



**CAPE CANAVERAL
LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION**

**Museum Collections
Management Policy**

August 20, 2019

Document Revision History

Date	Details of Change
8/20/2019	Policy document approved by the CCLF Board of Directors
9/21/2021	Modified the Collections categories and updated verbiage for Space Force

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1.0 Purpose and Mission

The purpose of this collections policy is to establish guidelines for the maintenance and development of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation (CCLF) museum collections. This policy outlines CCLF's scope of collections and methods of acquisitions, as well as the responsibilities of its governing bodies and staff. In all instances, the growth, care and development of CCLF's collections should reflect a commitment to the Foundation's mission as stated below.

The Cape Canaveral Lighthouse is owned and maintained by the United States Space Force's (USSF) Space Launch Delta 45. The United States Coast Guard operates the lighthouse beacon as a navigational aid. The purpose of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation, Inc. is to assist SLD 45 in preserving, protecting and interpreting the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse and its historical significance to the Florida Space Coast, State of Florida and our Nation.

2.0 Governance Documents

The CCLF collections, and their management, are compliant with the Bylaws of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation.

3.0 Ethical Standards

All board members, staff and volunteers of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation will follow the American Alliance of Museums Code of Ethics. The entire AAM Code of Ethics can be found in Attachment A (the Collections portion of that code is included here).

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.

In support of these ethical standards, no CCLF staff, volunteer, or Board member shall use his/her position at the Museum for personal gain or benefit at the expense of the Museum, its Mission, its reputation, and/or the community it serves. Board members, staff, and volunteers will not compete with the Museum in any personal collecting. Staff, Board members, and volunteers may not participate in any dealing in objects similar to those objects collected by the Museum. No CCLF board member, staff or volunteer may purchase an item.

4.0 Authority and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities for managing the collections and the museum are shared by multiple functions. Each of these may be performed by separate individuals, a team of people, or one individual may perform one or more of the functions. Any of these positions may be filled by either paid staff or volunteers.

Museum Director – oversees all museum activities and personnel. Ensures all personnel follow approved processes and procedures.

Collections Manager - ensures the proper care and preservation of objects within the museum. Responsible for accepting artifacts into the collections, cataloging, storage, conservation and care.

Curator - develops ways in which objects and archives can be interpreted, through exhibitions, publications, events and audio-visual presentations.

Historian - conducts historical research as a basis for the identification, conservation, and reconstruction of historic places and materials. Organizes data and analyzes and interprets its authenticity and relative significance.

Together, they form the Collections Committee. They are responsible for implementation of this Collections Policy, including development and execution of supporting procedures to control, catalog, document and disposition museum artifacts.

5.0 Scope of Collections

The collections contain objects that help tell the story of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse and its keepers. The museum will only collect those items consistent with and supportive of preserving, protecting and interpreting the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse. Artifacts in the collections of the CCLF are displayed either in the Museum, the Lighthouse or the adjacent grounds, unless placed in storage. Objects may be collected and stored for display in future buildings, including an education building and a replica keeper's cottage.

The museum has four distinct collections:

1. **Permanent Collection** – artifacts of intrinsic historic value with a direct connection to the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse, its keepers, or their families. These items are accessioned into the collection to be cared for at the highest level, if transfer of ownership to CCLF has been documented. Examples include bricks from the original brick lighthouse and copper roof segments from the iron lighthouse roof.
2. **Period Pieces Collection** - A period piece is an item made during the lighthouse's period of significance, but the item has no historic association to the lighthouse. They have been acquired to substitute for original objects to aid in interpretation of the lighthouse. Examples include antique furniture donated or purchased, to be used in the replica cottage.
3. **Reproductions Collection** – A reproduction is the reconstruction or fabrication of an accurate copy of an original object/item. A reproduction can be off-the-shelf or custom-made. Examples include the lighthouse keeper's jacket and hat.
4. **Exhibit Support Collection** – items that do not fall into the other collections and are used to support exhibits and interpretation activities but need to be tracked due to their cost or importance to the museum.

Differing levels of rigor apply to the processes and documentation for the four collections. Objects in the Permanent Collection will be treated from acquisition through deaccessioning and disposal with the utmost care and in accordance with standard museum best practices. All Permanent Collection items will be accessioned and cataloged in PastPerfect. Objects in the other Collections may be cataloged in PastPerfect. They will be well cared for but need not meet museum standards for care of items with intrinsic historic value.

