



## **Shiloh Museum of Ozark History Ethical Guidelines**

*Approved by the Shiloh Museum Board of Trustees on 1-10-08*

The collections and facilities of the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History (“the Museum”) are held in the public trust. Everyone associated with the Museum, whether volunteer or paid, has a duty and obligation to preserve and protect that trust. To affirm that ethic and to elaborate its application to the Museum’s governance, staff, and volunteers, collections, and programs, the Museum promulgates these ethical guidelines which outline standards of Museum-related conduct, practices, and policies.

### **GOVERNANCE**

#### ***General Responsibility***

The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History’s Board of Trustees (“the Board”) is the governing body for the Museum on behalf of the City of Springdale, Arkansas (“the City”). As such, it serves the public interest as it relates to the Museum and is accountable to the public, the City, and the Museum. In many cases the Board acts as the legal entity for the Museum and is responsible for making and maintaining policies, standards, and operational continuity. Board members shall be loyal to the Museum’s mission and shall understand and respect the basic documents that provide for its establishment, character, and governance.

While abiding by the parameters of the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act, Board members shall maintain Museum information in confidence when it concerns the activities or administration of the Museum, when the information is not generally available to the public. This principle does not preclude public disclosure of information that is properly in the public domain, nor information that shall be released in fulfilling the Museum’s accountability to the public.

Board members share fiduciary responsibility for the Museum with the Springdale City Council and the Mayor. Board members are responsible for the protection and nurturing of the collections and related documentation, the facilities, the financial assets, and the staff. Board members shall approve the policies of the Museum and insure that all Museum assets are properly and effectively used for public purposes.

The Board has an obligation to provide for the preservation of the collections and to monitor and develop the financial structure of the Museum so that it continues to exist as an institution of vitality and quality. Board members shall not jeopardize the collections by using them as collateral for a loan or by otherwise selling or mortgaging the collections in order to secure funds for operations, buildings, or expansion of the facilities.

In all activities Board members shall act with integrity and in accordance with stringent ethical principles as well as with the highest standards of objectivity. Loyalty to the Museum shall be paramount, since museums enjoy high public visibility. To the public, Board members are never wholly separate from the Museum; any Museum-related action by Board members may reflect on the institution or be attributed to it.

### *Conflict of Interest*

Individual Board members who are experienced and knowledgeable in fields related to Museum activities can be of great assistance to the Museum, but conflicts of interest, or the appearance of such conflicts, may arise because of these connections. Board members shall conduct all of their activities in such a way that no conflict arises between their other interests and the policies, operations, or interests of the Museum. Even the appearance of such conflicts shall be avoided.

Whenever a matter arises for action by the Board, or whenever the Museum engages in an activity where there is a possible conflict, or the appearance of a conflict between the interests of the Museum and an outside or personal interest of a Board member or that of a person close to her or him, the outside interest of the Board member shall be made a matter of record. If a Board member is present when a vote is taken in connection with such a question, the Board member shall abstain. In some circumstances, Board members shall avoid discussing any planned actions, formally or informally, where there might appear to be personal benefit.

Charges of self-interest at the expense of the Museum and charges of personal use of privileged information may arise whenever Board members and members of their families personally collect objects of a type collected by the Museum. The Board shall clearly state its policy regarding such personal collections to ensure that Board members do not compete with the Museum for objects, that Board members do not take personal advantage of information available to them because of their Board membership, and that, should conflict develop between the needs of the individual and the Museum, those of the Museum shall prevail.

Board members shall not take advantage of information they receive during service to the institution if personal use of such information could be financially detrimental to the Museum. Any such actions that might impair the reputation of the Museum shall also be avoided. When Board members obtain information that could be of personal benefit, they shall refrain from action until all issues have been reviewed by an appropriate Museum representative.

Board members serve the Museum and its public. They shall not attempt to derive any personal material advantages from their connection with the Museum. Board members shall use Museum property only for official purposes and make no personal use of the Museum's collections, property, or services in a manner not available to a comparable member of the general public. When Board members seek staff assistance for personal needs they shall not expect that such help will be rendered to an extent greater than that available to a member of the general public in similar circumstances or with similar needs.

Neither staff members nor members of their immediate families shall serve as Board members. Conflict of interest is the guiding principle, since Board members create and vote on policy affecting staff interests as a whole.

