIS. Critical assessment is a reflective practice that is systems-attuned, people-oriented, socially-engaged, politically-aware, and change-driven. It is invested in challenging existing status quo systems in a way that makes a better world for more people. The concept of “imagining otherwise” is central to the reflective and transformative goals of critical assessment, for “critical librarianship knows that the world could be different” (Drabinski, 2019, p. 53).

### 5.2.2 Co-Design

The traditions of design offer compelling approaches for ethical library assessment. Design offers a set of practical methods rooted in values-based theories, and is thus a promising area to examine through the lens of practical ethics. Designers recognize that “core values matter in shaping people’s attitudes and behavior” and “values-driven practices seek change in complex systems” (M. Davis, 2018, pp. 2–8). At the center of the design process is people, as expressed by noted industrial designer Dieter Rams (Hustwit, 2018): “If you do not understand people, you cannot understand good design” (1:01).

Co-design—and its related practices of participatory design and service design—is a subfield of design that is especially committed to involving and understanding the people involved in and impacted by the design process and the design result. Co-design and participatory design work to identify and involve representatives of key stakeholder groups so as to “challenge power relationships and transform patterns of exclusion and social injustice” (Robertson & Wagner, 2013, p. 68).

Participatory design is guided by a set of principles: equalizing power relations, democratic practices, situation-based actions, mutual learning, and the application of tools and techniques that

can realize these principles (Kensing & Greenbaum, 2013). In the process of participatory co-design, practitioners explicitly take a stand for justice and often work on projects that involve and elevate members of groups who have been historically marginalized, disempowered, or oppressed (Ehn, 1993).

In LIS, design is practically manifested in multiple ways: as service design, co-design, participatory design, user experience design, and design thinking. These approaches are united through common elements, including self-reflection, co-creation and co-determination in the design process, empathy for the people who use and deliver a service, and an explicit articulation of both professional and personal values. Drew (2018), for example, applied service design tools in the area of data ethics to operationalize values such as the public good. Rigling et al. (2018) applied a design methodology to create an open access statement, adopting a self-reflective approach that questioned traditional neutrality. Rigling et al. describe co-design as effective for bringing together multiple stakeholder groups for a shared purpose, arguing that “by practicing librarianship through the exploration of our own values, we can develop meaningful and actionable policy and service” (para. 27). Even further, Clarke (2017, 2018) has argued that LIS is already primed to accommodate design as a central theoretical and practical tenet of the profession, as LIS already involves key aspects of design, including reflection, problem solving, knowledge through making, criteria-based assessments, and practice-as-scholarship.

Participation and collaboration in the process of designing and assessing library services allows LIS professionals to build on core values such as service, equity, social justice, and lifelong learning (Clarke, 2017, 2019). Design ways have been adopted by practitioners who invite tensions that arise from the explicitly political nature of co-design, as expressed by Bats (2016), who studied participatory techniques in information literacy: “Political action seems to be in conflict with some traditional values of libraries like neutrality” (p. 33). As a response to neutrality, co-design offers a theory and a practice that allows librarians to take a stand for values and to enact an ethical practice.

In this way, design offers an apt model for practical ethics in the area of library assessment. Design practitioners in LIS such as Reidsma (2017) invoke the central self-reflective question of practical

ethics: “The questions we face now lean more toward ‘is this the right thing to do?’ than ‘am I doing this right?’” Reidsma describes a number of scenario-based ethical dilemmas in library service design, and posits an attunement to values as an ethical way forward. Indeed, co-design challenges the status quo by posing and attempting to solve troublesome design problems that encourage reflection and discourse while at the same time rejecting neutrality and objectivity (Robinson, 2019). The connection between ethics, values, and practice is drawn clearly by LIS design practitioners, with a recognition that all of our designs necessarily reflect our values (Orphanides, 2016). Hanson (2015) specifically calls for a greater values-oriented viewpoint in library software design. And service design has been shown as a method for achieving the service value of LIS (Marquez & Downey, 2015).

Design then becomes a pathway to ethical assessment, with the principles and practices of co-design applied to better understand user needs and goals, as well as to achieve an ethical practice that brings to life core values. A few examples can illustrate this point. At the University of Michigan, a process of co-design was followed for space assessment in order to “help our department hold ourselves accountable to our intentions of transparency, participation, and creating a data gathering program that is useful, timely, and relevant to colleagues across the entire organization” (Puckett-Rodgers et al., 2019, p. 243). Davis (2020) used participatory paper prototyping to design and assess web interfaces in an academic library, demonstrating that inviting students into the design and assessment process can provide in-roads for student expertise, leading to user empowerment and a better-researched final product. Gamboni (2017) applied a reflective, participatory process to assess the skills of librarians in developing an e-book service, concluding that participation in assessment was effective for growth-through-reflection, personal and professional development, and change-making in an academic setting.

Further examples demonstrate the application of design in support of diversity and social responsibility, as with Tewell (2019), who applied a participatory photovoice method in a co-designed assessment of reference services involving librarians and students from historically marginalized groups. The motivation for participation in this project comes from the recognition that “people’s experiences and information practices are unique and shaped by their diverse life

experiences” (E. Tewell, 2019, p. 173). In following the tradition of participatory design, this project sought results that could positively impact the lives of the participants, not only by creating better library services that better meet the needs of marginalized students, but also by empowering those students through a process of co-determination and mutual learning in the assessment process. Importantly, the results were “determined by the community studied instead of solely the researcher” (E. Tewell, 2019, p. 164).

In a similar study, Neurohr & Bailey (2016) applied photo-elicitation—a participatory research method—to assess how Native American students “perceived the role of the academic library in their lives, and which elements of the library students depicted and described as holding meaning for them” (p. 56). In this instance, participatory assessment proved valuable for engaging diverse users in support of designing and assessing library services. The process of participatory co-determination seeks to build relationships of mutual benefit and trust with participants (Delaney & Bates, 2015; Gamboni, 2017).

As an approach rooted in values, co-design is especially suited as a model for ethical assessment. Co-design shares certain characteristics of critical assessment, especially relating to questioning neutrality and the status quo, involving the subjects of assessment as equal participants, and working towards social change for the benefit of people who have historically been under-resourced or marginalized.

### 5.2.3 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning offers a model for achieving an ethical library assessment practice. Strategic planning in higher education dates back to the 1960s, and assessment is a key part of strategic planning (Dole, 2013). Strategic plans set the collective direction for a library, and provide a structure for generating insight into how libraries are prioritizing goals and the extent to which they are assessing those goals (Saunders, 2016). The basic formulation of strategic planning assessment follows a multi-part cycle: identify objectives, measures, and targets; gather data; analyze data; identify improvements and action plans; implement improvements to close the loop and restart the cycle (K. M. Crowe, 2019). Underlying this cycle is the identity of the organization,

including the vision, mission, and values. A library's organizational vision "will include a clearly articulated guiding philosophy that includes core values and beliefs and a statement of purpose" (Harland et al., 2018, p. 278). Strategic planning therefore provides a structure for articulating and assessing values (Dole, 2013). Importantly, strategic planners recognize that planning and assessment do not unfold from a place of neutrality. Rather, in allocating resources and articulating values, strategic planning is a political activity (Saunders, 2016).

A number of key examples can show strategic planning in action and demonstrate its relevance for ethical assessment, particularly as connected to the practice of defining, embedding, and assessing values. The practice of assessing values can be found in Baich (2020), who defines a "values-based vision" for the scholarly communications activities of Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. This vision draws upon evidence gathered through participatory activities and focus groups, culminating in an "Open Values Statement" that articulates values such as openness, transparency, and equity. Baich then develops a set of evaluation criteria to measure the degree to which library tools and services are aligned with the values of the vision statement. Baich presents a useful model for values-based planning and assessment using the strategic planning formulation of setting goals and measuring progress. In another similar example, Galvan (2020) describes a process of developing a values-driven license for library e-resources. Galvan articulates a set of library strategic values—including inquiry, inclusiveness, sustainability, and community—and then poses the question, "How does licensing impact those values?" By mapping licensing terms to stated values, the project seeks to answer this ethical question by assessing the alignment of licenses with values.

Another example can be seen in HuMetricsHSS, the Humane Metrics Initiative (Agate et al., 2020; *HuMetricsHSS*, n.d.). This project "proposes that metrics only be used to measure one's progress towards embodying five core values that initial research suggests are central to all humanities and social science disciplines: Collegiality, Quality, Equity, Openness, and Community" (Konkiel et al., 2017). The HuMetricsHSS initiative builds on the premise that common quantitative metrics like citation counts capture only a limited scope of activity, and that an assessment model based on values can better capture output and impact. Articulating and enacting core values becomes "an

alternative means of enabling people to tell textured stories about their professional development through the lens of the values they uphold, adhere to, and respect as members of an institution” (Agate, 2018, para. 2). Within the framework of HuMetricsHSS, the central question for library assessment can be phrased: “Does a library’s services uphold or manifest its stated values?” If the answer to this question is yes, then the library can be said to be successful.

Moving further in this direction, a final example drawn from the body of work of Town (2011), perhaps the strongest example of values-based assessment in strategic planning. Over the course of several years, Town developed a values-based assessment approach that leveraged the Balanced Scorecard, a prominent strategic planning framework. Town first recognized that libraries are under pressure to “prove their worth” through value and impact studies; he then posited that answers to value contributions can be found by expanding the concept of value to include values: “Because values are manifested, there will be something that we can measure arising from the way values are enacted in our libraries and the way value is generated as a result” (J. S. Town, 2011, p. 114). Beyond “mere espousal,” libraries should contextualize values, resolve conflicts among values, and ultimately “provide evidence of contribution to values achievement” (J. S. Town, 2011, p. 120). The evidence for achieving values can be measured because values are manifested in what people do and the choices they make. This values-based approach to value measurement may be summarized by the following: “value reflects values” (J. S. Town, 2011, p. 122). Next, Town & Kyrillidou (2013) developed a practical tool—the “Value Scorecard”—to give a practical expression to the concept of a values-based approach to value measurement.

The Value Scorecard is structured according to the basic operations of strategic planning—set goals, measure progress, report results—but that the goals are formulated as values that can demonstrate the library’s alignment with and worth to the parent institution. The Values Scorecard is a framework for centering library values as library value; as Town writes, “Because a value represents a slogan for the rationalization of action, values will be key to correct actions, which then lead to value creation” (J. S. Town, 2011, p. 120). Town (2015) then implemented and tested the Value Scorecard in an academic library, positing that “the ultimate test of the Value Scorecard is the contribution to the achievement of value as defined by institutional values, rather than the



achievement of strategy alone; hence whilst the centre of the Balanced Scorecard is vision and strategy, the centre of the Value Scorecard is values” (p. 239).

In practice, the Values Scorecard was found to be a “practical success, collecting a rich range of data and evidence of the worth of the library” (S. Town, 2015, p. 248). In a subsequent analysis of the Value Scorecard, Town (2018) argues that the application of this tool combined with a commitment to organizational development can generate positive results for the library. The Values Scorecard builds on other strategic planning scorecard models to direct values-based activities related to measurements, assessment, and advocacy.

The Value Scorecard encourages a broader vision of library value and impact that goes beyond immediate, market-conditioned outcomes in a way that captures the knowledge-based after-effects of library usage. The realization of aspirational values becomes the goal; demonstrating the realization of values becomes the demonstration of value. Town’s model has since been described as a compelling advancement of assessment practice, as the Values Scorecard provides a broader, higher level view of library resources, services, and facilities (Corrall, 2016). Town’s approach of situating values as the centerpiece of library value stands as a productive point of reference for practical ethics and values-based assessment. Bourg (2013) has similarly called for LIS values to be the driver of LIS practice, and to “re-inject the core values of libraries and of our parent institutions into our work and our decision-making” (para. 11). The examples from Town and others show that libraries can leverage the structure of strategic planning to articulate and manifest values in support of ethical library assessment. In this approach, LIS values themselves can be the key to demonstrating value and for resolving the tension between library values and library value.

#### 5.2.4 Norms and Regulations

The practice of ethical assessment may also be informed through an examination of legislative regulations and subsequent effects on normative behaviors. The relationship between norm and regulation derives from the passage of a law that reflects societal values and goals, followed by a community commitment to establishing and reinforcing best practices in support of the law (Nissenbaum, 2010, p. 242). Two case studies can help illustrate the effects of regulation on

normative community behavior: first, the effects of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on data collection and web privacy; second, the effects of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on physical and digital accessibility.

The GDPR aims to ensure a harmonized, unified and sustainable approach to European Union (EU) citizens' data protection by implementing privacy protection practices in the European Union, effectively giving more control to citizens over their personal data (Almeida Teixeira et al., 2019). The law went into effect in May 2018, and it sets out a number of standards that apply directly to the processing of personal data within the EU's territory or market, with fines for non-compliance; subsequent to the passage of this law, many companies and organizations prioritized meeting the standards of the GDPR (Albrecht, 2016). GDPR is a response to the need for large-scale changes in order to improve normative behaviors related to privacy practices in the digital environment (Kalbag, 2019). By creating more transparency and greater opportunity for people to determine how their data is collected and shared, the GDPR helps engage citizens as active participants in society and democracy (Hoel & Chen, 2018).

Yet the practical implementation of GDPR standards has been inconsistent, indicating that norms are still developing for this newly-enacted regulation. A study of post-GDPR cookie notices, for example, revealed that cookie notices have been implemented with varying designs that lead to correspondingly varying results in terms of user interactions, pointing to "the importance for regulation to not just require consent, but also provide clear requirements or guidance for how this consent has to be obtained in order to ensure that users can make free and informed choices" (Utz et al., 2019, p. 973). The work of Utz et al. highlight a gap that persists between espousing values and implementing values. Consent is an example of this gap. Consent is required by GDPR law, but implementation of cookie consent notifications is inconsistent across the jurisdiction, and to date a standardized cookie notice has not been developed. The outcome is an inconsistent patchwork of consent notifications that hinders the practical implementation of the consent value. The evolving relationship between regulation and norm is summarized by Hoel & Chen (2018): "Even if the concern for data privacy is shared among the general public around the world there is a long way to go from concern, at least in the abstract, to finding a common normative basis for

establishing data protection policies” (p. 5). The GDPR provides motivation and a high-level framework for implementation, but the wider community of web developers and policy-makers must support the development of more detailed norms of behavior to support consistent outcomes for citizens.

The gap between abstract value and normative practice becomes evident when looking closer at data protection practices in US academic libraries. Despite the global impacts of GDPR, there remains a long-standing divide between the cultures of privacy in the EU and in the US (Penney, 2019). Practitioners in the US do not benefit from the motivation and framework of GDPR to prompt the development of shared norms around data protection and privacy. Due to a lack of clear direction at the national level, privacy practices across the US—like US privacy laws themselves—are patchwork, inconsistent, and non-normative (K. L. Cox, 2019). Bamberger & Mulligan (2013, p. 1641) describe a landscape of US privacy practices that “are dynamic, are at times contradictory, can diverge both up and down from the law on the books, and vary contextually.”

Without a consequential mandate regarding privacy and data protection, libraries in the US rely on suggestions for behavior that leverage existing values as the primary motivation for action. IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations, 2020), for example, encourages libraries to comply with GDPR while also invoking core values: “Libraries’ continued commitment to the values of privacy can easily be seen in the many, many initiatives they dedicate to helping protect their users’ data privacy inside and outside of the library” (para. 10). But GDPR likely doesn’t impact US libraries directly if their activities do not occur within the jurisdiction of the EU (Hannay et al., 2018). For libraries in the US, GDPR can lead to more values-driven data collection practices—but primarily on an opt-in basis (Heller, 2018).

At the University of Denver, for instance, J. Cox (2018) led an initiative to update privacy practices related to the institutional repository (IR). Though it was recognized that GDPR does not directly affect the IR, Cox opted to work towards partial GDPR compliance so as to apply standards, reduce risk, and build trust. A leading value in this project was transparency, with Cox reviewing

and revising the library's privacy policy to ensure clear communication with users regarding activity across the library's website, online catalog, physical spaces, and databases. This work was self-initiated, with the intention to "show our patrons we care" (J. Cox, 2018, p. 8). J. Cox also posed a number of self-reflective questions to help guide implementation: What data do we collect? Why do we collect it? Is it justified? By assessing and improving privacy within the context of GDPR—but in a voluntary, site-specific approach—this project demonstrates that in the US, without a GDPR-style national regulation, implementation of privacy protection standards will continue to be ad hoc and opt-in, with users experiencing a patchwork of different approaches at different libraries. Library norms around online privacy will continue to be shaped less by national standards that carry legal consequences, and more by guidance statements from professional organizations that leverage existing values to further motivate the practice. On-the-ground practical implementation will continue to vary widely (Corrado, 2020).

The Americans with Disabilities Act offers a contrasting case study. Since its passage in 1990 with a jurisdiction that affects most companies and organizations in the US, discourse and practice around the ADA has blossomed into a rich conversation and a set of normative behaviors related to access and disability. The ADA requires organizations with public facilities to make reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities (Peters & Bradbard, 2010). The law prompted awareness and action of accessibility issues across the public and private sectors (Kimura, 2018). Within LIS, the ADA has been influential in initiating a conversation "about the importance of access to librarianship and educating us all regarding the needs of the disabled population" (Brown & Sheidlower, 2019). Before the ADA, "very little thought was given to functional diversity" (Pionke, 2017, p. 9).

Today, the ADA directly supports the development of normative behaviors in the form of best practices for library users in a variety of settings, including instructional contexts (Whitver, 2020), web services (Yoon et al., 2016; Ng, 2017), and staff training in support of differently-abled users (Wade, 2003). The ADA has also prompted critical reflection and action focused on LIS professionals themselves, as demonstrated by an emerging literature examining the experience of

disabled librarians with a view towards addressing inequities and injustices (Schomberg, 2018; Brown & Sheidlower, 2019; Moeller, 2019; Pionke, 2020; Schomberg & Highby, 2020).

For both library users and library workers, the regulatory aspects of the ADA have given rise to normative practices that are values-based and justice-oriented, seeking equity of access and service for both library users and library staff (Hill, 2013; Pereyaslavskaya, 2015; Kumbier & Starkey, 2016). Accessibility is now seen as a system of values and goals that information professionals can “bring to everything we do, from collections to services to hiring...accessibility can help promote values of diversity and social responsibility, and can serve us in the work of making our workplaces and profession more equitable and just” (Rosen, 2017, para. 37).

The ADA has motivated a practice of “imagining otherwise” described above by Caswell et al. (2017). This practice, rooted in LIS values, helps promote an “access that both responds to the pragmatic needs of the American Library Association’s ‘Core Values of Librarianship’ (to guide professional practice and education) and helps librarians and library workers imagine how we might transform the systems, beliefs, and practices that make libraries and the profession inaccessible and inequitable” (Kumbier & Starkey, 2016, p. 468). Now thirty years beyond its passage, the ADA has helped direct libraries to enhance access across the spectrum of information services: physical space, services, databases, instruction, policies, trainings, management, education, attitudes and interactions with differently abled patrons, empathy-building, and staff representation (Pionke 2020). The ADA is a regulation that has influenced normative behavior and today functions as an essential point of reference in developing best practices and norms for accessibility and disability justice.

For the assessment of accessibility in LIS, the ADA establishes standards for practitioners, with compliance being a focus since the law was enacted (Foos & Pack, 1992). But while many libraries meet the basic letter of the law in terms of physical space access (e.g., elevators and doorways), they can go still further in understanding disability, empowering disabled users and staff, and building a fair library accessible to all (Pionke, 2017). In this way, the ADA further functions as an important bedrock for building a normative assessment practice that goes beyond compliance. LIS

professionals recognize, for example, that ADA standards are often restrictive or exclusionary, treating disabled persons as objects to be controlled and managed (Schomberg, 2018).

In response, accessibility practitioners have advanced an assessment practice that doesn't view disabled users as existing outside the assessment process, but rather as essential participants in the assessment process. In a literature review covering the years 2000–2010, Hill (2013) finds that LIS professionals express a commitment to enhancing accessibility, but that accessibility efforts could benefit further from increased direct participation of people with disabilities in designing and assessing the accessibility of information services. Kumbier & Starkey (2016) reinforce the call to “recruit, educate, hire, and support library workers with disabilities” so as to make the LIS profession accessible and equitable. Kimura (2018) further amplifies the call to involve disabled people in the assessment of information services. With the normative standards set by these practitioners, disabled users become vital participants in the assessment lifecycle through a process of co-determination that supports positive social change for the disabled community through the implementation of information services made accessible with and for community members themselves.

Both the GDPR and the ADA demonstrate the limits and possibilities of regulation in setting norms and best practice, representing two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, the GDPR is unenforceable in the US and functions on an opt-in basis. On the other hand, the ADA is legally enforceable and sets a standard for practice. In both cases, the regulations serve as important points of reference that influence norms within practitioner communities. The ADA showcases the promise and power of regulation-driven norm development—over three decades of implementation, accessibility assessment within LIS has matured into a justice-oriented practice that deeply involves members of the disabled community in the practice of assessing information services. As a newer regulation, the GDPR hasn't yet reached this stage of maturity, but as more practitioners respond to the standards, the practitioner community around privacy may grow over time to develop its own set of normative behaviors.

These insights can be applied to the practice of ethical assessment: without a comprehensive regulation that sets clear, enforceable, consequential rules for library assessment, the practical implementation of an assessment framework would likely resemble privacy more than accessibility—varying in application, motivated not by law but by a commitment to abstract values, and ultimately opt-in and unenforceable. A library assessment framework may not have the regulatory and norm-setting power of the ADA; yet, as a point of reference for guiding practice, such a framework could over time lead to the development of normative behaviors in support of ethical assessment.

### 5.2.5 Care Ethics

The ethics of care is the fifth and final area of practice examined here for its applicability to library assessment. The theory and practice of care ethics derives from the wider field of feminist ethics. Feminist ethics recognizes that individuals are woven together in a social fabric, and therefore have relational responsibilities to one another in an interconnected community (Noddings, 2013). “Feminist Ethics” first appeared in the 1980s as a term to define a movement within philosophy that acknowledged women and gender as indispensable to adequately understanding many issues in practical ethics (Jaggar, 2017). Feminist ethics challenges the status quo of philosophy, especially focusing on the disproportionate representation of male-identifying thinkers and traditionally masculine ideas such as objectivity and individualism. In working to define the multiple dimensions of feminist ethics, prominent areas of attention have included care, empathy, and the cultivation of relationships as an important ethical action (Slote, 2007; Jaggar, 2017).

In LIS contexts, feminist ethics has been applied in a number of ways, including in the archives (Cifor & Wood, 2017; Arnold, 2020), through management and leadership (Hathcock & Vinopal, 2017), and in reference services (Clements, 2017). Feminist ethics offers a potent response to the problem of neutrality in LIS. H. A. Olson, (2007), for example, couches the act of classification in the language of feminist thought. Rather than seeing the world of information organization as hierarchical, Olson encourages a view of connected knowing: first, a rejection of a universal, objective model of truth based on pyramidal hierarchy; then, a focus on relationships as connected through a web-like structure that highlights situatedness, or the consideration of context and

experience. H. A. Olson further underscores the importance of involving different communities in LIS practice, and a recognition of power as a factor in knowing. Furthermore, Hatchock & Vinopal (2017, p. 162) find through interviews with feminist-identifying library administrators: “For our interviewees, there is no room for neutrality in feminist leadership.” Clements likewise views neutrality as incompatible for the delivery of authentic and justice-oriented reference services, as neutrality works to uphold the status quo of social inequality (Clements, 2017). In rejecting the existing paradigm of objectivity and neutrality, feminist ethics offers alternative visions for work and the world. In the context of library instruction, Accardi (2013) describes the vision and practice of feminist pedagogy, which can be characterized as collaborative, democratic, and transformative; consciousness raising about sexism and oppression; applying an ethic of care; valuing personal testimony and lived experience as valid ways of knowing.

As a subfield of feminist ethics, the ethics of care focuses on seeing people not as individuals only, but as relational entities in society; through a focus on mutuality and the recognition of interdependence, care can help people live a value of social responsibility (Held, 2006). For care ethics, the individual is not the primary unit of society, but rather the relational pair is the central epistemological entity (Noddings, 2013). In this way, the ethics of care also provides persuasive arguments for limiting market forces (discussed as a site of tension in Chapter 4). Held (2006) advances a number of arguments in support of the thesis that care ethics can provide a counterbalance to market forces in higher education. Over the last few decades, universities have adopted the corporate language and thinking of efficiency and productivity, and subsequently workloads have increased while wages decreased.

Market logic assumes that every actor operates with individualistic self-interest, but care ethics posits that cooperation and relationship-building can lead to a better world:

The values of *shared* enjoyment or *social* responsibility, or *collective* caring may well be worth promoting in the realm of culture and in the activities or practices of communication, but these are values that cannot even be registered in calculations of maximizing individual preferences (Held, 2006, p. 118).



Care ethics also provides space for conflicting values, and suggests approaches for resolving such conflicts based on prioritization: “It seems better to see education and the market as having different *priorities*, as *ordering* their values differently” (Held, 2006, p. 123). In the context of LIS values, Higgins (2017, p. 82) suggests feminist ethics as a framework for resolving potential conflicts among values: “A feminist standpoint toward the ‘Core Values’ would center Social Responsibility and The Public Good as the values that drive and inform the ways in which access to collections, information, spaces, and services are provided.” As an expression of practical ethics, the ethics of care provides a guide for conduct, and can also serve as a constructive point of reference in developing a framework for ethical library assessment.

LIS professionals have a long history of performing care labor (Słoniowski, 2016). For library assessment, care ethics provides a practical apparatus for developing alternative approaches for understanding and measuring success. At the reference desk, Howard (2017) invokes the values of equality and justice in encouraging librarians to build co-experiential, relational interactions with students, and then to assess this work not only by quantitative measures that would produce a count of how many references interactions, but also by the quality of the collaboration and the shared experience between the librarian and the student. In the context of digital libraries, Dohe (2019) marks out a care ethics assessment practice that balances quantitative measures with qualitative accounts of emotional labor, calling, for instance, for institutional repository managers to “de-emphasize and decouple quantity of submissions (especially faculty submissions) in repositories as a metric of performance” and to “emphasize demonstrable methods of emotional work” (para. 30). Dohe presents care ethics as a framework for enhancing inclusivity, democracy, and participation in the design, governance, and assessment of digital library software.

Nowvskie (2015) further develops care ethics in LIS settings through the lens of digital humanities. Nowvskie describes care ethics as a set of practices that include collective acts of mutual care and maintenance for the world, each other, our devices, and our instruments. This practice reorients practitioners away from the dominant paradigm of objective evaluation and towards an understanding of LIS practice as contextual and interdependent. Moreover, Nowvskie

outlines a care ethics that provides new space for measuring value: “A competitive capitalist marketplace depends upon but does not assign much value to things we create through networks of reciprocity, compassion, generosity, mending, and care”(para. 27).

Maintenance is seen as a notable aspect of care work, and maintenance is also seen as a notable aspect of LIS work—D. Olson et al. (2019) assert that information maintenance is care work. And like Nowviskie, D. Olson et al. outline an ethics of care composed of contextual and interrelated responsibilities. A central aspect of these responsibilities is assessment via self-reflection rooted in humility and empathy. D. Olson et al. suggest the following self-reflective prompts that can help challenge the status quo of market capitalism and objectivity: “Who is allowed to care and in what spaces? Who orders, elevates, and acknowledges or rewards the labor?” Combined with justice-oriented goal-setting, these and other care-oriented self-reflective assessments can help provide alternative, qualitative measures of success that counter or complement prevailing assessments that center numerical indicators.

Archives practitioners again provide examples of ethics in action. Punzalan & Marsh (2022) describe a process of building reciprocal relationships between archival institutions and Indigenous communities who are represented in the collections or who use the archives. This community-based relationship-building is advanced in a wider context of feminist ethics of care and responsible stewardship of collections, which the authors present as an *otherwise* practice, as it illuminates a transformative model of archival practice that works toward mutual benefit and trust with communities that have been historically exploited through traditional, extractive archival practice. Punzalan & Marsh also point to a model of reciprocity assessment, where the success of an archive is measured by the level of reciprocity with a community—has social justice or mutual trust been achieved? This presents a compelling alternative to a more capitalistic use-based assessment that would base success on, for example, the number of patrons who access a collection.

Care is a potent counterpoint to neoliberal capitalism, “holding possibilities as a means toward equitable, inclusive, anti-neoliberal futures” (Higgins, 2017). As a practical demonstration, care ethics has been applied in the archives as a way to shift LIS practice and assessment from

market-based postures of objectivity and neutrality and towards social change and social justice, as described by Caswell & Cifor (2016), who investigate an ethics of care as a model for supporting social justice. As H. A. Olson recognized a bibliographic record situated within an interconnected web of relationships, so Caswell & Cifor recognize archivists situated within a relational web of mutual responsibility involving records creators, subjects, users and communities. Within a context of care ethics, archivists become caregivers for archival records and researchers. Translating the care ethic into the context of assessment, Malenfant & Brown (2017) find through a national review of assessment projects that the practice of assessment can be most effective through collaborative, team-based assessment that places value on relationships, context, and connection.

Finally, Arellano Douglas (2020) has perhaps most directly linked care with assessment: in questioning the status quo, activating the participation of students and others who are assessed, building relationships with stakeholders, and working towards diversity and justice, Arellano Douglas seeks a “reframing of the conversation around assessment from one of demonstrating value to one of embodying a value of care and connection in learning for both students and librarians” (p. 46). Notably, care-as-assessment centers values and their realization as a measure of value: “To care through assessment, we will emphasize what we value, not that we have value” (p. 56). The values that matter are co-determined with students, and the relationships built and maintained through the learning experience that support those values become the objects of assessment and the statements of value.

For library assessment, care ethics is theoretically well suited for supporting an ethical assessment practice in alignment with LIS values, especially as it contains ready responses for the two key pressure points identified in Chapter 3: first, care ethics recognizes and celebrates different and unique cultural identities of individuals and their interrelations, thus advancing anti-neutrality viewpoints; second, care ethics calls for reconfiguring the boundaries of market norms and influences, thus advancing market-critical viewpoints. Many aspects found in care ethics find consonance in the other areas of practice examined above: imagining otherwise, relational, participatory, community co-determined, and positionality. I further describe these and other aspects in the analysis section below.

## 5.3 Analysis

### 5.3.1 Characteristics of Ethical Assessment

Through an inductive analysis of the representative articles discussed in each practice area (critical assessment, co-design, strategic planning, regulations and norms, and care ethics), I identify a set of characteristics that begin to highlight commonalities and trace the contours of an ethical assessment practice. Themes were identified following a content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 2012). My procedure was as follows:

1. Identify a set of published works that represent the practice area.
2. Identify themes to characterize the individual works within each area.
3. Themes appearing in at least 2 of the 5 areas were selected into a group of 20 themes.
4. Themes were combined further where definitional overlap occurred, for a final total of 11 thematic characteristics of ethical assessment.

The full view of the literature analysis can be seen in the Appendix A, which contains the data analysis organized by thematic characteristic.

The thirteen characteristics are listed in Table 5.1. Each characteristic includes a definition and an operational indicator in the form of a self-reflective prompt. The operational indicator serves as a practical marker, and can be used as a diagnostic for evaluating an assessment practice. Following Table 5.1, Table 5.2 presents a distribution matrix of characteristics across practice areas.

**Table 5.1 Characteristics of Ethical Assessment**

Characteristic	Definition	Operational Indicators
Community co-determination	<i>Community co-determination</i> happens when appropriate assessment questions and methods are determined in partnership with the subjects of assessment and other key stakeholders,	Throughout the assessment lifecycle, do key stakeholders

	whereby the assessor is not the sole source of decision-making. Co-determination equalizes power relations, with the goal of creating a shared dynamic through the assessment process that gives voice to those who have traditionally lacked power.	(such as students) have a meaningful voice in determining research questions, the selection of methods, interpretation of data, and the application of results?
Stated values and positions	An assessment practice demonstrates <i>stated values</i> when practitioners have articulated an explicit set of values that guide the practice, and have <i>stated positions</i> through an acknowledgement of one's subjective societal and organizational position, including cultural identity and related viewpoints, values, privileges, oppressions, and biases.	Does your practice explicitly articulate values?  Does your practice assess the achievement of those values?  Does your assessment practice explicitly acknowledge how your unique personal viewpoints and cultural identities affect your practice?
Imagining Otherwise	<i>Imagining otherwise</i> is marked first by questioning prevailing norms and the status quo (such as market forces and neutrality), and then by creating new approaches as counterpoints to those norms.	Does your practice engage critically with assessment norms?  Does your practice envision and make possible different futures?
Lifelong Learning	<i>Lifelong learning</i> is achieved through ongoing professional development, training, and education.	Is your practice continually strengthened through professional development?

Privacy	<i>Privacy</i> is achieved when data collection procedures are sensitive to the privacy of the people who are represented in the data. <i>Privacy</i> also means that data is collected only in service to an explicit assessment question, and never collected indiscriminately “just in case.”	Do your assessments collect only necessary data?  Do you protect the privacy of the people represented in the assessment data?
Qualitative measures	<i>Qualitative measures</i> highlight the voices of the assessed through narrative storytelling, and can help achieve a methodological balance with quantitative measures. When quantitative approaches can tend to reduce or simplify, qualitative measures also serve to complete the assessment picture.	Does your practice give appropriate weight to qualitative measures?
Relational	<i>Relational</i> means attending to the relationship-building throughout the assessment process, including relationships with students, faculty, community members, tools and devices, and the natural environment. A relational practice recognizes the interconnectivity of stakeholders and ideas, with a sense of mutual learning, mutual responsibility, care, empathy, and humility.	Does your practice seek to build and sustain relationships of mutual benefit and trust with relevant stakeholders?  Does your practice include the assessment of those relationships?
Self-reflection	<i>Self-reflection</i> is the act of pausing to consider the process, application, and impact of assessment.	Does your practice contain dedicated time for self-reflection?
Social impacts and social justice	<i>Social impacts and social justice</i> recognizes that assessment practice has a social history and a social impact, and that practitioners can work to address historical injustices, especially those related to race, gender, and class.	Does your practice account for social impacts?  Does your practice work to achieve social justice through, for

		example, a framework of diversity, inclusion, and equity?
Sustainability	<i>Sustainability</i> means accounting for the longer-term impacts of assessment, including data collection and relationships.	Does your practice account for longer-term sustainability in project planning and community relationship-building?
Transparency	<i>Transparency</i> is realized through the open documentation of process, result, application, and decision-making, resulting in sustained trust with stakeholders and the public.	Does your practice include regular documentation, including process, result, application, and decision-making?

Table 5.2 Distribution Matrix of Ethical Characteristics across Practice Areas

	Critical Assessment	Co-Design	Strategic Planning	Norms and Regulations	Care Ethics
Community co-determination	X	X	X	X	X
Stated values and positions	X	X	X	X	X
Imagining otherwise	X	X	X	X	X
Lifelong Learning		X		X	
Privacy	X			X	
Qualitative measures	X		X		

<b>Relationality</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Self-reflection</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Social impacts and social justice</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Sustainability</b>	X				X
<b>Transparency</b>	X	X	X	X	X

In demonstrating the concentration of characteristics across the practice areas, Table 5.2 points to a scope and perspective for ethical library assessment, as seven of the eleven characteristics are shared by all five practice areas examined in this chapter. It is these seven characteristics that provide a pathway toward an assessment practice that operationalizes a set of specific values and introduces a specific ethical viewpoint. They include: community co-determination, stated values and positions, imagining otherwise, self-reflection, social impacts and social justice, relationality, and transparency. These seven core characteristics point to an assessment practice that is deeply connected to wider communities, seeks to produce outcomes that are socially beneficial to traditionally under-resourced and under-represented groups, and committed to self-reflection, growth, and transparency through the process of conducting assessment.

From this analysis also emerges a point of view for an ethical assessment practice. The characteristic of “stated values and positions” is realized in the practitioner and the organization by rejecting neutrality and taking an explicit stand by communicating their values and viewpoint. Looking ahead at the ethical framework of this dissertation—the framework can include a component that captures the idea of “stated values and positions”—by stating values explicitly, an ethical framework represents its own values, and can help practitioners do the same. In the sections below I discuss alignment with ALA Core Values and next steps for the development of the framework.