Display of Collections

The focus of the exhibits in the museum will be on artifacts in the Permanent Collection, augmented where needed with Period Pieces and Reproductions. Permanent Collection objects will be appropriately protected against theft and inadvertent damage from handling

by the public, including being placed in locked display cases, in custom-made enclosures or behind crowd-control barriers.

6.0 Acquisitions and Accessioning

Acquisition is the creation of an immediate, brief, and permanent record utilizing a control number for an object or group of objects added to the collection from the same source at the same time, and for which the Museum has custody, right, or title.

Objects may be acquired for the collections by gift, bequest, purchase, commission, exchange, or other means. The Museum will accept objects into the collections only after thoughtful deliberation and consideration of the object's importance to the collection, its condition, its appropriateness in serving the mission, and the CCLF's ability and ethical obligation to store, preserve, document, and make accessible objects accepted, especially those going into the Permanent Collection. Consideration will also be given to how many similar objects are already in the collection and the ability to properly store artifacts.

CCLF subscribes to a policy of selective acquisition. It is neither feasible nor desirable for the Foundation to allow indiscriminate growth of its collections. The Collections Committee will make the determination on whether to accept a donation and will engage the Board of Directors for unusual or controversial objects, as needed. The CCLF may choose not to accession every object that comes into its possession. Objects acquired without tax implications (bequests, purchases), may be disposed of immediately.

Laws and Ethics of Acquisitions

All acquisitions are reviewed to avoid possible violations of legal and ethical standards involving ownership, possession, and authenticity.

- The CCLF does not knowingly acquire an object unless the donor or vendor has valid title to the object in question.
- The CCLF will not knowingly acquire, by direct or indirect means, ethnographic and archaeological specimens which it believes have been collected in contradiction of existing laws; or which have been unethically collected or alienated from their society or place of origin (even when not in violation of the relevant laws of that place).
- The CCLF ratifies the principles of UNESCO's "Convention on the means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970." The CCLF attempts to verify that questionable artifacts considered for acquisition were not acquired in or exported from their country of origin (or immediate country in which they may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws and that they have been acquired in full compliance with the laws and

regulations of the federal Government of the United States and of individual states within the United States.

- The CCLF complies with international laws as approved by the International Council on Museums (ICOM), a division of UNESCO, as well as federal laws regarding the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Types of Acquisitions

- a. **Gifts:** It is the policy of the CCLF to request each donor to execute a written Deed of Gift form to provide documentation of the transfer in ownership, title and copyright. Gifts cannot be encumbered by restrictions, thereby allowing the Foundation the full and complete ownership and freedom of use as permitted by law.

Legal and ultimate responsibility for furnishing appraisals of value to governmental tax agencies rests with the donor. The CCLF cannot provide appraisals to individuals but may supply the donor with the names of appraisers and will make the object(s) available on the Lighthouse property for an appraiser's inspection.

In compliance with the Federal Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1993, the CCLF does not offer any goods or services in exchange for objects given.

- b. **Promised and Partial Gifts:** The CCLF accepts promised gifts, only when a written agreement or will so stipulates said planned gift. A promised gift belonging in the Permanent Collection is only accessioned at the time of the actual donation or bequest.

The CCLF does not accept partial gifts, due to potential Federal tax ramifications.

- c. **Purchases:** The Collections Committee will review and approve or deny any request to purchase an object for the Museum. If the proposed purchase exceeds the approved budget for artifact purchases, the proposal is presented to the CCLF Board of Directors for their review and approval.

Should there be a special purchasing opportunity, where timely action is required (most often, but not exclusively, in auction circumstances), the President, in consultation with the Executive Committee, the Treasurer, and the Collections Committee may purchase said items.

- d. **Bequests:** The CCLF accepts bequests to the collections, as long as they are appropriate to the CCLF's mission and fall within the collection's criteria.

When a bequest is made to CCLF, legal documentation shall be reviewed by the CCLF's attorney and Executive Committee to ascertain all terms of the bequest. If the Executive Committee determines that said bequest does not fall within the parameters of the Collections Policy, their recommendation shall be presented to the full Board for their review and final decision.

- e. **Transfer and Exchange:** Objects acquired through transfer and exchange are treated in the same manner as donations.
- f. **Objects Found in the Collection:** Every effort should be made to identify the source of an object found in the collection. If the source is identified, the object may be accessioned into the collection through regular accessioning procedures.

Objects that are not identified shall be temporarily numbered and tracked by the Collections Manager. Objects belonging in the Permanent Collection shall be accessioned only after title has been obtained following the Abandoned Property laws for the State of Florida. Objects belonging in any other collection may be retained in temporary custody or placed into that collection.