### ***Gifts and Favors***

Board members shall avoid the appearance of unethical or compromising practice in relationship with business suppliers and contractors. Board members are prohibited from soliciting or accepting money, loans, credit, discounts, favors, entertainment, meals, lodging, and trips from present or potential businesses which might influence negotiations and purchasing decisions. The only exception to this rule are gifts of trifling value, deemed to be those novelty items with a value of less than \$10. Gifts in questionable taste, such as lottery tickets or alcoholic beverages, shall be declined in all instances, regardless of value.

### ***Board Member – Director Relationship***

The Board defines the limits, powers, and duties of the Museum Director. Board members shall work with the Director in all administrative matters and deal with the Director openly and with candor. They shall avoid giving directions to, acting on behalf of, or soliciting administrative information from staff members, unless such actions are in accord with established procedure or the Director is apprised. Staff members shall communicate with Board members through the Director or with the Director's knowledge, but staff members with grievances concerning the Director shall bring those grievances directly to the Board president.

The Board has the responsibility for appointing or dismissing the Director. The relationship between Director and Board shall reflect the primacy of institutional goals over all personal or interpersonal considerations. The Director shall attend all Board meetings and important committee meetings including executive sessions, except those dealing with the Director's performance.

The Director has an obligation to provide Board members with current and complete financial information in comprehensible form, to bring before the Board any matters involving policy questions, and to keep them informed on a timely basis of all other significant or substantial matters or intended actions affecting the Museum.

The Director shall have the responsibility and authority for the day-to-day operation of the Museum and shall carry out the policies established by the Board and adhere to the Board-approved budget. Whenever it is necessary to deviate from established policies or to alter or exceed budget guidelines, the Director shall notify the Board in advance and request appropriate approval.

### ***Board Member – City of Springdale Relationship***

Board members are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. While the Board has the authority to manage, operate, maintain, and control the Museum in accordance with its bylaws, the Mayor and City Council have the ultimate authority.

## **STAFF**

### ***General Responsibility***

Employment by the Museum is a public trust and involves great responsibility. In all activities Museum employees shall act with integrity and in accordance with strict ethical principles as well as with the highest standards of objectivity. Adherence to other Museum policies and

guidelines is expected. Loyalty to the Museum shall be paramount, since museums enjoy high public visibility. To the public, Museum employees are never wholly separate from their institution; any museum-related action by employees may reflect on the institution or be attributed to it.

The Museum's Personnel Policy provides information on employment issues, recruitment, evaluation, benefits, work scheduling, personal collecting, and other related issues. Additional staff policies and procedures may be found in the City of Springdale's Personnel and Procedures Manual.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

Employees shall refrain from any private or public activity which might be in conflict with, or appear to be in conflict with, the mission and interests of the Museum. At no time shall any staff member knowingly misrepresent the mission, policies, or programs of the Museum.

Occasionally employees may be asked to serve in a professional capacity on local or professional boards or commissions. To eliminate conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict, such service shall be reported to the Director (or, in the case of the Director, to the Board), performed on the employee's personal time except as authorized by the Director (or, in the case of the Director, by the Board), and without compensation except when authorized by the Director (or, in the case of the Director, by the Board). Employees may serve on boards so long as the activity does not impair the employee's ability to act with objectivity regarding the Museum's interest nor interfere with job performance.

Charges of self-interest at the expense of the Museum and charges of personal use of privileged information may arise whenever Museum staff members personally collect objects of a type collected by the Museum. The personal acquiring, collecting, and owning of objects is not in itself unethical and can enhance professional knowledge and judgment. However, the acquisition and management of a personal collection by a Museum staff member can create an ethical question. Staff members shall provide the Director with information about what kind of objects they collect to ensure that they do not compete with the Museum for objects, that staff members do not take personal advantage of information available to them in the Museum's employ, and that, should a conflict develop between the needs of the individual and the Museum, those of the Museum shall prevail.

At the time of employment, employees shall provide the Museum with a list of the areas of their personal collecting which fall within the collecting areas of the Museum. The list shall be kept in the Museum's files and shall be updated by the employee as their personal collections change. Employees may not store personal collections on Museum property or research personal collections on Museum time.

Employees shall not deal (buy and sell objects for profit on a regular basis) in historical objects, books, or papers, act on behalf of a dealer, accept outside employment from a dealer, or retain interest in a dealership.

