



Sam Noble Museum

**SAM NOBLE OKLAHOMA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CODE OF ETHICS**

(October 1998, revised August 2009)

Code of Ethics Committee:

Peter B. Tirrell, Associate Director (Chair), Janet Braun, Head Curator, Julie Droke, Registrar/Repatriation Specialist, Jamie Hubbard, Head of Visitor Services, and Jim Mustoe, Head of Security and Facilities

Introduction

This Code of Ethics addresses the moral standards and practices to be followed by you and other personnel of the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History (SNOMNH), hereinafter “Museum”. The Museum must utilize best practices to provide our constituents with confidence and trust and to signal our strong commitment to ethics. The Code also facilitates the resolution of ethical issues and concerns.

The Code is concerned with issues of merit and welfare rather than with the specifics of the Museum’s management of its collections, programs, services, and personnel. In all activities, you must act with integrity and in accordance with the most stringent ethical principles as well as the highest standards of objectivity. It is important that your actions are in the best interests of the Museum.

There are three basic statements that provide the foundation for our Code of Ethics: the Mission Statement, the Vision Statement, and the Statement of Core Values. It is important that you are aware of and understand these Statements. You can find them as appendices of this Code and on the Museum’s website. The Mission and Vision also are frequently stated in the media and documents about the Museum.

As a part of The University of Oklahoma (OU) and the State of Oklahoma, the Museum complies with applicable local, state, and federal laws, as well as with the specific legal standards governing trust responsibilities. We are working in a complex legal environment with increasing federal and state requirements to which we must adhere. The University intends to promote legal and ethical behavior through education and training. OU also wants to detect and prevent weaknesses in our compliance systems. The program sets forth Standards of Conduct that are a non-exclusive compilation of guidelines regarding ethical and legal standards that all University employees are expected to follow when performing services for or on behalf of the University that are related to the areas covered by the program.

You can obtain a complete copy of the program on the webpage of the Office of Compliance at www.ouhsc.edu/compliance. You also may contact the compliance officer at (405) 271-2511. The compliance officer is overseeing the implementation of the program and is available to answer compliance-related questions, provide education, and respond to compliance concerns.

By clarifying ethical responsibilities with this Code, the Museum strives to develop a better understanding of the respective roles and collective mission of everyone who works at the Museum or who has a position or recognized association or affiliation with it, including staff, curators, administrators, governing authorities, advisory and support organizations, and volunteers. Hereafter, “Personnel” refers to all such individuals. “Staff” refers to anyone who is employed by the Museum; “Students” are individuals who have been accepted by the University into an academic course of study; and “Volunteers” are unpaid staff. The Code also may be helpful in orienting others such as faculty members, donors, members, and legislators about the Museum’s professional standards and practices.

You are encouraged to refer to overarching publications such as The University of Oklahoma Regents Policies, The University of Oklahoma Staff Handbook, The University of Oklahoma Faculty Handbook, and The University of Oklahoma Policies Related to Conflicts of Interest. These documents describe general ethical policies and practices for all university personnel, including Museum personnel. Staff should be familiar with the International Council of Museums Code of Professional Ethics and the Code of Ethics for Museums by the American Association of Museums. Staff also may contact their supervisors and the OU Office of Human Resources for clarification of ethical questions. A list of reference documents can be found in Section XI. Appendices on File.

II. Personal and Professional Conduct

The Museum enjoys high public visibility and its personnel have a position of public esteem. Personnel are entitled to a measure of personal independence, consistent with professional and personal responsibilities. To the public, Museum personnel, and others associated with the Museum, are never wholly separable from the Museum. Any Museum-related action by an individual may reflect on the image and integrity of the Museum or be attributed to it.

There are specific important ethical issues that all personnel should be aware of, including the following:

Loyalty: Museum personnel must be dedicated, trustworthy, reliable, and loyal to the Museum.

Conflict of Interest: It is important that Museum personnel act in the best interests of the Museum. Personnel shall not engage in any employment, activity, or enterprise that is inconsistent, incompatible, in conflict with, or inimical to the Museum. Should a conflict of interest develop between the needs of the individual and the Museum, those of the Museum will prevail. You are required to sign a Conflict of Interest Statement that is kept on file in the OU Office of Human Resources.

Confidentiality: The Museum, as a part of the University of Oklahoma, places the highest priority on maintaining the confidentiality of its records, documents, and all other sensitive information. Information about collections, security, personnel, finances, and additional sensitive areas of the Museum may be confidential. Confidentiality also must be respected in relation to any Museum information, records, or objects subject to any legal obligation to assist the police or other proper authorities in their investigations.