Legal Conveyance of Ownership

A legal instrument of conveyance adequately describing the objects and the conditions of transfer must accompany the gift, bequest, purchase, or exchange (*i.e.* a Deed of Gift or commercial invoice). Title to all objects acquired for the collection must be obtained free and clear, and generally without restrictions to its use or future disposition. Any conditions or restrictions upon a gift, bequest, exchange or sale, must be approved by the Collections Committee. Said approval must be stated clearly on the deed. Significant restrictions requiring undue expense for care or exhibit must be approved by the CCLF Board. No object will be accessioned for which clear legal ownership is not documented. Since the CCLF does not own loaned items, they are held separately and not accessioned.

7.0 Deaccessioning and Disposal

Deaccessioning is the removal of an accessioned object or group of objects from the CCLF's collection through a formal process. In deaccessioning collections objects, the CCLF weighs carefully the interests of the public for which it holds the collection in trust, the donor's intent in the broadest sense, the interests of the scholarly and the cultural community, and the CCLF's ability to house and care for the object(s) in question. Only Permanent Collection objects are fully accessioned, therefore the formal deaccessioning process only applies to that collection. As with level of care, there are varying requirements for disposal, dependent upon the collection.

Criteria

Objects are eligible for deaccession or disposal only if they entered the collection on an unrestricted basis.

Categories of objects appropriate for deaccession or disposal consideration on a routine though fully procedural basis include:

- Objects that do not fit CCLF's Mission and Collections scope
- Objects which are duplicates of other items in the collection
- Objects of decidedly undistinguished quality
- Objects of historically insignificant study material
- Forgeries/historically insignificant copies
- Objects in irretrievably deteriorated condition
- Objects where comparable or better example(s) are in the collections
- Objects deaccessioned through collection refinement or upgrading
- Objects which are from non-collecting or non-strength areas
- Objects which are identified and claimed by persons identified under the law as appropriate representatives of their Native groups on the behalf of NAGPRA

Authority

- Permanent Collection:** The most care and reflection should be given before deciding to deaccession and dispose of any item in the Permanent Collection. All deaccession and disposal recommendations will be brought to the Collections Committee, who shall then make the final decision as to disposition method, rationale and reasoning.
- Period Pieces Collection:** Disposal recommendations will be approved by the Collections Committee.
- Reproductions Collection:** Disposal recommendations will be approved by the Collections Committee.
- Exhibit Support Collection:** Disposal decisions will be made by the Collections Manager and the Curator.

Types of Disposal

Disposal of objects through sale, trade, donation or transfer to other institutions are solely for the advancement of the CCLF's mission.

- **Transfer of Objects to Sister Institutions:** In certain instances, in recognition of its role as a caretaker of collections for the benefit of the public good, CCLF may choose to transfer objects to sister institutions rather than sell or exchange them.

A sister institution is defined as an organization determined to be exempt from Federal Income taxation pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, that responsibly collects and preserves objects, and whose mission makes it an appropriate recipient of the deaccessioned material. The policies and procedures for the transfer of objects to sister institutions are the same as those in force for the sale and exchange of deaccessioned objects.

- **Sale of Permanent Collection Objects:** Deaccessioned objects from the Permanent Collection shall be disposed of through public auction/sale in accordance with ethical standards of the American Alliance of Museums. The use of proceeds from the sale of Permanent Collection objects is restricted solely to acquisition of objects that raise the quality or otherwise enhance the Permanent Collection or provide for the direct care of collections. No funds from the sale of Permanent Collection objects will be used for operating expenses.

Direct care of collections includes:

- Conservation treatment
 - Conservation and preservation supplies (e.g., acid-free housing materials, storage furniture)
 - Technology for monitoring and regulating climatic conditions in storage and on exhibit
 - Computer hardware and software for collections documentation and management
 - Reference materials relating to the care and documentation of collections
 - Consultants
 - Staff training and development
- **Sale of Non-Permanent Collection Objects:** Objects removed from the Period Pieces, and Reproductions Collections shall be disposed of according to standard museum procedures, as objects without intrinsic historic value. Said objects may be sold or transferred, as recommended by the Collections Committee. Any monies received shall be used for acquisition of other artifacts or improvements to the museum.
 - **Donation:** If an object cannot be transferred or sold but is in reasonable condition, it may be donated to another organization.
 - **Destruction/Disposal:** If an object cannot be transferred, sold or donated or is beyond reasonable conservation efforts and/or could present a health hazard to staff or a threat to other objects in the collection, destruction/disposal may be considered as an option. Objects will first be documented through photographs.