### ***Ownership of Scholarly Materials***

Publications, lectures, manuscripts, and all other materials prepared by employees within the scope of their employment at the Museum, and/or any scholarly works produced by an employee as a result of financial support from the Museum, are the sole property of the Museum except as authorized in writing by the Board.

Employees shall first confer with the Director (or, in the case of the Director, with the Board) before agreeing to author, as a private individual, any publication that substantially draws upon materials prepared in the scope of employment with the Museum.

### ***Gifts and Favors***

Museum employees shall avoid the appearance of unethical or compromising practice in relationship with business suppliers and contractors. Employees are prohibited from soliciting or accepting money, loans, credit, discounts, favors, entertainment, meals, lodging, and trips from present or potential businesses and organizations for which staff members give talks, as these might influence negotiations and purchasing decisions. The only exception to this rule are gifts of trifling value, deemed to be those novelty items with a value of less than \$10. Gifts in questionable taste, such as lottery tickets or alcoholic beverages, shall be declined in all instances, regardless of value.

These rules also apply for the family or household of Museum employees, unless the recipients of the gifts have a relationship with the donor outside of the Museum, and the acceptance of the gifts does not in any way create a conflict between the employee's personal interests and the interests of the Museum.

### ***Outside Employment***

Due to the potential for conflict of interest, or the appearance of conflict of interest, employees engaged in or considering seeking outside employment for pay shall disclose such employment to the Director (or, in the case of the Director, to the Board and Mayor), who shall determine if the outside employment or proposed activity constitutes a conflict of interest.

Certain types of outside employment, including teaching, lecturing, and consulting, can benefit both the Museum and the staff member. However, all employment outside the Museum that is deemed not to be in conflict with the interests of the Museum shall be carried out on employees' personal time, and employees shall not make use of the facilities, equipment, or services of the Museum. Outside employment, whatever its nature, shall not impair the ability of employees to execute their duties and responsibilities at the Museum in an appropriate and professional manner.

### ***Political Activities***

The Museum recognizes that employees have the same personal interests in the decisions and policies of government as do other citizens, and that employees retain these rights as individuals. However, because the Museum receives local, state, and federal funding, employees shall be careful to keep any such activities separate from work and on a strictly individual basis.

Political activities may be undertaken as an individual but not on behalf of the Museum. Activities which are not permissible include, but are not limited to:

- using Museum property, materials, supplies, computers, or other equipment in connection with political activity;
- engaging in any form of political activity as an individual while on official duty for the Museum; and
- wearing political buttons or similar items on the job.

The above examples are intended to serve only as guidelines for employees who wish to be active in political causes; they are by no means inclusive. Employees are encouraged to talk with their supervisor about any activity which may be in question.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers have played an active and important role in the Museum since its founding. It is incumbent on the paid staff to be supportive of volunteers, receive them as fellow workers, and willingly provide them with appropriate training, a safe working environment, and an opportunity for their intellectual enrichment.

### ***General Responsibility***

Volunteers have a responsibility to the Museum, especially those with access to the Museum's collections, programs, and privileged information. Access to the Museum's in-house activities is a privilege and the lack of material compensation for effort expended on behalf of the Museum in no way frees the volunteer from adherence to the standards that apply to paid staff.

Volunteers shall work toward the betterment of the Museum and not for personal gain other than the natural gratification and enrichment inherent in Museum participation.

### ***Gifts and Favors***

Although the Museum provides special privileges and benefits to its volunteers, volunteers shall not accept gifts, favors, discounts, loans, or other things of value from other parties in connection with carrying out duties for the Museum. Conflict of interest restrictions and gift policies placed upon the paid staff of the Museum shall be explained to volunteers and observed by them. Volunteers shall respect the confidentiality of any information to which their volunteer activities give them access.

## **MUSEUM MANAGEMENT**

### ***Professionalism***

Board members and governing entities of the City of Springdale shall respect the professional expertise of staff members, who have been employed because of their special knowledge or ability in some aspect of museum activity. Museum governance shall be structured so that the resolution of issues involving professional matters incorporates the opinions and professional judgments of relevant members of the Museum staff.

