

ARDEN CRAFT SHOP MUSEUM COLLECTIONS POLICY

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OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

Collections Policy Statement

This Collections Policy is subject to future review and alteration to keep pace with evolving professional standards. It will be reviewed regularly (at least every two years) and necessary changes will be identified and made by Arden Craft Shop Museum staff, reviewed by the Museum and Archives Committee (hereafter Committee), and approved by the Arden Craft Shop Museum Board (hereafter Board) in a timely manner.

Arden Craft Shop Museum Mission

The Arden Craft Shop Museum's mission is to collect, exhibit and educate the public on the history of the Ardens which include the villages of Arden, Ardentown, and Ardencroft. The Arden Craft Shop Museum seeks to educate the community on the history of the Ardens as single-tax communities in addition to the roles that theater, craftsmanship, art, and other aspects of life affected the development of the Ardens as a close knit community.

Scope of Collections

The Arden Craft Shop Museum will collect objects, photographs and archival material directly relating to the history, art, and residents of the Ardens which include the communities of Arden, Ardentown, and Ardencroft. ACSM will pay particular attention to collecting objects, photographs and archival material related to the artists and artisans that have lived and/or worked in the Ardens.

The Arden Craft Shop Museum (ACSM) collects and maintains the official records and printed materials of the Arden Archives and ACSM. The ACSM also collects materials produced by the villages of the Ardens and primary source materials directly pertaining to or produced by residents of the three Ardens since 1900. The ACSM library maintains a collection of resources related to single-tax communities in Delaware, the arts and crafts movement in northern Delaware, and local writers.

The collection has been growing since about 1908, when the Arden Archives was formed. The collection is already strong in certain aspects, for instance in sculpture and oral history items. ACSM is always looking for more artwork by artists from the Ardens, particularly artwork that was actually produced in the Ardens.

The ACSM collection includes artifacts, archives, and a library. The ACSM acquires only items that are directly related to the three Ardens and their residents, including information on people, buildings, and events in the Ardens. The ACSM also collects items related to its own founding and operations. By acquiring these items, the ACSM accepts the responsibility to manage and care for them in the public trust. All accessioned items are part of the permanent collection.

This Collections Policy is intended to be used by ACSM staff and volunteers to meet current professional standards for the preservation and care of historic materials and to ensure that the

policies and procedures of the ACSM are in compliance with local, state, and federal laws governing the ownership and transfer of these materials. This policy only applies to objects coming into the permanent collection of the ACSM. The ACSM follows the standard practices and codes of ethics of the Society of American Archivists (see Appendix A).

PURPOSE AND USE OF THE COLLECTION

The ACSM collections are preserved and maintained in perpetuity to further its mission and may only be used in the following manner:

- Study, research, publication, or other educational purposes
- Publication of scholarly and promotional materials by ACSM
- Display in the museum
- Temporary loans to affiliated institutions

The collections may not be used for any purpose that include but are not limited to:

- Use of collections as props or decoration in an individual's home or place of business
- Use of collections at non-ACSM social functions or events, except when requested in writing and approved by the Committee
- Use of collections in educational programming that would subject them to excessive handling and therefore possible deterioration and damage
- Use for personal profit

When there is any doubt or question, appropriate or inappropriate use will be determined by the ACSM Curator and Committee.

Acquisitions

The Arden Craft Shop Museum will only collect objects, photographs, and archival material that it can properly store, care for, and exhibit. It will not accept objects, photographs, or archival material that are in too poor condition to fulfill the above criteria, or are a possible risk to the museum's collections. Potential acquisitions will only be accepted if the material directly relates to the Ardens and the ACSM's mission. The ACSM uses the following criteria to determine what items it will accept into its collection:

- Items must have a documented association with the collecting focus of the ACSM.
- Clear provenance and ownership must be established if possible.
- Items must not excessively duplicate material already in the ACSM's collection.
- Materials collected must be in stable condition or be able to be stabilized without undue expense.
- The ACSM must be able to provide adequate ongoing professional care for the item that will not compromise its ability to care for other parts of its collection.
- Items must have aesthetic merit, possess potential for research and scholarship, and/or have historical/cultural significance.