### 5.3.2 LIS Core Values alignment

The characteristics of ethical practice demonstrates alignment with ALA Core Values, indicating that these characteristics can adhere to and support a values-based ethical practice. Table 5.3 shows the characteristics mapped to existing ALA Core Values.

**Table 5.3 Characteristics of Ethical Assessment Practice Mapped to ALA Core Values**

ALA Core Values	Characteristics of Ethical Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity</li> <li>- Social Responsibility</li> <li>- The Public Good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stated Values and Positions</li> <li>- Imagining Otherwise</li> <li>- Relationality</li> <li>- Social Impacts and Social Justice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Democracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Co-determination</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lifelong Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-reflection</li> </ul>

Table 5.3 suggests that the ethical assessment characteristics can operate coherently or compatibly within the system of ALA Core Values, and that an ethical framework built on these characteristics can lead to the enactment of LIS professional values. Table 5.3 also begins to suggest ways for resolving tensions among values. For example, Service and Access were shown in Chapter 3 to be the two most common values present in LIS literature of the last century. Yet in the context of library assessment, the values of democracy, diversity, and social responsibility are represented to a greater degree in terms of corresponding characteristics. For ethical assessment, it may be more important to focus on some values—such as social responsibility—more than other values—such as service. From a standpoint more critical of the Core Values, this mapping demonstration suggests a potential re-interpretation of the Core Values such that long-standing values can be recuperated and re-deployed in support of an ethical practice.

## **5.4 Next Steps in the Research Design**

At this stage of the dissertation, the analysis of the LIS literature has produced insights related to professional values (Chapter 3), ethical dilemmas relevant to assessment (Chapter 4), and practices

for supporting values-based assessment (this chapter). Through the literature presented in this chapter, I identified ethical responses to the professional values of Chapter 3 and the sites of tension of Chapter 4. Then, in this chapter I extracted characteristics from this literature that begin to give shape to ethical assessment practice. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 together show the range of characteristics across assessment practice areas. From this point, additional research involving assessment practitioners can further establish the relevance of each characteristic to everyday practice, as well as the relationship between library professional values and library assessment values. More research is needed to support the development of a set of values that operate in the context of assessment. In the following chapters of the dissertation, I will collect and analyze data that captures practitioner perspectives on the values and practices of ethical assessment. Chapter 6 presents the results and data analysis from a survey of assessment practitioners. Chapter 7 discusses the process of validating the theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical assessment. The final outcome is a theoretical framework and an accompanying operational toolkit for ethical library assessment, in support of the research question articulated above.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter presented overviews of five ethical assessment practice areas. An inductive analysis produced a set of characteristics shared across these practices. These characteristics were then mapped to existing LIS Core Values, with a discussion of the characteristics as responses to professional values and ethical sites of tension. The survey data and analysis presented and discussed in Chapter 6 will identify a set of values that can define an ethical assessment framework. The new assessment framework and accompanying practical toolkit will feature a novel synthesis of values within the context of library assessment, thereby helping assessment practitioners enact professional values in their specific context.

## 6. Survey Data and Analysis: Toward a Framework for Ethical Assessment

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss results from a national survey of North American library assessment practitioners. The survey produced research data focusing on the values relevant for decision-making in library assessment, and the practices put into action by assessment librarians when confronted with ethical challenges. The survey design was informed by an extensive review of the literature related to library values and ethics (discussed in Chapter 3), as well as a literature review involving common ethical dilemmas or sites of tension that assessment practitioners confront in the course of their work (discussed in Chapter 4), and an analysis of the characteristics of ethical assessment, as expressed in the literature (discussed in Chapter 5). The survey was then designed around the common values, tensions, and characteristics of ethical assessment practice uncovered in the literature, with ethical vignettes forming the centerpiece of the instrument. This chapter is organized into two main parts: survey results and data analysis. The survey results part contains several sections and subsections that report on the results, organized according to the order of the questionnaire. A grounded theory analysis of the survey data produces codes that I interpret in this chapter through a discussion of five key takeaways. These codes also form the basis of a theoretical framework and operational toolkit for an ethical practice of library assessment.

### 6.2 Survey Results

This section is presented according to the three main parts of the survey:

1. Description of the sample, showing demographic responses
2. Values that are relevant for assessment decision-making
3. Analysis of Vignettes
  - a. Presentation and analysis of results within each individual vignette

- b. Presentation and analysis of results aggregated across all vignettes
- 4. Interpretation of the data

Please see Appendix J for research data, including full responses to the survey and the accompanying codebooks.

### 6.2.1 Description of the Sample

The survey recorded 239 responses; of those responses, 166 were partially complete and 73 were complete. The Qualtrics software used to administer the survey records a response when the survey link is clicked and the first page loads in a web browser. A few respondents exited the survey at various points following the first page, while most of the non-complete responses exited on the first page of the survey. The two subsections below describe the demographics of the sample. Respondents provided demographic information for themselves as individual practitioners, and also information about their respective institutions. See Appendix E for supplemental demographic charts.

#### *Individual Demographics*

For years of experience (n=71), most of the sample (42.2%) have 1–4 years of experience. The next most common category (22.5%) was 5–9 years of experience, followed by 10–14 years (12.7%), less than 1 year (12.7%), 15–19 years (5.6%), and 20 years or more (1.4%). “Prefer not to answer” was selected by 2.8% of the sample. Table 6.1 shows years of experience of the sample.

**Table 6.1 Years Experience in the Field**

<b>Experience in the field</b>	<b>Frequency (n=71)</b>
Less than 1 year	9
1–4 years	30
5–9 years	16
10–14 years	9
15–19 years	4

20 years or more	1
Prefer not to answer	2

For highest degree earned (n=72), most of the sample (77.7%) have earned a Master's degree.

Doctoral degrees have been earned by 15.2% of the sample, followed by Bachelor's degrees (4.2%).

"None of the above" and "Prefer not to answer" were each selected by 1.4% of the sample. Table 6.2 shows the highest degree earned of the sample.

**Table 6.2 Highest Degree Earned**

Highest Degree Earned	Frequency (n=72)
Bachelor's	3
Master's	56
Doctoral	11
None of the above	1
Prefer not to answer	1

For primary job classification (n=72), most of the sample (44.4%) selected Librarian, followed by Faculty (23.6%), Administration (16.6%), Professional Staff (11.1%). Classified Staff, Other: Fellow, and Other: Graduate Assistance were each selected by 1.3% of the sample. Table 6.3 shows primary job classification.

**Table 6.3 Primary Job Classification**

Primary job classification	Frequency (n=72)
Classified staff	1
Faculty	17
Administration	12
Professional Staff	8
Librarian	32

Other: Fellow	1
Other: Graduate Assistant	1

The survey asked, “How many assessment staff do you supervise?” Of these responses (n=72), 79.1% of the sample selected None, 11.1% selected 1, and 9.7% selected 2–3. Table 6.4 shows the number of direct reports.

**Table 6.4 Number of Direct Reports**

Direct Reports	Frequency (n=72)
None	57
1	8
2–3	7

For membership in the American Library Association (n=72), the sample is composed mostly of current members of ALA (47.2%), followed closely by those who are not currently a member but previously have been a member (40.2%). A smaller portion of the sample are not members and have never been a member (12.5%). Table 6.5 shows ALA membership of the sample.

**Table 6.5 Membership in American Library Association**

Member of ALA	Frequency (n=72)
Yes, currently	34
No, never	9
No, but previously I have been a member	29

The survey also asked about membership in other professional organizations; responses (n=72) were as follows: Association of College and Research Libraries (48.6%), ALA Core (13.9%), We Here (8.3%), Canadian Association of Professional Academic Libraries (4.2%), Society of American Archivists (4.2%), Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (2.8%), Association of Information Science and Technology (2.1%), American Educational Research Association (1.4%), Association of Computing Machinery (1.4%), International

Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (1.4%), Progressive Librarians Guild (1.4%). State library associations were included by 4.1% of the sample in the category for “other.” Further responses in the Other category include the following, each representing 1.4% of the sample: Digital Publishing Forum; Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa; Malawi Library Association; The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking; Reference and User Services Association; Special Libraries Association; Oklahoma Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries, Potomac Technical Processing Librarians, Society of Southwest Archivists; The League of Awesome Librarians, Association of Christian Librarians.

In response to the statement, “I feel that I have job security,” respondents (n=71) mostly selected Agree (57.7%), followed by Strongly Agree (36.6%), Disagree (2.8%), and Strongly Disagree (2.8%). The survey asked respondents to self-identify as a member of a historically oppressed group. Of the sample (n=70), 75.7% selected No, and 24.2% selected Yes. Table 6.6 shows job security.

**Table 6.6 Job Security**

<b>I feel that I have job security</b>	<b>Frequency (n=71)</b>
Strongly agree	26
Agree	41
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	2

The survey also asked if respondents felt that they were a member of a historically oppressed group. Of the respondents (n=70), 24% selected “yes” and 76% selected “no.” Table 6.7 shows this demographic data.

**Table 6.7 Historically Oppressed Self-identification**

<b>Historically Oppressed Group</b>	<b>Frequency (n=70)</b>
-------------------------------------	-------------------------

Yes	17
No	53

### *Institutional Demographics*

The survey asked how many library staff are assigned to assessment, including the respondent. The sample (n=72) mostly consists of institutions that have either 2–3 staff (40.2%) or 1 staff (33.3%).

The remaining responses included None and 4–5 staff, each with 6.9% of the sample, and 6+ staff (12.5%). Table 6.8 shows how many staff are assigned to assessment.

**Table 6.8 Assessment Staff Assigned to Assessment**

Assessment Staff	72
None	5
1	24
2–3	29
4–5	5
6+	9

In terms of the extent of library assessment in practice, the sample (n=72) indicated that assessment is typically practiced “in most areas of operation” (32%) or “in some areas of operation” (32%).

Assessment is practiced “in a few areas of operation” for 23.6% of the sample, while for 12.5% of the sample, assessment is practiced “in all areas of operation.” Table 6.9 shows the extent of assessment practice.

**Table 6.9 Extent of Assessment Practice**

Assessment Practice	72
In all areas of operation	9
In most areas of operation	23
In some areas of operation	23
In a few areas of operation	17



The survey also inquired about budgetary support by asking respondents to agree or disagree with the statement, “I have sufficient funding to conduct assessment.” Of those responses, (n=72), 48.6% agreed and 2.7% strongly agreed, while 30.5% disagreed and 18.1% strongly disagreed. Table 6.10 shows the funding situations for the sample.

**Table 6.10 Assessment Funding**

<b>I have sufficient funding for assessment</b>	<b>Frequency (n=72)</b>
Strongly agree	2
Agree	35
Disagree	22
Strongly disagree	13

### 6.2.2 Code Definitions

The two non-demographic sections of the survey focused on the values that are relevant for decision-making in assessment, with specific vignettes provided to prompt ethical response. Following a constructivist grounded theory approach (described in Chapter 2), I generated coded themes that were produced inductively from the survey data. Codes were normalized across question responses, with a system of codes emerging into a coherent view of the data. The organization of the codes is based on the structure of the survey: the vignette questions asks respondents 1) to list the values relevant to the decision and 2) to offer specific actions in response to each vignette. From this rich data emerged two interrelated sets of codes: one set of codes to represent the values that are relevant to decision-making, and another set to represent the practices that support values-based, ethical assessment. I refer to these codes throughout this results section. In the two subsections below I provide an overview of the codes and their definitions (see Appendix E for a full presentation of the codes by scenario, along with example responses). In some cases, the same code is used to describe responses from both categories; in these cases, two definitions are used in order to distinguish the codes. The codes and definitions below serve as an orientation to the universe of the survey responses.

*Value Codes***Alignment**

- Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.

**Beneficence**

- Values that relate to the well-being and care of those involved in the assessment

**Collaboration**

- Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making

**Communication and Outreach**

- Values that relate to professional development and scholarly communication.

**Human-centered**

- Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.

**Imagining Otherwise**

- Values relating to open-mindedness, innovation, and questioning the status quo

**Justice**

- Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.

**Positionality**

- Values that speak to the acknowledgment of personal perspectives and positions

**Sustainability**

- Values that relate to the sustainable financial and staffing operations of the library.

**Transparency**

- Values involving clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.

**Validity**

- Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.

*Practice Codes***Alignment**

- Practices that build a shared understanding with stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.

### **Alternative Methods**

- Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.

### **Beneficence**

- Practices that focus on social impacts and the well-being of participants.

### **Co-determination**

- Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.

### **Communication and Outreach**

- Practices that involve sharing assessments with wider communities.

### **Context**

- Practices that support demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts, including risk/benefit analysis, social impacts, or any other related aspect that helps explain or situate the assessment.

### **Data Stewardship**

- Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.

### **Human-centered**

- Practices involving user experience design and human-centered design

### **Methodological Soundness**

- Practices that consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment

population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.

### **Narratives and Counter-narratives**

- Practices that involve crafting narratives and counter-narratives that serve to interpret the assessment for appropriate audiences.

### **Negotiate with third-party**

- Practices involving negotiating with a vendor for terms more reflective of library values.

### **Operability**

- Practices that account for longer-term budget and staffing impacts

### **Pragmatism**

- Practices that focus on getting the job done.

### **Reject assessment**

- A practice of rejecting an assessment, if there is no other available resolution.

### **Relationship-building**

- Practices that involve cultivating partnerships.

### **Stated values and positions**

- Practices that result in identifying and applying values that are relevant to the assessment.

### **Transparency**

- Practices that give users the opportunity to understand the assessment, with choices for opting in or out of participation.

### 6.2.3 Values Relevant for Assessment Decision-Making

#### *ALA Core Values and Assessment Decision-Making*

The survey first asked, “I refer to the ALA Core Values when making decisions about my assessment practice.” This question points to the relevancy of the ALA Core Values as a set of values. This question does not yet ask the participant to respond to any individual value. Responses (n=92) included the following: always (n=3), most of the time (n=8), about half the time (n=4), sometimes (n=30), never (n=47). Only 12% of the sample refer to the ALA Core Values always or most of the time, while 84% either sometimes or never refer to the ALA Core Values. This result suggests that the ALA Core Values may not be a critical point of reference for decisions relating to the practice of library assessment. Table 6.11 shows how often assessment practitioners refer to the ALA Core Values.

**Table 6.11 ALA Core Values and Assessment Practice**

<b>I refer to the ALA Core Values when making decisions about my assessment practice</b>	<b>Frequency (n=92)</b>
Always	3
Most of the time	8
About half the time	4
Sometimes	30
Never	47

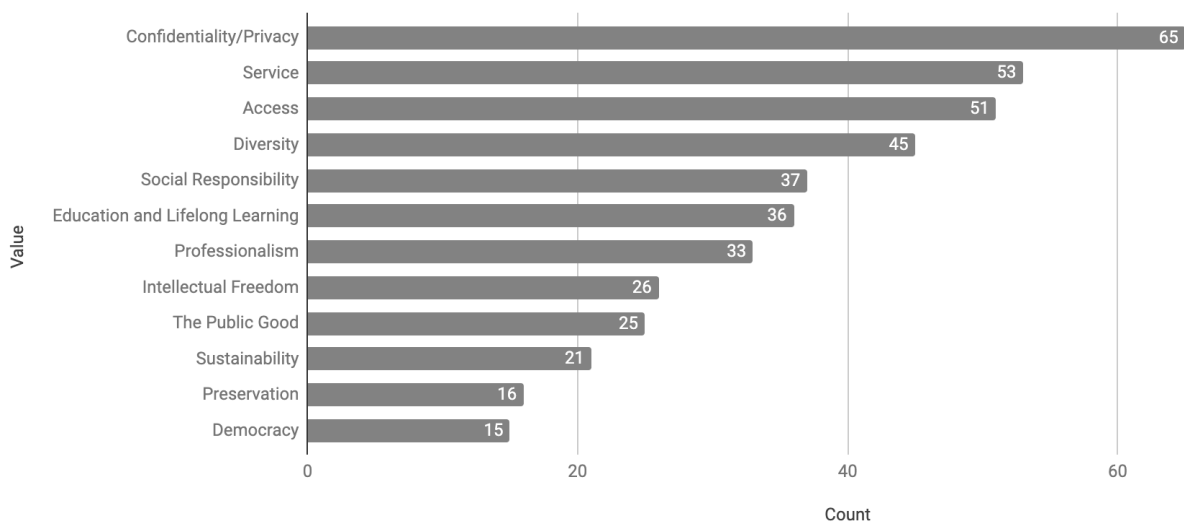
#### *Importance of the ALA Core Values*

The first substantive section of the survey focused on the function of values in library assessment decision-making. The first question asked respondents to rank the ALA Core Values by degree of importance: “Which of the ALA Core Values are most important to your assessment practice?” Respondents (n=92) selected up to four values. The most commonly selected value was Confidentiality/Privacy, which was selected 63 times across the 92 respondents. Composing the top next five most-selected values were Access and Service, each with 37 selections, followed by Diversity with 34 selections, Social Responsibility with 31 selections, Education and Lifelong

Learning with 25 selections, and The Public Good with 17 selections. The six least-commonly selected values included Intellectual Freedom with 14 selections, Professionalism with 12 selections, Sustainability with 11 selections, Democracy with 7 selections, and Preservation with 4 selections. None was selected 8 times.

### *Frequency of Consideration of the ALA Core Values*

The survey then asked respondents to mark each value according to its frequency of consideration in their assessment practice, with choices that included “often considered,” “sometimes considered,” “rarely considered,” and “not applicable.” Each value received 89 responses, except for Sustainability, which received 90 responses. The value most commonly selected as “often considered” was Confidentiality/Privacy (n=65), followed by Service, Access, Diversity, and Social Responsibility. Figure 6.1 shows how many times respondents marked “often considered” for each value. Additional charts showing the full responses to this question are available in the Appendix E.



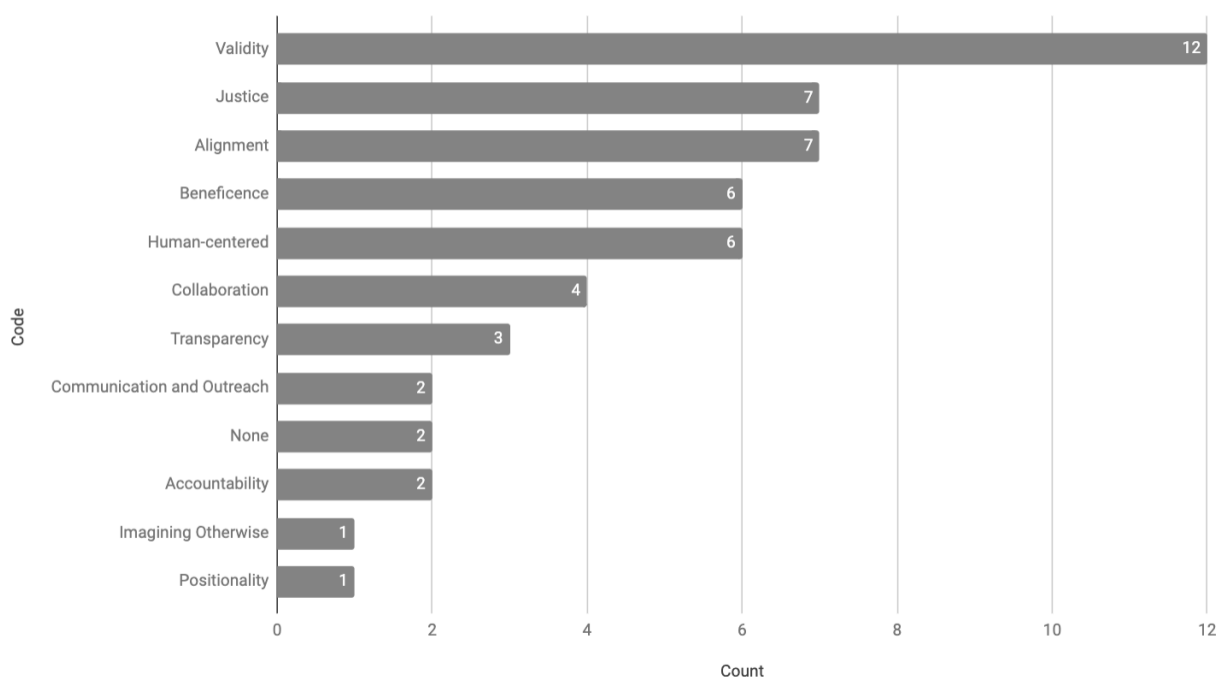
**Figure 6.1 ALA Core Values that Respondents Marked as “Often Considered” in their Assessment Practice.**

Next we turn to identifying values—not in the ALA Core Values—that were identified by participants as relevant to assessment.

### *Other Values Beyond the ALA Core Values*

Beyond the ALA Core Values, the survey also asks respondents to share any other value not already included in the set of Core Values. Results shown in Figure 6.2 were generated by coding the survey respondents' free-text response to the following question: "Which other values are relevant in your assessment practice? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed [in the ALA Core Values] above." This analysis yielded an additional 12 values derived from 53 total responses, including Validity (n=12), Justice (n=7), Alignment (n=7), Beneficence (n=6), Human-centered (n=6), Collaboration (n=4), Transparency (n=3), Communication and Outreach (n=2), None (n=2), Operability (n=2), Imagining Otherwise (n=1), and Positionality (n=1). Figure 6.2 shows the frequency of codes across these responses.

Which other values are relevant in your assessment practice? (n=53)



**Figure 6.2 Code Frequency for Other (non-ALA) Values Relevant to Assessment Practice**

The most common response to the question of other values was coded as *validity*. This code relates to finding the right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied. (In instances where I cite directly from the research data, I include a 6-digit alphanumeric code that corresponds to the response ID in the survey data.)

Responses from the *validity* code include:

- “In my view, if we can't act on some evidence that we gather, we generally should not ask about it, as that will undermine all stakeholders' perception of our ability to listen and be responsive” (R\_1BYn).
- “Making decisions on sound evidence” (R\_2QMx).
- “Accuracy, design, sample size, focus, actionable results” (R\_3dMU).

The *justice* theme includes a range of topics related to equity, inclusion, power, and accessibility.

Responses from the *justice* theme include:

- “I try to be as inclusive as possible in my assessment practice. I also try to treat participants in assessment as equal partners in the process as much as possible” (R\_3MbA).
- “Inclusivity. That all our patrons feel the library is welcoming and for them” (R\_cUZZ).

Also emerging as a leading value is *alignment*, a code that includes responses that focus on finding common ground among various stakeholders by aligning assessment activity with existing mission statements and value statements. Responses within the alignment code included:

- “Institutional (university and library) values and goals that describe our library's values, in the context of ALA values among others” (R\_1E6X).
- “Our university's values statement” (R\_AFO0).
- “The mission, vision, and values of the library and institution” (R\_1n2E).

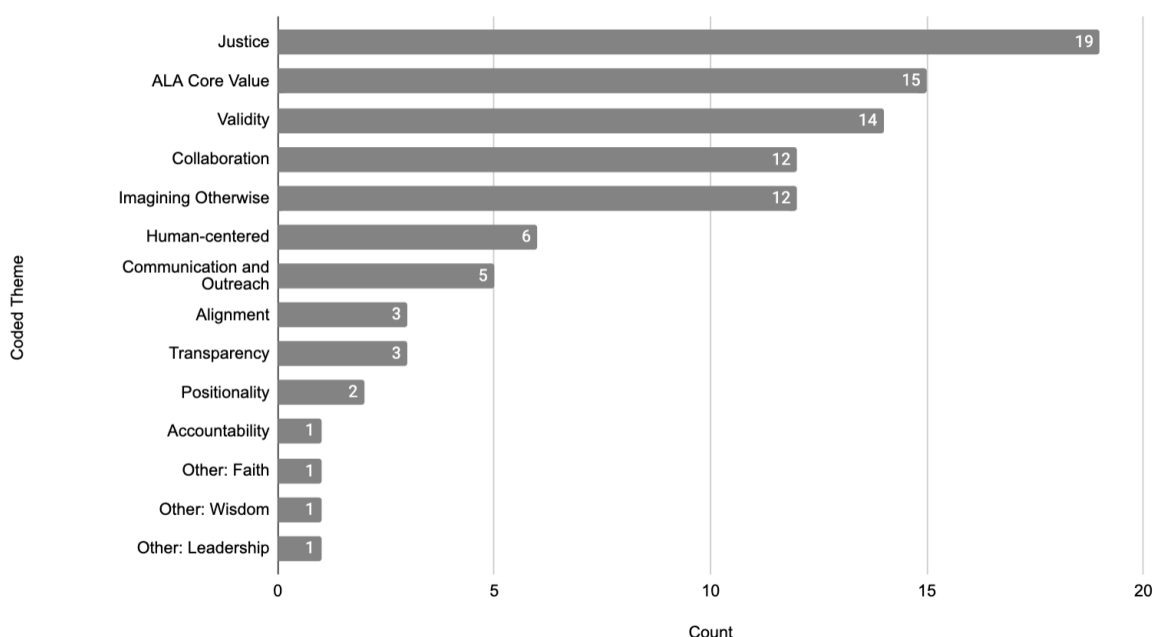
### *Locally-developed Values Statement*

On the topic of values, the survey also asked: “Do you have a locally-developed values statement that guides assessment practice at your library?” To this question, 26 respondents marked “yes” while 66 marked “no.” As a follow-up for those who marked “yes”, the survey asked, “Can you list the values that are included in your local values statement?” To this question, 20 respondents listed the values that are included in their local statement, with 95 unique values or value statements.

Responses coded into the following: Justice (n=19), Validity (n=14), Collaboration (n=12),

Imagining Otherwise (n=12), Human-centered (n=6), Communication and Outreach (n=5), Alignment (n=3), Respect (n=3), Transparency (n=3), Positionality (n=2), Operability (n=1), Other: Faith (n=1), Other: Leadership (n=1), Other: Wisdom (n=1). Of the 95 values, 15 were restatements of ALA Core Values. These included: Service (n=7), Access (n=4), Lifelong Learning (n=1), Privacy (n=1), Sustainability (n=1), Intellectual Freedom (n=1). Figure 6.3 shows the codes produced from these responses.

Values included in a local values statement (n=95)



**Figure 6.3 Code Frequency for Local Values**

The subsections above presented results related to values; results included ALA Core Values, other values not in the ALA Core Values, and locally-developed value statements. Patterns from the responses in these three areas begin to bring into view a picture of relevant values for assessment librarians.

Next we turn to the application of these values in practice.

#### 6.2.4 Ethical Vignettes

The vignettes were designed to prompt ethical deliberation and decision-making from survey respondents. The vignettes were shaped around ethical topics present in the literature (a more



detailed discussion of vignette design can be found in Chapter 5). Respondents were asked to read and review a series of six scenarios, and then to respond to four questions for each scenario:

1. What is the likelihood that you would take the same action as this librarian?
2. In your opinion, which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?
3. Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?
4. As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario?

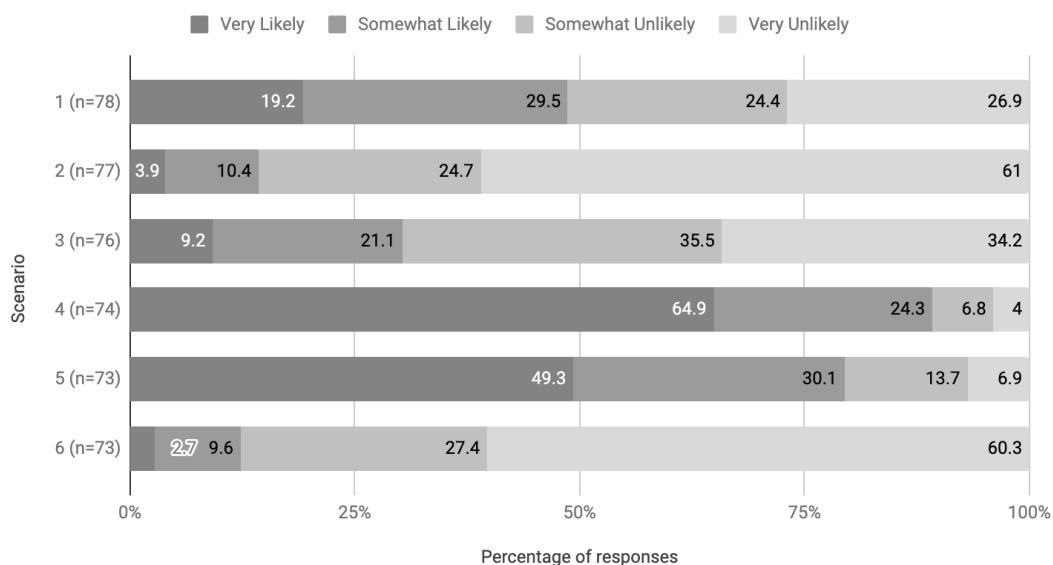
In this results section, I will first present results that show patterns across all six vignettes, then I will present result summaries for each individual vignettes. Appendix E contains full result tables for each vignette.

### *Results Across Vignettes*

#### *Likelihood*

For each vignette, the survey first asked, “What is the likelihood that you would take the same action as this librarian?” Results to this question varied across vignettes. Scenario 1 (n=78) produced the most balanced response, with 51.3% of the sample unlikely to take the same action and 48.7% likely to take the same action. Scenario 2 saw 86.7 % of the sample unlikely to take the same action and 14.2% likely to take the same action. In response to Scenario 3, 69.7 % of the sample is unlikely to take the same action and 30.0% is likely to take the same action. Scenario 4 produced the strongest response in favor of the same action, with 10.8 % of the sample unlikely to take the same action and 89.2% likely to take the same action. In response to Scenario 5, 20.6 % of the sample is unlikely to take the same action and 79.4% is likely to take the same action. Scenario 6 produced the strongest response against the same action, with 87.7 % of the sample unlikely to take the same action and 12.3% likely to take the same action. Figure 6.4 shows the likelihood of respondents to follow the same action as the librarian described in each scenario.

### What is the likelihood that you would take the same action as this librarian?



**Figure 6.4 Likelihood of Respondents to Follow the Same Action as the Librarian Described in Each Scenario**

#### ALA Core Values

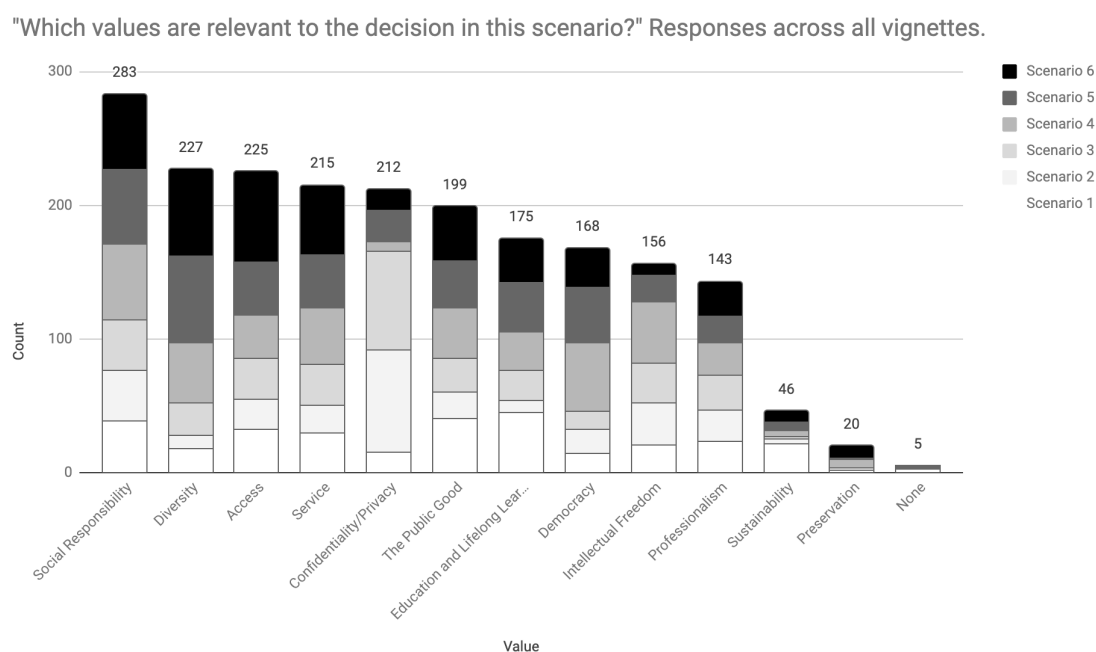
For each vignette, the survey then asked, “Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?” Participants were asked to select from among the ALA Core Values. Participants were allowed to select as many values as applied, or none. Each response selected an average of 4.6 values per vignette. The calculations for each scenario are shown in Table 6.12.

**Table 6.12 ALA Core Value Selections by Scenario**

Scenario	Responses	Total ALA Core Values selected	Average number of ALA Core Values selected
1	77	309	4
2	77	275	3.6
3	76	316	4.2
4	73	384	5.3
5	73	383	5.2
6	73	407	5.6

These calculations provide an insight into the ethical complexity of a scenario. Scenario 2, with only 3.6 values selected, is perhaps a more straightforward situation than Scenario 6, which received an average of 5.6 values. On the other hand, Scenarios 2 and 6 are similar in that participants most strongly disagreed with the action in these two situations. When viewed alongside Figure 6.4 (the likelihood results), further complexity comes into view: the scenarios that produced the widest variety of likelihood responses—Scenarios 1 and 3—were the fourth and fifth in terms of average number of Core Values selected. This suggests that the number of operating values is not indicative of complexity. Rather, the tension of a dilemma is perhaps better understood by examining which values in particular are relevant and potentially in conflict.

In terms of which values were selected in and across the vignettes, the most commonly selected values included social responsibility (283 selections), diversity (227 selections), access (225 selections), service (215 selections), and confidentiality/privacy (212 selections), and the public good (199 selections). The least commonly selected were none (5 selections), preservation (20 selections), sustainability (46 selections), professionalism (143 selections), intellectual freedom (156 selections), democracy (168 selections), and education and lifelong learning (175 selections). Figure 6.5 shows the selection of ALA Core Values across vignettes.



**Figure 6.5 Responses Across All Vignettes to, “Which Values Are Relevant to the Decision in This Scenario?”**

In comparing 1) the ALA Core Values that were selected as important and considered, with 2) the ALA Core Values that were selected as relevant to the vignettes with, a view emerges of the most important values that are also most often considered and most relevant for the practitioners in this study population. Table 6.13 shows this comparison. This suggests that there is some coherence and consistency to the values that are relevant to library assessment practitioners, at least from within the bounds of the ALA Core Values. Table 6.13 shows a comparison of responses across these three questions.

**Table 6.13 Comparative View of Most Important Values, Most Often Considered Values, and Most Relevant Values**

<b>Most important Core Values</b>	<b>Most often considered Core Values</b>	<b>Most relevant Core Values (across all vignettes)</b>
1. Confidentiality/Privacy 2. Access 3. Service 4. Diversity 5. Social Responsibility	1. Confidentiality/Privacy 2. Service 3. Access 4. Diversity 5. Social Responsibility	1. Social Responsibility 2. Diversity 3. Access 4. Service 5. Confidentiality/Privacy

From these questions, five Core Values emerge as consistently applicable for library assessment practitioners: Access, Confidentiality/Privacy, Diversity, Service, Social Responsibility.

To expand our results and analysis, we turn next to values other than the ALA Core Values.

#### Other Values Across All Vignettes

The survey asked participants: “Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?

These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above.”

Participants were instructed to provide values not included in the ALA Core Values. These free-text responses (n=128) were coded according to grounded theory content analysis detailed in Chapter 2. Coded themes for values that appear across all vignettes include the following: validity (n=30), alignment (n=20), justice (n=19), positionality (n=11), collaboration (n=9), transparency (n=9), imagining otherwise (n=8), human-centered (n=7), operability (n=5), beneficence (n=5),

none (n=4), and communication and outreach (n=1). Table 6.14 shows the distribution of value codes across scenarios.

