Discussion Post #3 October 2, 2012

Question: A patron enters the public library asking for information about making a homemade bomb to blow up a public institution. How would you handle the situation and why?

If put in this situation as a librarian I would feel conflicted with my moral obligation to serve the public good and my ethical obligation to serve my patron with accessible information.  Rubin (2010) explains that one of the values of a librarian is service, but the service must be for “the betterment of the individual and the community as a whole (p. 406)." It is important for librarians to provide information to individuals who seek it without judgment. Librarians must exercise tolerance and understand that it is important to be exposed to different perspectives and subjects (Rubin, 2010 p.410).  An individual could greatly benefit from learning and analyzing techniques for creating a bomb of that magnitude. The user may be interested in a future career that deals with deactivating or dismembering bombs.

People do have a right to information but the danger of giving information to someone who intends to use it to harm others jeopardizes some of the community. It is one of those situations where a librarian needs to figure out what the user intentions are with this information. Is the user just curious about the subject of explosions and wants to learn more, or is the user seeking this information to implement and cause harm to others in the community?  Rubin (2010) explains that balance is important when confronted with ethical issues.  People have the right to do what they want with the materials and information obtained as long as “they do not violate the dignity and respect of others (p.418)." If the user intentions are unclear then we must give this information to them.  We should not let our assumptions about what the user will do with the information discourage users from seeking information. I think if the user makes it very clear that the intentions for this information will result in harm to others, then this information should not be given because it dose not serve the communities interests or welfare.

Rubin, R. E. (2010). *Foundations of library and information science.* New York: Neal- Schuman.