The Arden Craft Shop Museum will give priority to objects, photographs or archival material that can be directly attributed to persons who resided or worked in the Ardens or are directly related to the Ardens as a place or community.

Additionally, the following terms and conditions must be met before Items will be accessioned into the ACSM collection.

- The owner of the item must have clear and legal title to the item. Clear title will be transferred to the ACSM with the acquisition.
- The owner must offer an item or collection unconditionally and without restrictions before the ACSM will consider accepting it, unless there is a compelling reason to accept an item or collection with restrictions. If an object or collection is acquired with restrictions on its use or future disposition, the conditions must be stated clearly in the accession file.
- Items accepted must also meet legal and ethical collecting guidelines established by the Society of American Archivists. The ACSM will not knowingly or willfully accept any material when evidence exists that it has been stolen, looted, or illegally imported.
- The ACSM respects issues of copyright and intellectual property. Donors of original materials to the ACSM shall provide the appropriate copyright ownership information for each item in the donated collection. The archive shall have no obligation to independently investigate copyright ownership and shall rely on donors' representations. The ACSM reserves the right to restrict access to items if there is any question of copyright violation.
- In general, a collection or object must be able to be conserved within the resources of the museum or be accompanied by a monetary donation to conserve the specific object being donated.

All objects, photographs, or archival material that are presented for accession to collection will be previewed in person by the Curator to be judged for meeting the above criteria. The Curator will make a recommendation to the Committee as to whether the item(s) should be accessioned. If chosen for accession, items will be given an accession number and the donor will complete a deed of gift form that will be signed by both the donor and receiving Committee member or ACSM staff member. A copy of the deed of gift form will be kept in the acquisitions folder for the year and a copy will be given to the donor.

Due to the unique nature of archival collecting in the Ardens, archival material proposed for accessioning will be examined by the Curator, who will determine whether the material is appropriate for inclusion in existing archival collections or processed as its own collection. If the material is substantial enough or otherwise qualifies for its own collection, the Curator will consult with donor as to whether donor desires incorporation or separate processing. Ultimate processing decisions rest with the Curator and/or Archivist.

The ACSM acquires objects for its collection through donations, purchases, bequests, or transfers. ACSM staff, volunteers, and board members are not permitted to provide a financial appraisal of any potential donations. If appraisal is desired, the donor is responsible for obtaining an independent appraisal of the material prior to making the donation.

Donations

The ACSM accepts donations into its collection if they meet the established acceptance criteria for new acquisitions. A deed of gift acknowledging transfer of title will be issued for all

materials acquired by donation. Staff and volunteers responsible for processing donations must file a copy of the deed of gift in the appropriate accession folder.

Purchases

The ACSM may purchase items for its collection if they meet the established acceptance criteria for new acquisitions. Purchases for the collections shall be made from income from specially designated funds, current budget allocations, or specially designated monetary gifts. The following shall apply to all objects purchased for the collection:

- Anyone may make suggestions with regard to purchases for the collections.
- The purchases of materials will be considered by the Committee on a case-by-case basis.
- The Bill of Sale shall constitute a transfer of title for purchased items and will be filed in the accession folder along with supporting documentation.

Bequests

The ACSM accepts bequests into its collection if they meet the established acceptance criteria for new acquisitions. The ACSM encourages bequests but reserves the right to renounce its interest in property bequeathed to ACSM under a testamentary instrument. Bequests must meet ACSM acceptance criteria for new acquisitions. Any renunciation of interest must take place within six (6) months after the official notification of the bequest. A copy of the donor's will and testament will be maintained in the accession folder in lieu of a Deed of Gift. Materials donated by an executor from an estate that are not specified in a will are to be treated as a donation from the estate rather than as a bequest and must be accompanied by a completed deed of gift form.