Ethical Consideration of Deaccessioning

CCLF realizes that they have public accountability for their decision to deaccession and the method by which they choose to dispose of an object. There should be no expectation of concealing the transaction. Materials and objects shall not be given, sold, or otherwise

transferred, publicly or privately, to CCLF employees, volunteers, officers, trustees, or their families or representatives.

Records

Records of all deaccessioned objects shall be maintained in perpetuity by the Collections Manager.

8.0 Loans

Outgoing Loans:

The CCLF encourages loans from the Permanent, Period Pieces and Reproductions Collections for exhibition at other History Museums or similar institutions in order to promote research and to increase and extend the knowledge and appreciation of the collection locally, nationally, and internationally. The Collections Committee must approve loans of objects to other institutions.

Loans from the CCLF will be considered on the following basis: condition of the object(s) to withstand the normal rigors of transportation and exhibition; role of the CCLF in the exhibit; security of the borrowing institution; stature and responsibility of the borrowing institution; importance of the exhibition; whether a publication is planned; impact on CCLF financial and human resources; public relations or extenuating circumstances. The CCLF abides by any legal restrictions on a gift that would require, limit or prohibit its loan. The borrowing institution will be responsible for all packing and shipping costs required to send the object to the institution and for its return to the CCLF.

The CCLF does not approve loans to individuals, except in the case of non-permanent collection objects.

Loans are processed through the Collections Manager, who coordinates all conservation, mounting, handling, packing, and shipping arrangements with the Curator. All current and past loan records are compiled and maintained by the Collections Manager.

Insurance coverage and/or indemnity coverage of the loan of CCLF property must be provided by the borrower. The coverage and/or indemnity must be appropriate as determined by the CCLF's Collections Manager. When the CCLF staff transports objects in their personal vehicle, the CCLF holds harmless such drivers in the event of loss except in the case of gross negligence, fraud, or illegal conduct.

Incoming Loans:

The CCLF does not accept loans from individuals, unless a direct historical connection exists, such as Cape Canaveral lighthouse keeper objects on loan from their descendants, and then only if the object(s) will significantly enhance the museum experience for visitors.

Loans from private owners is only permitted in exceptional circumstances and must be accompanied by a specified, written agreement with a limited loan time. Loans from individuals of items that would belong in the Period Pieces or Reproductions collections, if owned by CCLF, are not accepted. Ownership of those items must be given to the CCLF through a Deed of Gift.

Loans are accepted from sister institutions and government agencies when the objects significantly enhance the ability of the CCLF to interpret the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse and its historical significance.

The Collections Committee must approve loans of objects from other institutions or private owners, with final approval of the President, as appropriate.

All loans will be documented on an Incoming Loan Agreement, with duration specified. Loans may be renewed at the end of that timeframe, with the agreement of both parties and the loan agreement updated. A loan may be recalled by the lender at any time with the appropriate written notice to the CCLF. The CCLF may discontinue the loan at any time with appropriate written notice to the lender and the item will be returned. CCLF will not dispose of the loaned items in any other manner.

The CCLF will not clean, restore, or otherwise alter the work without written permission from the owner. The CCLF is responsible for all packing and shipping costs to bring the object to the Museum and to return it to the Lender.

9.0 Care of the Collections

Records: The CCLF has an established system, PastPerfect Museum Software, for the preservation of data concerning collection objects and all activities pertaining to those objects. The records also document the legal status, handling requirements, care and movement, location, and histories of collection objects. Receipts, title transfers, research, and other papers concerning the legal status of objects are compiled, housed, and maintained by the Collections Manager. Collection records are made in a timely fashion and are secured by electronic means. Computerized collection records are also backed up off-site. Loan and exhibition records are compiled and maintained by the Collections Manager.

Inventories: Collection inventory spot-checks are performed by randomly checking areas of the collections. The Collections Manager completes documentation of inventories and full disclosure of inventory results is made available, as necessary. Permanent collections, exhibitions, and collections storage areas are inspected periodically by members of the Collections Committee.

Pest Management and Housekeeping: In order to preserve CCLF collections a proactive pest management program will be instituted for all collections. CCLF pest management protocols incorporate preventative housekeeping throughout the institution's facilities. These protocols limit the presence of food and beverage, plants, and other materials which

may potentially harbor or attract pests. Procedures will be maintained and followed in the event of pest infestation to respond quickly to eradicate hazards and preserve materials. The Museum Director will work quickly with conservation professionals to take appropriate actions in the event of material degradation.

