



World Federation of Friends of Museums
Federación Mundial de Amigos de los Museos
Fédération Mondiale des Amis des Musées

Code of Ethics for Museums Friends and Volunteers

The purpose of the “Code of Ethics for Friends and Volunteers of Museums”, adopted unanimously by the World Federation of Friends of Museums at its IX Congress held in Oaxaca, Mexico in 1996, is to provide all members with a guide that contribute towards reinforcing and strengthening the relations between Friends and volunteers of museums and museum professionals.

Its pages contain the basic principles to which each member formally needs to comply when acting on behalf of his/her association. The authority and creditability of an organisation is measured, among other things, by the way each member, be it a collective or individual subject, behaves when dealing with society and its various elements.

In joining the organisation, WFFM members undertake to abide by the WFFM Code.

Introduction

Friends and volunteers of museums pursue noble objectives in cultural development. They bring to museums their support, their knowledge, their experience and their competence. In so doing, they contribute to the advancement both of museums and of museology. Their commitment is the voluntary expression of a solidarity that actively engages their role as citizens in the community.

As members of the museum community, and at the heart of the museum's public, friends and volunteers constitute a privileged audience, able to represent the public's interests to the best advantage of museum institutions.

Moreover, the status of friends and volunteers in museums implies certain obligations toward the institution of which they bear the name and to which they declare adherence. They agree, therefore, to meet a number of requirements conducive to ensuring a fruitful collaboration.

It is important that the institution, for its part, acknowledges the value of their contribution and assists in its implementation, in that a fully productive collaboration depends on the quality of their mutual relationship.

By using this Code of Ethics, friends and volunteers of museums will establish the principles that inspire their partnership and express their expectations regarding the institutions they serve.

Section 1: Definitions

1.1 Friend, Volunteer

Those who contribute in any way to the support of museums, to their development and to their public presence and influence are called “friends of museums”. They act on a voluntary and non-remunerative basis. Their support is moral, financial or consists of voluntary work or expertise. Benefactors, donors, volunteers, museum board members and members of museums are all considered friends of museums.

1.2 Association

The word “association” covers all forms of organization that bring together friends and volunteers of museums and structure their activities. Whether judicially constituted or not,

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these associations, societies or committees can operate only with official recognition from the institution concerned.

1.3 Museum, Museum Institution, Institution

In this document, the terms “museum”, “museum institution” and “institution” are synonymous. They refer to a museum as recognized and defined by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), that is to say a permanent non-profit making institution administered for the common good and accessible to the public, which conserves, studies and exhibits objects and specimens of educational and cultural value, including works of art, scientific materials, animate and inanimate, and historical and technical material.

The terms “museum”, “museum institution” and “institution” include any institution having some or all the characteristics of a museum, namely ecological museums, interpretation centres, exhibition centres, heritage sites and buildings, botanical gardens libraries, zoos, aquariums and other institutions of museological type.

Section 2: Status and Mandate

2.1 Partners

Friends and volunteers carry out their activities in an open manner and in a spirit of co-operation with the institution of which they are partners.

2.2 Support

Friends and volunteers of a museum institution undertake to support it and its activities with generosity and enthusiasm.

2.3 Respect for the museum's mandate

The goals they set, the sphere within which they operate and the programs they adopt should be developed with the participation and agreement of the museum authorities and in accordance with the museum's mission.

2.4 Satisfaction

Friends and volunteers expect no benefit, financial, or other, save the satisfaction of contributing to the maintenance and development of the institution to which they belong and to the satisfaction of the public which it serves.

Section 3: Organization

3.1 Organization

In order to promote a fully beneficial partnership as well as continuity in their relationship with their institution, it is recommended that they be organized within a structured framework such as an Association.

3.2 Operational link

To guarantee a direct and permanent link with the institution, it is vital that friends and volunteers be able to rely on an operational link with it. To that end, the institution should delegate a representative of management to the association, friends and volunteers doing the same in regard to management.

3.3 Action plans and agreements

It is desirable that friends and volunteers, together with the institution, develop action plans and agreements defining the terms on which their partnership with the institution is based.

Section 4: Duties

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4.1 Requirements and regulations

Museum friends and volunteers should recognize the need to respect the requirements and regulations of the institution.

