Managing Issues of Information Ownership in the Digital Environment:

An examination of the ethical climate in libraries

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Objectives:

Relate the background for the study
- Information ownership issues in ERM
- Information ethics and decision making

Describe the methodology for the study
- Ethical Climate Typology
- Ethical Climate Questionnaire

Explain the results of the study
- Prevailing ethical climate types
- Relationships between ethical climate and practice

Conclusions
- Limitations of the study
- Future directions for research

Background:
Information Ownership Issues

An Exploration of Emerging Issues In Networked Resources Management

- Spring 2005 study
- Content Analysis of the ERIL Listserv
- Sample transactions from September 2001 to February 2005
- Analyzed products, processes and policies for trends

Trends regarding information ownership

- Consistent number of transactions concerning *copyright law* throughout the period
- Dramatic rise in transactions concerning *open access* begins in early 2004

Background: Information Ethics

Information ethics deals with ethical questions about:

- *the library and information science field (library ethics)*
- the Internet (cyberethics; information ethics in a narrower sense)
- computer science (computer ethics)
- the biological and medical sciences (bioinformation ethics)
- the mass media (media ethics)
- the business field (business information ethics)
                (International Center for Information Ethics, 2005)

Mason's classification (1986)

- Privacy
- Accuracy
- *Property*
- Accessibility

Methodology:
Ethical Climate Typology

The prevailing ethical work climate in organizations has been determined by analyzing ethical choices made by individuals in that organization (Erdener, 2002).

Typology of ethical work climates in organizations developed by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988)

- Ethical Orientation (based on Kohlberg's stages of moral development):
  - Egoistic
  - Utilitarian
  - Principled
- Locus of Analysis (based on Merton's classification of patterns of influence):
  - Individual
  - Local
  - Cosmopolitan

Methodology:
Ethical Climate Typology

Organizational ethics are influenced by:

- Extramural sources -dominant cultural values, legislation and accepted business practices (Alfino and Pierce,1998)
- Internal sources -policies, guidelines, and organizational cultures

Typology for ethical work climates in libraries

- Ethical Orientation:
  - ☐ Egoistic
  - ☐ Utilitarian
  - ☐ Principled
- Point of Reference
  - ☐ Personal Convictions
  - ☐ Organizational Policies
  - ☐ Professional Codes
  - ☐ Laws

Methodology:
Ethical Climate Questionnaire

Unit of analysis
- Individual organizations
- Respondents act as organizational agents
- Focus on decision-making in the ERM environment

Contents
- Twenty-six questions from which to derive ethical climate typologies
- Eleven questions about library policy and procedures
- Nine demographic questions

Delivery
- Online, developed with Snap Survey Software
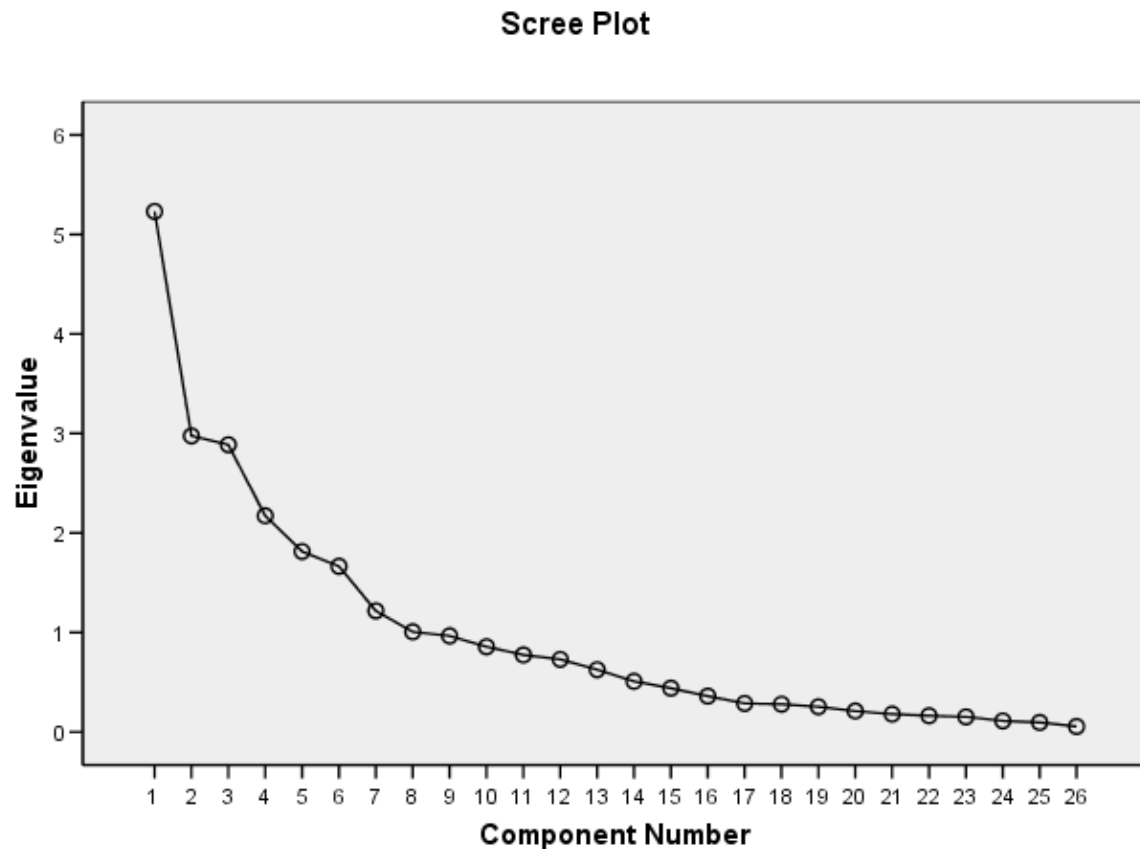- Participants invited via ERIL Listserv