Transfers

The ACSM may accept materials acquired by transfer from the collection of another institution collection if they meet the established acceptance criteria for new acquisitions.

Materials Found in Collection

Materials defined as "found in collection" are considered part of the ACSM collection but lack documentation or clear provenance. All efforts to establish the source of the materials will be documented in the accessions file.

Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning is the process used to remove permanently an object from a collection. Objects to which the ACSM has clear and unencumbered title may be deaccessioned by resolution of the Committee upon recommendation of the Curator or a Committee member.

The permanent removal of items from the ACSM collection through deaccessioning is permitted but this action has legal, ethical, and financial ramifications that the Committee must take into consideration. Review of the collections is an ongoing process and deaccessioning should take place on an item-by-item basis and always with reference to the ACSM Mission and Collections Policy. This policy does not apply to the weeding and disposal of duplicate, out-of-scope, and irrelevant archival material that is standard practice as part of collections and archival

processing.

Objects can be deaccessioned from a collection based on the object's condition, ACSM collections policy criteria, or redundancy in a collection. Collections items may be considered for deaccessioning based on the following criteria:

- The material falls outside the scope of the acquisitions criteria or does not support the ACSM mission.
- The material is a duplicate or excessively redundant copy of material already in the collection.
- The ACSM has acquired an example of the material that is in better condition and/or has better established provenance.
- The item has deteriorated beyond a point where it can be reasonably conserved and/or a significant portion of the item's value has been lost and it is no longer suitable for exhibition or study.
- The ACSM can no longer properly maintain and care for the material according to current professional standards.
- The material threatens the health or safety of staff, visitors, or other collections items and this condition cannot be remedied.
- The item lacks clear provenance and a good faith effort to locate such information and establish ownership has been made. (Note: there is no Abandoned Cultural Property statute in Delaware.)

Catalogue and inventory records of all deaccessioned articles shall be maintained, including a record of their disposal. Deaccessioned items shall be returned to the donor, gifted to an appropriate non-profit institution, destroyed if beyond reclamation, or, in rare cases, sold.

It is important to recognize that:

- The retention of every single object involves an ongoing expense for the museum in care and management costs.
- Deaccessioning may generate funds that can then be used to acquire other objects that are more critical to the collecting plan or to care for other objects in the museum's collection.
- Deaccessioning an item and transferring it to another museum may serve the museum community and the collection item itself better.

Deaccessioning Process

The following are guidelines for deaccessioning items in the collection:

- The Curator or a Committee member may propose material as a candidate for deaccessioning to the Committee.
- The proposing staff member or volunteer will submit a written recommendation with relevant reasons for deaccessioning to the collections committee.
- Approval of the majority of the Committee is required before any collections material may be deaccessioned. Any rejected recommendation may be discussed at a later meeting.
- When deaccessioned materials are of historic value, the ACSM will make every effort to place them with another museum or collecting institution where the material will be

accessible to the public.

- If possible, the ACSM will attempt to return deaccessioned materials to the donor. If the donor cannot be contacted after good faith efforts to do so have been made, items may be sold or destroyed.
- The ACSM reserves the right to destroy deaccessioned material that is deemed extremely deteriorated or a health hazard.
- Proceeds from the sale of collection items must only be deposited in accounts designated for acquisition or conservation.
- Deaccessioned materials will not be traded with, sold, or otherwise knowingly acquired by ACSM staff, Committee members, or their representatives.
- Deaccessioned materials destined for sale must only be sold at venues to which the general public has access, such as, but not limited to, public auctions.
- All records pertaining to deaccessioned material will be marked “Deaccessioned” along with the date of deaccessioning. These records will be maintained in the accessions files.

Loans

The ACSM does not loan out original collection materials for personal use, but the ACSM may temporarily loan items to affiliated institutions with approval from the Committee. The ACSM does not offer materials from its collection for permanent or indefinite loan. Duplications of collections materials for exhibition or publication purposes may be requested. Loan policies are designed to ensure the safety of all loaned items.