**Table 6.14 Distribution Matrix of Value Codes Across Scenarios**

Code	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Total
Validity	8	7	7	3	3	2	30
Alignment	5	4	5		3	3	20
Justice		2	4	3	6	4	19
Positionality				10		1	11
Collaboration				2	2	5	9
Transparency		7	1		1		9
Imagining Otherwise	6	1		1			8
Human-centered	2	1		1	3		7
Operability	4	1					5
Beneficence					3	2	5
None	2		1	1			4
Communication and Outreach				1			1

#### Practices Across All Vignettes

Finally for each vignette, the survey asked: “As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario?” Responses to this question generated valuable data that provided insight into the practice of assessment librarians, with patterns emerging that reveal common responses and shared understandings. These free-text responses (n=312) were coded according to grounded theory content analysis detailed in Chapter 5. The top five codes include: alternative methods (n=65), relationship-building (n=51), alignment (n=36), data stewardship (n=26), transparency (n=22), stated values and positions (n=21), co-determination (n=20). Table 6.15 shows the distribution of practice codes across vignettes, showing the alternative responses to each scenario.

**Table 6.15 Distribution Matrix of Practice Codes Across Scenarios**

Code	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Total
Alternative Methods	27	26	7	3	2		65
Relationship-building				4	5	42	51
Alignment	6		7	5	18		36
Data Stewardship		3	18	1	3	1	26
Transparency		13	9				22
Stated Values and Positions		1	4	16			21
Co-determination		1		3	4	12	20
Context	16		1	1	1		18
Methodological Soundness	1	2	9	2	1	1	16
Narrative	6			1			7
Beneficence				3	4		7
Negotiate with third-party		6					6
Pragmatism	4						4
Reject assessment		4					4
Communication and Outreach				2	1		3
Operability				3			3
Human-centered					2		2

In the following sections, I present results and discuss analysis for each of the six individual vignettes.

### *Scenario 1: Library Value and Impact*

In this scenario, respondents were asked to evaluate an ethical dilemma involving the use of financial measures to tell a story of library value. In the scenario, the librarian considers conducting an ROI evaluation as a way to determine library value, knowing that an ROI measure would resonate with university administration. The librarian decides not to conduct the assessment, however, on the thinking that financial metrics don't speak well to the impact of the library. This scenario reflects the site of tension related to library value and impact as found in the literature (discussed in Chapter 4).

Respondents evenly marked their likelihood of taking the same action as the librarian described in the Scenario 1, with 48.7% saying they are somewhat or very likely to take the same action. From the ALA Core Values, respondents (n=77) selected 309 values total, for an average of 4 values selected per response. The three most commonly-selected values included:

- Education and Lifelong Learning (n=45)
- The Public Good (n=41)
- Social Responsibility (n=39)
- Access (n=33)

For values other than the ALA Core Values, responses (n=27) were coded to included the themes of:

- Validity (n=8)
- Imagining Otherwise (n=6)
- Alignment (n=5)
- Sustainability (n=4)
- Human-centered (n=2)
- None (n=2).

Respondents discerned the ethical dilemma of Scenario 1 primarily to involve the limitations of applying a single measure for determining such a high-stakes result as library value. Many respondents recognized that the financial pressures of higher education compel library assessment practitioners to answer to the pressures of accounting for economic impacts. Whether going with or against this pressure, respondents understood that these pressures needed to be addressed. Thus the dilemma in this scenario revolves around how to measure and tell the story of library value in the face of financial expectations. Within the theme of Validity, respondents posed questions that aimed to produce a completed and accurate project, especially focusing on finding the right match between research question and research method—if the method does not match the question, then that can provide a grounds for re-examining and revising the assessment. Also relevant to this scenario was the theme of imagining otherwise, which includes values of thinking beyond the status quo. In this scenario, the status quo involves financial measures that are based on a premise of economic value and neoliberal capitalism. Several respondents took note of neoliberal associations with ROI measures and other financial views into library values, and expressed values of questioning the current paradigm and creating new counter-narratives as a way to open up new pathways for assessment. In these responses was a call to not simply accept the status quo, but

rather to question the existing economic paradigm, resist dominant narratives of assessment and value, and pose alternative storytelling. At the same time, other respondents spoke to the theme of alignment, where the values of the university drive the action of assessment, as one respondent said, “If dollars and cents communicates to administration, then that is better than a message that does not address their viewpoint at all” (R\_SUxB). Interestingly, these two values themes—imagining otherwise and alignment—converged in one response: “I might see if I could realign the parameters of the inquiry to help it move forward” (R\_1BYn).

As a way of responding to the scenario, responses (n=60) were coded into the following practices: Alternative Methods (n=27), Context (n=16), Narrative (n=6), Alignment (n=6), Pragmatism (n=4), Methodological Soundness (n=1). Respondents overwhelmingly offered two paths forward for resolving these dilemmas: seeking alternative methods and providing context for the assessment. Alternative methods were seen as a way to introduce greater nuance into the conversation of library value. Respondents note that there is usually more than one tool that can be used to conduct an assessment; when one method presents an ethical dilemma, seek an alternative that achieves the same goal with less ethical complication. Respondents suggested that the financial measure could be completed, but alongside and as a complement to other measures that speak more accurately to the unique strengths of the library. In terms of context, practitioners could provide a view of the wider context surrounding the collection, analysis, and application of data. This can introduce a more complete and accurate representation of library value, as practitioners can mark the limitations of a single measure while also supplementing that measure with other appropriate assessments and contextual factors. A further consideration involves the theme of alignment—by understanding and addressing different perspectives on an assessment project, multiple stakeholder interests can be satisfied, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values. Finally, within the theme of pragmatism, practitioners were motivated to follow guidelines provided by supervisors and to conduct the assessment, provided the project could be completed within the scope of professional standards such as accuracy and privacy.



*Scenario 2: Information Technologies, Data, and Privacy*

In this scenario, a librarian considers implementing a third-party tracking tool to assess website usage. The tracking tool is operated by a private company that would retain the data on their servers. The tool records screen captures, which is a unique analytics capability, but user privacy could be compromised since the data is passed to the servers of the private company. The library in the scenario decides to implement the tracking tool. This scenario reflects the themes of information technologies, data, and privacy as found in the literature (discussed in Chapter 4).

Respondents were not likely to follow the same action as the librarian described in Scenario 2, with 85.7% saying that they are somewhat or very unlikely to take the same action. From the ALA Core Values, respondents (n=77) selected 275 values total, for an average of 3.6 values selected per response. Privacy (n=76) was overwhelmingly the most commonly selected value from the ALA Core Values, followed by social responsibility (n=38) and intellectual freedom (n=32). For values beyond the ALA, responses (n=23) were coded into the following themes:

- Validity (n=7)
- Transparency (n=7)
- Alignment (n=4)
- Justice (n=2)
- Operability, (n=1)
- Human-centered (n=1)
- Imagining Otherwise (n=1)

Respondents discerned the ethical dilemma to involve a tension between service assessment and data privacy. In the theme of Validity are appeals to accepted standards, especially in this case involving data stewardship. Values related to transparency were also highly relevant to this scenario, with many respondents focusing on issues of disclosure and consent. If the library will record screen captures, then users should at least be made aware that such an assessment is occurring and, even more, be given the opportunity to opt in or out of participation

As a way to resolve the tension, responses (n=56) were coded into the following themes: Alternative methods (n=26), Transparency (n=13), Negotiate with third-party (n=6), Reject assessment (n=4), Data Stewardship (n=3), Methodological Soundness (n=2), Stated values and positions (n=1), Co-determination (n=1). The most common response involved seeking alternative assessment approaches—rather than install a privacy-violating analytics tool, practitioners can identify another similar tool that accomplishes the assessment without compromising privacy. Furthermore, an assessment such as this should be made transparent with users, which should also include an opportunity for users to provide informed consent to participate. Since this scenario involved a third-party, respondents also suggested negotiating with the third-party for more desirable terms. If the vendor supplies a unique and desirable service but offers an undesirable contract, it's worth negotiating for a contract that reflects library values.

### *Scenario 3: Learning Analytics and Student Success*

In Scenario 3, an assessment librarian is asked to share library card swipe data with a central data warehouse operated at the university level. Data would be used to develop student interventions. In the scenario, the librarian considers raising an objection on the grounds that the approach does not reflect library values, but ultimately agrees to participate in the assessment due to a commitment to the institution. This scenario reflects the site of tension related to learning analytics and student success as found in the literature (discussed in Chapter 4).

Respondents were mostly in agreement that they would not follow this same action as the librarian in Scenario 3, with 69.7% marking that they were somewhat or very unlikely to take the same action. From the ALA Core Values, respondents (n=76) selected 316 values total, for an average of 4.2 values selected per response. Of the ALA Core Values relevant to the decision, confidentiality/privacy (n=74) was the most commonly-identified value, followed by social responsibility (n=38) and access (n=31). Of the values other than the ALA Core Values, coded values included:

- Validity (n=7)
- Alignment (n=5)
- Justice (n=4)

- None (n=1)
- Transparency (n=1)

Other responses to the scenario were coded to include 7 potential responses:

- Data Stewardship (n=18)
- Transparency (n=9)
- Methodological Soundness (n=9)
- Alignment (n=7)
- Alternative Methods (n=7)
- Stated Values and Positions (n=4)
- Context (n=1)

Overall, respondents discerned the dilemma to involve matters of data collection and data sharing, with potential risks to student confidentiality weighed against the potential insights produced by this assessment. Many respondents noted that this data collection was not suitable for the goal, therefore it was not appropriate to conduct this assessment. If, however, the project were to move forward, special care should be paid to the procedures for data collection, storage, and sharing, with a view toward collecting the least amount of data necessary to conduct the assessment. Such data stewardship can help ensure that research participants are properly protected. In this way, data stewardship practices also relate to privacy, and, when seeking different approaches to data collection, this practice overlaps with alternative methods. Similarly, a practice of transparency should be followed, whereby users are made aware of the assessment. Alignment is also relevant here—the practice of communicating with and united key stakeholders of an assessment, including university administration, library administration, and the practitioner. As with Scenario 1, the pursuit of alternative methods is relevant here, as several respondents suggested that they could identify other assessments that can accomplish a similar result without compromising values.

#### *Scenario 4: Social Responsibility and Neutrality*

In this scenario, a librarian partners with a student group to assess the subject headings found in the library catalog. Specifically, the group is a prison abolition student organization, and the subject

headings in question relate to incarceration. The librarian considers not conducting the assessment so as to achieve library neutrality, but ultimately decides to work with the students group to conduct the assessment. This scenario reflects the site of tension related to neutrality and cataloging as found in the literature (discussed in Chapter 4).

Respondents tended to agree with the librarian in Scenario 4, with 89.2% marking that they are somewhat or very likely to take the same action. From the ALA Core Values, respondents (n=73) selected 384 values total, for an average of 5.3 values selected per response. Of the ALA Core Values, relevant values included:

- Social Responsibility (n=56)
- Democracy (n=52)
- Intellectual Freedom (n=46)
- Diversity (n=45)
- Service (n=43)

Of the values other than the ALA Core Values, coded values included:

- Positionality (n=10)
- Justice (n=3)
- Validity (n=3)
- Collaboration (n=2)
- Communication and Outreach (n=1)
- Human-centered (n=1)
- Imagining Otherwise (n=1)
- None (n=2)

Respondents found that the ethical dilemma in the scenario turned on two axes: the first related to whether it was right to assess subject headings, and the second related to whether it was right to involve this student group in a politically-engaged project. On the first point, all respondents were in agreement that subject headings are an appropriate area of assessment. On the second point, responses were more varied, with a range of possibilities for how to move forward.

As the most relevant value in this scenario, the principle of directly invoking values and positions was seen as especially useful for guiding action, as one respondent remarked: “I’m a prison abolitionist, so that would come into play in how I work with the program” (R\_1n3f). In this way, the practitioner is able to clearly identify their own operating principles, and then match those principles with the actual practice of assessment—if a match is found, the project can proceed. In terms of how to respond to the scenario, responses were coded to include: Stated values and positions (n=16), Alignment (n=5), Relationship-building (n=4), Co-determination (n=3), Beneficence (n=3), Operability (n=3), Alternative methods (n=2), Communication and Outreach (n=2), Methodological Soundness (n=2), Context (n=1), Narrative and Counter-narrative (n=1), Data Stewardship (n=1). Respondents indicated that the main approach to resolving these dilemmas involved identifying and invoking values, as one respondent describes: “All choices are grounded in (a set of) values. Any choice we make is a choice between values. Prior to working on the project, create a values statement grounded in the institution’s mission/vision as well as professional values as a way of guiding the project” (R\_3LXr). More directly, another respondent noted, “Library neutrality is BS anyway, and working with the group actually upholds values of diversity and inclusion” (R\_3MbA). Even when confronting neutrality, and politically-engaged work, previously agreed-upon values can resolve any ethical tensions: “My library recently responded to the Black Lives Matter movement with a public statement declaring that we are not neutral. If my library meant what they said, then we should accept that we will take active roles in social issues” (R\_10UV). In terms of operational considerations, a few respondents also pointed to staffing and budgetary sustainability as relevant to the decision. In this way, longer-term library workload capacity can help clarify decision-making.

### *Scenario 5: Student Participation*

In this scenario, a librarian convenes a student working group to assist in an assessment of library instruction. The students propose an assessment that involves the identification of immigrant status among library users, but the librarian is hesitant because an immigration-focused assessment does not align with institutional priorities. The librarian ultimately chooses to support the student

group and advocate for this assessment. This scenario reflects the themes of student participation as found in the literature (discussed in Chapter 4).

In response to Scenario 5, 79.4% of respondents said that they are very or somewhat likely to take the same action as the librarian in the scenario. From the ALA Core Values, respondents (n=73) selected 383 total, for an average of 5.2 values selected per response. Of the ALA Core Values, the two most relevant included diversity (n=64) and social responsibility (n=56). Of the values other than the ALA Core Values, coded themes included:

- Justice (n=6)
- Beneficence (n=3)
- Professionalism (n=3)
- Alignment (n=3)
- Human-centered (n=3)
- Relationship-building (n=2)
- Transparency (n=1)
- None (n=1)

In terms of how else to respond to this scenario, coded themes included Alignment (n=17), Relationship-building (n=5), Co-determination (n=4), Beneficence (n=4), Data Stewardship (n=3), Alternative Methods (n=2), Human-centered (n=2), Context (n=1), Methodological Soundness (n=1), Communication and Outreach (n=1). Respondents discerned the ethical dilemmas to involve two aspects—first, how to conduct an assessment that does not match with institutional priorities; second, how to conduct an assessment that involves sensitive identities of participants. The most common response for resolving the ethical dilemmas involved *alignment*, which involves checking with and adhering to other stakeholder expectations, including that of the parent-entity, the library, and the practitioners themselves. In terms of library expectations, one respondent remarked, “Expending resources on non-strategic plan/priorities aligned projects is a non-starter for me” (R\_1rON). Others noted that a stringent adherence to existing policy may not be necessary, but that communicating upward is useful: “I would consult with library leadership and those responsible for instruction to gain their input and support so they are aware of the

assessment and are not blindsided, but informed by it” (R\_1Op1). Another set of themes addressed the assessment participants, including the students themselves and other stakeholder groups that would be affected by the assessment. These themes include relationship-building, co-determination, and beneficence. Together, these themes point to ethical resolution via a practice of collaboration and partnership in support of outcomes that support the wellbeing of participants.

### *Scenario 6: Community Participation*

In this scenario, a librarian is conducting an assessment that involves accessibility of special collections finding aids. The librarian considers involving members of the disabled community, but doesn’t have existing relationships to leverage. The librarian decides to move forward without involving the community members. This scenario reflects the site of tension related to community participation and archives as found in the literature (discussed in Chapter 4).

In response to Scenario 6, 87.7% of respondents said that they are very or somewhat unlikely to take the same action as the librarian in the scenario. From the ALA Core Values, respondents (n=73) selected 407 values total, for an average of 5.6 values selected per response. The leading values from the ALA Core Values included:

- Access (n=67)
- Diversity (n=65)
- Social Responsibility (n=56)
- Service (n=52)

Of the values other than the ALA Core Values, coded themes included:

- Collaboration (n=5)
- Justice (n=4)
- Alignment (n=3)
- Validity (n=2)
- Stated Values and Positions (n=1)
- Beneficence (n=1)

- Care (n=1)

In terms of how else to respond to this scenario, coded themes included relationship-building (n=42), co-determination (n=12), methodological soundness (n=1), data stewardship (n=1). Respondents discerned the ethical dilemma to involve a tension between community engagement and the time required to build relationships with the community. Thus respondents were consistent in suggesting potential resolutions. On the theme of relationship-building, the practitioner can first engage the community to develop collaborative ties that can support the assessment. One respondent stated, “I would start with asking the department on campus that works with the disabled community and go from there” (R\_RrkF). With that having been established, the assessment practitioner can go further to implement deeper partnerships through shared decision-making. On this theme of co-determination, one respondent said, “It would be essential to involve members from that community in the assessment. I would partner with university access services and other university entities along with members from this community to help design and implement this assessment” (R\_1Op1). These two themes—relationship-building and co-determination—can work hand-in-hand as a response to ethical dilemmas involving questions of community participation.

## 6.3 Interpretation

In the sections below, I offer five areas of interpretation of the survey data: ethical complexity, locating library assessment values, ethical tensions, ethical resolutions, and idealism vs. pragmatism. In sum, I interpret the results to show that assessment practitioners are attuned to values and are equipped to act ethically, but are challenged by the complex array of values that may be relevant in any given situation.

### 6.3.1 Ethics is Complex and Multifaceted

A main takeaway from the data is that library assessment values and practices are complex and multifaceted. This aspect may be the precondition for all related tensions, as values-in-conflict (discussed in the next section) form the basis of a dilemma in the context of practical ethics. And



there are so many potential values. Survey respondents collectively reported hundreds of different values as relevant to their practice, with wide variation within any one scenario. This translates into a high degree of choice and possibility for practice, but it also means that unification or coherence across the field is more difficult to achieve. A high range of values also obscures, rather than clarifies, decision-making: if there are dozens of values in play, it can be difficult to know which value should take priority. Among the many values and practices identified by the sample, no one value or practice was predominant. This also leads to a lack of clarity as to which values are most relevant for practice ethical assessment. Librarians don't always know where to turn for values, especially since there are so many potential places to look: the ALA, personal values, library values, or university values. It's hard to know which values matter in a given situation. The number of values in play suggests that a theoretical framework or operational tool for identifying and prioritizing values would be useful for the community.

A power dimension further complicates this landscape: do librarians have the power to implement their values? If a practitioner were to decide on the values relevant for a certain assessment project, are they able to implement and enact those values in a meaningful way? An assessment librarian operates within an academic library that is often characterized by multi-stakeholder, hierarchical dynamics. The ability to identify and apply a value may be constrained in such an environment. As an example of this effect, one respondent remarked in response to Scenario 3 (contributing student data to a centralized data warehouse): "This situation is very difficult. I would rely on working with senior administration to advocate and educate institutional colleagues about the importance of privacy relative to libraries. I think that libraries have an important tradition of privacy and that this would be an instance where the larger profession of librarianship is greater than the academic objectives" (R\_10UV). In this example, the practitioner is speaking to a privacy value, while acknowledging the wider context of operating within an environment that includes stakeholders who might not adhere to their practice the same value. The practitioner here recognizes that education and advocacy around values is necessary, but nevertheless may not be sufficient for enacting this value in practice.

### 6.3.2 On Locating Library Assessment Values

From this place of ethical complexity, how can a set of values relevant for library assessment be identified? This dissertation began with an investigation into the stated values of library and information science as a profession (Chapter 2). The process of locating the profession's values yielded a wide-ranging collection of values, numbering in the dozens. My research question then delved into the values of library assessment per se, starting with the ALA Core Values as a key reference point. The role of the ALA Core Values was a question from the literature that I wanted to answer in the survey. In the search for a coherent system of values for library assessment, I hypothesized that the ALA Core Values Statement was capable of providing a common point of reference for library assessment practice. When asked to respond to individual values within the scope of the ALA Core Values, the sample highlighted five Core Values that are of particular relevance for library assessment: Confidentiality/Privacy, Access, Service, Diversity, Social Responsibility. But, when looking the ALA Core Values as a coherent set of values vis-à-vis assessment practice, nearly half the sample indicated that the ALA Core Values are never referenced, and only 12% of the sample refer to the ALA Core Values always or most of the time when practicing assessment. Though the ALA Core Values seeks to be the single, centralized, coherent set of values that govern library practice, library assessment practitioners do not appear to reference it meaningfully in their work. This points to a lack of a central, community-endorsed system of values by and for assessment librarians.

This result could speak to the Core Values themselves, insofar as the Core Values may not include values that are relevant for decision-making in assessment. The result could also speak to the diverse nature of library practice generally and assessment practice specifically, insofar as the professional community may not be in need of a central statement of values. In addition to need, there may also be a use factor involved. The field of library practice is broad—and the subfield of library assessment specific in relation to the field—that individual practitioners do not find much use for a value statement developed from such a centralized body. Are assessment librarians critical of ALA, or is there a community objection to ALA as the arbiter of ethics and values in the profession? When making ethical decisions, perhaps the local context is more immediately influential than a

professional society that is comparatively abstract and far away. These could be questions returned to the community for further reflection: why is the ALA Core Values statement not a more important reference point for the assessment community? What would be required to motivate the community to build, maintain, and apply a central set of values relevant for library assessment?

Insofar as the data here can answer the question of library assessment values, we can look closer at the codes to find insight into the practice of assessment as a specific speciality of LIS. Grounded theory coding revealed themes of special importance to the assessment community, namely those related to research. One value code and two practice codes—representing responses that appear frequently in the data—connected library assessment to research methods. The value code is “validity” and the practice codes are “alternative methods” and “methodological soundness.” Within each of these codes, survey respondents spoke about the primary importance of research design, research methods, and the validity of results derived from assessment. These factors are crucial in making decisions about assessment, suggesting that many assessment practitioners see themselves as researchers who operate in a library setting. This is perhaps a unique characteristic of the assessment practitioner community within the wider field of LIS, in that the practice of assessment can often take the form of research. The ALA Core Values, by contrast, are written from a very high level within the field, and attempt to speak inclusively for the greatest extent of library practitioners. LIS is a wide-ranging and diverse field, and some values articulated by the ALA—such as social responsibility and privacy—are indeed relevant to many LIS specialities, including assessment. But there are further values relevant to library assessment that have not risen to the level of the ALA—values that are particularly relevant to assessment, especially those related to research as a central practice of assessment.

This landscape of values is conducive to idiosyncrasy: the ALA Core Values have been shown not to be a central point of reference for assessment practitioners, and no comparative professional organization for library assessment exists that could craft a statement of values relevant for the assessment specialty. This environment produces a “values vacuum,” whereby practitioners create their own core values that are relevant to their own particular setting. In this environment, values are highly contextual and idiosyncratic. Indeed, for many practitioners, a known set of values was

available from which to choose: many respondents appealed to their library or university mission statement or value statement, if not a values statement developed within their own assessment department or program. And most respondents produced values beyond the ALA Core Values for the specific scenarios and for their practice. The sample was diverse in terms of the type of library in which a respondent worked. The variety of local settings and employment contexts amplified the variegated nature of responses. With thousands of universities in the US, the potential for different values in play is exponential. In short, the landscape of values is wide-ranging, with a diverse and multifaceted array of values and practices available to librarians working in idiosyncratic local contexts. This points to a practitioner community that wants to practice values-based assessment, is equipped to apply values, but is left to identify and enact values from a position of isolation or idiosyncrasy. Library assessment values are created in hybrid way—partly drawing on a centralized value system (as with privacy from the ALA Core Values) but ultimately completing the assessment value system with values developed to suit the needs of assessment per se (as with methodological soundness) or in response to local conditions (as with alignment).

With this in mind, a framework or toolkit for values-based assessment should aim to find a balance of rigidity and flexibility. In terms of rigidity, the framework should be recognizable as a set of values relevant to assessment practitioners *as a group*, yet also be flexible enough to accommodate other values relevant to an assessment practitioner *as an individual* in order to meet idiosyncratic needs at the local level. Given the many different local contexts—with each context carrying its own set of pressures and priorities—an ethical tool or framework would need to be flexible or adaptable so as to accommodate many different possible needs and outcomes.

### 6.3.3 Values-in-Conflict: Ethical Tensions

With such a high range of values available to assessment practitioners, there's also a potential for values to be in conflict in a given situation. Drawing on the coded values produced through grounded theory, I note three values-in-conflict in particular.

The first involves *positionality* and *justice*. On the one hand, many survey respondents spoke in favor of values such as equity, inclusion, and social justice. Such values depend on the rejection of

neutrality, yet other respondents spoke in favor of neutrality. This tension was surfaced in the literature review, and it appeared again in the survey results. In Scenario 4, for example, which involved a librarian partnering with a student group to assess the subject headings found in the library catalog, the topic of neutrality was directly addressed in the scenario description. As a response, one respondent remarked: “Educate my colleagues about why library neutrality is a dangerous myth” (R\_sL6p). Yet another respondent said: “Neutrality may be more valuable than is currently thought” (R\_1ou9). So in assessments that involve social factors and values related to justice, what if the librarian’s position is one of neutrality? Such a tension must be addressed and resolved.

The second tension involves *positionality* and *alignment*, which can be summarized with the question, “What if your personal position is at odds with library or university administration?” To illustrate this, Scenario 1 involved the application of financial measures to tell a story of value for the library. In this instance, the assessment practitioner recognizes equally that economic measures don’t speak to the strength or purpose of a library, but that economic measures do speak to the interests of university administrators. Responses from the sample demonstrate this tension. One respondent commented that this assessment should not be completed, as “ROI is a neoliberal metric” (R\_2WMg). This is a strong expression of positionality, in that the librarian is staking out a stance on the assessment. In this case, however, that stance is in opposition to the perceived desires of university administration. The value of alignment would suggest prioritizing university perspectives, as another respondent suggested: “It’s politics. Create the report that administration wants” (R\_u3xg). When a practitioner’s personal views (*positionality*) may conflict with those of administration (*alignment*), how is such a tension resolved?

The third tension also relates to external pressures, namely *alignment* in conflict with *validity*, as when administration requests an assessment that—rather than going against the personal values of a practitioner—goes against professional best practice. In Scenario 3, for example, an assessment librarian is asked to share library card swipe data with a central data warehouse operated at the university level. This data would be used to develop student interventions. The scenario was developed in response to the discussion found in the literature related to learning analytics. The

assessment community is divided on this topic, with some holding that the library should contribute data whenever possible to help university learning analytics efforts, while others object to such assessments based on privacy concerns or simply that library data cannot be meaningfully integrated into complex learning analytics software. And indeed, survey responses were divided. Nearly all respondents discerned the dilemmas to involve either privacy or validity in conflict with university alignment. With respect to validity, one respondent shared: “I’d add that from a methodological point of view retention is very unlikely to be a sensitive enough variable to observe the effect of visiting the library. This is a classic spurious correlation and is generally bad social science” (R\_sL6p). Despite serious reservations about this assessment, respondents were unsure about how to ultimately resolve the tension. Some advised to share concerns with the library director, or to make the assessment transparent to students, or to ensure that data is properly collectioned and managed. The idea of tension with administration was present in many responses, such as:

- “I feel that some libraries may be forced into collecting the data by university administration” (R\_3rPc).
- “I would want more information on how administration planning on operationalizing library use data. I would likely push back, but can’t say I would hold my ground if I felt my job was threatened (for this level of data)” (R\_VQil).
- “If administration refused to budge on this approach to assessment, I would resign in protest” (R\_3qKg).
- “I have my fingers crossed that we are not put into this position, because it is difficult for library to push back. If we lost the fight, I would push for transparency around the data collection and advocate that data be deleted as soon as possible as a condition for library participation” (R\_2Cx1).

The responses to this scenario are important for highlighting questions of values-in-conflict and professional responsibility. Who and what are assessment librarians ultimately responsible to: a professional statement of values, personal values, professional standards of best practice, parent entity administrators? The answer to this question shifts according to the context from which it

originates. This underscores the need for a reliable approach to identifying and prioritizing values, such that tensions among them may be identified and resolved.

### 6.3.4 Values-in-Conflict: Practical Resolutions

The sample demonstrated a sensitivity to ethical dilemmas and an interest in engaging a key question of practical ethics: “what is the right thing to do?” A takeaway from that data is that assessment librarians can discern dilemmas and can identify resolutions. The scenarios were designed to include an ethical dilemma in the form of values-in-conflict. Respondents generally recognized the dilemma and also offered clear paths forward, though the paths offered were also multifaceted. Only a few responses indicated that a scenario did not present any issues.

Importantly, many respondents appealed to local conditions as a factor in their responses, resulting in a similarly high degree of complexity and diversity of responses in terms of ethical resolutions. One possible interpretation of this result is that practitioners could benefit from additional support in evaluating decisions, so that each dilemma—though unique in some ways—does not become overwhelmingly idiosyncratic. A closer look at the results helps illustrate this point.

The likelihood responses in particular illuminate ethical sensitivity. Scenarios 1 and 3 resulted in a balance of responses across the 4-point likelihood scale (very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, very unlikely). Scenarios 2, 4, 5, and 6 were more strongly weighted in one direction. Starting with the strongly weighted scenarios, Scenario 2 featured a tension involving third-party tracking software to assess web services. The librarian in Scenario 2 decides to implement the third-party tracking software, despite concerns about privacy. Only 14.3% of the sample was likely to take this same action, with several responses indicating that the assessment should be outright rejected, and with many others offering revisions to the assessment such as alternative tracking software or greater transparency and opt-in/opt-out choices about the tool. Scenarios 4 and 6 also produced likelihood results that were heavily balanced in one direction. In Scenario 4, the assessment librarian partners with a prison abolition student group to evaluate subject headings involving incarceration. The librarian considers not conducting the assessment in light of the project's politically-charged social aspects and the library's position on neutrality, but ultimately decides to move forward.

The sample agreed, with only 10.8% saying that they were unlikely to take the same action. This scenario was developed in response to the presence of neutrality in the literature. The sample overwhelmingly rejected neutrality as a barrier to this assessment, and did not discern a dilemma in this case. In Scenario 5, the assessment librarian convenes a group of students to co-lead an assessment project. The students suggest assessing library instruction vis-à-vis student immigration status. The librarian decides to conduct the assessment. This was a polarizing scenario, with only 20.6% of the sample indicating that they would likely not take the same action. This was the most complicated scenario, involving issues of both student participation and social responsibility. Despite some reservations about how to proceed with an assessment that included sensitive identities, responses overall indicated a desire to work with students and to engage on social issues.

In Scenario 6, the assessment would impact members of a certain community, but developing community partnerships would extend the timeline of the project. In order to complete the project faster, the assessment librarian decides to conduct the assessment without the involvement of the community. Only 12.3% of the sample was likely to take this same action. In each of these cases, the scenario offers a check, and responses from the sample are invaluable for marking the territory of ethical assessment practice. Scenario 2 indicates that privacy is a vitally important value to put into practice; Scenario 4 indicates that neutrality is a value that is less relevant; Scenario 5 indicates that student participation and social responsibility are relevant values; Scenario 6 further indicates that community participation is essential, especially when the assessment impacts members of that community. The sample understood that the librarian in each of these scenarios was making a decision that was clearly aligned or misaligned with the community-accepted values of privacy, social responsibility, and participation.

Scenarios 1 and 3 were more balanced in the likelihood responses. Scenarios 1 and 3 involved negotiating the library administrator and parent-entity expectations. Unlike Scenarios 2, 4, 5, and 6—in which the assessment librarian was working autonomously and primarily interfacing with students and the community—Scenarios 1 and 3 feature a librarian working in response to parent-entity requests and interfacing primarily with university administration. Such scenarios



place different pressures on assessment practice that affect values-in-conflict. In these cases, a dilemma is understood to be present, but the resolution is less clear. In Scenario 1, the librarian considers an ROI assessment to satisfy parent-entity expectations, but reservations about ROI as a valid measure for library value lead the librarian not to conduct the assessment. This scenario produced the most balanced likelihood, with 51.3% of the sample unlikely to take the same action and 48.7% likely to take the same action. Scenario 3 involved a similar assessment, in which university administration requests that the library share library building card swipe data so as to assess student success. The librarian decides to conduct the assessment. In response, 69.7 % of the sample was unlikely to take the same action and 30.0% likely to take the same action. Even though this scenario also involved matters of privacy similar to Scenario 2, the sample was half as likely to make a decision that upheld privacy. In contrast to Scenario 2, which was contained within the library and self-directed by the librarian, this assessment involved responding to a direct parent-entity request. Scenarios 1 and 3 suggest that when assessment involves parent entity pressures, commonly-held values such as privacy or validity are under greater pressure as well. The framework that is the ultimate product of this dissertation should be able to accommodate local contexts such as the parent-entity pressures present in Scenarios 1 and 3.

### 6.3.5 Idealism vs. Pragmatism

Viewing the two main data points of the dissertation—the literature review and the survey—produces intriguing differences. In the literature review, I focused on publications that point to a more radical practice, with many articles presenting a new theory of practice or otherwise specifically calling for a new approach to assessment. Overall, the literature carried a sense of idealism and a vision for a different future of library assessment. On the other hand, survey data emphasized a more pragmatic approach. In response to Scenario 1 (using financial measures to tell a story of library value), for example, the most common responses articulated a desire to find a way to complete the assessment, if not exactly as requested. The following response illustrates this pragmatic approach:

- “As an administration, I can sympathize with this position, but as an assessment practitioner - I can see more uses for gathering such data than a simple ROI report to

higher administration. I might see if I could realign the parameters of the inquiry to help it move forward” (R\_1BYn).

- “Perform an assessment that includes more than just the financial perspective. Use the assessment to both communicate with the university administration along their axis of interest as well as to enhance their understanding of your work and different measurements of value” (R\_10UV).
- “Use the ROI as one point in a multi-point report or program” (R\_1n2E).
- “The assessment would proceed as outlined, but parallel assessments would seek to address the intangible importance of the library resources. This triangulation would create a better view of what is involved and impacted by cuts. It shows them we can speak their language while teaching them some of our language” (R\_1Op1).

Such pragmatism was more present in the survey, suggesting that library assessment faces external pressures that affect internal values (this is also an important tension that I highlight and discuss in the next section), yet with a desire to respond to calls for assessment in good faith, acknowledging different perspectives and accommodating multiple values. Assessment practitioners may be more inclined to conduct an assessment if there is shared understanding and a reasonable compromise among stakeholders.

## 6.4 The Framework for Ethical Library Assessment

Analysis of the survey data produced 11 value codes and 17 practice codes, as discussed in this chapter. Respondents often listed values and practices that stem from the same concept, and were thus coded accordingly. For example, I applied the *alignment* code when coding both the values and the practices. In the value coding, an *alignment* code would be attached when a participant identified their library’s mission statement as a source for values. In the practice coding, participants also spoke to the action of conferring with their library’s mission statement in developing an ethical response to a scenario—such a response was also coded as *alignment*. In this example, both the value codes and the practice codes were connected concepts. The coding process revealed many similar connections between the values and the practices, such that a coherent

universe of values with corresponding practices comes into view. The result is that each value has one or more supporting practices. Some values have one practice attached, while others have two or three supporting practices. In some cases, the practice code carries the same name as the value code. Table 6.16 shows the value codes and corresponding practice codes, with definitions. I present the framework as an analytical summary of the research data produced through Step 2 of the research design.

**Table 6.16 Initial Framework for Ethical Assessment**

Value	Value Definition	Corresponding Practice(s)	Practice Definition
Alignment	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	Alignment	Practices that build a shared understanding with stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.
Beneficence	Values that relate to the well-being and care of those involved in the assessment	Beneficence	Practices that focus on social impacts and the well-being of participants.
Collaboration	Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making	Relationship-building	Practices that involve cultivating partnerships.
Communication and Outreach	Values that relate to professional development and scholarly communication.	Communication and Outreach	Practices that involve sharing assessments with wider communities.
		Context	Practices that support demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts, including risk/benefit analysis, social impacts, or any other related aspect that helps explain or situate the assessment.

Human-centered	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	Human-centered	Practices involving user experience design and human-centered design.
Imagining Otherwise	Values relating to open-mindedness, innovation, and questioning the status quo	Narrative and Counter-narrative	Practices that involve crafting narratives and counter-narratives that serve to interpret the assessment for appropriate audiences.
		Negotiate with Third party	Practices involving negotiating with a vendor for terms more reflective of library values.
		Alternate Methods	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.
Justice	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	Co-determination	Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.
Operability	Values that relate to the financial and staffing operations of the library.	Operability	Practices that account for longer-term budget and staffing impacts.
		Pragmatism	Practices that focus on getting the job done.
Positionality	Values that speak to the acknowledgment of personal perspectives and positions	Stated Values and Positions	Self-reflective practices that result in identifying and applying values and impacts that are relevant to the assessment.
Transparency	Values involving clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.	Transparency	Practices that give users the opportunity to understand the assessment, with choices for opting in or out of participation.