### ***Personnel Practices and Equal Opportunity***

In all matters relating to staffing practices, the standard shall be ability in the relevant discipline. In these matters, as well as in the selection of Board members, management practices, volunteer

opportunities, collection usage, and relationships with the public, decisions shall not be made on the basis of discriminatory factors such as race, ethnicity, national origin, age, gender, socio-economic background, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or geographic diversity.

### ***Inter-institutional Cooperation***

The Museum, toward its goal of contributing to the preservation of humanity's cultural heritage and the increase of knowledge, shall respond positively to opportunities for cooperative action with other museums, libraries, schools, and other cultural institutions to further this goal.

### ***Museum Store and Earned-Income Activities***

The Museum store and other earned-income activities in the Museum, as well as publicity relating to them, shall be in keeping with the Museum's mission, shall be relevant to the collections and basic educational purposes of the Museum, and shall not compromise the quality of those collections. General goals, operations, and merchandise selection criteria for the Museum store may be found in the Museum's store policy. No earned-income activities shall be undertaken that violate or compromise the Museum's non-profit status.

## **COLLECTIONS**

### ***Care and Management***

Stewardship of Museum collections entails the highest level of public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, and accessibility. The Museum shall ensure that collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities and are protected, secure, unencumbered, documented, cared for, and preserved. Collections documentation shall likewise be protected, secure, cared for, and preserved, and stipulations attached to restricted documentation shall be followed. Collections shall not be capitalized or treated as financial assets and shall not be deaccessioned or disposed of in order to provide financial support for Museum operations, facilities maintenance, or any reason other than preservation or acquisition of collections.

The Museum's standards for acquisition, deaccession, care, conservation, management, and use of the collections are detailed in the Museum's Acquisition Policy, Deaccession Policy, and Photo Image and Document Policy. The standards set in the Policies, and all decisions regarding collections and their accompanying documentation, shall be in keeping with professionally accepted museum standards.

### ***Appraisals and Identifications***

No Museum employee shall perform appraisals. The exception to this principle is appraisal for internal use by the Museum (e.g., insurance evaluation for loans). Any such appraisal shall represent an honest and objective judgment and shall indicate how the judgment was reached.

Donations to the Museum are tax deductible to the extent of the law. Donors, therefore, are expected to obtain at their own expense independent appraisals for objects they wish to donate. The Museum shall avoid any action that might appear to be an effort to assist the donor in securing an improper tax deduction.

Although Museum employees are barred from appraising objects, whether for potential donation or otherwise, they may help individuals identify the historical or cultural identity of objects based on their expertise in the field. Staff members shall make it clear to the public that such identifications are not appraisals, that no financial or insurance value should be based on such identifications, and that secondary identifications are often warranted.

Museum employees may also provide the public with advice about the care of their private collections. Such opinions shall be based on professional expertise. If questions exceed the bounds of a staff member's personal capabilities, they shall refer those questions to other appropriate museum professionals, such as conservators.

### ***Truth in Presentation***

It is the responsibility of the Museum and its staff to present the best current information about the collections it holds. Intellectual honesty and objectivity in the presentation of objects is the duty of every professional. The stated origin of objects or attribution of work shall reflect a thorough and honest investigation by Museum staff and shall yield promptly to change with the advent of new facts or analysis. Exhibits shall provide with candor and tact an honest and meaningful view of the subject. Controversial topics shall include a variety of viewpoints presented in a balanced manner. Sensitive issues or materials shall be handled with tact and in a dignified manner.

The research and preparation of an exhibit will often lead a professional to develop a point of view or interpretive sense of the material. That individual shall clearly understand the point where sound professional judgment ends and personal bias begins. The professional shall be content that the resultant presentation is the product of objective judgment.

## **PROGRAMS**

The Museum serves the public by advancing an understanding and appreciation of our history and our cultural heritage. Exhibitions, research, scholarship, publications, and educational activities shall advance the Museum's mission and be responsive to the concerns, interests, and needs of area residents.

The Museum is committed to insuring that:

- programs support its mission and remain responsive to the interests and concerns of the Arkansas Ozarks area;
- programs are intellectually responsible, founded on scholarship, and are consistent with current knowledge;
- programs are accessible and encourage participation by the widest possible audience consistent with the Museum's mission and resources;
- programs respect the cultural diversity of the area, pluralistic values, traditions, and concerns;
- revenue-producing activities and those that involve relationships with outside organizations are compatible with the Museum's mission and support its public trust responsibilities; and
- programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.