Outgoing Loans

ACSM collection items will only be loaned to qualifying institutions and conservators that meet professional archival and museum standards for collections care. Collections items will not be loaned to individuals for private use. Any outgoing loan must be approved by the Committee. The status of existing loans will be monitored, documented, and processed by the Curator.

The following terms and conditions apply to all outgoing loans:

- All loan requests or renewals will be evaluated on an individual basis and may be accepted or declined by the ACSM for the following reasons:
 - prior commitment to the use of the material
 - condition of the material
 - length of loan period
 - state of the exhibition space or environmental conditions at the borrowing facility
 - other considerations as warranted
- The borrowing institution may not undertake any cleaning or restoration work without the express written permission of the ACSM.
- The borrowing institution is responsible for monitoring the condition of each item for the duration of the loan.
- The borrower will credit the ACSM as the owner of the material on exhibit labels and on any associated exhibit literature.
- Approval of any outgoing loan does not include rights to reproduce, publish, or distribute images of ACSM material. The borrowing institution must obtain written permission from the

ACSM before any photography, scanning, uploading to the internet, or publication can be undertaken. The ACSM does not grant rights to exclusive use and reserves the right to publish copies of material from its collections or authorize others to do so.

- The maximum loan period for ACSM collection items is one year. Any extensions or renewals must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- The ACSM reserves the right to recall items on loan at any time.

Incoming Loans

The ACSM may borrow material from individuals or other institutions for the following reasons:

- research, examination, or identification
- documentation and publication
- duplication for addition to the archival collection
- exhibitions

In accepting materials on loan, the ACSM agrees to treat them with the same professional care and consideration that it applies to its own collection and will not attempt to borrow items deemed too fragile to withstand handling and transportation. The ACSM Curator or an appointed volunteer is responsible for initiating all incoming loans and completing all associated paperwork. The Curator will monitor, document, and coordinate the necessary logistics and incoming loan paperwork.

The following terms and conditions apply to all incoming loans:

- It is the responsibility of the lender to notify the ACSM promptly and in writing if there is any change of address or ownership with regard to materials on loan.
- If a lender chooses to maintain his/her own insurance, the ACSM must be provided with a certificate of insurance from the lender's insurance company that names the ACSM as the additional insured or waiving subrogation against the ACSM. Failure to do so will constitute a release of ACSM from any liability and all claims arising out of loss or damage.
- The lender will agree that, in the event of a claim, recovery will be limited to the amount paid by the insurer.

Access and Use

The ACSM strives to make the collection available and useful for scholarly research in history and other disciplines. The ACSM collection is available to scholars and the public for research purposes except where restricted. Procedures and rules for public access are intended to balance the demands of patron access with responsible practices that support the long-term preservation of the objects. As such, all researchers shall be granted reasonable access in accordance with procedures necessary to safeguard the materials and restrictions imposed by available study space and staff time. The ACSM Curator and volunteers are responsible for managing public access to the collections and reserve the right to control or restrict access if, in their best judgment, the safety of the objects will be compromised in any way.