In the course of your duties, you may be given access to confidential information about Museum operations, staff, faculty, students, volunteers, visitors, and individuals in the community served by the Museum or the University. This information is for the purpose of performing your duties and responsibilities to the Museum and the University and for no other purpose. There is a special responsibility to respect the personal confidences contained in oral history (e.g., ethnographic information). Information regarding personnel actions is highly sensitive and should not be discussed with others privately or in public. Unpublished

information about Museum donors and personnel is confidential. All outside requests for unpublished information related to finances, donors, administrators, or regents must be referred to the Director. All staff and volunteers who have access to confidential information also are expected to annually read, sign, and acknowledge SNOMNH Privacy, Information Security and Confidentiality policies.

Information Systems and Technology: Museum information management systems (IS) must be used in a manner consistent with university and departmental policy. IS includes but is not limited to computers, networks, and telecommunication devices. Equipment must be kept secure. Information must be used appropriately. All guidelines pertaining to IS apply whether use is on or off the premises.

Communications or storage and relaying of information with IS will be considered an extension of the staff and volunteers and/or the institution and therefore must be appropriate and professional. Unethical, immoral, unlawful, harassing, or discriminatory communications through e-mail, telephone, web logging (“blogging”), instant messaging, and posting are a violation of the Code and also may be a violation of University and State regulations. IS and technology are to be used for the purposes of University and Museum business. However, the University and the Museum recognize an employee’s need to utilize such equipment and services for small amounts of reasonable personal use such as scheduling a doctor’s appointment, arranging lunch with a colleague, or checking in with a school-age child. Personnel need to be aware that inappropriate use may be monitored or reported. Observance of legal restrictions such as copyright and software licensing related to IS are maintained at all times.

Staff and volunteers are required to read and understand the Museum IT (Information Technology) policy and the University of Oklahoma Computer Use Policy (see Appendices on File). They also must sign the Equipment Checkout Form for their portable equipment acknowledging the understanding of its proper use. All staff and volunteers who use computers also are expected to annually read, sign, and acknowledge SNOMNH Privacy, Information Security and Confidentiality policies.

Communications and Media: Personnel designated by the Director handle requests by the media and subsequent contacts. The OU Office of Public Affairs must approve all media announcements for public distribution. Communications through interviews, meetings, memos, e-mails, and telephones should always be straightforward, professional, and courteous. Communications equipment such as telephones, computers, mail, and faxes are intended for Museum and University business. Personnel should refrain from initiating contacts with the media and they should use discretion with unsolicited contacts. Personnel should contact the Director if they think that the media should be contacted about some issue or concern.

Documents: Personnel must not alter, falsify, tamper with, or destroy documents with the intention of harming fellow personnel, the Museum, the University, or the State. Aforementioned documents include written documents, e-mail, voice mail, and electronic back-ups.

Financial Arrangements and Claims: Museum personnel who are authorized to spend Museum funds must do so with impartiality and honesty within the regulations and guidelines of the Museum and the University. Claims such as travel reimbursements, hours of work or non-work, and accomplishments must be reported faithfully.

Personal Relationships and Harassment: The Museum expects all personnel to exercise good judgment in forming any close, personal relationships with other personnel of the Museum. It is the policy of the Museum to treat all personnel with respect and integrity. Personnel may refer to the University of Oklahoma Staff Handbook and University of Oklahoma Faculty Handbook that covers policies regarding harassment and discrimination.

Gifts, Favors, Discounts, and Dispensations: Museum personnel must not accept personal gifts, favors, advantageous arrangements, loans, or other dispensations or things of more than trifling value (less than \$50) that are available to them in connection with their duties for the Museum. Further, personnel must ensure compliance with the Oklahoma Ethics Act in the receipt of items less than \$50 (e.g. receipt of such an item cannot influence the state employee's duties or obligations to the University/Museum). Special care should be taken in considering any offer of an item either for sale or as a tax-deductible gift from members of boards, personnel, or the families of close associates. Gifts of equipment, property, or services donated directly to the Museum will be reported to the Museum Director and Development Officer.

Outside Employment, Consulting, and Creative Activities: All employment activity must be undertaken within the fundamental principles that the employee's primary responsibility is to the Museum, that the activity will not interfere with his/her ability to discharge this responsibility, and that it will not compromise the professional integrity of the employee or the reputation of the Museum. All employees are required to report all employment and consulting to the Museum and the University. Employees must comply with the University of Oklahoma Staff Handbook or the University of Oklahoma Faculty Handbook.

Extracurricular Activities: Personnel are encouraged to participate in voluntary outside activities with community groups and public-service organizations. Personnel may identify their association with the Museum but may not use their title or association to take advantage of their activities for personal gain or to promote special interests not approved by the Museum.