Validity	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	Methodological Soundness	Practices that consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.
		Data Stewardship	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.
		Reject Assessment	A practice of rejecting an assessment, if there is no other available resolution.

Table 6.16 represents a universe of values and practices relevant for library assessment. This view of values and practices together represents the theory of ethical assessment produced by the grounded theory assessment. The framework shows the values relevant to library assessment, along with a corresponding set of practices for enacting the values.

## 6.5 Summary

This chapter presents the results from a nation-wide survey of assessment practitioners. The survey produced data related to the values and the practices that are relevant for decision-making in library assessment. Grounded theory analysis produced a set of codes for values and practices that begins to show a path toward ethical library assessment, in terms of practical ethics, understood to be the practice of putting values into action. Research data analysis presented above shows which values are relevant, and which practices are relevant to assessment librarians. I concluded by presenting the framework for ethical assessment, showing a model of values and practices relevant to library assessment. The framework aims to help resolve the main tensions of library assessment: that practitioners are aware of values and wish to act ethically and with sensitivity to those values, but are challenged by conflicting values and an inexplicit value system. In response to these main issues, the framework presents an explicit value system that contains relevant values with corresponding practices for enacting the values. The framework—aimed at a scholarly audience—articulates relevant values and models a system of values for ethical library assessment. Then, the

toolkit—aimed at a practitioner audience—defines procedures for putting the values into practice. The next chapter details the validation of this framework and toolkit.

## 7. Validating the Framework and the Toolkit for Ethical Library Assessment

### 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I detail the procedure of validating the theoretical framework and practical toolkit for supporting an ethical library assessment practice. The framework and the toolkit are built upon the literature review (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) and the survey results (Chapter 6). In order to validate the framework and the toolkit, I conducted a series of interviews with a subsample of participants drawn from the survey population. Feedback from the interviews is applied to validate values and to revise and improve the toolkit. In the subsections below, I discuss my step-by-step process that ultimately results in the main outcome of the dissertation, the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*, a practical tool developed and validated with the library assessment practitioner community. In the sections below, I report on the results and analysis of the validation interviews, including a detailed accounting of the revisions made to the toolkit in response to practitioner feedback gathered in the interviews.

### 7.2 Toolkit Operation

The theoretical framework articulates a relationship between the values and the practices of ethical assessment, and the operational toolkit translates these research results into an actionable tool that real-world practitioners can put into place as an aid to a values-based, ethical practice of library assessment. In Chapter 2, I discussed the process for developing the framework and the toolkit. In this section, I will provide a brief overview that discusses additional operational aspects of the toolkit, including its structure, goals, and language.

#### 7.2.1 Toolkit Structure

The toolkit contains 16 cards, each numbered as a reference. The first card is the instruction card, orienting the practitioner to the toolkit. The next 12 cards feature the 11 named values plus a blank

card for expanding the set. The final 3 cards feature the exercises, which sequentially represent the step-by-step process for achieving an ethical assessment practice: identify the values that matter, then prioritize the most relevant values, and finally develop approaches for implementing the values in practice. The cards are accessed two ways, physically and digitally. The toolkit can function as a physical object, with the intention of interacting with the cards in physical space. The toolkit may also function as a digital object, with interaction taking place in a virtual space. In this way, the toolkit is designed with a view toward accessibility. The toolkit will be available as a print-out for practitioners, and can also be made available as a digital download, along with a text-only version in a web environment so that card content may be accessible for practitioners with visual or physical impairments. As a minor visual note, to indicate that the instruction card and the exercise cards are a different category from the value cards, I have inverted the foreground and background colors so that the instruction cards and the exercise cards feature a dark-color background, while the value cards feature a light-color background. Please see Appendix I for a full presentation of the cards.

### 7.2.2 Toolkit Goals

As a result of using the toolkit, practitioners will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Articulate the values that matter to an assessment practice.
2. Prioritize different values for different contexts, and understand how values can complement or conflict with each other.
3. Identify and remove barriers to implementing values; identify and enhance supporting factors for implementing values.

These outcomes are crafted in response to key questions related to values-based assessment, including:

1. Which values are relevant for a given assessment project?
2. Once values have been identified, how are those values prioritized?
3. With the relevant values having been identified, how can those values be put into practice?



### 7.2.3 Toolkit Action Phrases

With a practitioner audience in mind, I sought to make the toolkit more approachable and usable for practitioners. To accomplish this, I translated the practice codes into “action phrases.” The “action phrases” are effectively synonyms of the research-based practice codes, expressed in terms more reflective of a real-world working environment. For example, the practice code of “alignment” was translated into “Find common ground.” In this case, the practice of alignment often takes the shape of finding common ground with collaborators and policies. By more directly stating the action associated with the code, the toolkit is able to speak in more direct language for practitioners. The “action phrases” appear in the toolkit as a guide for practitioners. Table 7.1 shows the action phrase that corresponds with each practice code.

**Table 7.1 Translation of Practice Codes to Toolkit Action Phrases**

<b>Practice Code</b>	<b>Toolkit Action Phrase</b>
Alignment	Find common ground
Alternative Methods	Seek alternate approaches
Beneficence	Consider social impacts
Co-determination	Share power with participants
Communication and outreach	Share your work
Context	Provide context
Data Stewardship	Steward the data
Human-centered	Apply principles of human-centered design
Methodological Soundness	Assess the assessment
Narrative and Counter-narrative	Craft narratives and counter-narratives
Negotiate with third party	Negotiate with third party
Pragmatism	Get the job done
Reject assessment	Reject the assessment
Relationship-building	Cultivate relationships
Stated Values and Positions	Articulate your values
Operability	Account for budget and staffing

Transparency	Provide information and a choice
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My goal with this exercise is to shift from research toward practice—from a scholarly perspective to an operational perspective. The codes developed from grounded theory were situated in the research context of the dissertation, while the action phrases are made to work in settings more suitable for everyday practitioners. I pre-tested the action phrases with one practitioner so as to check the accuracy of my translations.

Appendix I makes available a visual presentation of each card. In Chapter 2, I discuss in more detail the process of developing and designing the toolkit from the perspective of participatory design.

### 7.3 Validating the Toolkit

Part 2 of the research design resulted in an initial version of the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*. Now, Part 3 of the research design aims to validate the toolkit design by interviewing a subset of survey participants (see Chapter 2 for an in-depth discussion of the interview approach and the validation steps). The interviews focused on the operational aspects of the toolkit, with the goal of producing a functional tool that accurately reflects the values of library assessment practitioners. I was primarily concerned with two operational questions related to values and assessment decision-making: as presented in the toolkit, 1) do the values work? 2) do the exercises work? I designed the interviews so that I could check that I had in fact developed values relevant to assessment, that those values were described accurately, and that the toolkit exercises effectively allowed practitioners to interact meaningfully with the values. In short, I presented the toolkit to interview participants, asking them to comment on the accuracy of the values and the functionality of the toolkit in terms of the exercises included. The ultimate goal is a working toolkit that assessment librarians can integrate into their practice.

## 7.4 Analysis and Results: Main Insights

Data collection and analysis focused on participant feedback in response to individual cards in the toolkit, and the toolkit development process, is described in Chapter 2. In the sections below, I present main insights that resulted from the interviews.

The aim of the toolkit is to center values in library assessment, in support of an ethical practice. The interviews demonstrated that the toolkit is a feasible tool for this aim. The card deck appears to be a viable option for practitioners. In terms of the values, all but one of the values presented to participants were affirmed as relevant. “Human-centered” is the only value that was not validated in the interviews. The interviews also produced data to support improvements, clarifications, and revisions to the toolkit, both in terms of its design and presentation, and also in its use-cases and potential for practical applicability.

In the subsections below, I first present three main insights generated from the interviews: the interrelation among values, the potential use-cases for the toolkit, and the limitations and constraints of the toolkit. I then discuss each card in order from 0 to 16, with a view toward revision and improvement for the final version of the toolkit.

### 7.4.1 Interconnectivity of Values

Participants in the interview were keen to make connections among values. Even though the toolkit gives each value its own card, participants readily noted adjacencies and interrelations among the values. Participants eagerly paired cards, discussing how some values were complementary or conflicting. Many participants noted connections especially among these values:

#### *Imagining Otherwise, Validity, and Operability*

These three values are linked together in that they are all concerned with the possibilities available to the practitioner, but each applies a distinct lens. Imagining Otherwise is about opening up possibility in terms of the approach to assessment, and in interpreting the results of assessment. Imagining Otherwise is thus about creativity in assessment. Validity

seeks to ensure that the research question and the research method are in tune with one another. Validity is thus about the possibilities available to the practitioner for designing a valid study. Operability introduces a resource perspective, and focuses on scope and sustainability in the context of organizational capacity. Imagining Otherwise asks, “What is possible?” Validity asks, “Does it work?” And Stewardship asks, “What are the available resources?” All together, the values ask, “What’s possible for this assessment, does it work as a valid study, and is it achievable given the resources?” Participants in the interviews noted that these values take on different valences when configured together as a group of three, or in two pairs. Imagining Otherwise on its own might lead to big sky thinking, which could be desirable in some situations. But then Validity provides a check to ensure that the creativity of Imagining Otherwise is grounded in professional standards of assessment. Likewise Operability provides a grounding element to Imagining Otherwise, in that it can usefully constrain thinking within the bounds of organizational capacities.

### *Beneficence and Justice*

These two values demonstrate an interplay between individual and group aspects related to social issues. Beneficence focuses on maximizing well-being and minimizing harm for individual participants in an assessment, while Justice focuses on larger-scale, structural social inequalities. Interview participants recognized that these two aspects are important to account for when conducting assessment, and together they provide a fuller view of potential social benefits or harms of assessment.

### *Positionality and Alignment*

Positionality and Alignment both deal directly with values, though their respective orientations are inverted. Positionality prompts the practitioner to look inward so as to identify relevant personal values, and Alignment prompts the practitioner to look outward so as to identify relevant institutional or professional values. Interview participants viewed these two cards functioning together as a complementary pair for identifying the relevant values in an assessment.

*Transparency and Communication*

As with the values discussed above, *Transparency* and *Communication* function together to demonstrate a fuller landscape of assessment activity. These values share similarities in seeking to talk with others about assessment, but they each provide finer points that help give shape and direction to both the values and the supporting practices. Transparency focuses on sharing back the process and results of assessment with participants of the assessment. That alone was identified as a key value. Separate but related is Communication, which focuses on sharing out the results and the impact of the assessment with other stakeholders such as administrators, collaborators, and the wider professional community.

The interconnectivity of values reinforces an insight discussed in Chapter 6—that ethics are complex, multifaceted, and highly contextual. Multiple values are in play for any given situation, and the meaning of those values can shift across different situations and different value configurations.

#### 7.4.2 Use-cases of the Toolkit

Participants articulated three potential use-cases for the toolkit: as a planning tool when designing a new assessment, as an evaluation tool when in the middle of an assessment or when looking back on a completed assessment, and as a teaching tool when educating about the practice of assessment. The final questions of the interview produced data that illuminated these potential applications of the toolkit. (In instances where I cite directly from the research data, I include a 3-digit alphanumeric code that corresponds to the Interview Participant code in the interview data.) The interview concluded by asking participants to complete the following sentence: “After practicing with this toolkit, I will be able to...”

To this question, one participant responded: “I will be able to articulate the values that are involved in the decisions I make around assessment and how to conduct assessment, and what assessment I want to do. I thought that was really helpful...I hadn’t thought about [values] in such a clear term. There’s something about being able to see them that really is helpful” (IP11). Along these lines,

another participant remarked, “I will be able to articulate my own values related to library assessment, and apply them to my work more consciously” (IP1). The particular structure of the toolkit was notable to another participant, who said, “I will be able to approach planning a project more intentionally. I don’t think there’s anything in the toolkit that I’ve never thought about before, but having it in a structured way as you’re going through it—helps make sure things don’t get overlooked—is extremely valuable” (IP9). This feedback is evidence that the toolkit and its underlying research data reflects relevant values that can be made useful for everyday practitioners.

A team-building and organizational development aspect was also expressed by the participants, as illustrated by this response: “I will be able to engage library administration in assessment efforts in a more meaningful way. I would like to do this with [our leadership group]. I think that would be really illuminating because I have a really solid handle on what my values as they relate to assessment are, but I actually don’t for those folks. That would be crucial. I think this might be a good tool to get at that” (IP12). Another participant shared: “I will be able to initiate and enjoy discussions with my colleagues about assessment values, and I will be able to use the toolkit to plan future assessment work” (IP2). Similarly, another participants said of the toolkit: “Over time, if a group were to use the toolkit often, to keep returning to it, it could really have the potential to build a shared vocabulary...I have a relatively young team in our Research and Instruction unit, and we’ve been talking about assessment and people’s desire to learn more about assessment. I could see something like this being really useful” (IP3). On the topic of the toolkit as a teaching resource, another participant remarked, “Being able to clarify and classify the values of a particular project is something I’d be able to do, which I think is very useful. And also to be able to take this tool to people with less research design experience, and use it as a teaching tool. I think that’s also quite useful” (IP8). These use cases demonstrate the potential applications of the toolkit, and indicate the toolkit is capable of achieving its goal of aiding an ethical assessment practice.

As a further note on the use-case, the interviews demonstrated that the physical nature of the toolkit was effective. Participants spoke positively of the toolkit design, and all were able to read the card content and complete the exercises without issues arising related to the shape of the toolkit as a card set. Participants especially highlighted the ability to hold the values in their hands, to move the

cards around in space, and to share the cards with others. Notably, due to a mail delivery error, one interview participant did not receive a physical toolkit. This interview was conducted using a digital proxy, and the toolkit operations were unhindered in this environment—the participant accessed and viewed the cards through a website, and completed an exercise after reading the instructions on-screen. This indicates that there is potential for the toolkit to be developed in a digital environment as a web application, which would enhance its accessibility and increase its reach.

### 7.4.3 Limitations of the Toolkit

The interviews also revealed constraints and limitations. The final question of the interview asked participants to complete the following sentence: “After practicing with this toolkit, I still felt that I needed...” Responses to this question in particular helped illuminate the boundaries of the toolkit’s applicability. Three main areas of constraint emerged: internal communication and collaboration, practitioner empowerment, and ethical resolution.

#### *Internal Communication and Collaboration*

Reflecting the collaborative nature of assessment, the reach and impact of the toolkit will be enhanced with multiple practitioners or stakeholders involved in the work of articulating and applying values. Participants discussed the many stakeholder interests connected to assessment, and the collaborative relationships on which assessment depends. An organizational culture of trust and communication may be a necessary precondition for the toolkit. Without collaborative relationships, the operation of the toolkit will be constrained. As participants recognized the potential for the toolkit to bring stakeholders together around shared values, there was a recognition that barriers can stand in the way in terms of interpersonal dynamics or organizational culture that prevent those stakeholders from communicating and collaborating. The toolkit may not operate well in an environment that is not supportive of discussion, reflection, and team-building. The toolkit assumes that the practitioner and their organization have a built-in motivation to investigate values, enact values, and achieve an ethical practice from this perspective of applied values and practical ethics. As one participant said of using the toolkit: “A lot of these prompts [in the toolkit] are going to be things that you need to discuss with stakeholders...The development of those conversations is another kind of skill set that needs to be

acknowledged...Conversations can be tough, especially if you're telling someone, 'Hey, I need you to challenge your beliefs or potential biases you might have.' They might not be as open to doing that. The art of giving and receiving feedback can be difficult...this is something the toolkit doesn't necessarily address" (IP4). This comment is crucial in understanding the functions and the constraints of the toolkit. The toolkit is designed to elicit dialogue about values. And the toolkit, via the exercises, provides a structure for facilitating that dialogue. But the toolkit assumes that dialogue is possible in the first place. The toolkit is not equipped to solve culture issues or interpersonal tensions within the workplace. Some practitioners may find themselves in a library setting where there is resistance to ethical reflection and ethical action. Such a setting may limit the applicability of the toolkit.

### *Practitioner Empowerment*

This leads to a related limitation that was revealed in conversation with interview participants. The toolkit assumes that a practitioner has the power within their organization to enact values. But participants pointed out that this is not granted. There may be circumstances where values are imposed upon a project or a practitioner, or where a practitioner is not able to introduce values into an assessment environment. Observed one participant: "We have more or less power, depending on who is in relationship to whom. Librarians aren't the most powerful individuals. We have a lot of power over our users bureaucratically, but we're not able to just do whatever we want" (IP3). Indeed, as above, an assessment practitioner does not operate in a vacuum. This factor of empowerment warrants special attention, as it directly affects the practitioner and their ability to practice ethical assessment. One participant captured this with the following: "A lot of assessment librarians...don't feel empowered to say, 'This isn't going to work...this isn't going to meet the values that we want to get to'" (IP5). The concept of power and empowerment is inherent to the functionality of the toolkit, in that the assessment practitioner needs to actually be able to activate a value in practice. The toolkit could help foster such an environment, but a degree of openness to it should exist in the first place. A workplace that values neutrality, for instance, may present barriers to the toolkit. As one participant asserted of the toolkit: "It itself can't be a neutral tool" (IP7). This participant spoke to the neutralizing effect of neutrality as value: that the toolkit would be rendered ineffective if collaborators—especially those with greater power or authority—were to assert



neutrality over any or all of the other values. Indeed, the toolkit is designed to counteract neutrality, and to provide an approach for taking a stand by articulating values. But it is not a given that the practitioner has the power to draw a principled line.

### *Resolving Dilemmas*

The final limitation surfaced in the interviews involves the toolkit's ability to resolve ethical dilemmas. As designed, the cards don't seek to provide answers on their own. The values in the toolkit are not positioned as the authoritative set of values for library assessment, nor do the descriptions of those values seek to be comprehensive or definitive. Rather, the toolkit serves to orient practitioners toward values, and to model for practitioners one possible universe of values that can be relevant for their work. The toolkit then prompts the participants to find the definitions and resolutions that are suitable for their own local context. One participant discerned this aspect of the toolkit, saying, "the discussion and the reflection is part of the point. You may understand some of these values differently, but part of that discussion is what we're trying to do with this toolkit" (IP8). The toolkit doesn't contain resolutions to ethical dilemmas, but the toolkit will help enhance a practitioner's sensitivity to dilemmas, which the practitioner then resolves based on the values that are relevant in that particular situation, as identified by working with the toolkit. The toolkit's best purpose is in providing a structure to ask the right questions. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this dissertation set the groundwork for the toolkit, by applying a lens of practical ethics to LIS practice and posing the question, "What is the right thing to do?" The toolkit orients the practitioner toward this question, and provides a direction for their ethical inquiry. One participant described when thinking about one of the value cards: "These are really big, complicated, thorny issues around this value...It's one thing to identify these issues, and a whole other thing to actually solve them" (IP11). This participant is correct. Values-in-conflict are difficult to resolve, but discerning those values and those conflicts is an essential first condition toward resolution. If the toolkit prompts assessment practitioners to consider values in their practice, to confront thorny issues related to implementing those values, and to ask the question, "what is the right thing to do?"—then it will have been successful.

The three main limitations—internal communication, practitioner empowerment, and ethical resolution—reveal the constraints of the toolkit. And by revealing the limitations, these points also bring into relief the goals and functionality of the toolkit.

## **7.5 Analysis and Results: Revisions to the Toolkit**

The interviews revealed a number of potential improvements for the cards. In the first subsection below, I discuss overall changes that can be applied across the toolkit, and in the further subsections that follow, I detail card-by-card revisions. Please see Appendix I for an illustrated presentation of each card in the toolkit.

### **7.5.1 Overall Revisions**

The primary feedback received from participants related to the amount of content on the cards, which included: value name, value description, practitioner quote, practice name, practice description, and reflective prompts. Participants indicated that the amount of text on each card may hinder the usability of the cards and of the toolkit as a whole. I observed participants exerting greater effort than intended in holding together the various parts of the card. In response, the toolkit would benefit from a further round of editing so that practitioners are asked to read and process less content. The toolkit is based on the framework, and the framework is oriented toward a scholarly audience, both its in language and its structural complexity that models a relationship among values and supporting practices. But the toolkit needs further translation so that the model of the framework can function as a workable tool for practitioners. This approach is fitting, as I do not aim to present the toolkit as prescriptive of the values. Streamlining the content that appears on the cards serves to emphasize the purpose of the toolkit as a guide for reflection and action, and supports participant comments that express a desire for more space for meaning-making. As one participant summarized: “I felt like the front of the card was more than enough for me to kick off a conversation about those values in a meaningful way” (IP10).

The final version of the toolkit will simplify the textual presentation by removing the practice name and description from the back of the value cards. As written on the cards, there was a degree of

redundancy to the “supporting practices.” The reflective prompts alone function more effectively to suggest practices that can be implemented in support of the corresponding values. This change draws greater attention to the value itself by removing the practices, as the text related to the practices risked complicating or competing with the value. The interviews also provided new data from which to draw practitioner quotes that are directly related to the cards. For some cards, the practitioner quote was updated. Finally, in order to improve the clarity of the values, many of the value descriptions were updated with one or both of the following goals in mind: 1) address any inaccuracies or confusion, 2) implement recommendations regarding clarity of expression based on the conversations conducted with practitioners in the interviews.

In the sections below, I discuss the feedback received for each card in the toolkit. I first present the card as discussed in the interview, then I discuss the participant feedback, and I conclude by presenting the final, revised version of the card.

### 7.5.2 Alignment

The alignment value was confirmed as relevant by the participants. Many spoke to the importance of connecting assessment activity to library strategic planning and priorities. Participants indicated that the priorities of their library organization took precedence over the statements of professional societies, other campus units, and the university. This was the main insight related to this value card—participants wanted to see a greater emphasis on the library’s strategic plan. One participant’s feedback illustrates this point: “This is my starting point. I always align with library goals and mission. This could be mentioned more explicitly” (IP6). In response to the practitioner feedback, I revised and expanded the description, the quote, and the reflective prompts to include more direct references to library strategic planning and priorities.

### 7.5.3 Beneficence/Care

The beneficence value was confirmed as relevant by the participants, with some modification. Participant feedback may be summarized as follows:

- The idea of well-being and benefit for assessment participants was identified as a key value.

- The concept of the card could be expanded: participants focused on harm as an important complementary aspect of beneficence, in addition to the well-being aspect. Participants spoke of maximizing well-being while minimizing harm.
- There was some confusion as to whom the card is focused on—the well-being of participants, collaborators, or both?
- The quote drew some negative feedback, as the beneficence value should not be scoped around students, but should rather include any person or community involved in the assessment.
- There was some confusion about beneficence as a term, since that word is more commonly recognized in the context of IRB training. Participants described “beneficence” as a jargon term not used in everyday expression. Many supported renaming this value to a more plain-language term, such as “Care.”
- Participants observed that this card is focused on individual well-being, while the “Justice” card is focused more on group dynamics. This insight prompts a reconsideration of the “social justice” and “social impacts” elements of this card.

In response to participant feedback, I modified the description to include both well-being and harm. I revised the name of the card from “beneficence” to “care.” And the reflective prompts were revised in response to questions offered by participants, focusing on the well-being and harm considerations of individual participants and collaborators in an assessment. I have also included an additional reflective prompt to underscore the feminist ethic of care (discussed in Chapter 5) that understands care to be an interconnectivity, where people and communities are linked together through shared responsibilities. The reflective prompts that focused on social justice and social impacts have been moved to the Justice card (discussed more in the Justice section below), and the quote has been updated to reflect an expanded scope of care from students to any person involved in the assessment.

#### 7.5.4 Collaboration

Participants indicated that collaboration was one of the most relevant values to their practice. This card generated less feedback from participants compared to other cards, as collaboration is a

common value and practice among assessment professionals. Feedback focused on refining the language on the card, particularly as to whom a collaboration may involve: students, community members, or others. Participants also suggested that the reflective prompts could be made stronger by revising the prompts from simple yes/no questions to more generative, open-ended questions. In response to this feedback, I revised the description and the prompts.

### 7.5.5 Communication and Outreach

Communication and Outreach was an important value for the interview participants. The representation of the value on the card generated plentiful feedback and new ideas for revision. Participants agreed that talking about assessment and sharing the work of assessment is highly relevant. But the card content was not clear enough as to how that communication should happen, as the card content pointed to multiple vectors of communication—professional development, scholarly communication, and outreach to stakeholder groups. Interview participants astutely offered approaches for narrowing and refining the communication activity that is most relevant for assessment. Practitioners distilled the main point to be about communicating an assessment and its results to relevant audiences. As currently written, the card still needs to offer more precision in defining those audiences. Participants wanted to know—who are we communicating to, and what are we communicating? For the interview participants, communication is ultimately about “closing the loop” of assessment, which involves sharing results back to participants and out to other stakeholders.

In response to this feedback, I narrowed the value name to “Communication.” I refined the description by removing “scholarly communication” and “professional development,” and added a reference to “closing the loop,” as the latter aspect is the most relevant component of communication to assessment. I updated the quote to include an excerpt from one of the interviews. I expanded the reflective prompts to focus more about the activity of “closing the loop” and communicating results meaningfully with relevant stakeholders. In light of the feedback from participants that focuses on communicating the right story about assessment to the right audience, I also moved the practice of “crafting narrative and counter-narrative” from the Imagining

Otherwise card to the Communication card. This change results in a more cohesive set of reflective prompts for the communication of assessment.

### 7.5.6 Human-Centered

Human-centered is the only value that was not confirmed as relevant by the interview participants. This value caused the most confusion or hesitation, as human-centered design is not a widely-practiced approach within assessment. A design practice can appear as one approach within a larger assessment program, but more often human-centered approaches such as user experience, usability, and accessibility are practice areas located in other departments or programs within the library. Many interview participants shared that they themselves don't practice or fully understand human-centered design, and therefore cannot claim it as a value. Interestingly, it was pointed out that concepts such as usability and accessibility may not be values, but rather practical outcomes that result from other, more abstract values, such as beneficence or care for library users. In fact, multiple participants connected the value of beneficence/care to the practice of centering people in assessment. In response to this feedback, I have removed this card as a stand-alone value in the toolkit. The human-centered value did not resonate with the participants. However, the practice of considering the needs and desires of assessment participants and stakeholders was identified as important. To accommodate this stated interest, I added to the revised Care card a practitioner quote from conversations related to the Human-centered value: "Keeping participants at the center of the research is important" (IP8).

### 7.5.7 Imagining otherwise

Imagining otherwise was a value that resonated with participants. The value itself and the description were well-received, with participants welcoming this card as a prompt for considering the methods employed in their assessment practice and the capacity for their assessment results to act as a vehicle for change. However, the quote and the practices generated critical suggestions for revision.

Interview participants responded with two primary areas of feedback: first, the practice of negotiating with third parties was surprising, and second, the practice of seeking alternate

approaches has less to do with a conflict of methods and more to do with a balance of methods. Conversations around this card were helpful for illuminating the kind of negotiation that assessment practitioners do in support of imagining other futures. Those negotiations don't typically involve third parties, and the responses to that practice were mixed. On the one hand, some participants thought that the practice was out of place and could be removed. On the other hand, other participants viewed it as a welcome surprise, and remarked that practitioners should always be challenging third-party vendors to adhere to library values. In couching this value in the practice of assessment, one participant interpreted this value as: "I'm always questioning, 'why do we do things this way?'...That undergird[s] everything I do in the assessment, because my ultimate mental end game is that these assessments are going to change the things" (IP6). The connection between assessment and change was very strong, as participants expressed a clear desire that their assessment work will be applied toward improvement or change in their library or on the part of vendors.

Participants spoke to negotiation happening elsewhere in their practice, namely with collaborators and other stakeholders. The negotiation focuses on deciding the methods and interpreting the results of an assessment. Here, participants introduced a more nuanced and less binary approach to the selection of methods. According to one participant, "I didn't love the focus 'more on narratives than numbers' on this, because I think numbers can also imagine otherwise...I always like to break down the quantitative/qualitative divide" (IP8). Rather than reinforcing this divide and putting methods into conflict with each other, this participant and others spoke to finding a balance of methods, knowing when to apply the right methods at the right time, and embracing new forms of assessment. The act of imagination is thus expressed as imagining different approaches into and throughout the assessment lifecycle. The narrative component of this card operates in support of this intended change. Here, participants spoke of framing the assessment data and analysis through narrative storytelling in such a way as to guide interpretation and understanding of the assessment.

In response to this feedback, the card has undergone the following revisions:

- The description has been updated so as to couch this value more firmly in a library assessment context. Previously, the description read: “Innovation, open-mindedness, questioning the status quo.” Interview participants situated these broader aspects in the specific context of assessment, which I have then translated to the following: “Imagining and embracing different approaches to assessment, and ensuring that results support change.” This new description helps capture the nuance and sensitivity of interview participants, namely that Imagining Otherwise involves imagining different ways into the assessment question and finding a balance of methods, not a conflict of methods.
- Similarly, the quote has been updated so that choosing among methods is not presented as adversarial.
- The reflective prompts have also been revised:
  - A new prompt has been added to capture the aspect of results being applied to support change. This prompt has also been combined with a similar prompt imported from the pre-validation version of the Validity card (discussed more in that section below).
  - The prompt regarding narrative has been moved to the Communication card.
  - The third-party vendor prompt has been reworded to include a conditional statement.

#### 7.5.8 Justice

Justice was perhaps the most straightforward card, in that every participant considered it relevant to their practice, and provided minimal notes for revisions. Revisions to this card were not extensive, relating mostly to the card for Beneficence/Care. Participants marked out a categorical distinction between these two cards, with Beneficence/Care as a value concerned with individuals, and Justice concerned with groups. Along with revisions to Beneficence/Care discussed in that section above, I have updated the Justice card so that the reflective prompts are focused on social groups, social impacts, and social justice. Additionally, participants spoke of a power element specific to values in assessment, namely: what power do assessment practitioners have to enact values? This was identified as an important consideration, but was noted as perhaps more suitable for the Positionality card, as that card deals with acknowledging one’s own position in the assessment. For



that reason, I have moved references to power dynamics to the revised Positionality card (discussed below).

### 7.5.9 Operability/Stewardship

The card for Operability generated extensive feedback from participants. In sum, participants acknowledged the concept of operability—as expressed on the card—as a highly relevant factor in decision-making, though they did not fully embrace the concept as a value per se, in the sense of an aspirational or guiding principle for action. As one participant described it: “This resonates with me. This is my lived experience...But it’s something that I’m reluctantly stuck with having to deal with. And I think that’s good. And it’s good to address these things” (IP12). The pressure of limited resources is essential to consider when conducting assessment, but it was not fully embraced as a positive value, as expressed by other participants:

- “Ahh—the realism...you can have the best intentions and design in the world, but if you don’t have the people, the money, other resources to make it happen, then don’t back yourself into a corner and end up doing it poorly as a result” (IP9).
- “Got to make sure you can do the thing you want to do” (IP8).
- “We need to be realistic about resources” (IP2).

I interpret these responses as saying that this value is crucial for assessment, but that the orientation of the card needs to be shifted so that the value is expressed as a positive outcome to be achieved or as a value to be enacted, rather than as a limitation that must be accounted for. For example, the practice of “Get the Job Done” appeared as a supporting practice on the Operability value card. This practice focused on simply completing a project as requested, despite potential reservations about resources or capacity. The “Get the Job Done” practice is the action phrase based on the *pragmatism* code produced through the grounded theory analysis of the survey data. Interview participants understood this practice as relevant, but responded by introducing a greater degree of nuance and adaptability:

- “If there’s a way to look at it a little bit more possibly, than just getting the job done. The more important question is, ‘how can we bring this so that it’s completable?...How do we frame this or scale this project, so that it’s completable?’” (IP5).
- “What’s possible, given the right resources?” (IP3).

For interview participants, this value is about institutional support and capacity for assessment.

Interview participants took this value very seriously, and viewed it as essential to the decision-making in their practice. Two participants spoke directly to the ethical aspects of resource consideration:

- “It is unethical to propose a bunch of stuff and not be able to actually see it through” (IP11).
- “If we’re collecting this data, we have an ethical obligation to act on it” (IP12).

The interview participants offered a carefully re-framed understanding of resources in the context of assessment: instead of “operability” as a constraining element focused on the limitation of resources, practitioners see themselves as responsible stewards of resources, working to ensure that an assessment is first possible and then sustainable, and that assessment data will be managed according to professional standards.

In response to this feedback, I have revised the card in the following ways that build upon the original premise of this card, but refine the concept into a guiding value:

- The card is renamed from “Operability” to “Stewardship”
- The card has a new description: “Ensuring that an assessment reflects organizational capacities—including staffing models, budgetary considerations, and data management and retention.”
- The reflective prompts associated with the practice of “Data Stewardship” are moved from the “Validity” card to this card, and the reflective prompts are given more detail. Previously, the reflective prompt focused vaguely on “due diligence” for data. The revised prompt now

reads: “What policies or practices govern the collection, retention, usage, and sharing of assessment-related data?”

- There is a new quote: “What is possible, given our resources?”
- I removed reflective prompts for the practice of “get the job done,” as practitioners spoke with greater nuance about re-framing or re-scoping an assessment so that it can be done. These nuances are present in a revised reflective prompt.
- The icon was updated to reflect the new card name.

### 7.5.10 Positionality

Positionality was viewed as a relevant value by participants. Participants recognized the function of this value as foundation-setting for establishing other values, with one participant describing positionality as “implicit” or as a “precursor” to other values (IP10). Another participant connected this value to the ongoing act of positioning and repositioning oneself: “This is a really crucial one...a good reminder for people to constantly remind themselves of” (IP12).

Two main revisions emerged through the interviews. First, a desire to see issues of power more directly connected to those of positionality, especially by marking the relative power of different stakeholders involved in the assessment. The following excerpts capture this point:

- “It’s really hard to get a group of people, even within the same profession—who ostensibly share professional values—to talk about their own values or their own perspectives and the idea of positionality. How much relative power do the various members of a group have? That’s going to change the conversations about how they might articulate their values” (IP3).
- “Positionality isn’t about whether or not you’re a good or bad person, it’s being where you are in the system, so that you can move the system” (IP7).
- “Understanding your position as a researcher relative to what you’re researching” (IP8).

Beyond relative power dynamics, participants also spoke of understanding the different assumptions that may be generated from relative positions. As expressed by one participant: “I feel

like our positionality is based on what assumptions we're bringing to the project, and making sure that those are explicit and not just unsaid is an important part of positionality" (IP2).

In response to this feedback, I have incorporated the power-attunement aspect into this card. The description now contains a reference to power, and a new reflective prompt reads, "In the context of this assessment, over whom do you have power? Who has power over you? How do those power dynamics affect your ability to articulate and enact values?" In the pre-validation version of the toolkit, issues of power dynamics were represented in the Justice card, but participants indicated that the Positionality cards may be more suitable. Also following participant comments, I have added a reflective prompt related to assumptions: "Based on your relative positions, what assumptions are you and others bringing to the project?"

### 7.5.11 Transparency

Participants indicated that transparency is a relevant value for their assessment practice. Participants recognized that transparency is important for building and maintaining trust among stakeholders and collaborators, and that transparency with participants is an approach for involving library users in assessment. To strengthen this card, participants noted that it should contain a direct reference to informed consent. Participants also wanted greater clarity as to the audience of this card—who is included in the stakeholders for transparency? Most participants answered that question by focusing on the population being assessed. Participants underscored the important aspects of achieving transparency: sharing procedural details with participants, securing informed consent, and sharing results of the assessment back with the study population. In response to this feedback, I have revised the description so that the intended focus of this card is the assessment population, and I have added a reflective prompt about sharing results back with research participants. This card has thus been fine-tuned vis-à-vis the Communication card, with the two cards now functioning more precisely together to capture a fuller range of potential audiences or populations related to communication and transparency. The Communication card now specifically references administrators, collaborators, and the professional community, while Transparency references participants.

