
Northeast Native Museum Alliance

Ethics Guidelines for Collections Staff

“Ethics is conduct that a profession considers essential in order to uphold the integrity of the profession”-
Marie Malero

- Why have a Code of Ethics?
 - to define accepted/acceptable behaviors;
 - to promote high standards of practice;
 - to provide a benchmark for members to use for self evaluation;
 - to establish a framework for professional behavior and responsibilities;

(From the website of [Life Skills Coaches Association](#))
 - For museums, ethical standards are important because:
 - The museum needs public opinion of its institution to be strong-if it seems that museum is providing good stewardship of collections, support will follow. If it appears that museum might be doing unethical or underhanded things, this will undoubtedly harm the museum (Schmiegel 1998: 277).
 - Provides staff with clear understanding of what is expected of them professionally.
 - Ethical standards will protect you from any conflict of interest issues that might arise.
 - It is required for accreditation from AAM.
 - Most codes of ethics include common components
 - That you will follow federal, state, local and/or tribal laws as appropriate.
 - You will document your work and maintain proper records
 - You will conduct yourself in an open and honest way.
- See the websites listed below for specific codes of ethics for collections care personnel.
- Ethical Issues that Native American museums may want to address in a Code of Ethics
 - How do you treat your culturally sensitive materials, human remains?
 - Do you collect other people’s sensitive materials? How do you treat it?
 - Traditional care issues?
 - Tribal specific ethical guidelines you wish to include?
 - Tribal values that need to be translated into ethics.

Resources for Developing or Improving Codes of Ethics for Collections Staff

Schmiegel, Karol. 1998. *Legal and Ethical Issues: Professional Ethics*. In *The New Museum Registration Methods*. AAM. Edited by Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore. pp. 277-280.

Web Based Information

Conservation Code of Ethics
<http://aic.stanford.edu/pubs/ethics.html>

Curator Code of Ethics
<http://www.curcom.org/ethics.php>

Registrar Code of Ethics-look under appendix
<http://www.rcaam.org/>

General Information about Museum Ethics from AAM
<http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/index.cfm>
<http://aamweb.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm>

International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums
<http://icom.museum/ethics.html>

Museum Store Code of Ethics
<http://www.museumdistrict.com/membership/EthicsCode.cfm>

General help on writing a code of ethics
<http://www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/>

American Association of State and Local History statement of professional standards and ethics
<http://www.aaslh.org/ethics.htm>

Available from the AAM Bookstore

Codes of Ethics & Practice of Interest to Museums / American Association of Museums

Now, for the first time, all the museum-related professional codes of ethics have been assembled in one handy reference volume! With codes from all the AAM Standing Professional Committees and standards and policy statements from such organizations as the National Center for Nonprofit Boards and the National Society of Fundraising Executives, this is a complete guide to ethics related to all aspects of museum operations. This book is a valuable resource for any museum seeking to understand the range of ethics and practices at work in its institution, enhance the overall understanding of a broad scope of codes of practice, and improve its own practices. Includes Web addresses for associations, the AAM Accreditation Commission's expectations regarding Institutional Codes of Ethics and other useful tools.

Spiral bound | 311 pages | 2000
ISBN: 0-931201-69-1
\$35.00 (*non member cost*)
\$26.00 (*member cost*)

Code of Ethics for Museums / American Association of Museums

Best Seller!

Adopted in November 1993 and revised in 1999 by the AAM Board of Directors, this code provides a framework for developing an institution's own code of ethics and reflects the current, generally understood standards of the museum field. Issues covered include governance, collections, programs, and promulgation.

Paper | 16 pages | 2000
ISBN: 0-931201-65-9
\$7.00 (*non member cost*)
\$5.00 (*member cost*)

Writing a Museum Code of Ethics / American Association of Museums

The most useful book available on writing your museum's code of ethics. Outlines a step-by-step approach to writing a code of ethics consistent with your museum's mission. The report includes a section on: What is ethics?, a case study of one museum's experience, and a section on trustee involvement in development and implementation of a code of ethics. Also includes a survey of regulations and their relationship to museum ethics, sample codes from U.S. museums and a definition of ethics in the museum context, readings, and a list of additional resources.

Paper | 141 pages | 1993

ISBN: none

\$15.00 (*non member cost*)

\$12.00 (*member cost*)

Museum Ethics / edited by Gary Edson
(Routledge)

This title considers the theoretical and practical elements of the philosophy of conduct in relation to both contemporary issues and museums. Topics include: procurement of artifacts, rights of indigenous peoples, repatriation, the politics of display, the role of education, and more.

Paper | 304 pages | 1997

ISBN: 0-415-15290-9

\$46.00 (*non member cost*)

\$41.00 (*member cost*)

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