Training: Ethical Considerations When Helping Patrons

Learning Objectives:
- Library staff will evaluate ethical aspects to helping patrons make decisions that involve financial or privacy risks.

About this Training:
Staff will discuss the ethical considerations that are implicit in a given patron scenario, and brainstorm ways to address these ethical considerations.

This Training is Appropriate for:
Group, Onboarding, Continuing, One-on-One

Time Required for Training:
Less than 30 minutes.

Materials Needed:
"What is a Persona?" information sheet, personas, scripts

Training Outline:

1. Start by introducing the concept of personas and explaining the persona being used in this activity (select one). Give staff time to read through the persona and the script provided.
2. [OPTIONAL, adds 10 minutes] Ask volunteers to read (or role play) the script to the rest of the group.
3. After the staff have had a chance to fully explore the persona and script, the facilitator will lead a discussion focusing on the ethical considerations that arose in the script:
   o Anthony: How much help and effort should library staff offer when it comes to making big financial decisions?
   o Josué: How much help and advice should library staff offer to Josue when it comes to protecting his privacy online but still being vocal about his political beliefs?
   o Simone: How much should library staff help minors manage their privacy online?
4. After you have talked about the question above, ask staff about more general ethical questions:
   o How do we give advice without being preachy?
   o How do we remain neutral? Are libraries neutral? Should we?
   o Are there any alternatives we can provide to prevent patrons from making bad decisions?
5. If you are well acquainted with the patron, does this affect how much advice you give?
6. How does the patron's age affect the level of help and advice staff give? What if the patron is 8? What if the patron is 80?

Note: For this activity, we have provided some suggested example prompts for Anthony, Josué, or Simone. However, this activity can be completed with any persona and script, but prompts will need to be customized for those scenarios.