



DUBUQUE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY CODE OF ETHICS

Approved by DCHS Board of Directors
March, 26, 2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	<u>3</u>
Governance	<u>4</u>
Board of Directors	
Staff Assistance	
President & CEO	
Conduct	<u>4</u>
General Behavior	
Volunteers	
Conflict of Interest	<u>5</u>
Reputation	
Use of Name, Assets, and Information	
Affiliations with Other Related Institutions	
Receiving Gifts and Favors	
Outside Employment and Volunteering	
Referrals	
Political Activities	
Purchase of Museum Property	
Personal Collecting	
Dealings	
Collections	<u>7-11</u>
Collection Management & Maintenance	
Acquisition and Disposal	
Documentation of Collection	
Human Remains and Culturally Significant Artifacts	
Animal Disposal both Living and Deceased	
Use of Animals	
Loans	
Appraisals	
Reproduction of Image and Form	
Availability of Collections, Archives and Record Materials	
Programs and Interpretation	<u>11</u>
Accessibility	
Evaluation and Visitor Studies	
Interpretation	
Management Practices	<u>11</u>
Professionalism	
Fundraising	
Commercial Activities	
Core Values	
Equal Opportunity	
Scholarly Material	

INTRODUCTION: MISSION & BACKGROUND

The Dubuque County Historical Society (DCHS) organized in 1950 as a private organization for local history. In 1964, DCHS was established as a non-profit and opened its first museum at the historic Mathias Ham House. Over the next 25 years, the museum specialized in local and regional material culture. Gradually it expanded into a wider focus to interpret and collect on river-related topics, including a living species population to support a mission of becoming a “Museum of River Life.”¹ The growth crystallized in the early 1980s with the founding of the Fred W. Woodward Riverboat Museum. Enthusiasm grew for the dual focus of living and historic collections that in 2003 DCHS opened the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, a building expansion to combine the Riverboat Museum and the William Woodward Mississippi River Discovery Center. Today, the Dubuque County Historical Society operates both the Mathias Ham Historic Site and the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium under a shared mission to

... inspire stewardship through educational experiences where history and rivers come alive.

Within this mission our aim is to inspire all through river connections using stories of the human-river relationship. By building community and encouraging conservation of shared ecosystems we are stewards of our past, present, and future.

¹Phrasing of ‘Museum of river Life’ first appears in an undated communication located in general 1980s administration records. Appears in a detailed description of the organization for a likely grant project. Continues to be used through the 1980s and early 1990s as a catchphrase for functions of the organization.

Preface

As a document central to the functions of the organization, the Code of Ethics is based on conversation and review by Dubuque County Historical Society (DCHS, or ‘Society’) staff, board, and auxiliary board members. Guiding resources used during discussion include the *Code of Ethics and Practice of Interest to Museums* (2000) published by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and the *Code of Professional Ethics* (2017) amended by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). This code should be read as a guide to make decisions in difficult situations. Should questions remain regarding appropriate action discuss the matter with a supervisor or senior leadership team.

All employees and volunteers of DCHS are obligated to adhere to the following Code of Ethics. Final authority on compliance with this Code resides with the chair of the DCHS board of directors who delegates the responsibility of oversight to the president & chief executive officer (CEO). In turn, the Executive Committee of the board of directors reviews all ethical concerns regarding the president & CEO.

DCHS staff, volunteers, board and auxiliary board members, and appointed committee members are expected to show loyalty to the organization through commitment to the following principles:

- All actions and decisions are grounded in the Mission;
- Maintain public trust responsibilities in all activities, especially collections management and development of public programs;
- Manage and interpret artifacts and species in the Society’s care to assure long-term health and teaching value;
- Intentionally involve diverse voices in decision-making;
- To increase and disseminate knowledge;
- Conduct themselves in a legal manner;
- Operate in a fiscally responsible manner;
- Act with integrity, making the best ethical judgments possible to support a mission-centric philosophy; and
- Encourage creativity and collaboration between departments and across local, regional, and national networks.

Discipline-Specific Codes of Conduct

All staff of DCHS, collectively and individually, subscribe to the *Code of Ethics for Museums* (American Alliance of Museum, amended 2003) and the *Code of Professional Ethics* (Association of Zoos & Aquariums, 2017). In addition, individual staff members or departments subscribe to discipline-specific codes to represent the best professional standards within their specialties for the success of the organization.

A Code of Ethics for Curators (American Alliance of Museums, 2009)

AASLH Statement and Standard of Ethics (American Association for State & Local History, 2018)

Evaluators’ Ethical Guiding Principles (American Evaluation Association, 2011)

AAMD Code of Ethics (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2011)

American Library Association Code of Ethics (amended, 2019)

AMA State of Ethics (American Marketing Association, 2021)

ASPA Code of Ethics (American Society for Public Administration, 2013)

AFRP Code of Ethical Standards (Association of Fundraising Professionals, amended 2023)

Code of Ethics and Professional Practices for Collections Professionals (Association of Registrars and Collection Specialists, 2021)

Code of Ethics (American Educational Research Association, 2011)

Educational Interpreter Code of Ethics (National Association of Interpreters in Education, 2021)

ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (International Council of Museums, 2017)

MSA Knowledge Standards (Museum Store Association, accessed 2025)

MSA Code of Ethics (Museum Store Association, Revised 2000)

NCPH Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (National Council on Public History, 2007)

NEA Code of Ethics for Educators (National Education Association, 2020)

PRSA Code of Ethics (Public Relations Society of America, 2000)

AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct (American Historical Association, 2023)

Universal Declaration on Leading and Managing Volunteers (Association for Volunteer Management, 2001)

CCVA Core Values and Principles (Council for Certification in Volunteer Management, 2016)

GOVERNANCE

Board of Directors

The board of directors shall be loyal to the functions and mission of DCHS. Each member must devote their time and conscientiously participate in Society governance. The board provides oversight to ensure DCHS is aligned with its mission, evaluates planning and assesses performance.