4.2 Loyalty

In the actions they take, friends and volunteers should show their loyalty to both the institution they support, and to their association.

4.3 Confidentiality

They should respect the confidentiality of any information they may have regarding the management of the institution and activities to come or yet unannounced; the same applies to their association's projects.

4.4 Conflicts of interest

They should make it a point of honour to avoid conflicts of interest and to abide by the rules laid down by both their institution and their association.

4.5 Gifts and acquisitions

When friends and volunteers donate works of art, collection specimens and objects, they should make every effort to ensure their authenticity and their origin. They should follow the regulations of the museum.

4.6 Full approval of the institution

Donations to the institution from friends and volunteers should be made with the full approval of the institution and in accordance with its acquisition policy. It is recommended that the institution inform donors beforehand of the particular works, objects, or specimens it wishes to acquire.

4.7 Fund Raising

Friends and volunteers should co-ordinate their fund-raising activities with the plans and programs of their institution.

4.8 Media

In their relations with the media, friends and volunteers should act with the agreement of their museum's relevant departments.

4.9 Health and safety

They should conform to the health and safety regulations of the institution, taking care that no intervention threatens their application.

Section 5: Areas of Operation

5.1 Areas of operation

Friends and volunteers may have numerous areas of operation. These should be designed for the specific character of each institution, its mission and individual goals, and for the programs it offers.

5.2 Areas of operation limited to permanent staff

When carrying out voluntary work in areas of operation controlled by permanent staff, particularly in curatorship, research and publicity, friends and volunteers should act only with the agreement of the relevant staff. They should respect the obligations to which permanent staff is subjected.



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5.3 Avoiding overlapping

In areas of operation not limited to permanent staff, friends and volunteers may discover a fertile ground in which to launch their initiatives. They must be careful their activities do not overlap with staff responsibilities.

5.4 Definition of tasks

As a general rule, in all operations friends and volunteers are asked to accomplish, it is advisable that they act upon a definition of the tasks and of their means of execution.

Section 6: Expectations with regard to the Institution

6.1 Recognition

Friends and volunteers expect the museum and its staff to recognize, encourage and make good use of their commitment and contribution, both inside and outside the institution.

6.2 Support

The museum institution should encourage the formation of associations of friends and volunteers and should support their ventures. It may put at their disposal the necessary resources to pursue goals common to the institution and the association.

6.3 Harmony

The museum should foster a harmonious relationship between itself and the association, stressing solidarity and a feeling of belonging.

6.4 Information

To ensure that friends and volunteers act on acceptable grounds, the institution should ensure that they are fully informed of its mission, short and long-term goals, future plans, programs and administrative procedures.

6.5 Training

To ensure that the contribution of friends and volunteers is as effective as possible, the museum should provide training in those areas where the latter are called on to help. It should encourage them to take part in workshops, seminars and lectures to increase their proficiency.

Section 7: The Association

7.1 Membership

Friends and volunteers should focus on maintaining and expanding the membership of their association.

7.2 Democratic principles

Within the association, friends and volunteers must respect democratic principles, ensuring fair representation of the points of view shared by members.

7.3 Sharing

Associations of friends and volunteers consider it a duty to co-operate with each other, sharing knowledge and experience.

7.4 Co-operation with associations of museums and museum professionals

Friends and volunteers should co-operate with the various associations of museums and museum professionals, particularly by taking part in their activities, when appropriate.

7.5 Co-operation between associations of friends and volunteers

In order to make their voluntary contribution even more valuable and far-reaching, and to

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demonstrate the extent of public support for museums, local associations of friends and volunteers should support the activities of regional and national groups of friends and volunteers.

7.6 International activities

At the international level, friends and volunteers support the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) of which the Federation is the counterpart.

Comment

In this Code of Ethics, articles are to be interpreted in relation to each other. The general nature of one may impinge on the specific nature of others. For instance, the general rules concerning confidentiality and conflicts of interest, mentioned in articles 4.3 and 4.4, apply to articles 4.5 and 4.6 concerning donations and acquisitions, even if this is not explicitly stated.

This Code of Ethics was adopted by the World Federation of Friends of Museums at its 9th International Congress held at Oaxaca, Mexico, October 21 to 25, 1996. It constitutes a general framework for application, each federation and each association being invited to refer to it for drawing up its own rules of ethics based on their specific needs.

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