Results:
Prevailing Ethical Climate Types

Factor Analysis
- Twenty-six questions
- Extraction Method:
  - ☐ Principal Component Analysis
- Rotation Method:
  - ☐ Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
  - ☐ Rotation converged in seven iterations
  - ☐ Eight factors with Eigenvalues >1

Scree Plot

Results:
Prevailing Ethical Climate Types

Example:

components making up the fourth factor labeled 'Socially Responsible'

Rotated Component Matrix	Anarchical	Consummate Professionalism	Trust in Law	Socially Responsible	Trust in Organizational policy	Law Abiding	Organizationally Responsible	Subversive
I seriously consider the societal and professional implications of the ERM decisions that I make.	-0.013	0.083	0.028	0.815	0.14	0.076	-0.01	-0.032
Reversed: I rarely reflect on how my ERM decisions might affect the profession or society in general.	-0.158	0.123	0.197	0.74	-0.19	0.148	0.28	0.017
Reversed: I do not generally make ERM decisions based on principle.	0.383	-0.04	0.187	0.71	0.067	-0.059	-0.057	-0.015

Results:
Prevailing Ethical Climate Types

Prevailing Typologies:

1. Anarchical
2. Consummate Professionalism
3. Trust in Law
4. Socially Responsible
5. Trust in Organizational Policy
6. Law Abiding
7. Organizationally Responsible
8. Subversive

Keep in mind:
- Only with respect to ERM decision-making
- Typologies are not mutually exclusive

Results:
Relating Ethical Climate to Practice

Character of Practice:

- **Copyright Law Knowledge**
  - ☐ Three questions
- **Exclusive Rights Advocate**
  - ☐ Three questions
- **Fair Use Advocate**
  - ☐ Four questions
- **Open Access Advocate**
  - ☐ Four questions

Keep in mind:
- Based on self-reporting
- Characters are not mutually exclusive

Results:
Relating Ethical Climate to Practice

Example:

Questions considered for the 'Open Access Advocate' character

1. Librarians in this organization have been educated about the Open Access movement.
2. Librarians in this organization understand how to locate and use Open Access resources.
3. The library ensures that provision of access to Open Access materials is equal to that of proprietary materials.
4. The library collects data on the use of Open Access materials.

Respondents rated agreement using a five-point Likert scale

Strength of the character

- 1-3 (where '1' is 'disagree') labeled 'weak'
- 4-5 (where '5' is 'agree') labeled 'strong'

Results:
Relating Ethical Climate to Practice

Character Strength of Libraries
According to Ethical Climate Type

	Exclusive Rights Advocate		Fair Use Advocate		Open Access Advocate		Copyright Law Knowledge	
	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong
Anarchical	81.0%	19.0%	85.7%	14.3%	47.6%	52.4%	76.2%	23.8%
Consummate Professional	75.0%	25.0%	85.0%	15.0%	65.0%	35.0%	75.0%	25.0%
Trust in Law	66.7%	33.3%	76.2%	23.8%	57.1%	42.9%	57.1%	42.9%
Socially Responsible	75.0%	25.0%	80.0%	20.0%	50.0%	50.0%	75.0%	25.0%
Trust in Organizational Policy	60.0%	40.0%	85.0%	15.0%	60.0%	40.0%	60.0%	40.0%
Law Abiding	70.0%	30.0%	75.0%	25.0%	40.0%	60.0%	70.0%	30.0%
Organizationally Responsible	66.7%	33.3%	71.4%	28.6%	42.9%	57.1%	66.7%	33.3%
Subversive	50.0%	50.0%	55.0%	45.0%	45.0%	55.0%	50.0%	50.0%

Conclusions:
Limitations of the Study

Sample
- Small size: N=64
- Not representative of libraries in general: 79% of respondents served in academic or research libraries

Validity of ECT and ECQ
- Content
  - Do these questions represent all possible attributes of ethical climate?
- Construct
  - Do the scores actually represent the organization?
  - Can an individual serve as an objective organizational agent?

Reliability of ECT and ECQ
- Self reporting

Conclusions:
Future Directions for Research

Intra-Organizational Analysis
- Two instruments: one for individuals and one for organizational agent
- Individual responses examined across departments

Multi-Method Studies
- Conduct interviews, engage in participant observation, analyze documents
- Compare data with ECQ to test instrument reliability

Cross-Cultural Analysis
- Professional cultures (public v. corporate libraries)
- Economic cultures (capitalist v. socialist economies)

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