

AIA Code of Professional Standards

The following Code of Professional Standards was approved by the Council at its December 29, 1994 meeting, and amended on December 29, 1997 and January 5, 2008.

Preamble

This Code applies to those members of the AIA who play an active, professional role in the recovery, care, study, or publication of archaeological material, including cultural resources located under water. Within the Institute they enjoy the privileges of organizing sessions and submitting papers for the Annual Meetings, of lecturing to local societies, and of participating in the AIA committees that shape and direct the discipline.

Along with those privileges come special responsibilities. Our members should inform themselves about and abide by the laws of the countries in which they live and work. They should treat others at home and in the field with respect. As primary stewards of the archaeological record, they should work actively to preserve that record in all its dimensions and for the long term; and they should give due consideration to the interests of others, both colleagues and the lay public, who are affected by the research.

The AIA recognizes that archaeology is a discipline dealing, in all its aspects, with the human condition, and that archaeological research must often balance competing ethical principles. This Code of Professional Standards does not seek to legislate all aspects of professional behavior and it recognizes the conflicts embedded in many of the issues addressed. The Code sets forth four broad areas of responsibility and provides examples of the kinds of considerations called for by each.

I. Responsibilities to the Archaeological Record

Professional archaeologists incur responsibilities to the archaeological record — to the physical remains, including those located under water, and to all the associated information about those remains.

1. The purposes and consequences of all archaeological research should be carefully considered before the beginning of work. Approaches and methods should be chosen that require a minimum of damage to the archaeological record. Although excavation is sometimes the appropriate means of research, archaeological survey, study of previously excavated material, and other means should be considered before resort is made to excavation.
2. The recovery and study of archaeological material from all periods should be carried out only under the supervision of qualified personnel.
3. Archaeologists should anticipate and provide for adequate and accessible long-term storage and curatorial facilities for all archaeological materials, records, and archives, including machine-readable data, which require specialized archival care and maintenance.
4. Archaeologists should make public the results of their research in a timely fashion, making evidence available to others if publication is not accomplished within a reasonable time.
5. All research projects should contain specific plans for conservation, site preservation, and publication from the very outset, and funds should be secured for such purposes.

II. Responsibilities to the Public

Because the archaeological record represents the heritage of all people, it is the responsibility of professional archaeologists to communicate with the general public about the nature of archaeological research and the importance of archaeological resources. Archaeologists also have specific responsibilities to the local communities where they carry out research and field work, as well as to their home institutions and communities.

1. Professional archaeologists should be actively engaged in public outreach through lecturing, popular writing, school programs, and other educational initiatives.

2. Plans for field work should consider the ecological impact of the project and its overall impact on the local communities.
3. For field projects, archaeologists should consult with appropriate representatives of the local community during the planning stage, invite local participation in the project, and regularly inform the local community about the results of the research.
4. Archaeologists should respect the cultural norms and dignity of local inhabitants in areas where archaeological research is carried out.
5. The legitimate concerns of people who claim descent from, or some other connection with, cultures of the past must be balanced against the scholarly integrity of the discipline. A mutually acceptable accommodation should be sought.

III. Responsibilities to Colleagues

Professional archaeologists owe consideration to colleagues and project members.

1. Archaeologists involved in cooperative projects should strive for harmony and fairness; those in positions of authority should behave with consideration toward those under their authority, while all team members should strive to promote the success of the broader undertaking.
2. The Principal Investigator(s) of archaeological projects should maintain acceptable standards of safety and ascertain that staff members are adequately insured.
3. Professional archaeologists should maintain confidentiality of information gleaned in reviewing grant proposals and other such privileged sources.
4. Professional archaeologists should not practice discrimination or harassment based on sex, religion, age, race, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation; project sponsors should establish the means to eliminate and/or investigate complaints of discrimination or harassment.
5. Archaeologists should honor reasonable requests from colleagues for access to materials and records, preserving existing rights to publication, but sharing information useful for the research of others. Scholars seeking access to unpublished information should not expect to receive interpretive information if that is also unpublished and in progress.
6. Before studying and/or publishing any unpublished material archaeologists should secure proper permission, normally in writing, from the appropriate project director or the appointed representative of the sponsoring institution and/or the antiquities authorities in the country of origin.
7. Scholars studying material from a particular site should keep the project director informed of their progress and intentions; project directors should return the courtesy.
8. Members of cooperative projects should prepare and evaluate reports in a timely and collegial fashion.

IV. Responsibilities to the Discipline

The Code of Professional Standards encourages all professional archaeologists to keep ethical considerations in mind as they plan and carry out their research.

1. In their research and publications professional archaeologists should adhere to the guidelines of the AIA Code of Ethics concerning illegal antiquities.
2. Professional archaeologists should not participate in projects whose primary goal is private gain. This does not apply to cultural resource management and similar projects, even if carried out by a for-profit firm, as long as they otherwise comply with the provisions of the Code of Professional Standards.

3. Professional archaeologists must not engage in plagiarism or the fabrication or falsification of data. Professional archaeologists should be explicit and accurate in acknowledging their use of words, ideas, data, and research findings of other scholars, and they should respect the property rights of copyright holders. Intellectual integrity requires the accurate and truthful reporting of the results of excavation and scholarship.