Location, Hours, and Usage Guidelines

- The ACSM collections are housed located at: 1807 Millers Road, Arden, DE 19810.
- The ACSM collection is open by appointment only. Appointments for in-depth research should be made at least one week in advance. ACSM is open to the public and to researchers on Wednesdays from 7:30pm-9:00pm and Sundays from 1:00pm-3:00pm, and other times by appointment. The ACSM will attempt to accommodate researchers who have not scheduled an appointment if sufficient staff is on hand.
- Please contact 302.475.3060 or email ardencraftshopmuseum@gmail.com to make an appointment.
- The request must state the purpose of the visit, and must be approved by a Committee member or the curator prior to the date of the appointment.
- The ACSM provides access to items in our collection for educational and research purposes.
- Upon arriving at the museum, the researcher will fill out a research form with his/her name, the date, and his/her phone number or e-mail address. S/he will also have the option of providing a brief description of his/her research interests.
- The ACSM library is a non-circulating library.
- All researchers are required to abide by the ACSM's rules and regulations.
- Researchers may access collection materials through finding aids and other search materials provided. Collections that are not catalogued are not available for use unless approved by the Curator.
- Where possible, copies or digital copies of archival material will be presented to researchers.
- Only ACSM staff and volunteers are authorized to remove material from storage areas, including storage rooms, boxes, and filing cabinets.
- Members of the general public are not permitted to enter collections storage areas unless accompanied by an authorized member of ACSM staff or volunteers, who must be present at all times.
- No objects (art, artifact, written material, or photograph) will be removed from the collection for any reason by any person without prior approval by the Committee.
- No food, beverages, or smoking are permitted in the ACSM.
- Researchers will use pencil only for note taking.
- Access to collections materials is provided at the discretion of ACSM Curator and designated staff/volunteers. Researchers must follow their guidance with regard to appropriate handling of materials.
- When using manuscript material, the researcher will not disturb the arrangement of papers or folders.
- ACSM reserves the right to limit the amount of material issued to a researcher at any one time.
- ACSM staff reserve the right to take appropriate action if guidelines are not followed or inappropriate or destructive behavior is observed.
- In general, single copies of materials are free, but reproduction requiring extensive time or resources may be subject to a reasonable fee. Please see our *Schedule of Fees*.
- Photocopies of documents are for personal research only. Copies may not be further reproduced without the explicit permission of the ACSM.
- All reproductions are done at the discretion of museum staff and volunteers. Conservation concerns and staffing limitations are the most common reasons for declining reproduction

requests.

- All researchers wishing to photograph any object or material (art, artifact, written material or photograph) will be required to sign a form that states that all images and original text remain the property of the Arden Craft Shop Museum, and that all papers written will properly acknowledge and credit the Arden Craft Shop Museum.
- Before publication or any paper, book or periodical, we strongly encourage they be submitted to the Arden Craft Shop Museum for review, clarification or correction.

Request for Materials (photocopies, scans, mailings, etc.)

Requests for photocopies and scans may be submitted via the Request for Materials form. This form may be emailed to ardencraftshopmuseum@gmail.com or mailed to 1807 Millers Road, Arden, DE 19810. Request for materials will be processed on a first come, first serve basis. Because the ACSM has a limited staff, it may take up to one month to process materials request. At this time, off-site research requests are not granted.

Permission to Publish

No photographic, digital, or replica reproduction is permitted without the written permission of the ACSM. Reproduction and publication permission requests must be submitted in writing to the ACSM Curator. The ACSM reserves the right to collect fees and control the use of its items as may be deemed appropriate and lawful. In the event that the ACSM does not hold the copyright to certain materials, permission to publish must come from the owner of the copyright. The ACSM shall have no obligation to obtain this information with requests to publish. In general, the 1976 Federal Copyright Act allows the museum to carry out its exhibition programs even when the museum does not hold copyright for an item. However, unless the museum can prove its copyright of an object, the ACSM cannot grant rights to reproduce objects in the collection for other purposes.

The ACSM strongly encourages that a copy of all papers, books or periodicals written (published or otherwise) using material from the Arden Craft Shop Museum be donated to museum to be accessioned to the museum's library.

Collections Management and Care

It is the responsibility of the ACSM to maintain the condition and integrity of the materials in its care. The ACSM will maintain all of its collections in accordance with recognized current professional standards in the museum and library fields. It is the responsibility of the staff and/or volunteers to ensure that:

- All materials accepted into the collection will be documented, classified, and catalogued according to generally accepted collections practices.
- The ACSM makes every effort to maintain the safest, most stable environment possible for all pieces of the collection.
- If conservation work is required, the ACSM engages the services of a professional conservator if possible. Conservators selected should follow the American Institute of Conservation's *Code of Ethics and Guidelines of Practices*. All conservation work must be documented photographically and in writing.