### 7.5.12 Validity

Participants responded with supportive feedback for the Validity card. In the first version of this card, validity contained three aspects: method selection, data management, and the actionability of results. Participants indicated that validity is a relevant value, but that the cards need greater clarity of expression to resolve tensions among these three aspects. For the interview participants, the focus of the card should remain on finding the right method for the research question, as this is the essential component of validity. One participant captured this: “I don’t think of ‘Data Stewardship’ and ‘Ensuring Results Will be Applied’ as validity questions. I think of validity as, ‘Am I measuring the thing I’m intending to measure?’” (IP8). Similarly, another participant described this value: “To me, validity is if the method and your answers to your questions really relate to what you want to know” (IP1). Along these lines, the validity card generated responses that focused on method selection, with related comments involving mixed-methods and triangulation as a way to support valid results. For example, one participant said of validity: “This is something I think about...The template I’m using [for my assessments] is built using multiple methods of assessment, and then combining the findings for a built-in triangulation” (IP6). Aspects of data stewardship were not found to be a good fit for this understanding of validity. According to one participant: “This part about being a good data steward, I feel like that is different than validity. But it’s something that needs to be addressed” (IP1). Likewise, the actionability of results was seen as important but distinct from validity.

In terms of the practices listed on the card, the participants focused in particular on the practice of “Reject the Assessment.” Participants showed less interest in rejecting the assessment, and more interest in revising the assessment. One participant related that there has not been a “single time” when an assessment has been rejected, rather, “A lot more conversations are around, ‘Well, what if we tweak this? Make sure we talk to this participant group? Look at this methodology instead? Come at it from a different angle?’” (IP9). Another participant responded similarly: “My initial response wouldn’t be to necessarily say a rejection. It would be, ‘Okay, here’s what we did wrong. Here’s why this isn’t as helpful to us as it could be. What can we either salvage or what can we redo? How can we rethink this project?...How do we know what this isn’t telling us? And how can we get

there?” (IP5). For the participants, achieving validity is not about rejecting an assessment outright as invalid, but rather working to find the right assessment method for the research question.

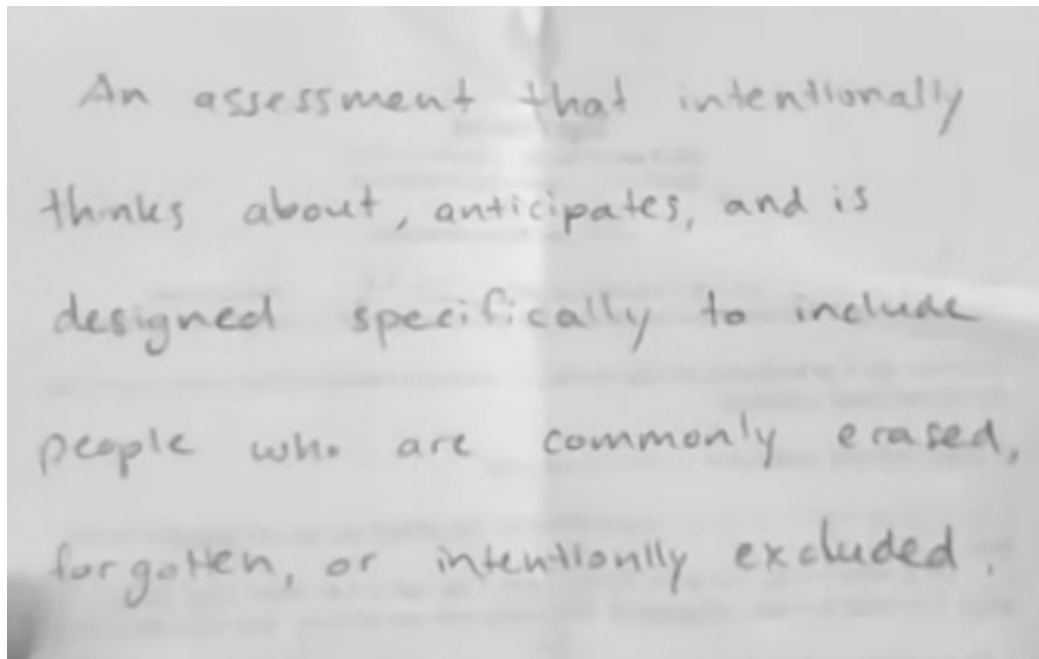
In response to this feedback, the card has undergone the following revisions:

- To scope the value around method selection, the prompts for “Data Stewardship” have been moved to the new Stewardship card, and the prompts for “Results Actionability” have been moved to the card for Imagining Otherwise.
- Prompts for “Reject Assessment” have been reworded to focus on revising or rescoping an assessment.

Next, I turn to the exercise cards and the drawings produced by participants. The visual elicitations serve as a key point of reference in the interviews, demonstrating the operational potential of the toolkit as a whole.

#### 7.5.13 Values Freewrite/Connect Two

This exercise asked participants to write their own interpretation of a value. In the broader scope of the toolkit, this is an important exercise in showing the toolkit user that their own perspective is a crucial component of the toolkit. The toolkit user ultimately makes their own meaning from the toolkit, with their unique definition and experiences acting as an essential aspect of the toolkit’s operation. Of the four participants to complete this exercise, all indicated that the goal of this card was achieved through the instruction. This indicates that the exercise design is functioning properly. To demonstrate the outcome of this exercise, Figure 7.1 shows one participant’s free write for the value of Human-centered (IP10).



**Figure 7.1 Visual Elicitation, Values Freewrite Exercise for the Human-Centered Value**

This participant selected “Human-Centered” at random from the deck, and produced this one-sentence definition that interprets this value from their own perspective. In this example, the participant took the Human-Centered value card as a starting point for writing their own meaning into the card. The participant-produced description does not match the description that I produced, and this result reinforces the finding that values are highly contextual—within this participant’s context, this description is accurate. This demonstrates the purpose of this exercise and the functionality of the toolkit. The exercise allows the participant to find their relevant values and create definitions that suit their local setting. The toolkit overall functions to guide the practitioner in naming those values that are relevant to their practice, building an understanding of those values, prioritizing the values, and ultimately putting the values into practice.

In discussing this definition, the participant also connected Human-Centered with Justice and Alignment, and articulated the relationship of these other values with the selected value of Human-Centered. This type of response was present in all four participants who completed this exercise—participants instinctively began to connect values and concepts across the toolkit. As discussed in the section above (Interconnectivity of Values), participants were keen to make connections between and among the cards. This insight prompted the main revision for this card.

Instead of asking participants to isolate just one value, the card can build on its premise and be revised and expanded to include two values. In this way, the exercise still meets its goal of prompting the practitioner to produce their own definition of a value, but then it expands to meet the natural desire of participants to seek and find connections among the values. In this iteration, the exercise can ask participants to select two values at random, and to write their own definition of each of the two values. Then, with an additional step, the exercise will prompt participants to consider the connections between these two values. How do the values strengthen each other? How are they in tension?

Following the validation interviews, the following changes were made to this card:

- The exercise name has been updated to “Connect Two.”
- The icon has been revised accordingly
- The instructions now prompt participants to select two values and reflect on their interrelation.
- Instead of asking participants to write up to three sentences to define the value, the card now asks for one sentence. This new scope makes the revised exercise more approachable, since participants will be responding to two values. Furthermore, the participants who completed this exercise each wrote only one sentence for the value.
- The instructions have been revised to include clearer steps for working either individually or in groups. Step 3 has been split into two substeps: Step 3a for individuals and 3b for groups.
- I removed the final sentence about repeating the exercise, as that instruction is supplied in the main instruction card of the toolkit

#### 7.5.14 Must-Haves

The exercise Must-Haves asks participants to sort the values in categories based on relevancy to an assessment project. Of the four participants to complete this exercise, all indicated that the goal of this card was achieved through the instruction. To strengthen this exercise, it was apparent that the sorting activity could be refined. The card presented in the interviews did not indicate a limit or



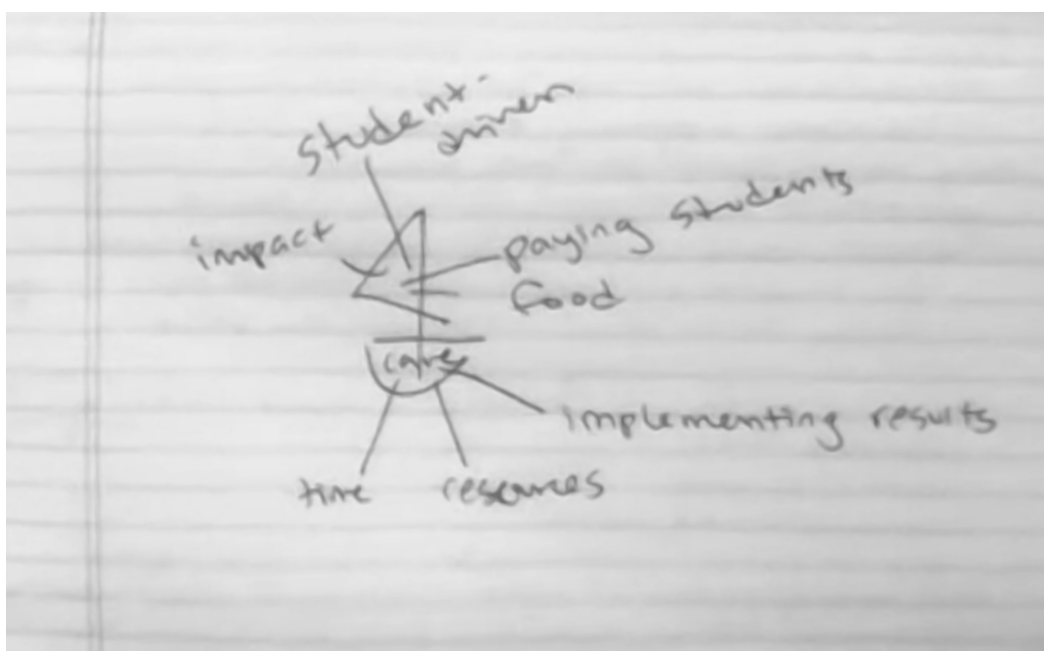
scope for how many values could be placed in any one category. Some participants wanted to place seven or eight values in the “must have” category, which limits the utility of the sorting exercise. So the primary refinement is in limiting the number of values that can be placed within each category to 3 or 4. This constraint guides toolkit users in making the decisions about which values are actually critical, must-have values. Similarly, the categories could be refined. As currently designed, the final category is “shouldn’t have”, which is glossed as, “values that are not relevant or that might even detract from the project or program.” In the interviews, participants struggled to place values in this category. As a revision, this third category can be presented as “could do without,” which would present it in parallel with the existing category of “could have.” One further refinement could be made to the number of categories. One participant noted that the exercise’s “distinguishing power” may be limited with only three categories (IP2). In response to this, the exercise can accommodate a fourth category as an additional sorting option for toolkit users.

Following the validation interviews, the following changes were made to this card:

- In Step 3, the instruction to use sticky-notes for naming the categories was removed, as participants did not demonstrate a need for this detail.
- A new instruction was added to guide or limit the sorting: “Aim to have no more than 3 or 4 values in each category.”
- Two new categories have been added
  - “Would like but won’t get,” glossed as “values that might be too difficult to implement
  - “Could do without” glossed as “values that are not so important or relevant to the assessment.”

### 7.5.15 Anchors and Sails

In the Anchors and Sails exercise, participants apply the metaphor of a boat to discuss constraints and opportunities in implementing values. Of the four participants to complete this exercise, all indicated that the goal of this card was achieved through the instruction. Figure 7.2 shows one participant’s visual elicitation produced through this exercise (IP11).



**Figure 7.2 Visual Elicitation, Anchors and Sails Exercise for the Care Value**

In this example, the participant chose the card for Beneficence, renaming it “Care.” The Anchors on the boat—the constraints in implementing the value—are time, resources, and implementing results. The sails—the supporting factors for the value—are impact, student-driven culture, and funds available to pay and to provide food for student participants. Of this exercise, one participant said, “It did do the piece of identifying ways that the project does and does not support the value, or things to be aware of, that—if we’re saying this is really important—things to be aware of that we need to actually make sure that we’re addressing, or this is not going to be achieved” (IP11). In terms of revisions to the card, participant feedback did not demonstrate a need to refine this card, save for one modification to Step 2: one participant suggested that this exercise could be completed on a white board. In response to this feedback, I have added additional language in Step 2 that makes clear to toolkit users that the boat can be drawn on a white board.

#### 7.5.16 The Instruction Card

Finally, we turn to the card that provides the overall framing and instruction for the toolkit.

Participants did not comment directly on the instruction card. However, their comments elsewhere in the interview regarding the content and operation of the toolkit can inform revisions to the main instruction card. Two main insights derived from the interviews—use cases and ethical resolutions

(discussed in those sections above)—focused on the uses of the toolkit and the limitations of the toolkit. With this in mind, I wanted to translate those insights into concise notes for the instruction card. First, the use-cases. In the pre-validation version of the card, the uses of the toolkit were articulated as: “The exercises may be completed any time before, during, or after an assessment is completed—but the exercises may be most useful before an assessment, in order to clarify relevant values.” The interviews, however, provided more precise use-cases. I have revised this usage note as follows: “This toolkit can be used as a planning tool when designing a new assessment, as an evaluation tool when in the middle of an assessment or when looking back on a completed assessment, and as a teaching tool when learning about the practice of assessment.” Next, the limitations. I wanted to be more clear that the values presented in the toolkit are not final or comprehensive, that the cards are a point of reference for thinking about and working with values, and that consideration, reflection, and discussion of the values is the purpose of the toolkit. This reflects both a limitation and the functionality of the toolkit: rather than asserting a definitive expression of values that speak for all assessment practitioners, the toolkit offers a mechanism through which individual practitioners can generate their own values and their own definitions. Each practitioner will understand the values differently according to their local contexts. To that end, I have added a new instruction: “This toolkit represents just one model for values in assessment. Think of the cards as points of reference in developing your own values, practices, and meaning.”

## 7.6 Presenting the Final Framework

In light of the feedback collected from participants, the framework was also revised so that the practices were re-mapped to the values in a way that accorded with the views of the participants. Table 7.2 shows the final framework.

**Table 7.2 Final Framework for Ethical Assessment**

Value	Value Definition	Corresponding Practice(s)	Practice Definition
Alignment	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and library strategic planning.	Find Common Ground	Practices that build a shared understanding with stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.
Care	Values that relate to the well-being and care of those involved in the assessment	Evaluate Benefit, Harms, and Responsibilities	Practices that evaluate and weigh the potential benefits and the harms of an assessment, with a consideration of responsibilities to stakeholders, especially collaborators and participants.
Collaboration	Values that relate to building and sustaining mutually-beneficial relationships	Cultivate Relationships	Practices that involve cultivating partnerships.
Communication	Values that relate to “closing the loop” of assessment by communicating an assessment and its results to relevant audiences.	Share Your Work	Practices that involve sharing assessments with wider communities.
		Provide Context	Practices that support demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts, including risk/benefit analysis, social impacts, or any other related aspect that helps explain or situate the assessment.
		Craft Narrative and Counter-narrative	Practices that involve crafting narratives and counter-narratives that serve to interpret the assessment for appropriate audiences.
Imagining Otherwise	Values that relate to imagining and embracing different approaches to assessment, and ensuring that results support change.	Ensure that Results Support Change	Practices that ensure that the results of an assessment will be translated into action and be applied to support specific improvement or change in the library.

		Negotiate with Third party	Practices involving negotiating with a vendor for terms more reflective of library values.
		Seek Alternate Approaches	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.
Justice	Values relating to diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	Share Power with Participants	Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.
		Consider Social Impacts	Practices that focus on social impacts and the well-being of participants.
Positionality	Values that speak to the acknowledgment of perspectives, positions, and power	Articulate Your Values	Self-reflective practices that result in identifying and applying values and impacts that are relevant to the assessment.
Stewardship	Ensuring that an assessment reflects organizational capacities—including staffing models, budgetary considerations, and data management and retention.	Account for Organizational Capacity	Practices that account for budget, staffing, and community relationship-building; if necessary, re-scoping a project to appropriately reflect organizational capacity in supporting the assessment.
		Steward the Data	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.
Transparency	Values involving clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.	Provide Information and a Choice	Practices that give users the opportunity to understand the assessment and provide informed consent, with choices for opting in or out of participation.
Validity	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially focusing on a right fit between research question and research method.	Assess the Assessment	Practices that consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result
		Modify the Assessment	A practice of modifying an assessment so that the research method matches the research

			question
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This framework shows the overview of ethical assessment values and practices. The cards of the toolkit offer a way to operationalize the values and the practices. Ultimately this framework represents one “value model” for assessment in LIS, as described by Rubin (2016a): “the professional foundation of LIS is not its knowledge or techniques, but its fundamental values. The significance of LIS lies not in mastery of sources, organizational skills, or technological competence, but in why LIS professionals perform the functions they do” (pp. 283–284). In articulating a value model for library assessment, this framework of values and corresponding practices establishes a foundation for the ethical practice of library assessment, which the toolkit then operationalizes for assessment practitioners.

## 7.7 Summary

This chapter discussed the development of the theoretical framework and the practical toolkit for ethical library assessment. The framework and the toolkit were initially derived from the grounded theory analysis of the survey data, and then validated through interviews with a subset of members from the same study population. The framework models the values relevant for assessment decision-making and the practices that can support those values. This chapter introduced the toolkit with the title *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*. I discussed the intended audience, goals, and use-cases for the toolkit, and the card-by-card revisions made to the toolkit in response to practitioner feedback in the interviews. The three-part research design of this dissertation resulted in a practical toolkit that serves as an operational expression of the research-based framework, with the goal of aiding assessment practitioners in articulating and applying the values that are relevant to their practice. In the next chapter, I offer concluding thoughts and future directions for this research.

## 8. Conclusions and Future Directions

### 8.1 Summary

This dissertation asked the following research question: “How can library assessment be practiced ethically?” This dissertation further aimed to produce a practical tool to support ethical library assessment practice. To answer this question and to produce this outcome, I applied a three-part research design. In Chapter 2, I described the methodological approach for answering my research questions, and presented the development process for the theoretical framework and the practical tool. Each stage of the research include a method and a corresponding outcome:

*Step 1.* A literature review that informs a survey design by revealing questions related to professional values, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices or resolutions. (Chapters 3, 4, 5)

*Step 2.* A national survey of assessment practitioners, with data analyzed through constructivist grounded theory to support the development of a theoretical framework and practical toolkit for ethical assessment. (Chapter 6)

*Step 3.* A set of interviews to validate the framework and the toolkit. (Chapter 7)

In Chapter 3, I first analyzed relevant literature to trace the history of ethics and values within the Library and Information Science (LIS) field. I found that practical ethics was the predominant ethical perspective found in the LIS literature. Practical ethics asks of a given situation, “What is the right thing to do?” Through a practical ethics lens, practitioners can apply values to know what is the right thing to do. This led me to look closer at the values of the LIS profession, and I found that LIS practitioners throughout history have named dozens of different values as relevant to their practice. I next sought to better understand the situations in which those values were applied. In Chapter 4, I investigated the ethical dilemmas that assessment practitioners confront in their work, as expressed in the literature. This examination revealed a number of relevant sites of tension where

values or value systems may be in conflict. I then wanted to know how practitioners have responded to these tensions with a view toward ethics and values. And so in Chapter 5, I analyzed literature that described ethical assessment approaches, deriving a set of characteristics for describing ethical assessment practice. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 constitute Step 1 of the research design, and together they set the groundwork for the survey.

The survey, representing Step 2 of the research design and described in Chapter 6, was designed to gather data that can further explicate the values and practices of ethical library assessment. The survey design is based on the main question of practical ethics: “What is the right thing to do?” This survey presented six ethical vignettes to practitioners. The vignettes reflected themes and situations found in the literature. For each vignette, I asked practitioners to share the values that are relevant, and to share practical responses suitable for their local setting. In this way, I essentially asked of each situation, “What is the right thing to do?” I analyzed responses using constructivist grounded theory, deriving a set of codes that capture the values and practices relevant for ethical assessment. I then configured the values into a theoretical framework for ethical assessment. In Chapter 7, I validated the theoretical framework and its corresponding operational toolkit, called the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*, through interviews with library assessment practitioners.

Through the research process described in Chapter 2 and presented in Chapters 3–7, this dissertation has answered its research question, “How can library assessment be practiced ethically?” The theoretical answer is that practitioners can practice ethical assessment by articulating and enacting the values that are relevant in their local contexts. The *Values-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit* represents the operational answer and practical outcome: the toolkit can serve as a practical aid to support practitioners in naming and applying the values that matter in their situations, thereby practicing an ethical library assessment.



## 8.2 Contributions

This dissertation makes three key contributions to the practice and scholarship of library assessment: 1) ethics in library assessment are highly complex and contextual, 2) an ethical practice can be achieved by articulating and applying values, 3), the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit* is a viable tool for supporting an ethical practice of library assessment.

### 8.2.3 Ethics as Complex and Contextual

Chapters 2–4 demonstrated a number of key insights into ethical library assessment that contribute to the scholarly conversation in this area. Namely, that ethics are complex and contextual. As a result of competing values and multiple right choices, ethical paths forward are ambiguous. Library assessment practitioners have a desire to apply values and achieve an ethical practice, but practitioners are challenged in that the landscape of values is wide-ranging and highly contextual. Furthermore, the library assessment community does not have a centralized professional body that can develop a statement of values that speaks to the particular skills and challenges of library assessment. In some ways, this is suitable for library assessment practitioners, who operate in varied settings that call for varied sets of values that can be tuned according to local needs.

### 8.2.4 The Importance of Articulating and Enacting Values

The survey data and analysis presented in Chapter 6 give greater weight to these findings, showing that many different possible values are indeed available to practitioners, and those values shift and change according to the contextual factors present in different assessment situations. In this way, the act of choosing which values to apply in different situations is a central component of an ethical assessment practice. The dissertation demonstrates that assessment practitioners seek an ethical practice, and that a path toward an ethical practice can be found through the applied values approach of practical ethics. As an answer to the main question of this dissertation—“how can library assessment be practiced ethically?”—this dissertation posits that to achieve an ethical practice, practitioners can articulate and enact a set of values that is meaningful to their practice.

### 8.2.5 The *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*

To model a coherent set of values that can speak directly to the practice of library assessment, I applied grounded theory analysis to the survey data, producing a set of codes to describe the values and practices relevant to library assessment. These codes established a theoretical framework for assessment, where the values and the practices are mapped to each other, thus demonstrating a cohesive universe of values, with supporting practices for enacting those values. Finally, as a practical contribution to library assessment, I created the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*. The work of the dissertation is manifested by the toolkit, which is an operational expression of the dissertation's original research into values and ethics in library assessment. Drawing on the tradition of participatory design, this toolkit operationalizes the research data and the theory of ethical assessment. The toolkit helps practitioners identify and choose which values to apply in different situations. The toolkit orients the practitioner toward values, and provides a direction for their ethical inquiry. The toolkit provides a recognizable set of values relevant to assessment practitioners, and it is also flexible enough to accommodate values that emerge contextually or are otherwise unique to a particular locus of assessment. To that end, this dissertation produced a toolkit that contains 10 values relevant for library assessment. The values reflect the principles and practices of the library assessment professionals who comprise the study sample. The toolkit promises to impact practice in that practitioners can apply the toolkit in their own settings to support a values-based, ethical assessment practice.

## **8.3 Limitations**

This dissertation contained limitations, notably in the research design and in the final output.

### 8.3.1 Sampling

The population sample of the study necessarily limits the scope and applicability of results. The values presented as relevant for library assessment apply primarily in the context of North American colleges and universities. Other national or geographical settings may include additional values or exclude values that were generated here. Other settings of assessment practice may also produce varying results, such as public libraries, special libraries, school libraries, or private

libraries. And within the context of North American higher education, the sample itself is not representative of all assessment practitioners. My survey sample was comprised of those who subscribe to certain email listservs, and my interview sample was comprised of a subset of the survey sample who opted into further conversation with me. The survey sample is thus biased in that it contains the views only of those who subscribe to a limited set of list servs. And the interview sample is biased in that it over-represents practitioners who have a stake or an interest in values-based, ethical assessment practice. With this limitation to the sample, I cannot claim that the values produced in my data analysis are representative of the wider assessment community. Nor therefore can I claim that the toolkit will function effectively for all assessment practitioners. I have verified that my data analysis and the toolkit is correct for my study population. To address this limitation, future work could involve re-administering the survey using a nation-wide register of assessment practitioners, with a randomized sample of respondents (discussed more below).

### 8.3.2 Framework

Turning to the framework, the framework is but one universe of values. One of the main findings from the dissertation showed that values are complex and multifaceted, with practitioners choosing from a multitude of available values and value sets. While there are many values and value sets from which to choose, absent from those choices is a profession-wide statement of values tuned specifically to the practice of library assessment. Such a statement could unify the values perspective of assessment practitioners. In this wider landscape, the framework and the toolkit of this dissertation risks simply adding to an already competitive and complex landscape of values. While it is possible that the framework could grow to become a useful and desirable point of reference for values in assessment, this new model of values could contribute to the already noisy and complex landscape of values and assessment, and not receive attention or implementation by the wider practitioner community.

### 8.3.3 Toolkit

Finally, the toolkit itself contains constraints and limitations. As a physical card deck with instructions for use, the toolkit provides guidance for its operation. The physical nature of the toolkit is one limitation, in that it functions first as a table-top tool in an in-person setting.

Accessibility of the toolkit is thus limited. While the card set can be accessed and used in a digital environment, it is designed as an in-person tool to be completed by users who are sighted and do not have mobility impairments.

Beyond the accessibility considerations of the toolkit, the form of the toolkit may also limit its adoption in the professional community. The toolkit is based on design games that are well established in the traditions of co-design and participatory design, but such approaches are not yet common in library assessment. Some practitioners or library administrators may not be accustomed to “playing” a card game in a professional setting, and may not initially be enthusiastic about a tool that could be perceived as unserious.

The toolkit design presents further limitations, as discussed in Chapter 7. Notably, the toolkit’s operation presupposes an environment that is conducive to trust, communication, inquiry, and reflection. Practitioners who are already oriented toward values will benefit from the toolkit’s ability to further sensitize their practice to values. And organizational settings that already have a culture of communication will be more able to integrate the toolkit into their processes. If a practitioner or an organization suffers from poor communication or low trust, then the toolkit will not thrive. Furthermore, the toolkit relies on a practitioner who is empowered in their organization to articulate and apply values, but this is not a given. Some practitioners will be able to adopt this tool and implement their values—for example, assessment directors or librarians who have tenure status in their organization. Others, however, could struggle to implement values if they have relatively low levels of empowerment and authority, and lack the ability or comfort to assert the values that matter to them and their particular situations. Finally, the toolkit is limited in that the toolkit itself cannot resolve an ethical tension. The toolkit functions to sensitize practitioners to values, and provides prompts that invite the practitioner to identify the tensions and produce the resolutions that fit their local setting. As a tool of collaboration and creativity, the toolkit requires the sincere, active contribution of practitioners to reach its potential of supporting an ethical practice of library assessment.

### 8.3.4 Positionality

The findings indicate that positionality is a relevant value for library assessment. Positionality means naming one's particular viewpoint and perspective relative to one's research. Positionality is connected to my research method of constructive grounded theory, as Charmaz (2006) describes: "Because constructivists see facts and values as linked, they acknowledge that what they see—and don't see—rests on values" (p. 131). The positionality value is thus also highly relevant to this dissertation. My unique position affords me a viewpoint that is particular to me. What I see and don't see rests on my values. My approach to this dissertation comes from my position first as a researcher-practitioner. I apply a value of inquiry as a researcher, and as a practitioner I apply a value of pragmatism. In completing this dissertation, I sought to build new knowledge about library assessment ethics, and also to produce a new practical contribution that my fellow assessment practitioners can apply in real-world settings. As a User Experience & Assessment Librarian, I bring a background of participatory design and co-design, and this informed the development of the toolkit into its form as a card deck. In my own personal life and professional pursuits, I also seek to better understand histories of oppression and exploitation, and to work towards a more just world that centers accountability and redress. My justice-oriented views have influenced my grounded theory analysis that produced codes such as imagining otherwise, co-determination, justice, and positionality. I want libraries to work better for more people, and my approach to this dissertation reflects these values of inclusion and justice. In research and designing a tool to support ethical assessment, I aim to help myself and other practitioners become more in tune with values. I hope to meet other practitioners as colleagues in a shared practice of ethical assessment that is mutually beneficial for practitioners, participants, and institutions.

## **8.4 Future Work**

The work of this dissertation can continue in a number of directions.

### 8.4.1 Values of LIS and of Assessment

To the question of values in LIS practice, there can be more work in establishing the values that are relevant to LIS practitioners across specialities. The ALA Core Values are currently the primary

point of reference for professional values in LIS, but the literature review findings of Chapter 3 suggest that LIS professional values have a greater history and complexity than the ALA Core Values. In a similar vein, the survey results from Chapter 6 indicate that some values may be more suited for particular specialties, such as specific values that are relevant for the specific needs of library assessment practice. In thinking about future directions, there could be work to expand the scope of the research to include other LIS specialties, and to determine similarities and differences in relevant values across different specialties, such as reference, collections, circulation, scholarly communication, and data management. A similar scenario-based survey administered to a more extensive population could generate insight into this question. Such a survey could also be administered to a greater number of the members of each specialty, resulting in data that is more representative of the profession. A sample could be developed that more fully represents the study population. Within assessment, for example, a researcher could build a register of assessment practitioners working in an academic library setting. To my knowledge, such a list does not presently exist. But it could be constructed manually by visiting staff directories of universities and colleges in North America, and documenting the names and email contacts of personnel who carry assessment-related titles, such as Assessment Librarian or Directory of Library Assessment. A randomized sample could then be generated from that list, with the resulting dataset serving as a representative sample of library assessment practitioners. The question of values could also be approached with a different research design. A set of qualitative interviews, for instance, could be conducted that ask practitioners to describe real-life ethical dilemmas or scenarios of values-in-conflict. Such interview data could be analyzed to better understand the tensions that practitioners encounter in the day-to-day operations of library assessment.

#### 8.4.2 Values and Demographics

The interviews raised further questions about the relative power and authority of practitioners in implementing values. This specific aspect could be developed further, especially related to practitioner demographics. The survey collected some data in this regard, such as the size of the institution and the employment status of respondents. I did not analyze the data vis-à-vis this demographic data, but further analysis in this direction could reveal differences in values across different demographic or identity characteristics. Practitioners of different cultural backgrounds or

age groups may have different values, for example. From the perspective of power and authority, values-orientation appears to change depending on one's position within an organizational structure. Administration, for example, could have different values than faculty, staff, or students. Once those value differences have been identified, there's a related question about the power to implement values. Again, organizational position influences the ability to enact a value. When there are tensions among values and stakeholders, whose values take priority in different situations?

### 8.4.3 Ethical Priorities and Perceptions

The research also generated an intriguing and unanswered question about ethical priorities and perceptions, relating to the competing interests of different stakeholders. The toolkit, for its part, aims to help practitioners identify and implement the values that are relevant for a particular situation. But how are those value choices perceived by others? In summary, an assessment practitioner can be influenced by the values of their university, library, profession, or their own personal values. These different entities present competing interests that call for resolution—how then does that resolution affect perceptions across stakeholder groups? I am influenced here by Hurst (2021), who cites research indicating that “people who are highly identified with their employer are more likely to engage in unethical actions that benefit the organization.” In light of this, what of assessment librarians who identify with their library or university more than with their profession? If employer values are in conflict with professional values, and a practitioner chooses to resolve that tension by enacting employer values, to what extent would other members of the assessment community view those actions as unethical in light of professional values?

### 8.4.4 Interview Data

Another area of expansion is the interview dataset produced in the dissertation. Within the scope of this research design, I applied the interview data analyses toward validating and revising the toolkit. But the interviews produced a rich dataset that can be analyzed with a view toward producing broader insights on the factors that influence practitioners' abilities to enact values and ethical practices in their daily work. In particular, interview participants described the constraints and opportunities they encounter in their organizations that help or hinder ethical assessment

practice. The interview data could undergo a similar grounded theory analysis or other qualitative analysis to develop insights about values and ethics in assessment.

#### 8.4.5 Toolkit Development

The toolkit itself can also be expanded and further tested. With a view toward further testing, the toolkit as it is currently constructed can be studied in real-life situations to better understand its feasibility as a useful tool for practitioners. The toolkit comes packaged with three exercises, but the number and type of exercises can be expanded to create more pathways into the values. These additional exercises could produce new sequences that can enhance the goal of the toolkit, which is to support values-based, ethical assessment. Different exercises could help support different dimensions that reflect practitioners' work environment. For example, assessment practitioners collaborate with a variety of stakeholders, from students to deans. Specific exercises could be developed that are optimized to work best when completed in collaboration with a certain type of stakeholder. Different exercises could also enhance the inclusivity of the toolkit. The three current exercises involve writing and drawing as a way to produce responses, and one exercise applies the metaphor of a boat to generate dialogue and insight. Other exercises could be added to the toolkit that ask participants to share thoughts through different modalities, and different metaphors can be applied that allow participants to have greater choice in how to engage with the values and generate ideas in support of ethical assessment practice.

Inclusivity can also be understood in terms of assessment stakeholders. From this perspective, further toolkit development would also benefit from expanding its field of view to include different stakeholders in its planning and design. The validation step of my research design focused on assessment practitioners working as librarians. For the toolkit to reach its full potential, it needs to be able to bring together diverse stakeholders including librarians, but also library staff and library administrators. Further development could validate and test the toolkit with different audiences. Finally, as a further note of the inclusivity of the toolkit, the accessibility of the toolkit can be more strongly developed. The toolkit could exist in a digital environment, for example, potentially as a web application or a digital download that allows broader accessibility to the toolkit content, as through a screen reader on a web site.



The toolkit underwent a number of changes and revisions following the validation step of the research design. In particular, the exercise card for Values Freewrite was reformulated into Connect Two. This change was warranted based on the interview data, but this new exercise has not yet been tested with practitioners. Before being released as a final product, a further round of validation that focuses on this exercise would strengthen this card and help position the toolkit as a fully tested product.

Finally, in looking further into the future of ethical assessment, this toolkit could form the basis of a professional development training series or a certification process for values-sensitive practice. The toolkit could constitute a day-long or even multi-day workshop, where practitioners learn how to work with the toolkit, and how to develop their facility with articulating and applying values. A train-the-trainer series could be developed where I lead a group of assessment professionals in the operation of the toolkit, and that knowledge is disseminated back to their home institutions. More formally, I could connect with established professional conferences such as the *Library Assessment Conference* or the *Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries* to develop a workshop, training, or certification series. Or, looking to the American Library Association, I could build on existing interests around Core Values to develop an ethical training series based around the toolkit. The assessment community is extensive, with many practitioners working in library settings with library values. When looking widely across the field, a view comes into focus of the toolkit's applicability expanding in such a way as to bring those many others into the practice of value-sensitive assessment.

## 8.5 Closing Thoughts

Viewing library values and library value as equivalent brings about the closing thought of this dissertation: libraries can achieve value by enacting library values. The underlying assertion of the toolkit is that libraries and library assessment can be made manifestly valuable by demonstrating values in action. The toolkit is partly a response to calls from the profession to “re-inject the core values of libraries and of our parent institutions into our work and our decision-making” (Bourg,

2013, para. 11). In libraries, living our values is our value. We first must know our values, and then can we enact our values. In answer to this dissertation's main research question—"how can library assessment be practiced ethically?"—the answer is that ethical assessment can be conducted by knowing and enacting our values, and the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit* aids practitioners in both knowing and enacting value.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Literature Analysis

This appendix contains literature analysis data organized by assessment characteristic, with subcategories listed according to practice area.