Volunteers: Volunteers share the mission and responsibilities to the Museum. They must adhere to the same standards that apply to staff. Volunteers must work toward the betterment of the institution and not for personal gain other than the natural gratification and enrichment inherent in Museum participation. All volunteers are required to sign a University of Oklahoma Volunteer Acknowledgment and Release Form that is kept in the Museum personnel files.

Responsibility to Museum Property, Real and Intangible: The name and reputation of the Museum are valuable assets and should not be exploited either for personal advantage or the advantage of any other person, group, or organizations. It is unethical to misuse any object or

representation (e.g., logo) that is a part of the Museum's collection or under the guardianship of the Museum or to misuse or abuse property such as equipment, vehicles, landscaping or grounds, supplies, or resources.

Access to the Museum Grounds and Building: It is important for all personnel to realize that the Museum has many areas of its grounds and building that are sensitive and require protection. Personnel and visitors (see below) have access to all public areas unless there is a restriction for activities such as programs or repairs. Access to non-public areas is restricted and determined by the Director, Associate Director, or Head Curator. The Curator in charge of his/her designated collection and space can determine access to the collection and its associated space. Access to non-public areas and collections includes access to areas such as common hallways, servery, and copy room.

Visitors: Visitors are welcome in all public areas. The term "visitors" refers to all non-Museum staff, such as members of the lay public, organized groups and classes, VIPs, guests, friends, members, students, and family members including children who are visiting the building or its grounds, and University faculty and staff who are not employed by the Museum. Museum staff may take visitors into their assigned offices through common hallways and spaces. Access by visitors to a collection and its associated space can be determined by the Curator in charge of the collection and space or by the Director, Associate Director, or Head Curator. Permission for visitor access to other non-public areas such as mechanical rooms, workshops, and storage facilities must be obtained from the Director, Associate Director, or Head Curator.

Live Animals: Animals used in programs and research must be cared for in a proper, safe, and secure manner that does not endanger the personnel or the audience and that adheres to animal welfare regulations. Live animals may be permitted in the Museum for use in public programs, research, or as personal assistants for physically challenged people who require them. Permission from the Director, Associate Director, or Head Curator is required for use or housing of live animals in the SNOMNH.

III. Administration and Management

The administration is responsible for establishing an ethical corporate culture by creating a core-values statement, policies, and ethical practices and by setting an example. The administration also should periodically perform an assessment that gauges the ethical health of the Museum and its activities.

The administrators and managers of the Museum will create a work environment that encourages and fosters the productivity of the personnel. They also will take safety measures to ensure and protect the personnel. The Museum and its administration should never require personnel to act in a way that could reasonably be judged to be unsafe, unethical, illegal, or insecure. The Museum has an established Policy and Procedure Manual to help guide employee actions (see Appendices on File).

The administration is responsible for having sound financial practices. The administration is

responsible for obtaining and maintaining accreditation by appropriate professional organizations.

IV. Collections

The Museum holds the collection in the public trust. Good stewardship includes rightful ownership, permanence, preservation and conservation, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal. The care and management of the collection is an institutional responsibility that is shared by all personnel, but primarily that of personnel directly involved with the collection. Curatorial activities, conservation, and collection management are the responsibility of personnel with the appropriate knowledge, training, and experience. The “best practices” and the highest professional standards in conservation and preservation will be applied to the collection within budgetary limits. Use of collection items identified as Native American will be compatible with preservation objectives and concerns of appropriate Native American tribes or nations.

The Museum Collections Management Policy, approved by the OU Board of Regents, is the Museum’s policy regarding the acquisition, registration, preservation, care, and use of the collection. It is incumbent upon Museum personnel to review, understand, and adhere to the Museum’s Collections Management Policy.

Objects acquired by the Museum must be relevant to its mission, goals, and objectives. They must be documented regarding provenance and due diligence. In addition, they require a valid legal title, or must have been legally acquired without restrictions. The Director may approve specific limitations. The objects also must be clearly described (identified) in an instrument of conveyance, and be properly cataloged, conserved, stored, or exhibited following standards in the museum field. The Museum has the authority to improve its collection through selective disposal and acquisition and to permit sampling for well-considered analytical (including destructive), educational, or other purposes as stated in the Collections Management Policy.

In accepting and/or acquiring objects, the Museum assumes the ethical, legal, and fiscal responsibility to ensure that the collection is “protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved” (Code of Ethics for Museums, American Association of Museums). In general, objects should be kept as long as they retain their physical integrity, authenticity, and usefulness for the Museum’s purposes. The Museum must weigh carefully its interests and the interests of the public, the donor, and the scholarly and cultural community. Negotiations concerning the acquisition of Museum items from members of the general public must be conducted with scrupulous honesty to the seller or donor. No object should be deliberately or misleadingly identified to the benefit of the Museum and to the detriment of the donor or owner, in order to acquire it for the Museum collections, and no object should be taken or retained on loan with the deliberate intention of improperly procuring it for the collections. Other ethical issues that all personnel should be aware of include the following (Personnel should refer to the Collections Management Policy for further information).