- All accession records are kept in PastPerfect and, if possible, as a hard copy in the accession file. PastPerfect is to be backed up at least once per month.
- Objects in the collection are handled as little as possible in order to ensure their security and stability for the future.

Risk Management

The ACSM must take all the necessary precautions to secure its collections and maintain its buildings to reduce the risk of damage by fire, theft, vandalism, or natural disasters. The museum is to be locked by both the front and back (the one that opens into the Bernie Schwab Community Room) doors when not occupied. The alarm is to be set when the museum is not occupied. In the event of an emergency, the safety of staff and visitors shall have priority over collections.

Definitions

Accession: an acquisition that a museum formally adds to its collections, to be held in the public trust and administered according to the collections management policy

Accessioning: the process of transferring ownership of an acquisition to the museum, including the process of recording the acquisition as part of the collection

Accession number: a unique number assigned to a collection element or group of elements that comprise the accession (this is generally the prefix of the object ID number)

Accession record: contains the information documenting where the accessioned material came from, a brief description of the material, and how the museum took ownership of it (these are now found in PastPerfect and, when possible, the paper accession files)

Acquisition: something obtained by a museum, though formal transfer of ownership may not have taken place

Archive: A collection of historical documents and records. Can also be used as a general term that encompasses collections of historical documents and historical objects.

Arden Craft Shop Museum, Inc.: An entity formed to acquire the Arden Craft Shop and its leasehold in order to form a 501(c)3 corporation to operate a museum for the three Ardens. The ACSM Board members are elected by the shareholders of the museum, who are all the residents of the three Ardens.

Cataloguing: process of organizing the information about the accessions by creating a record of specific information about the object or specimen

Catalogue record: created during the cataloguing process; usually contains information in addition to the accession record

Collection: a group of items that have been gathered and arranged in some order

Collections policy: A policy or set of policies that address(es) various aspects of collections management, including acquisition, accession, registration, cataloging, control, security, and storage, as well as a museum's other collections-related activities. This document defines what objects and archives a museum or similar institution collects for its permanent collection from the community and other institutions.

Deaccessioning: the process of removing an accessioned object from the permanent collection by due process

Finding aid: Document containing detailed information about a specific collection of papers or records within an archive

Inventory: For the purposes of the ASCM, the inventory is a process in which objects in the collection are identified, numbered, measured, and photographed

Museum and Archives Committee: A committee of Arden Craft Shop Museum, Inc. responsible for the administration of the Arden Craft Shop Museum. Members are elected/selected by the three villages.

Object: Usually defined as an artifact or historic object that has significance to a person or group of people. An object can be a pot, painting, sculpture, book, or piece of furniture to just name a few examples.

Object ID number (sometimes catalogue number): Every artifact accessioned in a museum collection has its own unique object ID number. (At ACSM, there are three parts to an object ID number for each collection object: first two parts are the accession number, and the third number is the object's unique number within a specific collection. If ACSM is uncertain when a specific object entered its collection but the object has been present in the museum for at least two years with no claim to provenance/donor, the object will be designated as Found in Collection. The Accession Number and Object ID number will then indicate this status by using the year in which the object was found as the first set of numbers, 00 as the second set of numbers, and, in the case of the Object ID number, the next number in the 00 accession for that year (e.g., 2015.00.004 would be the fourth Found in Collection item found in the year 2015. Archives items do not follow this numbering system as they are generally not catalogued individually.)

Definitions aided or provided by John E. Simmons, *Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2006).

Appendix A: Society for American Archivists Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics for Archivists

Preamble

The Code of Ethics for Archivists establishes standards for the archival profession. It introduces new members of the profession to those standards, reminds experienced archivists of their professional responsibilities, and serves as a model for institutional policies. It also is intended to inspire public confidence in the profession.