### Community co-determination

- Critical Assessment
  - Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers 2014; Marsh & Punzalan 2016; Punzalan, Marsh, & Cools 2017; Caswell et al. 2017; Zavala et al. 2017; Magnus, Belanger, Faber 2018; Montenegro & Jankowski 2020
- Co-Design
  - Marquez & Downey 2015; Neurohr & Bailey 2016; Drew 2018; Rigling 2018; Puckett-Rodgers, Leyton, & King 2019; Tewell 2019; Davis 2020
- Strategic Planning
  - Konkiel et al. 2017; Agate 2018; Galvan 2020; Baich 2020
- Norms and Regulations
  - Hill 2013; Rosen 2017; Kazuye 2018
- Care Ethics
  - H A. Olson 2007; Accardi 2013; Nowviskie 2015; Cifor and Wood 2017; Hathcock and Vinopal 2017; Howard 2017; Dohe 2019; D. Olson et al. 2019; Douglas 2020

### Imagining otherwise

- Critical Assessment
  - Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers 2014; DeLuca Fernández 2015; Graf & Harris 2016; Marsh & Punzalan 2016; Punzalan, Marsh, & Cools 2017; Reale 2017; Caswell et al. 2017; Zavala et al. 2017
- Co-Design
  - Robinson 2019
- Strategic Planning
  - Town 2011; Town & Kyrillidou 2013; Town 2015; Town 2018; Konkiel et al. 2017; Agate 2018
- Norms and Regulations
  - Kumbier, & Starkey 2016; Pionke 2017; Rosen 2017



- Care Ethics
  - H. A. Olson 2007; Accardi 2013; Nowviskie 2015; Cifor and Wood 2017; Higgins 2017; Douglas 2020

### **Lifelong Learning**

- Co-Design
  - Clarke 2019
- Norms and Regulations
  - Bailey 2018

### **Privacy**

- Critical Assessment
  - O’Gara et al. 2018; Muglia et al. 2019
- Norms and Regulations
  - Bailey 2018

### **Qualitative measures**

- Critical Assessment
  - Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers 2014; Magnus, Belanger, Faber 2018; Marsh & Punzalan 2016; Punzalan, Marsh, & Cools 2017;
- Strategic Planning
  - Town 2011; Town & Kyrillidou 2013; Town 2015; Town 2018

### **Relational**

- Critical Assessment
  - Marsh & Punzalan 2016; Punzalan, Marsh, & Cools 2017
- Co-Design
  - Delaney & Bates 2015; Clarke 2017b; Gamboni 2017
- Strategic Planning
  - Town 2011; Town & Kyrillidou 2013; Town 2015; Town 2018
- Norms and Regulations
  - Pereyaslavskaya 2015
- Care Ethics
  - H. A. Olson 2007; Accardi 2013; Nowviskie 2015; Caswell & Cifor 2016; Hathcock and Vinopal 2017; Higgins 2017; Howard 2017; Malenfant & Brown 2017; D. Olson et al. 2019; Douglas 2020

**Self-reflection**

- Critical Assessment
  - Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers 2014; Reale 2017; Magnus, Belanger, Faber 2018; Hodge 2019; Montenegro & Jankowski 2020
- Co-Design
  - Clarke 2017; Reidsma 2017; Robinson 2019
- Strategic Planning
  - Konkiel et al. 2017; Agate 2018
- Norms and Regulations
  - Cox 2018
- Care Ethics
  - Hathcock and Vinopal 2017; Douglas 2020

**Social impacts and social justice**

- Critical Assessment
  - Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers 2014; DeLuca Fernández 2015; Graf & Harris 2016; Marsh & Punzalan 2016; Punzalan, Marsh, & Cools 2017; Caswell et al. 2017; Zavala et al. 2017; Magnus, Belanger, Faber 2018; Hodge 2019; Montenegro & Jankowski 2020
- Strategic Planning
  - Konkiel et al. 2017; Agate 2018
- Co-Design
  - Neurohr 2016; Rigling 2018; Clarke 2019b; Tewell 2019
- Norms and Regulations
  - Kumbier 2016; Pionke 2017; Rosen 2017; Kazuye 2018; Brown & Sheidlower 2019
- Care Ethics
  - Nowvieskie 2015; Caswell & Cifor 2016; Cifor and Wood 2017; Hathcock and Vinopal 2017; Higgins 2017; Howard 2017; Dohe 2019

**Stated values and positions**

- Critical Assessment
  - DeLuca Fernández 2015; Marsh & Punzalan 2016; Punzalan, Marsh, & Cools 2017; O’Gara et al. 2018; Muglia et al. 2019; Magnus, Belanger, Faber 2018; Hodge 2019
- Co-Design
  - Reidsma 2017; Marquez & Downey 2015; Clarke 2017; Robinson 2019

- Strategic Planning
  - Town 2011; Town & Kyrillidou 2013; Town 2015; Town 2018; Konkiel et al. 2017; Agate 2018; Galvan 2020; Baich 2020
- Norms and Regulations
  - Rosen 2017
- Care Ethics
  - H. A. Olson 2007; Hathcock and Vinopal 2017; D. Olson et al. 2019

**Sustainability**

- Critical Assessment
  - Caswell et al. 2017; Zavala et al. 2017
- Care Ethics
  - Malenfant & Brown 2017; D. Olson et al. 2019

**Transparency**

- Critical Assessment
  - Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers 2014; O’Gara et al. 2018; Muglia et al. 2019; Montenegro & Jankowski 2020
- Co-Design
  - Puckett-Rodgers, Leyton, & King 2019
- Strategic Planning
  - Konkiel et al. 2017; Agate 2018; Galvan 2020; Baich 2020
- Norms and Regulations
  - Bailey 2018; Cox 2018
- Care Ethics
  - Hathcock and Vinopal 2017

## **Appendix B: Survey Recruitment Message**

*Subject:* Values and Ethics in Assessment: Request for Survey Participation

Hi everyone,

This message is an invitation to participate in a research study that investigates ethical decision-making in the practice of library assessment. The study seeks participation from academic librarians who practice assessment in any part of their work.

### **The Survey**

Participants are asked to complete one online survey. The survey includes questions related to: 1) professional values; 2) ethical decision-making; 3) demographic information. The survey should take around 30 minutes to complete. If you are interested in participating in this study, please access the survey through the following link:

**[tiny.cc/ethical-assessment-survey](https://tiny.cc/ethical-assessment-survey)**

### **Next Steps**

Reminder messages will be sent on November 23 and December 2. The survey will remain open until December 11. If you know of other library assessment practitioners who could provide a relevant perspective on this topic, please forward this message. Survey responses will be used to inform the development of an ethical decision aid for library assessment practitioners.

### **Questions**

If you have questions about this project or the survey, please contact me:

Scott W. H. Young, [swyoung@montana.edu](mailto:swyoung@montana.edu), Associate Professor, Montana State University

Thank you for considering this request.

All best,

Scott

## **Appendix C: Informed Consent for the Survey**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **Who is conducting this research?**

Scott Young, Associate Professor and User Experience & Assessment Librarian, Montana State University

#### **Is my participation voluntary?**

You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Montana State University.

#### **Will I be paid for participation?**

No, you will not be paid for participating in this study.

#### **What will happen during the study?**

You will complete one online survey. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

#### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?**

The risks of participating in this research are minimal, and involve the time and effort spent on completing the survey. There are no expected benefits from taking part in this study, but I hope that the results will provide a practical benefit to assessment practitioners in understanding and resolving ethical decision-making.

#### **How will my information be protected?**

This survey does not collect personally identifiable information. This survey is being facilitated using the Qualtrics survey system, which is contracted to Montana State University as a vendor. Only research collaborators will have access to individual responses available in Qualtrics. You will be asked to volunteer identifying information about yourself only if you would like to speak further with the researcher, and that information will be maintained in a separate survey so as to prevent data identification.

#### **Who should I call with questions or concerns?**

For questions about this project, contact Scott Young, [swyoung@montana.edu](mailto:swyoung@montana.edu). For questions about the rights of human subjects, contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, [mquinn@montana.edu](mailto:mquinn@montana.edu).

**I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. By clicking the next arrow, I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.**

## Appendix D: Detailed Description of Survey

Question number	Question text	Rationale
Block 1	What is this survey about?	This provides a very brief overview of the survey goals.
Block 2	Informed consent	This informs survey respondents of the risks and benefits of the survey, and allows respondents to opt into continuing to the survey questions.
Block 3	Introduction	This provides an overview of the survey's structure, with definitions of key terms to help provide context and shared understanding.
Block 4	Professional Values and Library Practice	This provides an introduction to the first main part of the survey
Block 4: Question 1	I refer to the ALA Core Values when making decisions about my assessment practice.	This question checks to what extent the respondent refers to the ALA Core Values.
Block 4: Question 2	Which of the ALA Core Values are most important to your assessment practice?	This question provides insight related to the values that are most important to practitioners. Responses can help guide the development of the framework by creating a priority of values to be addressed. The values offered to respondents included a controlled vocabulary drawn from the ALA Core Values. These values were selected because the ALA list is the most common point of reference found in the literature.
Block 4: Question 3	Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice. You can mark as many values in each category as appropriate.	This question also provides insights related to the values-in-practice, but adds a nuance by prompting the respondent to consider the actual practice of assessment vis-à-vis the values.

Block 4: Question 4	Which other values are relevant in your assessment practice? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above.	Beyond the controlled list of the ALA Core Values, this question allows respondents to provide further values that are relevant for their work. Responses to this question can provide new viewpoints on values that go beyond the ALA Core Values.
Block 4: Question 5	Do you have a locally-developed values statement that guides assessment practice at your library?	Survey pre-testing indicated that respondents may have a local values statement that guides their work. This question was included to reveal any local statements.
Block 4: Question 6	Can you list the values that are included in your local values statement?	If the respondent answered yes to the previous question, this answer was shown so as to prompt further detail about the values statement
Block 5	Ethical Decision-Making in Library Assessment Practice	Introductory language for the second of three main parts
Block 6: Scenario 1	There's a perceived need on campus for the library to demonstrate its value to university administration in order to receive continued financial support. The assessment librarian thinks about conducting a study that would produce a return-on-investment (ROI) measure for the library's e-resources. The librarian knows that this assessment would resonate with university administration. At the same time, the librarian thinks that dollars-and-cents calculations might not be appropriate for	This scenario was presented to respondents so as to gather data related to library value and impact, which was a key theme identified through the literature review.

	measuring abstract educational outcomes of learning and research. The librarian decides not to conduct the study.	
Block 6: Question 1	What is the likelihood that you would take the same action as this librarian?	Each scenario presented a clear action in response to a potential ethical dilemma. This question assesses the ethical response of practitioners with the action of the scenario as a guidepost.
Block 6: Question 2	In your opinion, which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?	This question assesses the values that are in play for a given scenario. A controlled vocabulary drawn from the ALA Core Values was used.
Block 6: Question 3	Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above.	Respondents were able to include any values not included in the ALA Core Values.
Block 6: Question 4	As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario?	This question allowed respondents to provide an open-ended description of potential actions that could resolve the dilemma of the scenario.
Block 7: Scenario 2	In order to assess the library website, the assessment librarian is considering implementing new analytics software that captures screen recordings of website visits. The analytics software is operated by a privately-owned e-commerce company, and the screen recordings would be stored on the company's	This scenario was presented to respondents so as to gather data related to technology and privacy, which was a key theme identified through the literature review.



	cloud servers, which could affect the privacy of library users. But this company's software can provide advanced analytics that would be applied to improve library web services. The librarian decides to implement the software.	
Block 8: Scenario 3	The assessment librarian maintains anonymous student data related to library gate counts. University administration has requested that the library begin identifying this data using card swipe records, and then share the data into a centralized learning analytics data warehouse. University administration would analyze the data and develop interventions with students to improve retention. But the assessment librarian is concerned that this approach doesn't reflect library professional values, and considers raising an objection. Still, the librarian feels a sense of commitment to the institution, and ultimately decides to identify and share the data.	This scenario was presented to respondents so as to gather data related to learning analytics and student success, which was a key theme identified through the literature review.
Block 9:	The assessment librarian is	This scenario was presented to respondents so

Scenario 4	<p>working with the university's prison abolition student group to assess the library's usage of subject headings related to incarceration. At the same time, the librarian recognizes that this project would affect the library's position of neutrality, since the topic is politically charged, the library's affiliation with this group could be controversial, and the results might be viewed as biased. Despite these reservations, the librarian sees the benefit of this project, and decides to conduct the assessment.</p>	<p>as to gather data related to social responsibility, neutrality, and cataloging, which were key themes identified through the literature review.</p>
Block 10: Scenario 5	<p>The assessment librarian has formed a student working group to help inform a study of library instruction. The student group proposes a study to assess how students of different immigrant statuses experience library instruction. The librarian is hesitant because this assessment doesn't align with existing institutional priorities, and the results might not be received well by other librarians and administrators. But the</p>	<p>This scenario was presented to respondents so as to gather data related to social responsibility, student participation, and library instruction, which were key themes identified through the literature review.</p>

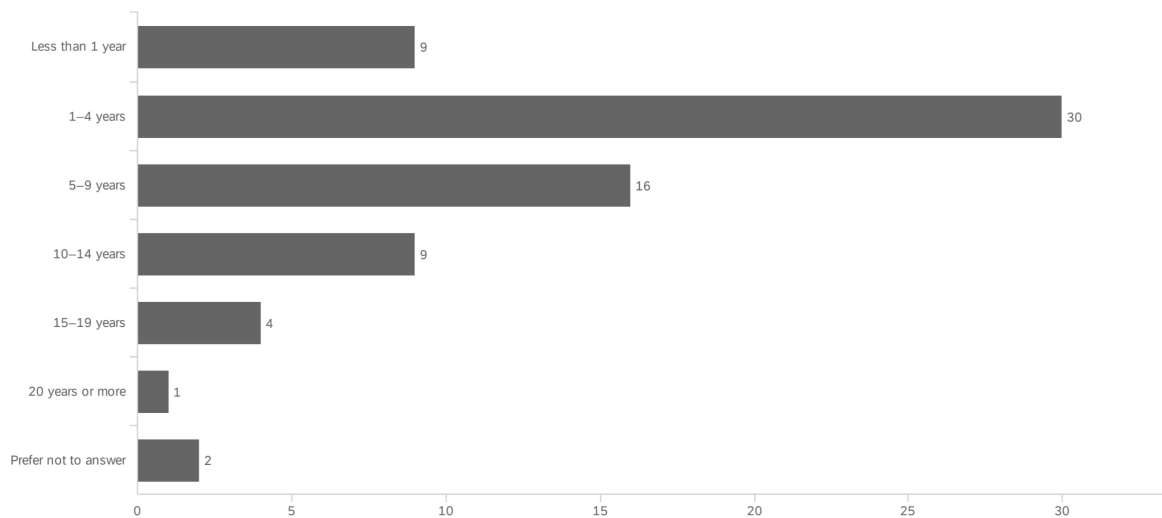
	<p>assessment librarian feels that student voices should be meaningfully included in the assessment process, even if student viewpoints challenge existing perspectives and processes. The librarian ultimately decides to advocate for the student group, and to co-develop an immigration-focused assessment with the students.</p>	
Block 11: Scenario 6	<p>The assessment librarian is assessing the accessibility of special collections finding aids. The librarian considers inviting disabled members of the university community to be participants in the assessment process, as they could provide relevant cultural perspectives. But the librarian doesn't have an existing relationship with this community, and isn't sure how to involve them or how much time it would take. The assessment librarian decides not to involve the community members.</p>	<p>This scenario was presented to respondents so as to gather data related to archives and community participation, which was a key theme identified through the literature review.</p>
Block 12	<p>Before we turn to demographic questions, is there any further response that you would</p>	<p>This question provides an opportunity for response to any part of the survey or the research.</p>

	like to share regarding the subject matter of the survey?	
Block 13: Question 1	How many staff are currently assigned to library assessment in your organization, including yourself?	This question assesses the personnel and budgetary scope of assessment at each respondent's local institution. Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between staff size and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 2	How many assessment staff do you supervise?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between supervisory role and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 3	To what extent is assessment practiced in your library?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between assessment maturity and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 4	I have sufficient funding to conduct assessment.	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between budget and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 5	What is your primary job classification?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between job classification and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 6	I feel that I have job security.	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between job security and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 7	How many years have you practiced assessment in an academic library?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between experience and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 8	Which of these types of degrees have you earned?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between education and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 9	Are you a member of the American Library Association (ALA)?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between professional membership and ethical response, specifically focusing on ALA membership since the ALA

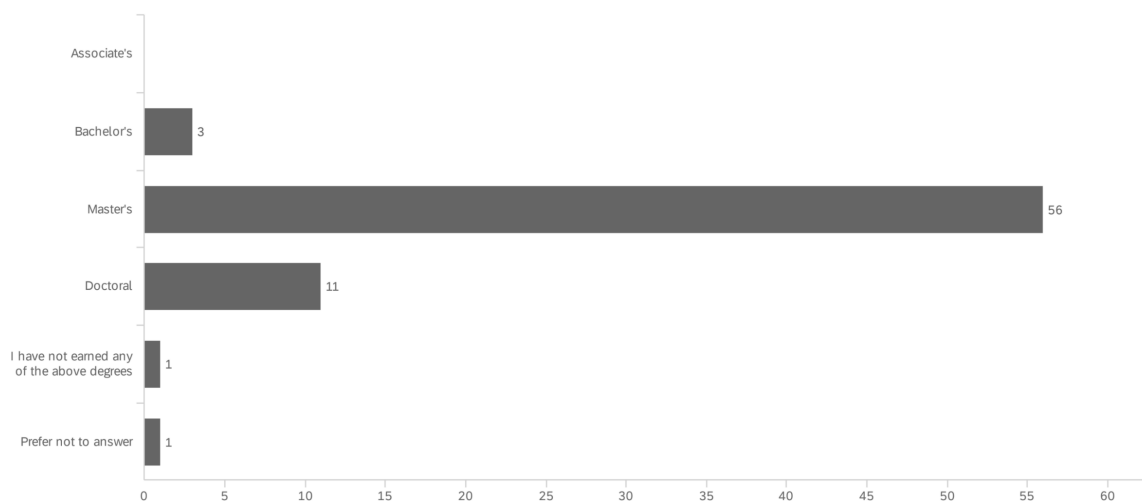
		Core Values are a central component of the survey.
Block 13: Question 10	Are you a member of other professional organizations?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between professional membership and ethical response.
Block 13: Question 11	Are you a member of a historically oppressed group?	Responses to this question will help reveal a relationship between cultural identity and ethical response.
Block 14	Would you be available to talk more with the researcher about the values that support ethical decision-making in library assessment? (if you respond yes, you will be connected to a separate contact survey)	This question builds a pool of participants for the next phase of the research, which will involve interviews that focus on the new assessment framework.

## Appendix E: Presentation of Supplemental Survey Results and Analysis

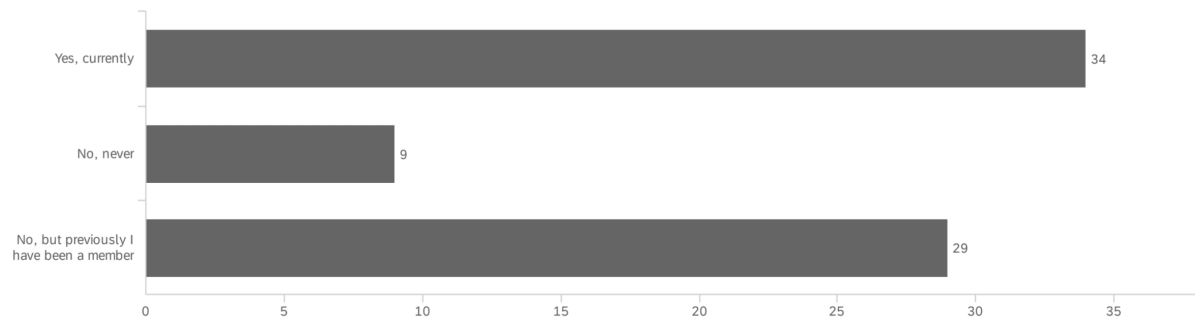
### Demographics



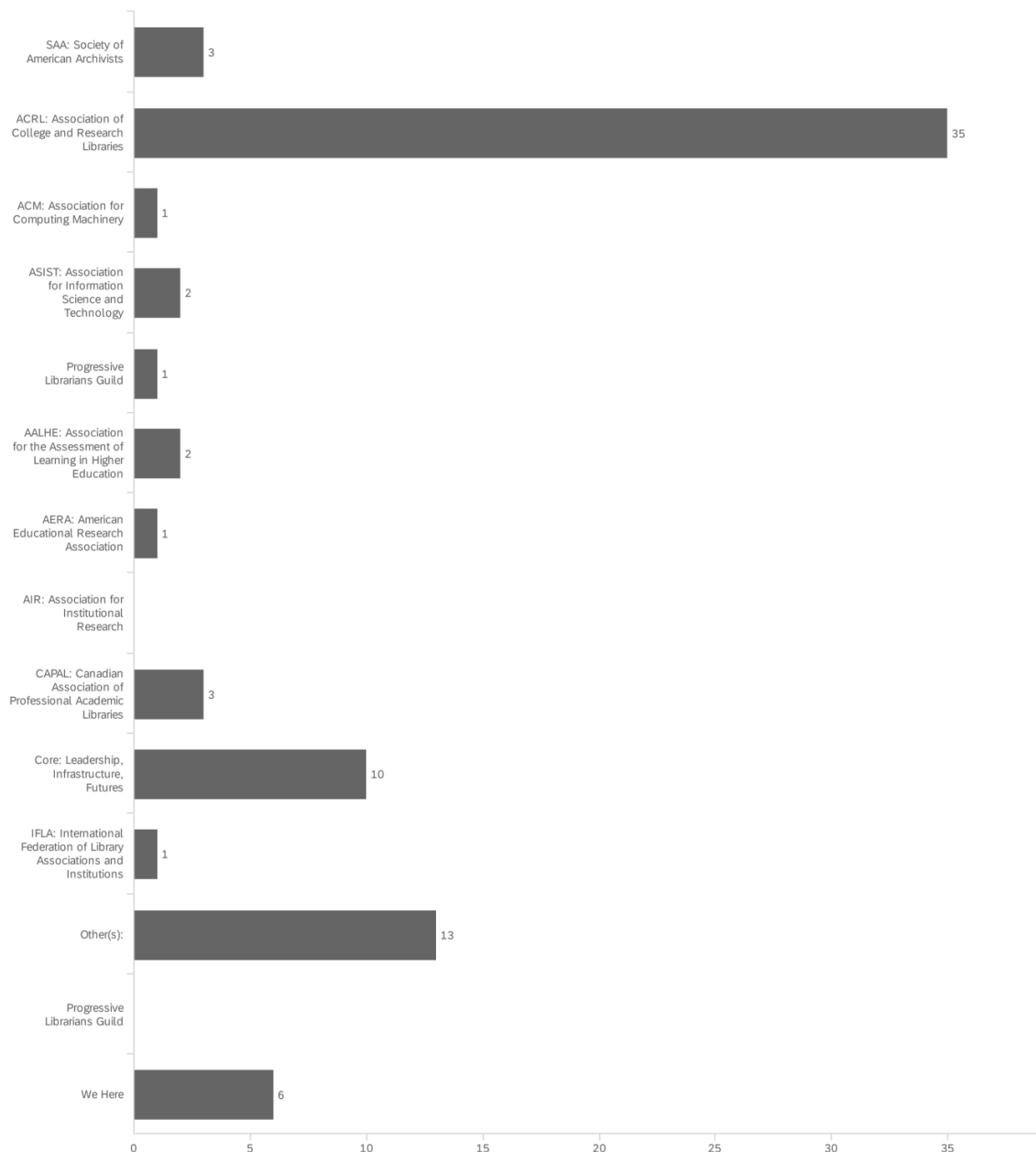
**How many years have you practiced assessment in an academic library? (n=71)**



**Which of these types of degrees have you earned? Select highest degree earned. (n=72)**



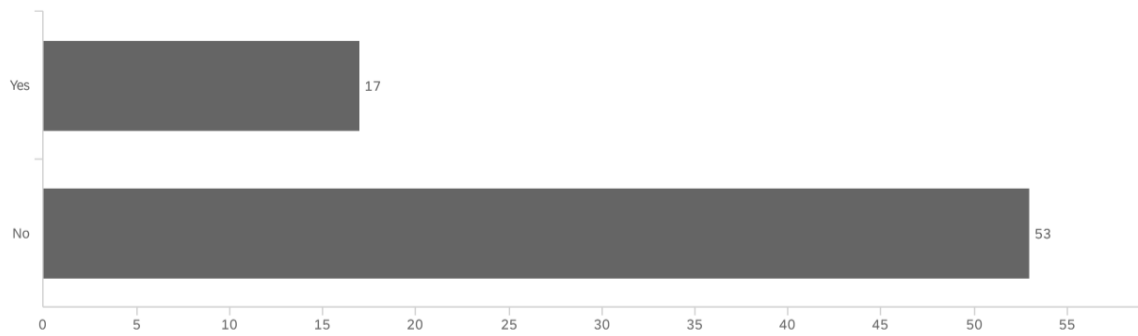
**Are you a member of the American Library Association (ALA)? (n=72)**



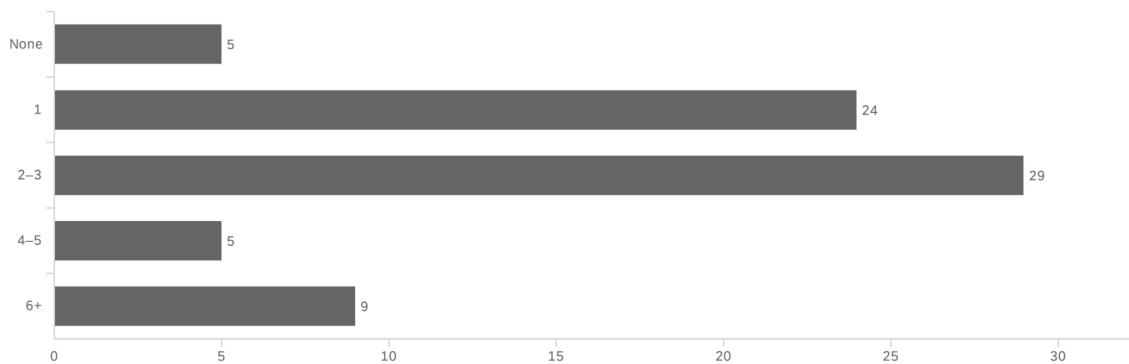
**Are you a member of other professional organizations (select all that apply)? (n=47)**

Others include: “The League of Awesome Librarians, Assoc. of Christian Librarians, REFORMA, State library association, Georgia Library, LIANZA, RUSA, SLA, Digital Publishing Forum, SSA, OK-ACRL, PTPL

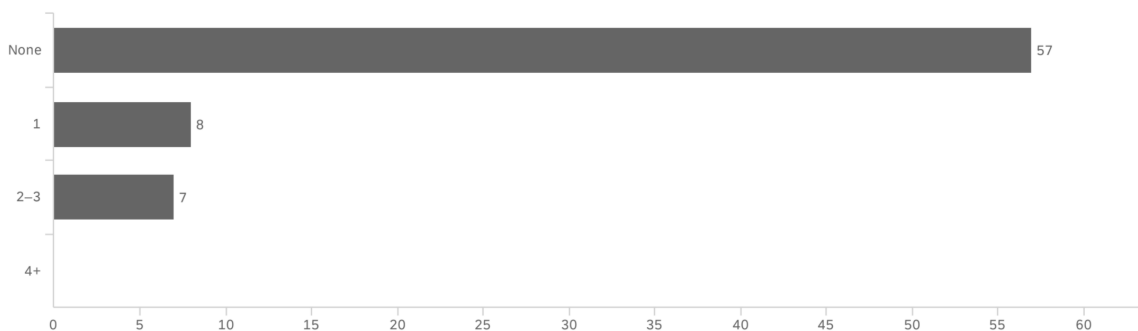




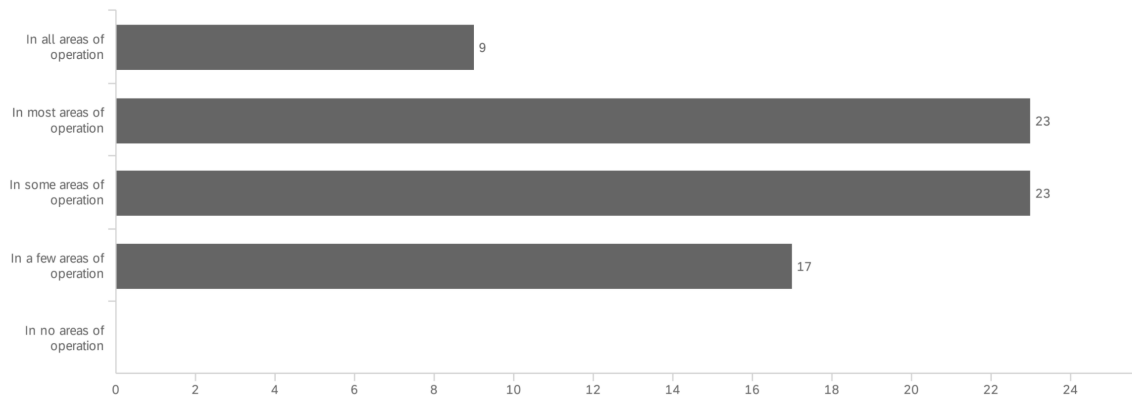
**Are you a member of a historically oppressed group? (n=70)**



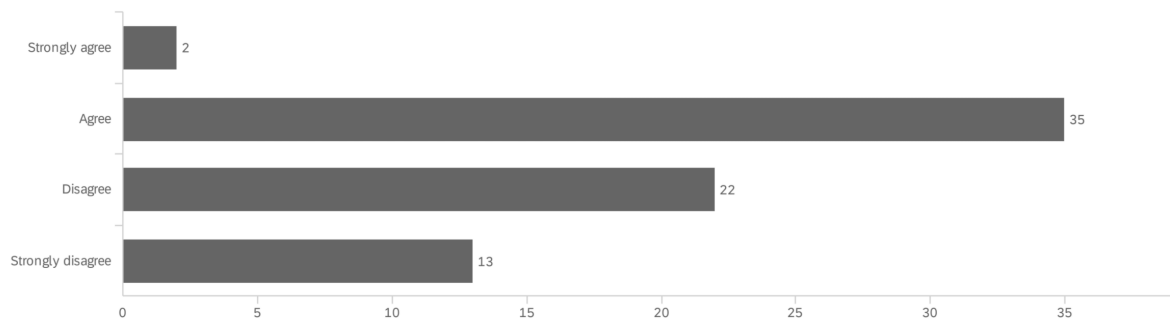
**How many staff are currently assigned to library assessment in your organization, including yourself? (n=72)**



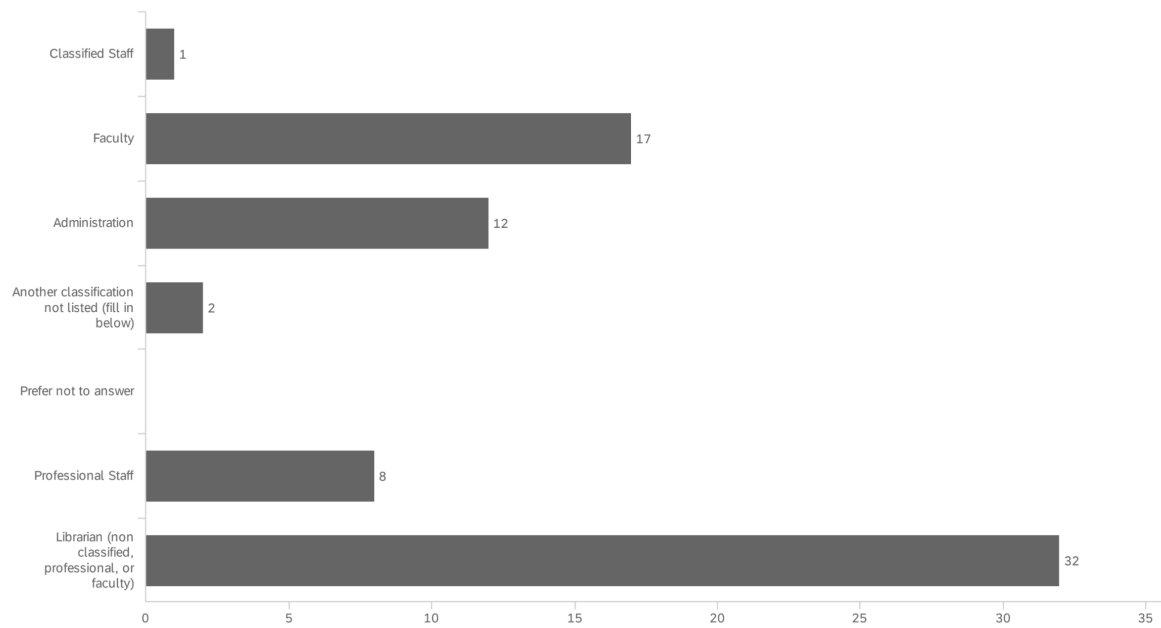
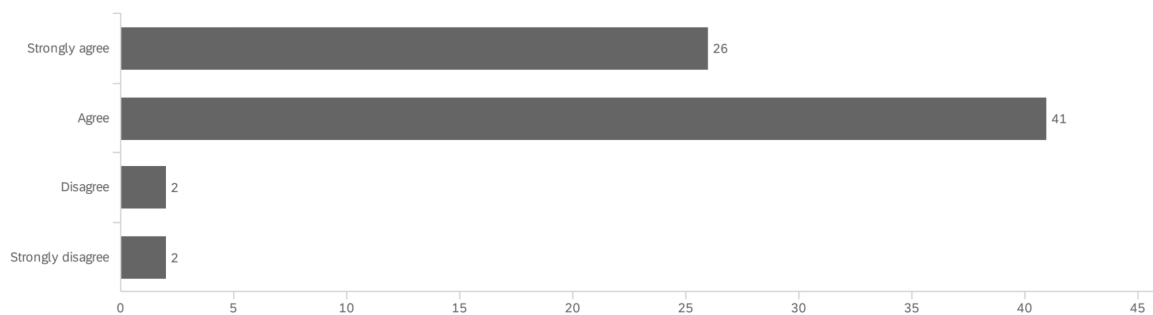
**How many assessment staff do you supervise? (n=72)**



**To what extent is assessment practiced in your library? (n=72)**

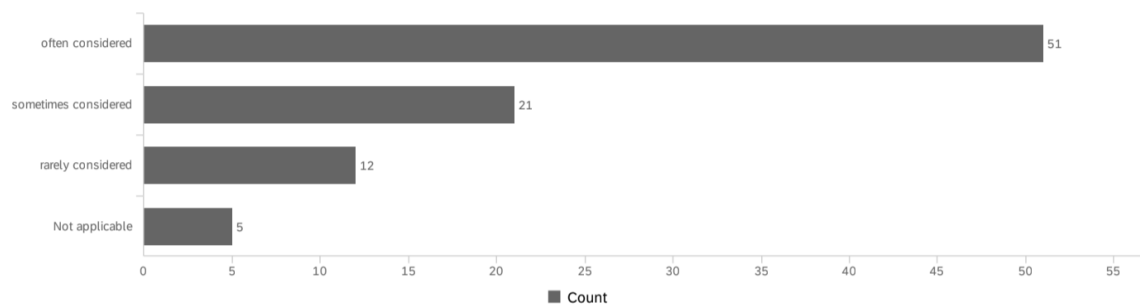


**I have sufficient funding to conduct assessment. (n=72)**

**What is your primary job classification? (n=72)****I feel that I have job security. (n=71)**

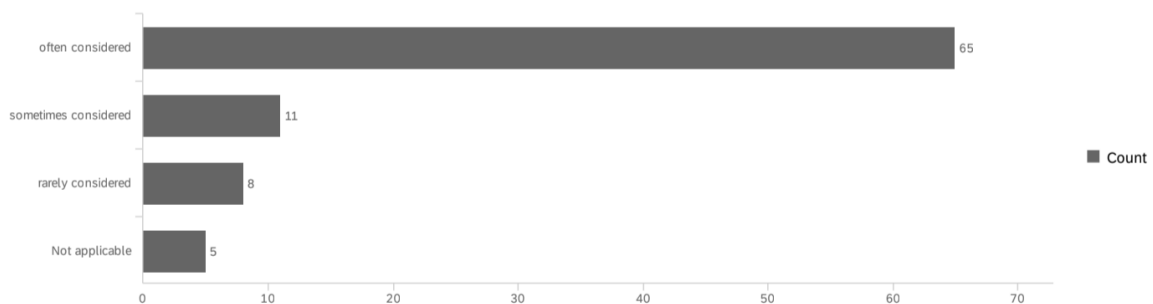
## ALA Core Values

### Access



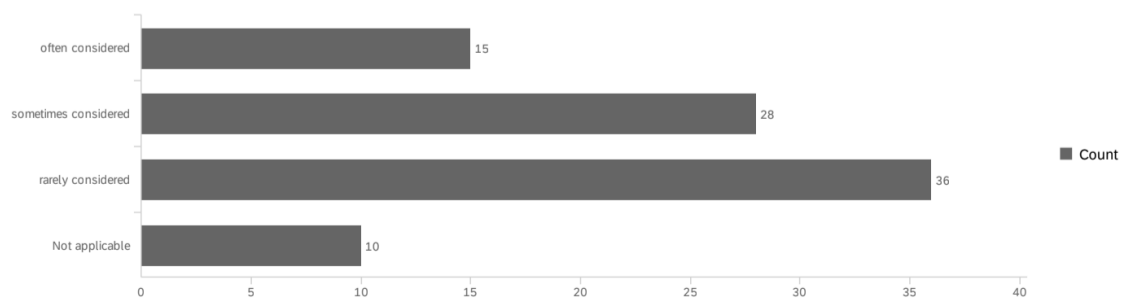
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Access. (n=89)**

