

Code of Conduct

Introduction

In 1994, the members of the Society of Archivists agreed by ballot to the introduction of a binding Code of Conduct, as a condition of membership of the Society, to take effect from 1st October 1994.

Purpose

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to set out the standards of professional behaviour expected of archivists, archive conservators, records managers and those occupied in related activities, who are members of the Society of Archivists. No exhaustive Code of Conduct can be laid down to cover all situations. However, the Council of the Society is always available to give guidance to members: members have a duty to obtain a ruling, through the Honorary Secretary of the Society, on all occasions when they are in doubt as to the proper standards of professional behaviour.

General guidelines

The Code of Conduct sets out certain, basic principles that are intended to help members maintain the highest standards of professional conduct. Should a case arise where a member is believed to have fallen short of the standards desired, procedures are defined within the Articles of Association of the Society of Archivists (Articles 20-26) and within the Bye-Laws of the Society (Section 10), which permits the convening of a Disciplinary Panel to consider the matter.

Standard requirement

All applicants for membership of the Society of Archivists are required to sign an undertaking that they will abide by the Code of Conduct if elected.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct of the Society of Archivists is as follows:

1. members must seek to promote the objects of the Society as set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association, and must not engage in any action which is contrary to those objects
2. members of the Society must conduct themselves in such a way that their behaviour would not reasonably be regarded by the Council of the Society as professional misconduct
3. members must endeavour to develop their professional understanding and expertise, to contribute to extending the body of professional

knowledge and to ensure that those whose training or activities they supervise are equipped to carry out their tasks in a competent manner

4. members must act with due regard to the Society's Equal Opportunities Policy and not discriminate in their dealings with individuals or organisations on the grounds of race, colour, religious beliefs or practices, ethnic or national origin, disabilities, gender, sexuality, marital status and age
5. members must refrain from activities that might prejudice their professional integrity and in particular must ensure that private research and publication, personal collecting interests or collaboration with the media, do not conflict with, or encroach upon, their professional responsibilities
6. members must perform their function in respect of the creation, maintenance and disposal of current and semi-current records, the selection, acceptance or acquisition of records for archival custody, the safeguarding, preservation and conservation of records in their care and the arrangement, description, publication and making available for use of those records in accordance with generally accepted archival principles and practices, offering impartial advice to all and employing available resources to provide a balanced range of services
7. members must not misuse or allow unauthorised disclosure or use of any information acquired by them, in confidence, in the course of their professional work
8. the primary duty of members is to maintain the integrity of the records in their care and custody but in performing this duty, they must balance the respective, legitimate rights and interests of employers, owners, data subjects and users, both present and future
9. members must seek to avoid conflict with their professional colleagues and with members in related professions and strive to resolve difficulties on a basis of mutual respect and understanding
10. members must not seek or seem to ascribe to the Society responsibility for views expressed or actions taken by them unless expressly authorised to do so.

All enquiries concerning the Code of Conduct should be addressed to:

The Honorary Secretary,
The Society of Archivists,
20 Canon Street,
Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1SW.
email: honsec@archives.org.uk