This code provides an ethical framework to guide members of the profession. It does not provide the solution to specific problems.

The term “archivist” as used in this code encompasses all those concerned with the selection, control, care, preservation, and administration of historical and documentary records of enduring value.

I. Purpose

The Society of American Archivists recognizes the importance of educating the profession and general public about archival ethics by codifying ethical principles to guide the work of archivists. This code provides a set of principles to which archivists aspire.

II. Professional Relationships

Archivists select, preserve, and make available historical and documentary records of enduring value. Archivists cooperate, collaborate, and respect each institution and its mission and collecting policy. Respect and cooperation form the basis of all professional relationships with colleagues and users.

III. Judgment

Archivists should exercise professional judgment in acquiring, appraising, and processing historical materials. They should not allow personal beliefs or perspectives to affect their decisions.

IV. Trust

Archivists should not profit or otherwise benefit from their privileged access to and control of historical records and documentary materials.

V. Authenticity and Integrity

Archivists strive to preserve and protect the authenticity of records in their holdings by documenting their creation and use in hard copy and electronic formats. They have a fundamental obligation to preserve the intellectual and physical integrity of those records. Archivists may not alter, manipulate, or destroy data or records to conceal facts or distort evidence.

VI. Access

Archivists strive to promote open and equitable access to their services and the records in their care without discrimination or preferential treatment, and in accordance with legal requirements, cultural sensitivities, and institutional policies. Archivists recognize their responsibility to promote the use of records as a fundamental purpose of the keeping of archives. Archivists may place restrictions on access for the protection of privacy or confidentiality of information in the records.

VII. Privacy

Archivists protect the privacy rights of donors and individuals or groups who are the subject of records. They respect all users' right to privacy by maintaining the confidentiality of their research and protecting any personal information collected about them in accordance with the institution's security procedures.

VIII. Security/Protection

Archivists protect all documentary materials for which they are responsible and guard them against defacement, physical damage, deterioration, and theft. Archivists should cooperate with colleagues and law enforcement agencies to apprehend and prosecute thieves and

vandals.

IX. Law

Archivists must uphold all federal, state, and local laws.

Approved by the SAA Council, February 5, 2005.

Appendix B: American Alliance of Museum's Code of Ethics for Museums

Code of Ethics for Museums

Museums make their unique contribution to the public by collecting, preserving and interpreting the things of this world. Historically, they have owned and used natural objects, living and nonliving, and all manner of human artifacts to advance knowledge and nourish the human spirit. Today, the range of their special interests reflects the scope of human vision. Their missions include collecting and preserving, as well as exhibiting and educating with materials not only owned but also borrowed and fabricated for these ends. Their numbers include both governmental and private museums of anthropology, art history and natural history, aquariums, arboreta, art centers, botanical gardens, children's museums, historic sites, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology centers, and zoos. The museum universe in the United States includes both collecting and non-collecting institutions. Although diverse in their missions, they have in common their nonprofit form of organization and a commitment of service to the public. Their collections and/or the objects they borrow or fabricate are the basis

for research, exhibits, and programs that invite public participation.

Taken as a whole, museum collections and exhibition materials represent the world's natural and cultural common wealth. As stewards of that wealth, museums are compelled to advance an understanding of all natural forms and of the human experience. It is incumbent on museums to be resources for humankind and in all their activities to foster an informed appreciation of the rich and diverse world we have inherited. It is also incumbent upon them to preserve that inheritance for posterity.

Museums in the United States are grounded in the tradition of public service. They are organized as public trusts, holding their collections and information as a benefit for those they were established to serve. Members of their governing authority, employees and volunteers are committed to the interests of these beneficiaries. The law provides the basic framework for museum operations. As nonprofit institutions, museums comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws and international conventions, as well as with the specific legal standards governing trust responsibilities. This Code of Ethics for Museums takes that compliance as given. But legal standards are a minimum. Museums and those responsible for them must do more than avoid legal liability, they must take affirmative steps to maintain their integrity so as to warrant public confidence. They must act not only legally but also ethically. This Code of Ethics for Museums, therefore, outlines ethical standards that frequently exceed legal minimums.