### Confidentiality/Privacy

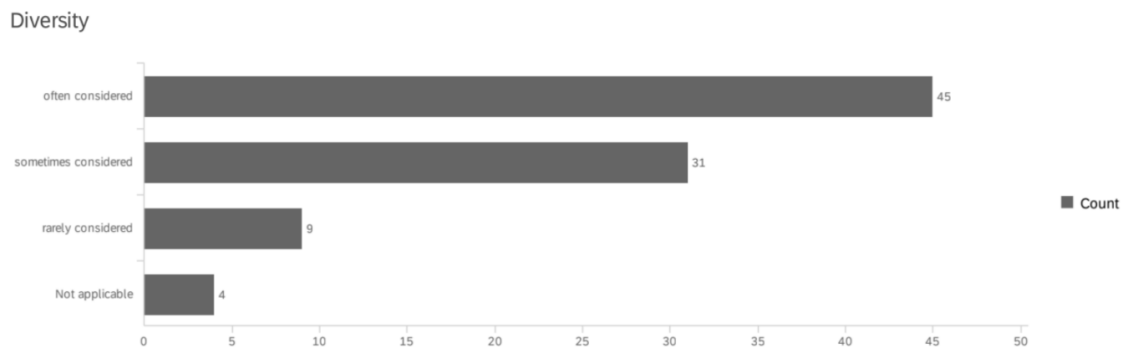


**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Confidentiality/Privacy. (n=89)**

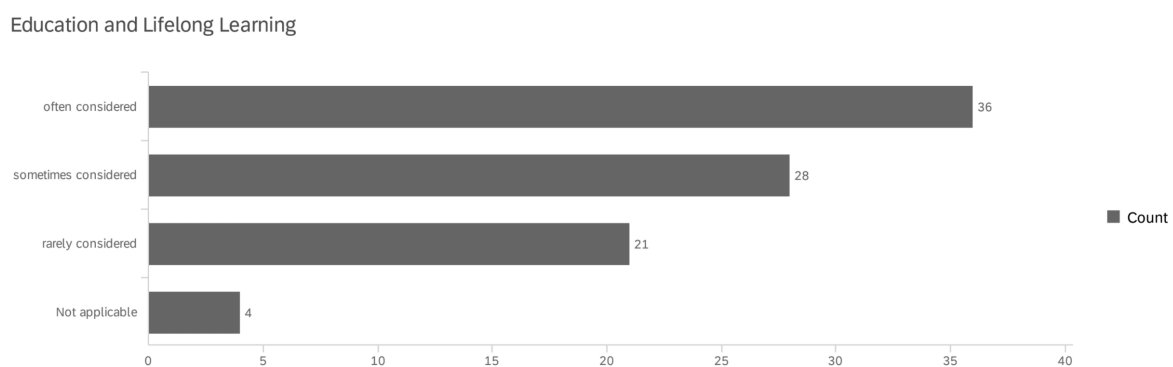
### Democracy



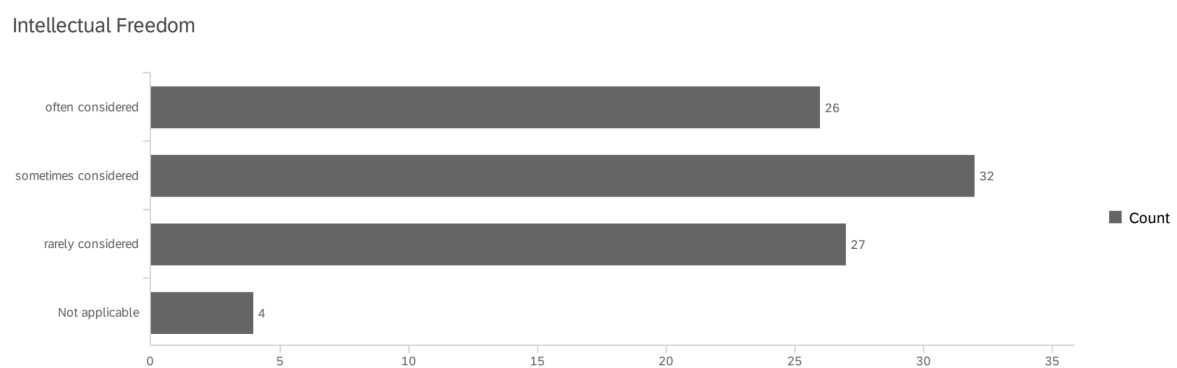
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Democracy (n=89)**



**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Diversity (n=89)**

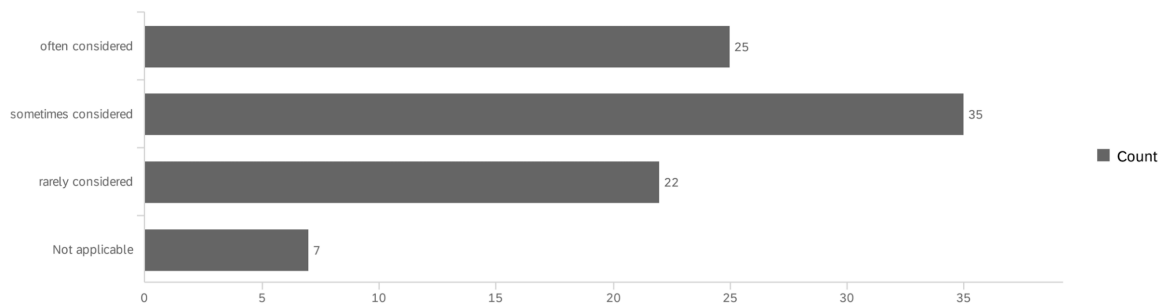


**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Education and Lifelong Learning (n=89)**



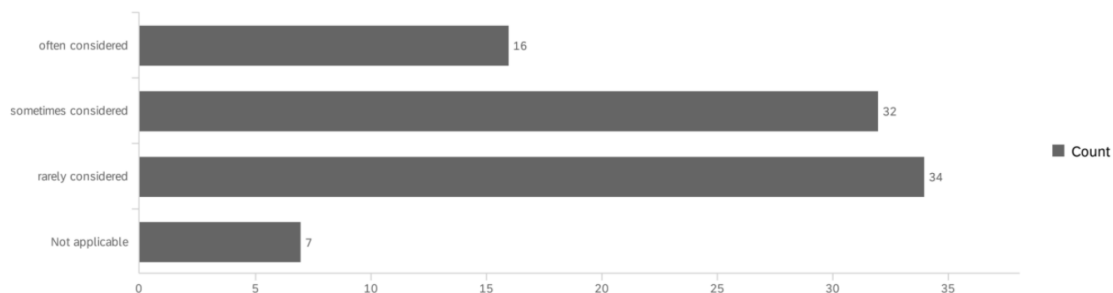
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Intellectual Freedom (n=89)**

The Public Good



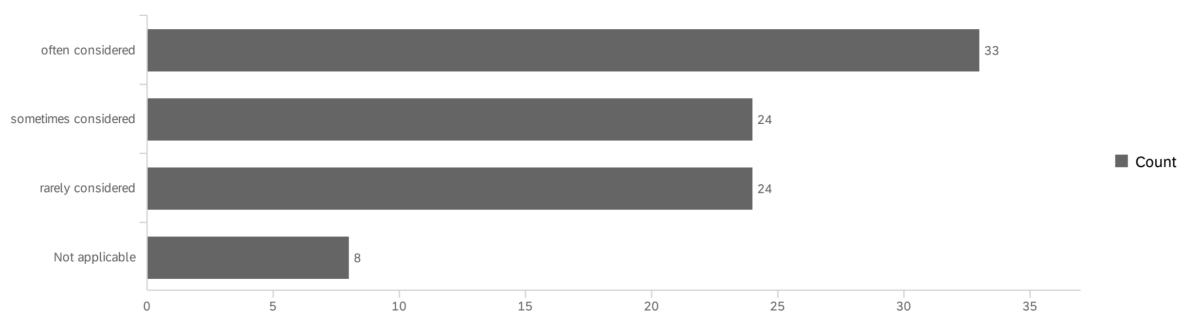
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: The Public Good. (n=89)**

Preservation



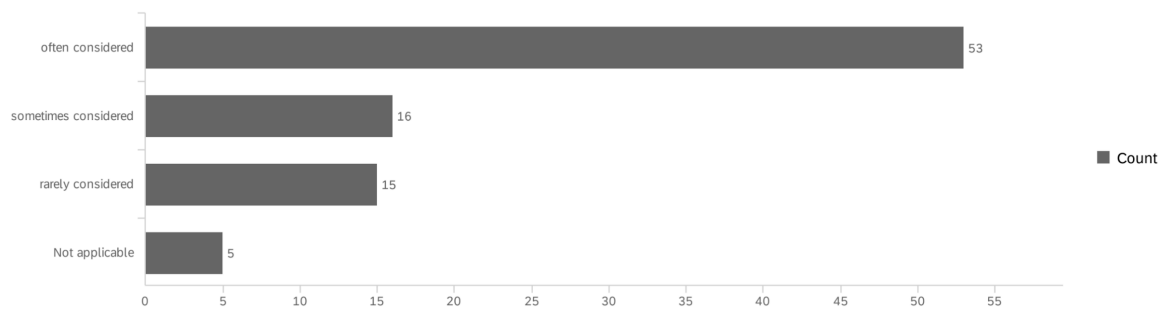
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Preservation. (n=89)**

Professionalism



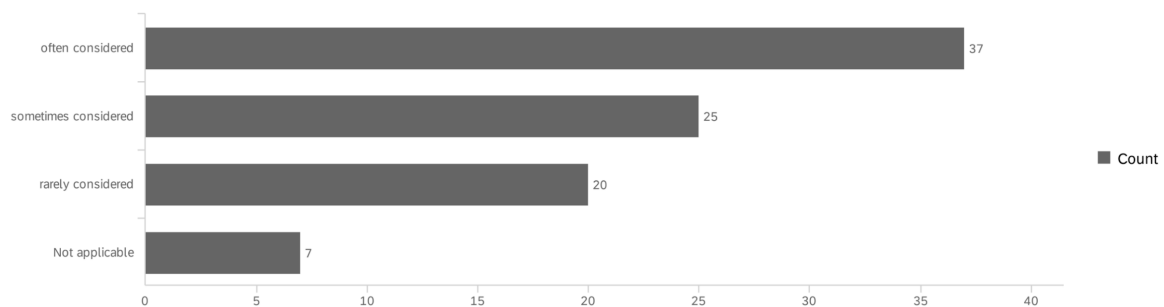
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Professionalism. (n=89)**

## Service



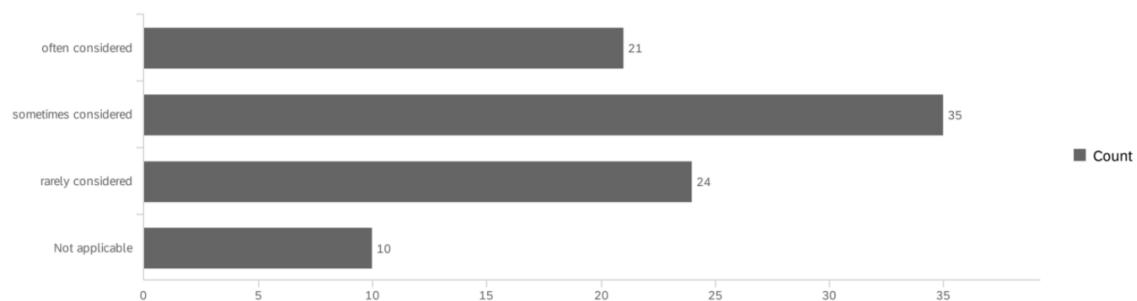
**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Service (n=89)**

## Social Responsibility



**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Social Responsibility (n=89)**

## Sustainability



**Mark the ALA Core Values according to how often you consider each value in your assessment practice: Sustainability. (n=90)**

<b>Question</b> - Which other values are relevant to your assessment practice? (n=53)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Validity	12	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	“accuracy, design, sample size, focus, actionable results”
Justice	8	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	“I have a lot of power in my position; the people I am asking to share their observations do not necessarily have that kind of power.”
Alignment	7	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	“The mission, vision, and values of the library and institution.”
Beneficence	6	Values that relate to the well-being and care of those involved in the assessment	“Harm reduction, as in not asking for personal information beyond what's crucial for the analysis.”



Human-centered	5	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	“User-centered mindset”
Collaboration	2	Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making	“Ensuring the people represented by assessments have the ability to influence data gathering and reporting.”
Transparency	3	Values related to clear communication about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.	“transparency and honesty”
Communication and Outreach	2	Values that relate to professional development, scholarly communication, and internal culture-building.	“Open access”
Operability	2	Values that relate to the financial and staffing operations of the library.	“Responsible stewardship; accountability”
None	2	Responses marked either “none,” “NA”, or restated an ALA Core Value	“None”
Positionality	1		“Positionality of the person

			doing the assessment: the person as a part of the institution is not neutral.”
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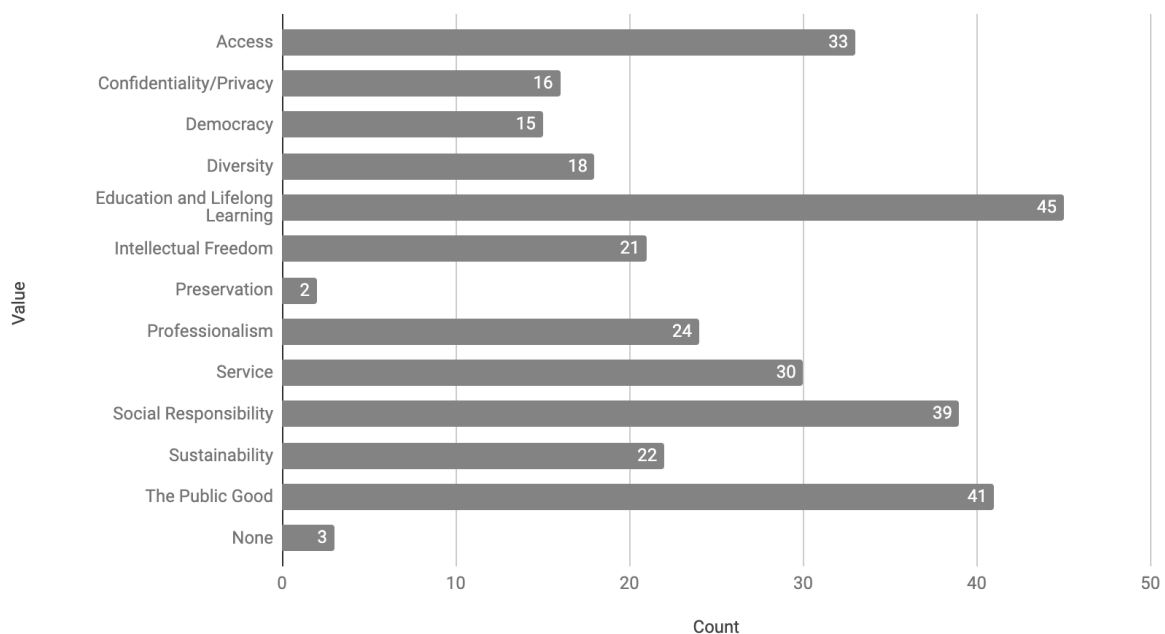
<b>Question</b> - Do you have a locally-developed values statement that guides assessment practice at your library? (n=95)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Justice	19	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	“We create a safe and supportive environment that honors the library’s diverse constituencies and employees.”
Validity	14	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	“Collect, manage, analyze and report data pertaining to library service delivery and library value.”
Collaboration	12	Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making.	“Partnerships with other academic units.”
Imagining Otherwise	12	Values relating to open-mindedness, innovation, and	“We foster a climate that encourages creativity, experimentation, and

		questioning the status quo.	adaptability.”
Communication and Outreach	5	Values that relate to professional development, scholarly communication, and internal culture-building.	“Advances library communication and evidence-based librarianship by sharing and promoting its work with the library community as well as in professional circles.”
Human-centered	6	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	“Put users first”
Alignment	3	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	“align with parent institutional values”
Transparency	3	Values involving clear communication to stakeholders.	“Openness”
Positionality	2	Acknowledging personal perspectives, values, and positions	“Strives to stay objective, impartial, and grounded in research and analysis.”
Operability	1	Values that relate to the financial and staffing operations of the library.	“Accountability”
Other: Faith	1	Faith	“Faith”

Other: Leadership	1	Leadership	“Leadership”
Other: Wisdom	1	Wisdom	“Wisdom”
ALA Core Value	15	Values that restated ALA Core Values, including: Service (7), Access (4), Lifelong Learning (1), Privacy (1), Sustainability (1), Intellectual Freedom (1).	

### Scenario 1

#### Scenario 1: Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?



**Question** - Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above. (n=27)

#### **Thematic Analysis**

Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Validity	8	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	“Methodologically, it’s not feasible to control for all the variables affecting learning and to sort out which are applicable to the library and which are not.”
Imagining Otherwise	6	Values relating to open-mindedness, innovation, and questioning the status quo.	“It’s not always about using the language our stakeholders use, like ROI.”
Alignment	5	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	“Organizational citizenship (upholding university mission).”
Operability	4	Values that relate to the financial and staffing operations of the library.	“Fiscal responsibility”
Human-centered	2	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	“Seeing people as humans, not aggregate numbers.”
None	2	Responses marked either “none,” “NA”, or restated an ALA Core Value	—

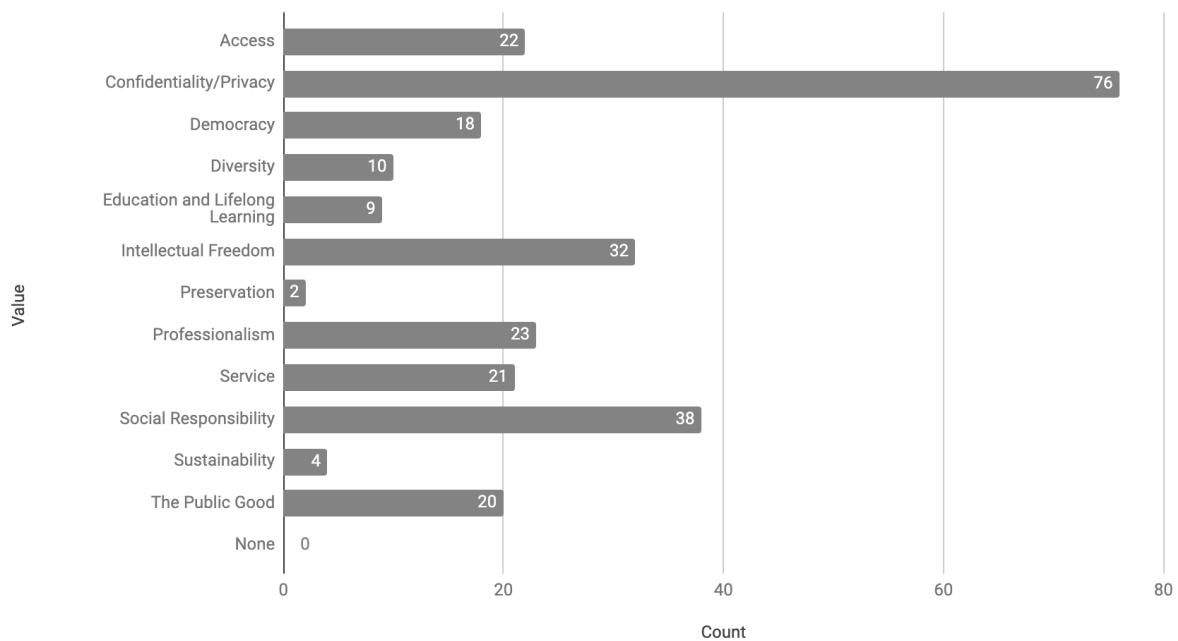
**Question** - As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario?

(n=60)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Alternative Methods	27	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.	<p>“I would conduct a mixed methods study to include the initial assessment idea and add in a qualitative component.”</p> <p>“Perform an assessment that includes more than just the financial perspective.”</p>
Context	16	Demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts.	<p>“I believe that the ROI study would be helpful and I would complete it, but I would also provide context for the data to help administration understand the fuller picture. Due to low numbers in some majors, for example, simple calculations would not explain the whole impact or necessity of resources. While the ROI sounds good, I don't feel it goes far enough to demonstrate and explain the value of the resources provided.”</p>
Narrative	6	Crafting narratives and counter-narratives that serve to interpret the assessment for appropriate audiences.	“Focus more on narratives than numbers.”
Alignment	6	Practices that build a shared understanding with	“organizational citizenship (upholding university

		stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.	mission)”
Pragmatism	4	Practices that focus on getting the job done.	“It’s politics. Create the report that administration wants.”
Methodological Soundness	1	Consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.	“I would try to base the decision about whether to run an assessment on what specific metrics I’m being asked to gather and summarize, whether those metrics match the research question of the person requesting the assessment, and whether I can gather those metrics reliably and accurately.”

## Scenario 2

### Scenario 2: Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?



**Question** - Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above. (n=23)

#### Thematic Analysis

Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Validity	8	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results	“Autonomy, partnerships, data management.”



		will be applied.	
Transparency	7	Values involving clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.	“Disclosure/consent”
Alignment	4	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	“Organizational policies”
Justice	2	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	“Justice (i.e. minority and at-risk groups always bear more risk in surveillance scenarios)”
Operability	1	Values that relate to the financial and staffing operations of the library.	“Fiscal responsibility”
Human-centered	1	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	“Usability, accessibility, risk management”
Imagining otherwise	1	Values relating to open-mindedness,	“a rejection of surveillance capitalism”

		innovation, and questioning the status quo	
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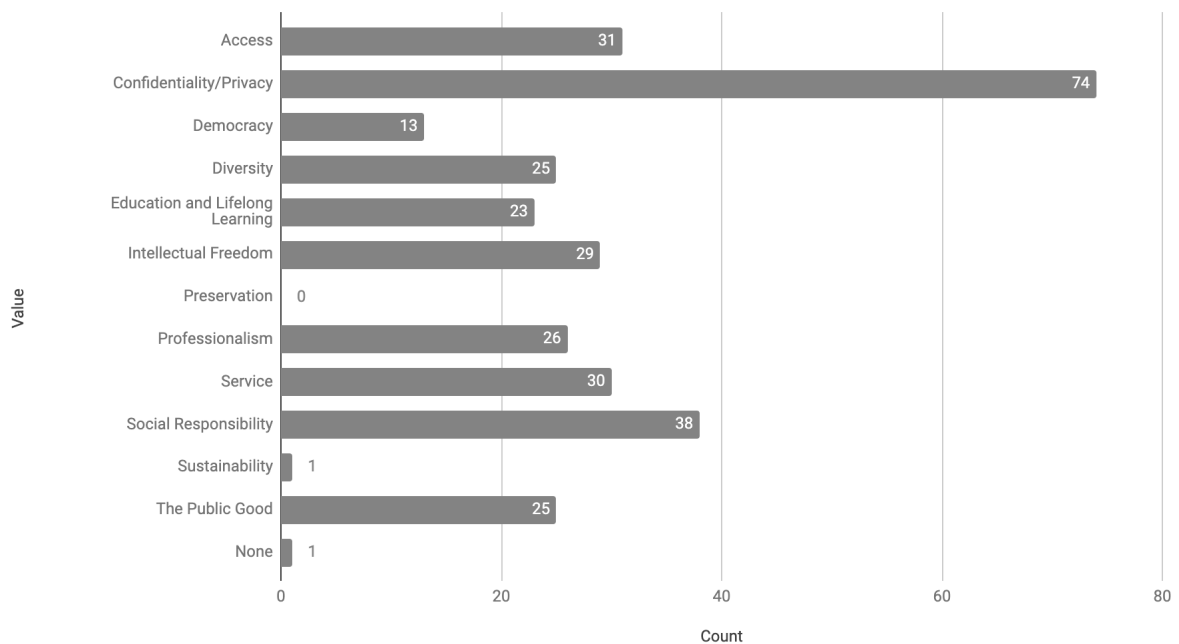
<b>Question</b> - As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario? (n=56)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Alternative methods	26	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.	"Sending data to a 3rd party is a no-no in terms of data privacy and possible data breaches. I would find a different product that accomplishes what I want without violating everyone's right to privacy."
Transparency	13	Practices that give users the opportunity to understand the assessment, with choices for opting in or out of participation.	"I would put a notice on the computer that we might be sampling screen activity for assessment purposes so we can improve the library web site. The user can decide if they want to give their consent to continue."
Negotiate with third-party	6	Practices involving negotiating with a vendor for terms more reflective of library values.	"I might also talk with the company to see if it's possible for the company NOT to store users' screen captures."
Reject assessment	4	There is no resolution to the	"This is not ethical at all as described. I would not

		assessment as described other than to reject it.	participate in this research.”
Data Stewardship	3	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.	“Prior to committing to this contract I would ensure that proper technological controls are in place to deidentify data if possible and protect all data stored in the cloud or elsewhere. Additionally would need details on how long data is stored, if/how it is purged, and what happens to the data if the contract ends.”
Methodological Soundness	2	Consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.	“If, and only if, there were specific outcomes that would follow such an endeavor (say - immediate action and available resources for significant website changes), I might try to look a time-limited scenario of use of this software.”
Stated values and positions	1	Identifying and applying values that are relevant to the assessment.	“This level of intrusion is unacceptable and contrary to library values.”
Co-determination	1	Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make	“this kind of decision would be made by a group of staff and director.”

		decisions together.	
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### Scenario 3

Scenario 3: Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?



**Question** - Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above. (n=18)

#### **Thematic Analysis**

Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Validity	7	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research	“Good match between research question and data being analyzed.”

		method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	
Alignment	5	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	“Institutional values of importance of learning and student support; personal value of commitment to the institution.”
Justice	4	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	“Justice and equity! Targeting interventions to students because they don’t visit the library in person contributes to inequitable treatment of students.”
None	1	Responses marked either “none,” “NA”, or restated an ALA Core Value	—
Transparency	1	Values involving clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.	“trustworthiness, transparency”

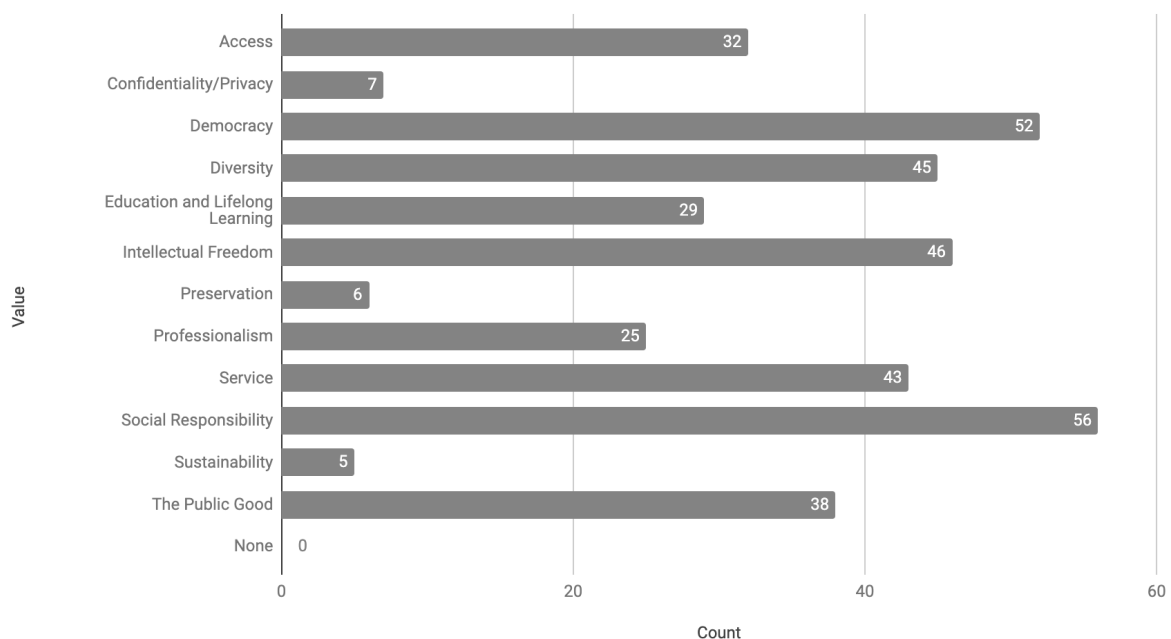
**Question** - As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario? (n=55)

<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Data Stewardship	18	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.	“I would collect these data but then de-identify them and share findings only in the aggregate.”
Transparency	9	Practices that give users the opportunity to understand the assessment, with choices for opting in or out of participation.	“Do the swipe cards for some other purpose if relevant, but be sure to share this collection with users.”
Methodological Soundness	9	Consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.	“I’d add that from a methodological point of view retention is very unlikely to be a sensitive enough variable to observe the effect of visiting the library. This is a classic spurious correlation and is generally bad social science.”
Alignment	7	Practices that build a shared understanding with stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.	“Definitely start with a conversation with someone in university administration to have a dialogue around privacy values, impact of having this data, current state of the learning analytics system, data governance policies, and other retention activities.”

Alternative Methods	7	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.	“Explore other methods of engaging without collecting personal data.”
Stated Values and Positions	4	Identifying and applying values that are relevant to the assessment.	“Voice my strong privacy concerns about this plan.”
Context	1	Demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts.	“Ensuring that the campus is considering multiple factors -- outcomes, not just use -- of library resources, is critical in any argument.”

### Scenario 4

Scenario 4: Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?



<b>Question</b> - Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above. (n=23)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Positionality	10	Acknowledging personal perspectives, values, and positions	"I'm a prison abolitionist, so that would come into play in how I work with the program."
Justice	3	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	"Social justice, equity, representation, abolition."
Validity	3	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	"IRB guidelines."
Collaboration	2	Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making	"Shared decision-making."
Communication and Outreach	1	Values that relate to professional development, scholarly communication, and internal culture-building.	"Desire to contribute to professional literature."
Human-centered	1	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience	"Fostering students' construction of



		design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	knowledge.”
Imagining Otherwise	1	Thinking beyond current paradigms.	“Openness to new ideas, ability to innovate.”
None	2	Responses marked either “none,” “NA”, or restated an ALA Core Value	—

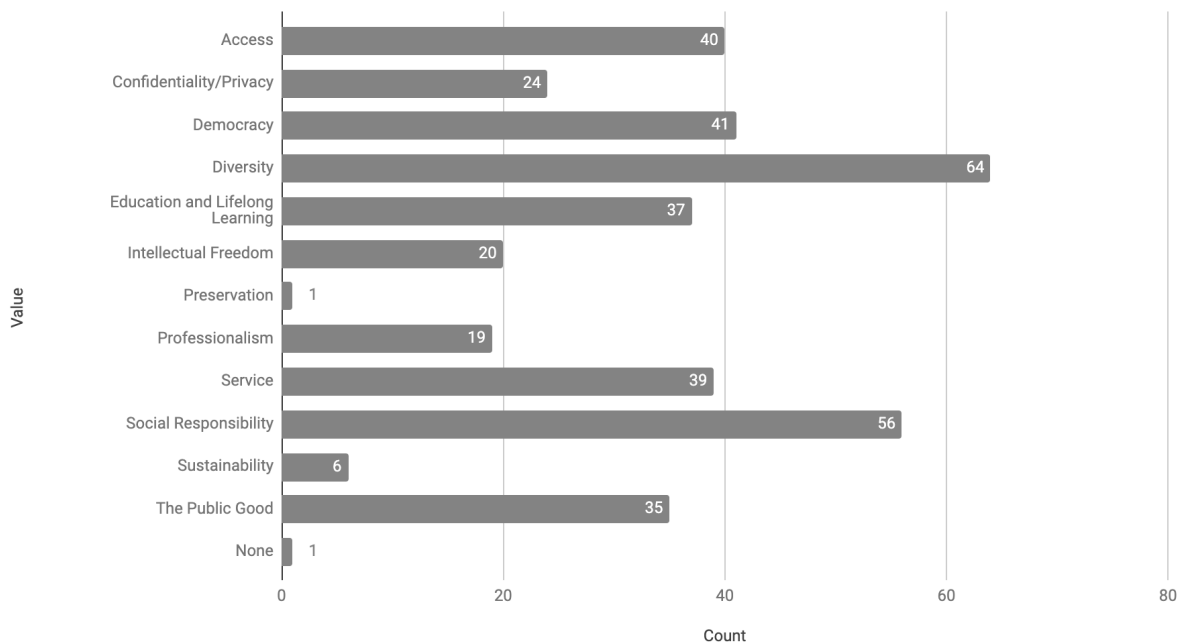
<b>Question</b> - As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario? (n=43)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Stated values and positions	16	Identifying and applying values that are relevant to the assessment.	“All choices are grounded in (a set of) values. Any choice we make is a choice between values. Prior to working on the project, create a values statement grounded in the institution's mission/vision as well as professional values as a way of guiding the project.”
Alignment	5	Practices that build a shared understanding with stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.	“This is an excellent project and I have no objection to it. Other student groups could work with librarians on similar projects with different aims, so long as

			there wasn't a conflict with the library's or school's conduct policies."
Relationship-building	4	Practices that involve cultivating partnerships.	"There would be ways in which the Library could offer assistance, as it might to any individual or group."
Co-determination	3	Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.	"Making sure to involve the actual cataloguers in the project would be important."
Beneficence	3	Practices that focus on social impacts and the well-being of participants.	"Care given to student identities is paramount."
Operability	3	Account for longer-term budget and staffing impacts.	"Ultimately this project wouldn't be sustainable for us with the staff we have, so that was the deciding factor for me to not do the study."
Alternative methods	2	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.	"Assess police interactions in the library, rethink security practices."
Communication and Outreach	2	Practices that involve sharing assessments with wider communities.	"Present and publish this work so that other libraries can run similar projects!"
Methodological Soundness	2	Consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the	"I need more info on what the assessment is. Just looking at usage/circulation isn't a lot

		assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.	of data to help inform whatever this group is trying to uncover. I would need a fuller project plan, instead of just running some numbers.”
Context	1	Demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts.	“Provide context for the study”
Narrative and Counter-narrative	1	Crafting narratives and counter-narratives that serve to interpret the assessment for appropriate audiences.	“Educate my colleagues about why library neutrality is a dangerous myth.”
Data Stewardship	1	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.	“The assessment would be kept away from an individual access level and only be done in aggregate showing what resources have and have not been accessed.”

**Scenario 5**

Scenario 5: Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?



**Question** - Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above. (n=22)

**Thematic Analysis**

Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Justice	6	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	"Inclusion, equity, user-centric."
Beneficence	3	Values that relate to the well-being and care of those involved in the assessment	"It's great for voices to be heard, but more thought needs to be put into how to do it without being harmful."