Human Remains and Sacred Objects: The Museum maintains stewardship of collections of human remains, sacred objects, and photographs which must be treated with sensitivity and

respect. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and tribal law may protect these objects. Consent of the relevant ethnic group(s) and permission of the Director are required for their study, display, or viewing by personnel or the public.

Commercial Use: All aspects of a commercial venture, including the manufacture and sale of replicas, reproductions, or other commercial items adapted from an object in the Museum's collection must be carried out in a manner that will not discredit either the integrity of the Museum or the intrinsic value of the original object. Commercial use must abide by the Museum policies regarding royalties and reproductions.

Personal Collections: Staff is not allowed to have personal collections that relate to the collection within their discipline without written permission of the Director and subject to approval by the OU Board of Regents. Volunteers, members of the Board of Visitors, and others with a close association to the museum should not have a conflict of interest, real or perceived, with the Museum's collections and collecting activities.

Authentication, Valuation (Appraisals), and Dealings: Personnel are prohibited from providing written certificates of authenticity or valuation (appraisals) and opinions on the value of objects. Personnel should not recommend any particular dealer, auctioneer, or other person to a member of the public although they can assist in locating appraisers. Personnel are prohibited from participating in any dealing such as buying, selling, and trading for profit objects that are like the objects under their purview and control at the Museum. In addition, personnel may run the risk of conflict of interest, real or perceived, by participating in any dealing of objects similar to those held in the Museum's collections. Other forms of nonmonetary authentication such as identification of objects or specimens are encouraged.

Field Study and Collecting: Museum personnel must act legally and ethically in acquiring specimens and data through field exploration, collecting and excavation. Collecting, transporting, importing, and exporting of specimens and objects must conform fully to international, regional, national, or local laws and regulations and treaty obligations.

V. Research, Teaching, Writing, and Additional Creative Activities

All Museum personnel have the responsibility of ensuring the integrity and ethical standards in any activity with which he/she is associated. These activities should conform to established legal, ethical, and academic practices. Museum personnel are encouraged to refer to the following University of Oklahoma policies: Regents Policy; the Ethics in Research Policy; Intellectual Property Policy; and Compliance Policies in the Faculty Handbook; and the Financial Conflicts of Interest Policy, and Outside Employment and Extra Compensation Policy in the Faculty and Staff handbooks. These policies apply to employees associated with the Museum. Personnel also are referred to the Copyright Policy in the Faculty and Staff handbooks for further elucidation of this policy.

VI. Development, Gifts-in-Kind, and Grant Funding

The Museum's development program has a philanthropic mission that is above personal gain. Personnel involved in raising funds are required to work closely with the Director and the Development Officer. They may seek support and form relationships with individual donors,

corporations, and foundations to further Museum efforts. Personnel must ensure that the standards and objectives of the Museum are not compromised by such a relationship. They should not exploit any potential funding source for their own benefit.

Personnel involved in raising funds or soliciting other contributions or gifts-in-kind on behalf of the Museum must do so with honesty as to the need for such contributions. Personnel will ensure, to the best of their ability, proper stewardship of charitable contributions, including timely reporting on the use and management of funds. The Director must approve any gift restriction. Personnel will ensure that contributions are used in accordance with donors' intentions. The Museum must obtain explicit consent from the donor before altering the conditions of a gift.

Personnel will not disclose privileged or confidential information to unauthorized parties, nor utilize such information except on behalf of the Museum. The Museum's development program advocates adherence to all applicable laws and regulations.

VII. Public Programs and Services

The Museum's public programs and services are integral activities of the Museum. The Museum's interpretive practices and strategies such as exhibits and education must acknowledge a variety of cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual themes and perspectives. The Museum also seeks to expand and diversify its audience and collaborate with other museums and organizations.

The personnel that implement the public programs interact more frequently and intimately with Museum audiences than any other Museum personnel. Volunteers and personnel of public programs should display courtesy, respect, and sensitivity at all times and in all circumstances when interacting with members of the public. Interactions and activities in dealing with the public should conform to ethical standards and practices required by the University (e.g., audience evaluation).

The Museum store activities and any other commercial activities of the Museum, and any publicity relating to these, should enhance the integrity of the Museum. Sales items must be relevant to the collections and the basic educational purpose of the Museum and must not compromise the quality of the collections.

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O K L A H O M A M U S E U M
of N A T U R A L H I S T O R Y



**Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History
Code of Ethics Acknowledgment**

I have read the SNOMNH Code of Ethics and understand the Code's philosophy, values, and principles.

Staff Member or Volunteer:

Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

Internal Dept: _____