Loyalty to the mission of the museum and to the public it serves is the essence of museum work, whether volunteer or paid. Where conflicts of interest arise—actual, potential or perceived—the duty of loyalty must never be compromised. No individual may use his or her position in a museum for personal gain or to benefit another at the expense of the museum, its mission, its reputation and the society it serves.

For museums, public service is paramount. To affirm that ethic and to elaborate its application to their governance, collections and programs, the American Association of Museums promulgates this Code of Ethics for Museums. In subscribing to this code, museums assume responsibility for the actions of members of their governing authority, employees and volunteers in the performance of museum-related duties. Museums, thereby, affirm their chartered purpose, ensure the prudent application of their resources, enhance their effectiveness and maintain public confidence. This collective endeavor strengthens museum work and the contributions of museums to society—present and future.

Governance

Museum governance in its various forms is a public trust responsible for the institution's service to society. The governing authority protects and enhances the museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources. It ensures that all these resources support the museum's mission, respond to the pluralism of society and respect the diversity of the natural and cultural common wealth.

Thus, the governing authority ensures that:

- all those who work for or on behalf of a museum understand and support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- its members understand and fulfill their trusteeship and act corporately, not as individuals
- the museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources are protected, maintained and developed in support of the museum's mission
- it is responsive to and represents the interests of society
- it maintains the relationship with staff in which shared roles are recognized and separate responsibilities respected
- working relationships among trustees, employees and volunteers are based on equity and mutual respect
- professional standards and practices inform and guide museum operations
- policies are articulated and prudent oversight is practiced
- governance promotes the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Collections

The distinctive character of museum ethics derives from the ownership, care and use of objects, specimens, and living collections representing the world's natural and cultural common wealth. This stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility and responsible disposal.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- collections in its custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for and preserved
- collections in its custody are accounted for and documented
- access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities
- disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.
- the unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections
- collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain
- competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsively and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

Programs

Museums serve society by advancing an understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural common wealth through exhibitions, research, scholarship, publications and educational activities. These programs further the museum's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of society.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- programs support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- programs are founded on scholarship and marked by intellectual integrity
- programs are accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with its mission and resources
- programs respect pluralistic values, traditions and concerns
- revenue-producing activities and activities that involve relationships with external entities are compatible with the museum's mission and support its public trust responsibilities
- programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Promulgation

This Code of Ethics for Museums was adopted by the Board of Directors of the American Association of Museums on November 12, 1993. The AAM Board of Directors recommends that each nonprofit museum member of the American Association of Museums adopt and promulgate its separate code of ethics, applying the Code of Ethics for Museums to its own institutional setting.

A Committee on Ethics, nominated by the president of the AAM and confirmed by the Board of Directors, will be charged with two responsibilities:

- establishing programs of information, education and assistance to guide museums in developing their own codes of ethics
- reviewing the Code of Ethics for Museums and periodically recommending refinements and revisions to the Board of Directors.

Afterword

Each nonprofit museum member of the American Association of Museums should subscribe to the AAM Code of Ethics for Museums. Subsequently, these museums should set about framing their own institutional codes of ethics, which should be in conformance with the AAM code and should expand on it through the elaboration of specific practices. This recommendation is made to these member institutions in the belief that engaging the governing authority, staff and volunteers in applying the AAM code to institutional settings will stimulate the development and maintenance of sound policies and procedures necessary to understanding and ensuring ethical behavior by institutions and by all who work for them or on their behalf.

The Code of Ethics for Museums serves the interests of museums, their constituencies, and society. The primary goal of AAM is to encourage institutions to regulate the ethical behavior of members of their governing authority, employees and volunteers. Formal adoption of an institutional code promotes higher and more consistent ethical standards.