Environmental Control: Air quality, temperature, and humidity play a role in the preservation of source materials. Some materials which include paper materials require low humidity and lower temperatures, while other materials, metals and clothing do not necessarily require lower temperatures to maintain preservation. The Collections Manager will identify materials that require special treatment. Environmental control systems will be adjusted, as needed, including dehumidifiers.

Light Exposure: Reasonable limits will be set to light exposure levels for source materials. Whenever possible, source materials should be protected from unfiltered natural light or fluorescent lighting. This will ensure source materials will not fade, oxidize in the case of older materials written with iron oxide ink, or other unforeseen consequences stemming from light exposure.

Storage and Housing: CCLF shall provide safe and appropriate storage for collection and loaned materials. These areas must maintain an appropriate space for adequate storage and safe movement of materials. CCLF will minimize exposure to harmful materials and or environmental conditions that could be caustic or otherwise damage materials. The use of appropriate materials: equipment, housing, and storage will support the long-term preservation of source materials.

Handling and Transportation: CCLF will seek to limit the handling and transportation of source materials whenever possible. This will limit the potential for damage and or loss of said materials. Only the Collections Manager, Curator, or designated staff will handle or transport materials when necessary.

Conservation: The CCLF is committed to meeting its legal and ethical responsibilities to provide prudent care and protection for its collections. Permanent Collection objects identified as requiring assessing and conservation treatment will be sought by qualified American Institute for Conservation (AIC) conservators, when possible.

Risk Management: The CCLF will maintain a complete accounting of all parts of the collections through regularly scheduled inventories.

Disaster Plan: A Disaster Preparedness Plan for the protection of the CCLF buildings, its staff and collections will be maintained. This plan covers the actions to be taken if faced with a disaster that could impact the museum, including but not limited to fire, flood, power outage, serious weather threats, and acts of terrorism.

Intellectual Property: CCLF respects the intellectual property of others which includes copyright, publicity rights, and trademarks where applicable. CCLF staff will make every

effort and take reasonable precautions to identify and document any and all materials so that these rights are not infringed upon.

Security: All CCLF staff are responsible for maintaining security of the collection on display. The CCLF's buildings are all protected by Cape Canaveral Space Force Station security. Access to locked storage areas is limited to the Collections Committee and designated staff.

10.0 Access to and Use of the Collections

Access to the collection is made possible to the public through exhibitions, research, publications, teaching, and educational programs. Access to and use of the collections and collection information are consistent with professional standards of safety and protection and are subject to reasonable but specific conditions. All uses of the collections are subject to the consideration and approval of the Collections Committee. Certain information pertaining to the collection, such as appraisal values and donor information are considered privileged and confidential and are not made available to the public.

General Research Guidelines: In making CCLF collections available for use by outside researchers:

- CCLF staff must supervise any and all outside researchers at all times while said researchers have access to source materials and or original documents.
- CCLF staff will establish material handling guidelines to ensure the safety and integrity of the materials in the collection. This may include the limiting of handling source materials to CCLF staff only.
- CCLF may limit the availability of materials to the public based on: the overall condition of the materials, the fragility of materials, storage location, or the appropriate nature of the materials itself.
- CCLF staff will take appropriate action to prevent public access to any materials deemed as "privileged" or "restricted".
- CCLF reserves the right to implement a fee to offset the costs of providing access to collections and collections materials and other research services.

11.0 Emergency Preparedness and Response

CCLF Staff will coordinate with the SLD 45 and follow the procedures contained in the CCLF Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan relative to preparing the museum for a major storm and recovering after the storm has passed. Portions of that Plan will be utilized for other types of emergencies, as appropriate.

All actions taken relative to the safety and repair of the building itself will be coordinated with the SLD 45 to determine responsibility, both financial and physical.

12.0 Review and Update of this Policy

Future Review and Revision will be conducted in full every 3-5 years and updated as necessary between. The Collections Manager will lead the review process. The Collections Committee will be the final approval authority for all changes.

Attachment A -- American Alliance of Museums Code of Ethics

<http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics>

Code of Ethics for Museums

Adopted 1991, amended 2000.

Please note that the Code of Ethics for Museums references the American Association of Museums (AAM), now called the American Alliance of Museums.

Ethical codes evolve in response to changing conditions, values and ideas. A professional code of ethics must, therefore, be periodically updated. It must also rest upon widely shared values. Although the operating environment of museums grows more complex each year, the root value for museums, the tie that connects all of us together despite our diversity, is the commitment to serving people, both present and future generations. This value guided the creation of and remains the most fundamental principle in the following 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 Foundations, botanical gardens, children's museums, historic sites, nature Foundations, planetariums, science and technology Foundations, 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.