

# Museum Store Association Code of Ethics

Adopted 1984, Revised 2000

MSA was established in 1955 to promote professional standards and to foster a climate of integrity within the museum store profession. Because the diversity of museums makes it impractical to address specific ethical issues that may arise for each museum store, this document is intended as a guide for store personnel.

The museum store is primarily an extension of the educational aspect of the museum and can be an important source of income. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the museum administration and the museum store manager to collaborate on a policy that will reflect their community of interest and purpose.

The use of the term “museum store” has specific meaning and carries with it important obligations to the public to ensure quality and authenticity. Improper use of the term is not condoned by MSA.

## Management and Personnel

Since public perception of the museum store is closely tied to the parent institution, it is the responsibility of museum store personnel to be fully aware of the source, quality, authenticity and educational worth of all items sold in the store. Misrepresentations, whether intentional or not, reflect upon the reputation of the museum as well as the museum store. All museum store personnel, whether paid or volunteer, are representatives of the museum.

Volunteer managers are ethically obligated to ensure that their volunteer status is not used as an excuse to exploit the commercial role of the museum store at the expense of its educational function. It is unethical for museum store personnel to use their museum affiliation for personal profit or to engage in any activity that may compromise the integrity of the institution or undermine the confidence of the museum staff and the public.

## Reproductions, Replicas and Derived Products

The policy regarding the propriety of manufacturing reproductions, replicas and derived products varies from museum to museum. Their sale in museum stores must be carefully regulated because of the ease with which they can be misconstrued by the public. All reproductions and replicas must be clearly and indelibly identified as such. Museum store managers are obligated to learn and observe applicable copyright laws.

Advertising implying that reproductions are original works is unethical, misleading and in some instances, illegal. Any representation suggesting that the value of a reproduction appreciates is also unacceptable.

## Deaccessioned Materials and the Museum Store

The sale of any deaccessioned materials through the museum store is unethical. Even though the item may have been officially deaccessioned, the public may perceive the transaction as the museum store participating in the liquidation of the museum’s collection.

## Information Fair Use Policy

Museum store Web sites are an extension of traditional museum stores. Museum stores have an ethical responsibility to post in an easy-to-find and clearly written manner a policy detailing how they collect, track, use and disclose information gathered about Web site visitors. Visitors to museum store Web sites should be assured that information collected for one purpose is not shared or sold to a third party without their consent. Visitors should also be assured that by providing personal information they will not receive unwanted solicitations.

## Audience Diversity and the Museum Store

The museum store enjoys a unique opportunity to serve a diverse clientele. For that reason, the store is obligated to offer items that are educational, safe and of the highest quality.

## Endangered Cultural and Natural Heritage

The sale of any object or merchandise that is manufactured from or incorporates parts of any endangered species is a grievous offense against the moral principles upon which museums are established. Sale of illicitly acquired antiquities is offensive to the affected cultures and destructive to archaeological sites. MSA fully supports existing laws and recognizes the need for their rigid enforcement in order to preserve and protect our dwindling cultural and natural resources from wanton commercial exploitation.

## To Learn More

For more detailed information on endangered natural heritage and consumer buying tips, click on the following documents.

[Buy Responsibly: The Consumer Connection](#)

[Ethics Policies for Archaeological and Ethnological Resources](#)

[Ethics Policies for Endangered Natural Heritage](#)

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4100 E. Mississippi Ave., Ste. 800, Denver, CO 80246-3055  
Tel: (303) 504-9223 Fax: (303) 504-9585 [Contact MSA](#)

source: <http://museumdistrict.com/membership/EthicsCode.cfm>