Validity	3	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	“Ethical research practices.”
Alignment	3	Values that draw from statements and policies of key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	“Institutional values statement”
Human-centered	3	Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.	“Respect for individuals' time and dignity”
Collaboration	2	Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making	“Community”
Transparency	1	Values involving clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.	“consent”
None/Core Value	1	Responses marked either “none,” “NA”, or	—

		restated an ALA Core Value	
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<b>Question</b> - As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario? (n=44)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Alignment	18	Practices that build a shared understanding with stakeholder groups by aligning values, policies, and practices.	“Expending resources on non-strategic plan/priorities aligned projects is a non-starter for me.”
Relationship-building	5	Practices that involve cultivating partnerships.	“Perhaps also partnering with other groups, departments, or classes on campus to generate institutional momentum outside the library.”
Co-determination	4	Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.	“Partnering with the students helps this research avoid being as extractive as it might be without student input.”
Beneficence	4	Practices that focus on social impacts and the well-being of participants.	“ I believe student voices should be heard, however, students with fragile immigration statuses should be

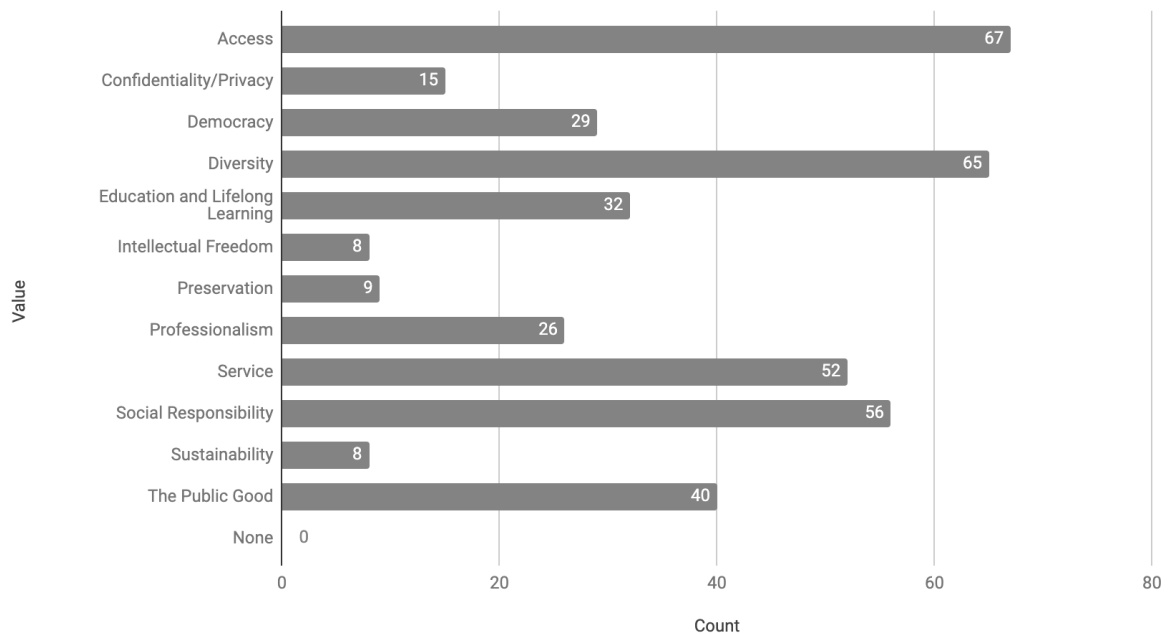
			protected and I feel this study might make them feel more vulnerable instead.”
Data Stewardship	3	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.	“Again, I am concerned with what data is collected about instruction and the associated personal information. Immigrant status is potentially a high-risk group (particularly in the current political climate) , so I would be cautious in designing such a study.”
Alternative Methods	2	Practices that introduce alternative or complementary approaches.	“While I understand the students' perspective and interest, I would take a more holistic approach to gathering feedback on library instruction from a variety of voices, such as other cultures, not just immigrants.”
Human-centered	2	Practices involving user experience design and human-centered design	“These are the principles behind universal design - make conditions better for one group, make conditions better for all.”

Context	1	Demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts.	“Provide context and background.”
Methodological Soundness	1	Consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.	“Furthermore, the study should be based on sound evidence of the potential for differences in learning outcomes by immigration status, rather than speculation.”
Communication and Outreach	1	Practices that involve sharing assessments with wider communities.	“I’d...try to do this type of study in the future, ideally after some work on the culture around instruction and possibly training on inclusive pedagogy.
None	3	—	—



## Scenario 6

Scenario 6: Which values are relevant to the decision in this scenario?



**Question** - Which other values are relevant to the decision in this scenario? These can include personal, professional, institutional, or any other values not listed above. (n=17)

### Thematic Analysis

Theme	Responses	Definition	Example Response
Collaboration	5	Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making	“Community Involvement.”
Justice	4	Values relating to power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.	“Equity and accessibility”
Alignment	3	Values that draw from statements and policies of	“Institutional values”

		key stakeholders, including parent entities, other campus units, and personal values.	
Beneficence	2	Values that relate to the well-being and care of those involved in the assessment	“Beneficence to persons.”
Validity	2	Values that speak to the validity of the assessment, especially involving a right fit between research question and research method, data stewardship, and ensuring that results will be applied.	“Timeliness of research”
Positionality	1	Acknowledging personal perspectives, values, and positions	“Personal values of efficiency or ease.”

<b>Question</b> - As an assessment practitioner, how else could you respond in this scenario? (n=56)			
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Example Response</b>
Relationship-building	42	Practices that involve cultivating partnerships.	“I would start with asking the department on campus that works with the disabled community and go from there.”
Co-determinatio	12	Partnering with	“It would be essential to

n		community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.	involve members from that community in the assessment.”
Methodological Soundness	1	Consider the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensure that the results will be applied.	“It would depend what the purpose of the study was and what the possible outcomes were for the staff who would use the results of the study.”
Data Stewardship	1	Practices ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data.	“You could access this data by ensuring everyone on campus, including disabled students, have access to the survey.”

## Appendix F: Interview Recruitment and Preparation Messages

### Interview Recruitment Email

Subject Research Interview Request - Library Values and Assessment

I hope this email finds you well.

I am a librarian at Montana State University, and I am conducting a research project that investigates the relationship between library values and library assessment.

#### **Project background**

An earlier stage of this research project involved a national survey. You were a participant in that survey during the fall of 2020, and you self-identified as being interested in talking more about this topic. I am now getting back in touch with you to follow up. I have analyzed the survey data and developed a prototype toolkit for applying values in real-world assessment settings. As a part of the toolkit development, I would like to invite you to test the prototype toolkit in a research interview.

#### **My request to you**

Would you be willing to join me for a research interview? The interview would take 60 minutes. The interview would focus on the operations of the toolkit and the role of library values in your assessment decision-making.

If you are interested and available to speak with me, please submit a booking request via Outlook. The calendar availability begins on March 31, runs through April, and ends on May 6. **Please select any time during those weeks that is convenient for you.**

Thank you very much for considering. Be in touch with any questions.

All best,  
Scott

### Interview Preparation Email 1

Thank you so much for scheduling a research interview. I'm really looking forward to talking more with you about values and assessment.

I'm writing now with a bit of preparation ahead of the interview. The prototype toolkit that I'm developing is in the form of a card set. To test the toolkit, I would like to ship the physical card set to you so that you can interact directly with the prototype. **What is a good mailing address for you?**

I will follow up with another update closer to the date of your interview with shipping information and further instructions.

Thank you again. Talk more soon.  
Scott

### Interview Preparation Email 2

Your prototype toolkit is now in the mail! It should arrive via USPS later this week.

We are scheduled to talk at **[date]**

As final prep for the interview, I've got a few last steps for you:

- Review the informed consent [link]
- Come to the interview with a specific assessment project in mind. We will use this project as a point of reference in our discussion.
- We will complete one of the exercises in the toolkit together, and this will involve writing or drawing. Please have paper and pen at hand.

We will have time during the interview to review and discuss each card in the toolkit, so there's no need to take a close look at the prototype ahead of the interview. But, if you have the time and interest, I do welcome you to review the cards and begin thinking about them before we speak next week.

Be in touch with any questions or feedback.

Thanks so much. Talk more soon,

## Appendix G: Informed Consent for the Interview

### SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH AT MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Project Title – Values-based Library Assessment

Overview – You are being asked to participate in a research interview that investigates your experience as a library assessment practitioner. This study will help the researchers gain insights that will inform the development of a practical decision-aid to support ethical assessment in libraries.

Procedure – Participation is voluntary and there is no cost to you to participate. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to discuss your experience conducting library assessment.

Risks and Benefits – There are no foreseen risks to participating in this study. This study is of no direct benefit to you.

Decline to Participate – If you decline to participate, you can withdraw at any time.

Study Funding – There is no declared funding.

Confidentiality – Research data will be stored securely and in confidence. Excerpts from your interview may be published with your information fully anonymized.

Questions or Concerns – If you have any questions about this project, please contact Scott Young (406) 994-6429, [swyoung@montana.edu](mailto:swyoung@montana.edu). If you have additional questions about the rights of human subjects, please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, (406) 994-4707, [mquinn@montana.edu](mailto:mquinn@montana.edu).

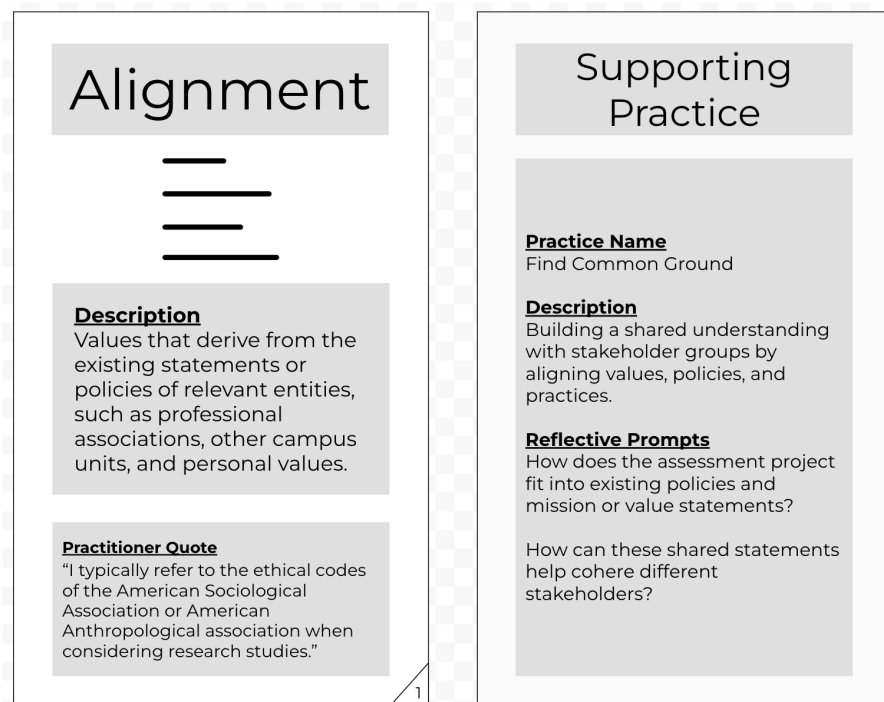
**AUTHORIZATION:** I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. By clicking the submit button below, I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

## Appendix H: Interview Protocol

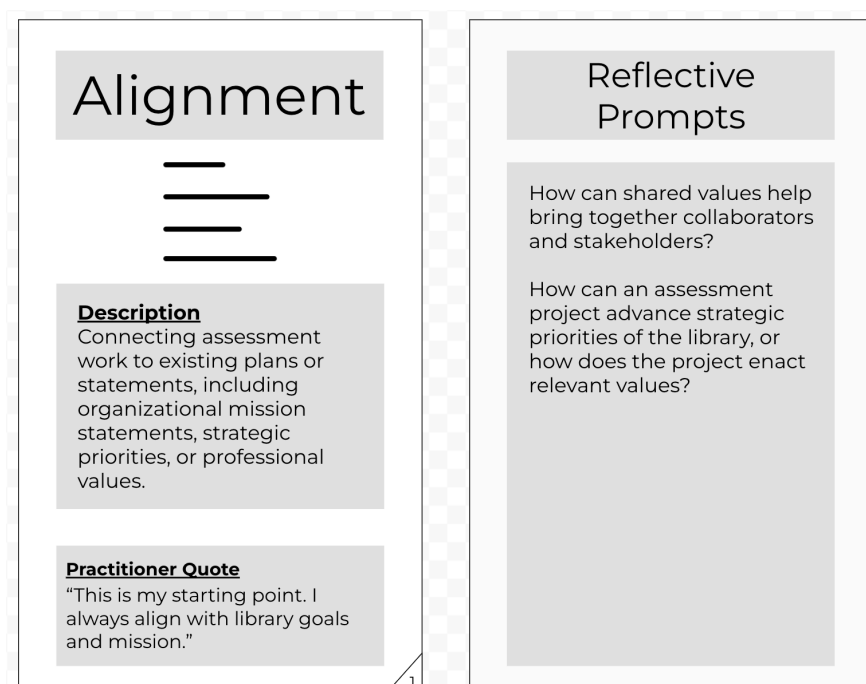
<b>Values</b>	<p><u>Instructions</u></p> <p>Let's begin by reviewing the toolkit with Card 0, the top card that shows the instructions. Please read silently through that card to orient yourself to the toolkit. Let me know when you are done.</p> <p>We will now move through the Value Cards, beginning with Card 1, Alignment. We will spend about 1–2 minutes on each of the 11 Value Cards (I will keep us on time). For each card, silently read both front and back. We'll pause after each card to discuss the following questions:</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Is this value relevant to your practice of library assessment?</p> <p>How accurately does the card content reflect the value? Consider the description, quote, and supporting practices.</p> <p>Is there anything missing from the card? Anything vague or confusing?</p>
<b>Exercise</b>	<p><u>Instructions</u></p> <p>Consider an assessment project recently concluded or planned. We will use this project as the point of reference for this exercise.</p> <p>Please read aloud the instructions for the exercise, and then complete the steps described on the card. Talk aloud as you think and work through the exercise.</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Is this exercise effective in achieving the goal stated on the card? Why or why not?</p> <p>At the end of this stage: Please show your paper to the camera so that your drawing can be recorded.</p>
<b>Wrap-up</b>	<p><u>Instructions</u></p> <p>Please reflect on the toolkit as a whole: the value cards, the exercises, and the potential application to your real-world work.</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Please complete the following two statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After practicing with this toolkit, I will be able to...</li> <li>- After practicing with this toolkit, I still felt that I needed...</li> </ul>

## Appendix I: Full Presentation of the *Value-Sensitive Library Assessment Toolkit*

The cards of the toolkit are presented in two forms: first, the pre-validation version discussed in the interviews, and second, the post-validation version that resulted from revisions.

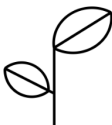


Pre-Validation card for Alignment

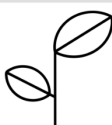




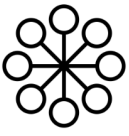
## Post-Validation card for Alignment

<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Beneficence</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b></p> <p>The well-being and care of those involved in the assessment</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b></p> <p>"Care given to student identities is paramount."</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Supporting Practice</div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practice Name</u></b></p> <p>Consider Social Impacts</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b></p> <p>Focusing on social impacts and the well-being of participants.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Reflective Prompts</u></b></p> <p>How does the project account for social impacts and the well-being of participants?</p> <p>Does the project support social justice outcomes?</p> </div>
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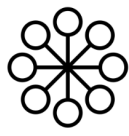
## Pre-Validation card for Beneficence

<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Care</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b></p> <p>Maximizing well-being, while minimizing harm.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b></p> <p>"Keeping participants at the center of the research is important."</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Reflective Prompts</div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>How would you describe your responsibility to the different stakeholders of the assessment, especially the participants? How will you know that you've fulfilled your responsibility?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>How does the assessment account for the well-being of participants and collaborators?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>What kind of harms could result from this work?</p> </div>
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## Post-Validation card for Care

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Collaboration</h2> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Values that relate to community, collaboration, and shared decision-making.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "The best time to foster a relationship with an important user community is before now; now is the next best time."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Supporting Practice</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practice Name</u></b> Cultivate Relationships</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Cultivating partnerships and relationships of mutual benefit with key stakeholders, especially students and community members.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Reflective Prompts</u></b> Does the project involve collaborators and partnerships?  Are there relationships of mutual benefit and trust with relevant stakeholders?</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Collaboration

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Collaboration</h2> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Working together to build and sustain mutually beneficial relationships.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "The best time to foster a relationship with an important user community is before now; now is the next best time."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Reflective Prompts</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>How does the project involve collaborators and partnerships?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 10px;"> <p>How does your approach to collaboration and relationship-building support mutual benefit and trust among stakeholders? Stakeholders can include students, campus collaborators, community members, or other assessment participants.</p> </div>
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Post-Validation card for Collaboration

<h2>Communication and Outreach</h2>  <p><b>Description</b> Professional development and scholarly communication.</p> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b> “Provide context and background, be transparent, share results.”</p>	<h2>Supporting Practices</h2> <p><b>Practice Name</b> Share Your Work</p> <p><b>Description</b> Sharing assessments with wider communities.</p> <p><b>Reflective Prompt</b> Are there plans to share the project with wider audiences and professional communities?</p> <p><b>Practice Name</b> Provide Context</p> <p><b>Description</b> Demonstrating a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts, including risk/benefit analysis, social impacts, or any other related aspect that helps explain or situate the assessment.</p> <p><b>Reflective Prompts</b> How will the project make documentation available to participants and stakeholders? Does that documentation include contextual factors for the assessment?</p>
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Pre-Validation card for Communication &amp; Outreach

<h2>Communication</h2>  <p><b>Description</b> “Closing the loop” of assessment by communicating an assessment and its results to relevant audiences.</p> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b> “Don't do research without a plan to communicate your research.”</p>	<h2>Reflective Prompts</h2> <p>How will project results be shared out to others, such as administrators, collaborators, and the wider professional community?</p> <p>Are you communicating the assessment in a way that your different audiences can each understand?</p> <p>What story are you telling with the data? What is the most readily-available reading of the assessment, or the most dominant narrative driving interpretation? What other readings are available?</p> <p>Would the project report benefit from including a fuller landscape of measures, activities, and impacts, including a risk/benefit analysis, social impacts, or any other contextual factor that helps explain or situate the assessment?</p>
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Post-Validation card for Communication

<div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Human-centered</div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Values that draw from the traditions of user experience design and human-centered design, including usability and accessibility.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "In higher ed, I feel that student voices should be elevated."</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right;">5</div>	<div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Supporting Practice</div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px;"> <p><b><u>Practice Name</u></b> Apply Principles and Practices of Human-centered Design</p> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Practices adapted from user experience design, service design, and human-centered design</p> <p><b><u>Reflective Prompts</u></b> Can the project integrate approaches from user experience design and human-centered design, such as usability, accessibility, and participation?</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Human-centered

<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2>Imagining Otherwise</h2> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Description</b> Open-mindedness, innovation, and questioning the status quo.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Practitioner Quotes</b> “Working against the slog of data as the sole value indicator.”  “Focus more on narratives than numbers.”</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2>Supporting Practices</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Practice Name:</b> Craft Narrative and Counter-narrative  <b>Description:</b> Crafting narratives that serve to interpret the assessment for appropriate audiences, with a view toward challenging existing status quos and easy explanations.  <b>Reflective Prompts:</b> How can the assessment be interpreted through narrative? What is the most obvious reading of the assessment or the most dominant narrative driving interpretation? What other readings and narratives are available?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Practice Name:</b> Negotiate with Third Party  <b>Description:</b> Negotiating with a vendor for terms more reflective of library values.  <b>Reflective Prompts:</b> Can you work with a vendor for terms more reflective of library values?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Practice Name:</b> Seek Alternate Approaches  <b>Description:</b> Introducing alternative or complementary approaches.  <b>Reflective Prompts:</b> Can the assessment project be made stronger by introducing alternative or complementary methods, in particular qualitative approaches.</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Imagining Otherwise

<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2>Imagining Otherwise</h2> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Description</b> Imagining and embracing different approaches to assessment, and ensuring that results support change.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b> “I’m always questioning—why do we do things this way?”</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2>Reflective Prompts</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>How will the assessment project generate improvement or change? Who is responsible for leading that change, and who benefits from that change?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Can the assessment project be made stronger by introducing alternative or complementary methods?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p>If a third-party vendor is involved, can you work with the vendor for terms more reflective of library values, or can you change vendors?</p> </div>
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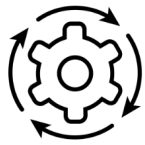
Post-Validation card for Imagining Otherwise

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Justice</h2>  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Power-attunement, diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "I would be careful to center students' voices and students' lived experiences at the center of the assessment and to make sure I was using inclusive and culturally respectful forms of data collection and analysis for this work."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Supporting Practice</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practice Name</u></b> Share Power with Participants</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Partnering with community members and other stakeholders to make decisions together.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Reflective Prompt</u></b> Do stakeholders and participants have a voice in determining research questions, methods, interpretation of data, and the application of results?</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Justice

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Justice</h2>  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Diversity, inclusion, equity, and allyship.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "I would be careful to center students' voices and students' lived experiences at the center of the assessment and to make sure I was using inclusive and culturally respectful forms of data collection and analysis for this work."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Reflective Prompts</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Do stakeholders and participants have a voice in determining research questions, methods, interpretation of data, and the application of results?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Does the project result in social or material benefits for participants and collaborators?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>How does the project engage with structural social inequalities?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p>Does the project support social justice outcomes?</p> </div>
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Post-Validation card for Justice

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Operability</h2>  </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 20px;"> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Taking into account the financial and staffing operations of the library.</p> </div> <div> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b></p> <p>"Ultimately this project wouldn't be sustainable for us with the staff we have, so that was the deciding factor for me to not do the study."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Supporting Practices</h2> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 20px;"> <p><b>Practice Name</b></p> <p>Account for Budget and Staffing</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Accounting for longer-term budget and staffing impacts</p> <p><b>Reflective Prompt</b></p> <p>Does the project account for longer-term impacts in budget, staffing needs, and community relationship-building?</p> </div> <div> <p><b>Practice Name</b></p> <p>Get the Job Done</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>A focus on getting the job done.</p> <p><b>Reflective Prompt</b></p> <p>Pragmatically, is it appropriate to just complete the project as requested?</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Operability

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Stewardship</h2>  </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 20px;"> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Ensuring that an assessment reflects organizational capacities—including staffing models, budgetary considerations, and data management and retention.</p> </div> <div> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b></p> <p>"What's possible, given the right resources?"</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Reflective Prompts</h2> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 20px;"> <p>Does the project account for longer-term impacts in budget, staffing needs, and community relationship-building?</p> </div> <div> <p>If there are resource constraints, how can the project be scoped so that the assessment is completable?</p> <p>What policies or practices govern the collection, retention, usage, and sharing of assessment-related data?</p> </div>
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Post-Validation card for Stewardship


<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Positionality</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Acknowledging personal perspectives and positions.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "All choices are grounded in (a set of) values. Any choice we make is a choice between values."</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Supporting Practice</div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practice Name</u></b> Articulate Your Values</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Self-reflective practices that result in identifying and applying values and impacts that are relevant to the assessment.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Reflective Prompts</u></b> Does the assessment project include dedicated time for self-reflection?</p> <p>Is the project guided or supported by explicit values?</p> <p>Does the project assess the achievement of those values?</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Positionality


<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Positionality</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Description</u></b> Acknowledging perspectives, positions, and power</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b><u>Practitioner Quote</u></b> "All choices are grounded in (a set of) values. Any choice we make is a choice between values."</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Reflective Prompts</div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Does the assessment project include dedicated time for self-reflection?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Is the project guided or supported by explicit values? Does the project assess the achievement of those values?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>In the context of this assessment, over whom do you have power? Who has power over you? How do those power dynamics affect your ability to articulate and enact values?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p>Based on your relative positions, what assumptions are you and others bringing to the project?</p> </div>
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Post-Validation card for Positionality




<div style="text-align: center; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Transparency</h2> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Clear communication to stakeholders about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b></p> <p>"I would ensure that all participants are fully informed of what they're consenting to and conduct testing in a way that minimizes harm."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Supporting Practice</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Practice Name</b></p> <p>Provide Information and a Choice</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Giving users the opportunity to understand the assessment, with choices for opting in or out of participation.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Reflective Prompts</b></p> <p>Does your assessment practice include documentation, including process, result, application, and decision-making?</p> <p>How will the project make documentation available to participants and stakeholders?</p> <p>Are participants able to opt in or out?</p> </div>
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Pre-Validation card for Transparency

<div style="text-align: center; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Transparency</h2> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Clear communication to participants about how data is collected, analyzed, and applied, with choices for participation.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b></p> <p>"I would ensure that all participants are fully informed of what they're consenting to and conduct testing in a way that minimizes harm."</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Reflective Prompts</h2> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Does your assessment practice include documentation, including process, result, application, and decision-making?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>How will project documentation and results be shared back with participants?</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p>Are participants able to opt in or out, and are they able to provide informed consent?</p> </div>
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Post-Validation card for Transparency


<h2 style="text-align: center;">Validity</h2>  <p><b>Description</b> Ensuring that an assessment is valid, especially focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a right fit between research question and research method</li> <li>- data stewardship</li> <li>- ensuring that results will be applied.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b> "I would try to base the decision about whether to run an assessment on what specific metrics I'm being asked to gather and summarize, whether those metrics match the research question of the person requesting the assessment, and whether I can gather those metrics reliably and accurately."</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Supporting Practices</h2> <p><b>Practice Name:</b> Assess the Assessment <b>Description:</b> Considering the appropriateness of the research question compared to the assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result; ensuring that results will be applied. <b>Reflective Prompts:</b> Is there a strong match among research question, assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result? How will results be made actionable?</p> <p><b>Practice Name:</b> Steward the Data <b>Description:</b> Ensuring that due diligence is applied to assessment data. <b>Reflective Prompt:</b> Does the project ensure that due diligence is applied to assessment data?</p> <p><b>Practice Name:</b> Reject the Assessment <b>Description:</b> Rejecting an assessment, if there is no other available resolution. <b>Reflective Prompt:</b> Is it appropriate and possible to decline the assessment project?</p>
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Pre-Validation card for Validity

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Validity</h2>  <p><b>Description</b> Ensuring that an assessment is valid, especially focusing on a right fit between research question and research method.</p> <p><b>Practitioner Quote</b> "I would try to base the decision about whether to run an assessment on what specific metrics I'm being asked to gather and summarize, whether those metrics match the research question of the person requesting the assessment, and whether I can gather those metrics reliably and accurately."</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Reflective Prompts</h2> <p>Is there a strong match among research question, assessment method, the assessment population or service, and the intended result?</p> <p>Can the research question be answered by the method(s) that you are applying? Could a different method answer the question in a better way?</p>
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Post-validation card for Validity.

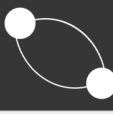
### Values Freewrite



**Goal:** To build a contextual understanding of values

1. This exercise may be completed individually or as a group. In the case of a group, first convene the stakeholders for a given assessment.
2. Shuffle the Value Cards. Then select one card at random. Individually, review the card, and reflect on the value. On a piece of paper, write down what the value means to you, based on your own experience, in up to three sentences. If you prefer, you may draw a sketch to represent the value. (If this exercise is being completed individually, move ahead next to step 4.)
3. Break into pairs. In pairs, take a few minutes to sharing what you produced in Step 2, noting similarities or differences in your experiences. Then reconvene as a full group.
4. Reflect on your personal interpretations of the value. Record any additional notes during this step. You may repeat this exercise for each Value Card.

### Connect Two



**Goal:** To connect your views with the values, and to connect values with each other

1. This exercise may be completed individually or as a group. In the case of a group, first convene the stakeholders for a given assessment.
2. Shuffle the Value Cards. Then select two cards at random. Review the cards, and reflect on the values. On a piece of paper, write one sentence to describe what each value means to you, based on your own experience. Then consider the interrelation of these values—how do they complement or conflict with each other?
- 3a. If working individually, move ahead to Step 4.
- 3b. If working as a group, break into pairs. In pairs, take a few minutes to share what you produced in Step 2, noting similarities or differences in your experiences. Then reconvene as a full group.
4. Reflect on and share your personal interpretations of the values. Record any additional notes during this step.

Exercise card for Values Freewrite/Connect Two, showing pre-validation on the left, and post-validation on the right

### Must-Haves



**Goal:** To prioritize different values

1. Identify an assessment project or program to serve as the subject of this exercise.
2. Arrange the full set of Value Cards on a tabletop surface so that all cards are visible.
3. Sort the Value Cards into the following categories (using sticky-notes as the headings):
  - Must have:* values that are highly relevant and need to be implemented to have a successful project or program
  - Could have:* values that are important but not critical
  - Shouldn't have:* values that are not relevant or that might even detract from the project or program
4. Reflect on and discuss the categories.

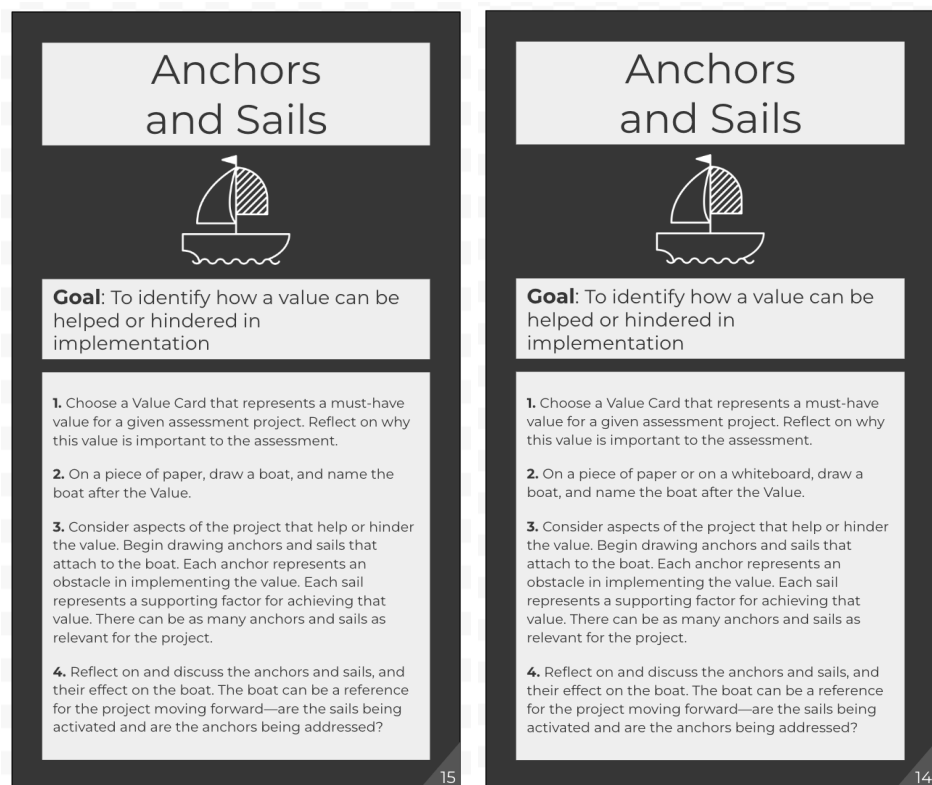
### Must-Haves



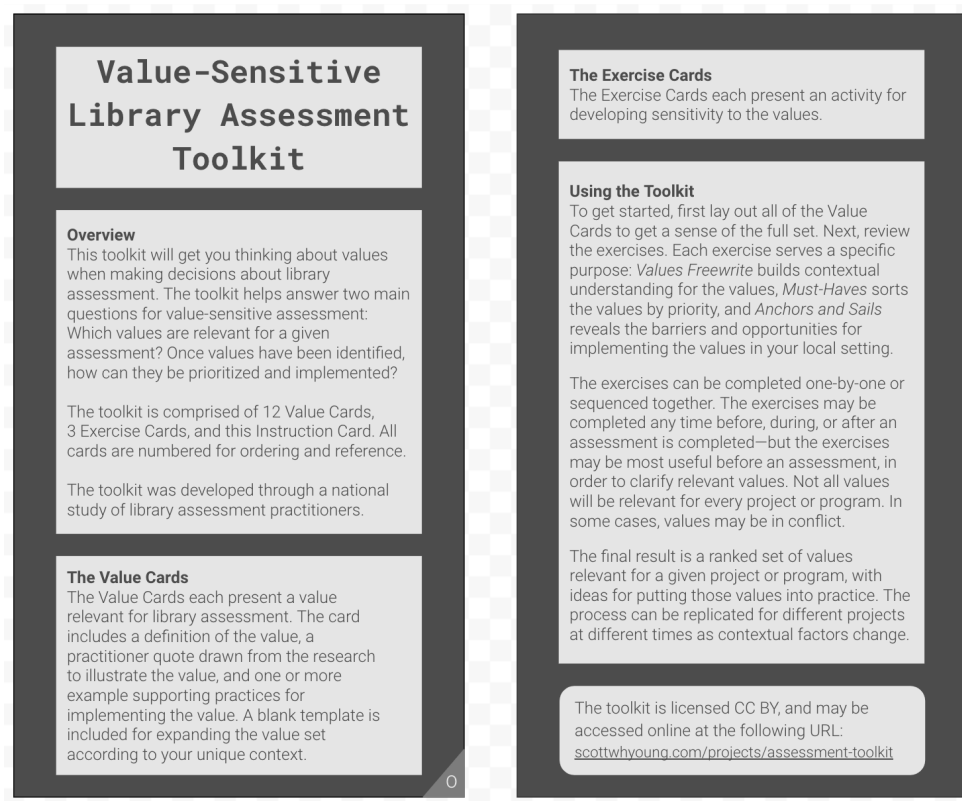
**Goal:** To prioritize different values

1. Identify an assessment project or program to serve as the subject of this exercise.
2. Arrange the full set of Value Cards on a tabletop surface so that all cards are visible.
3. Sort the Value Cards into the following categories. Aim to have no more than 3 or 4 values in any category.
  - Must have:* values that are highly relevant and need to be implemented to have a successful project or program
  - Could have:* values that are important but not critical
  - Could do without:* values that are not so important or relevant to the assessment
  - Would like but won't get:* values that might be too difficult to implement
4. Reflect on and discuss the categories.

Exercise card for Must-Haves, showing pre-validation on the left, and post-validation on the right



Exercise card for Anchors & Sails, showing pre-validation on the left, and post-validation on the right



Pre-validation instruction card for the toolkit



Post-validation version of the Instruction card for the toolkit.

## Appendix J: Research Data and Analysis

My data and analysis will be available in the Dryad data repository in late 2022, with the following citation: Young, S.W.H. (2022). Data for: A Theoretical Framework and Practical Toolkit For Ethical Library Assessment <https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.5x69p8d61>.

As of summer 2022, data are available at the following password-protected URL (password is available upon request):

<https://ln5.sync.com/dl/896e1f1b0#geqgqt9j-nxp3jkep-xhm77chi-diyu6n36>

The README file for the research data set:

This readme.txt file was generated on 20220720 by Scott W. H. Young

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GENERAL INFORMATION  
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Title of Dataset:

Data From: A Theoretical Framework and Practical Toolkit For Ethical Library Assessment

Filename: interview\_analysis\_and\_memos.csv

Short description: themes and memos from the interviews, organized by card

Filename: ip1\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 1

Filename: ip2\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 2

Filename: ip3\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 3

Filename: ip4\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 4

Filename: ip5\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 5

Filename: ip6\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 6

Filename: ip7\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 7

Filename: ip8\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 8

Filename: ip9\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 9

Filename: ip10\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 10

Filename: ip11\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 11

Filename: ip12\_transcript.txt

Short description: transcript of interview with interview participant 12

Filename: survey\_codebook\_local\_values.csv

Short description: codes generated from survey respondents

Filename: survey\_codebook\_values\_other.csv

Short description: placeholder

Filename: survey\_codebook\_vignette\_practice\_codes.csv

Short description: placeholder

Filename: survey\_codebook\_vignette\_value\_codes.csv

Short description: placeholder

Filename: survey\_print\_out.pdf

Short description: full survey instrument, exported from the Qualtrics survey software

Filename: survey\_responses\_full.csv

Short description: full survey responses, exported from the Qualtrics survey software

Filename: survey\_results\_report.pdf

Short description: full survey report, exported from the Qualtrics survey software

#### Author Contact Information

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Institution: Montana State University

Email: [swhyoung@protonmail.com](mailto:swhyoung@protonmail.com)

Date of data collection: survey data collected in 2021, interview data collected in 2022

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#### SHARING/ACCESS INFORMATION

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Licenses/restrictions placed on the data:

CC0. To the extent possible under law, the author has waived all copyright and related or neighboring rights to this work. This work is published from the United States.

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#### CREDITS

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Based on a template by Cornell University Research Data Management Service Group: <https://data.research.cornell.edu/content/readme>