The board is closely associated with the president & CEO, the Society's chief executive. A recognized primary role in their impartial oversight is to hold the executive accountable to responsibilities of the position.

All actions of the Board shall comply with the board of director's bylaws and the statement of expectations on confidentiality and conflict of interest. These documents are reaffirmed annually by all board members. To ensure personal and professional integrity, a conflict of interest is identified as any competing benefit or activity by board members, or those closely associated, that creates a conflict of interest in the operations and policies of the Society. No board member shall be directed by private interest, and if a concern arises, that interest should be disclosed and made matter of record. If conflict occurs, the board member abstains from voting on measures that may personally, for the individual or for members of family or friends, provide independent benefit.

Staff Assistance

Board members may seek staff assistance for personal needs. However, that help is rendered to the same degree as what is available to the general public with similar needs.

President & CEO

While the position of president & CEO of DCHS, is formally accountable to the board of directors for its actions, it is a position of trust between the president & CEO and all staff, volunteers, board and members of the public. As such, the actions of the executive set an example for the core values of integrity, innovation and inclusiveness, and is a guide for the organization to implement its policies in an ethical manner. All actions shall be reflective of loyalty to the Society and professional standards of the field, both museum and aquarium, at large. The president & CEO will avoid any and all activities

that compromise their position at the organization and is held by the same Conflict of Interest policies as the board of directors and staff broadly. The president & CEO is responsible for communicating the contents of this Code of Ethics to all Society staff, inform, educate and advocate for the interests of the organization and its mission as a whole.

CONDUCT

General Behavior

Regardless of capacity, individuals who are part of the organization are expected to practice respect at all times recognizing the dignity of others. DCHS is committed to embracing collaboration, practicing equity, and ensuring accessibility and inclusion in all activities, statements, and behaviors. For transparency, DCHS staff, volunteers, board members, auxiliary board members, and appointed members of committees, must make it clear whether they are acting or speaking for the Society. To maintain the core value of integrity, they must not represent, or appear to represent, the Society without a mandate to do so, being aware that even the perceived conflict of interest may cause harm to organizational reputation.

Respectful relationships are the basis of all work at the organization whether it is through internal cross-departmental activities, external partnership development in the community or with peers. The diverse individuals, groups and partners, associated with DCHS reflect the values of the organization at every level. While the use of Artificial Intelligence is not prohibited, all communications should be honest, fact-based, and considerate. The DCHS Employee Handbook further details the Code of Conduct expected on and off campus when representing and promoting the mission of the organization.

Volunteers

Non-paid individuals volunteering with the organization in any capacity are expected to adhere to the same general behavior codes of conduct as staff. While participating in or attending a DCHS sponsored program, event, meeting, activity, or other cause, volunteers represent the organization by word and action. Staff are expected to provide appropriate training and development for volunteers to respectfully honor their donation of time and skills.

Volunteers participate in a variety of roles across the organization and at times are granted association to privileged information or work in sensitive areas. They must hold confidential matters privately under direction of the organization. Though the position may have special privileges it does not change the ethical responsibilities. Volunteers may not accept gifts, discounts, loans, or other things of value from others in connection to carrying out duties for the Society. Volunteers must adhere to the same duty and interests of the organization and its mission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflicts of interest apply equally to all DCHS staff, volunteers, board and auxiliary board members, and appointed committee members. Common instances are highlighted for use of collections, loans and gifts of objects, outside employment, intellectual integrity, and brand reputation.

Reputation

All staff, volunteers, board and auxiliary board members, and appointed committee members share responsibility for safeguarding the reputation of the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium and the Dubuque County Historical Society. Because individuals connected to the Society are seen as representatives of the institution, their conduct—whether internal or public—should reflect the highest ethical standards and support public trust in the Society and the museum/aquarium profession.

Individuals must never abuse their position or access to Society resources, nor engage in activities that could impair their ability to fulfill their responsibilities, compete with the Society, or bring discredit to the organization. Participation in Society-related activities requires accepting certain restrictions necessary to maintain public confidence in the integrity, objectivity, and mission-driven work of the institution.

The Society's name and reputation are valuable assets and may not be exploited for personal advantage or used to benefit any outside person or entity. Any situation that could be perceived as a conflict between the interests of the Society and an individual's personal or outside interests must be brought promptly to the attention of a supervisor, the president & CEO, or the board chair for review and resolution.

Use of Name, Assets, and Information

Use of Name

The Society's name, logos, branding, and reputation may not be used for personal advantage or to imply endorsement of outside activities. Individuals must not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the Society unless expressly authorized by the president & CEO or board chair.

Use of Assets

Society property—including but not limited to equipment, collections, facilities, digital platforms, images, intellectual property, and staff expertise—must be used solely for official Society purposes unless otherwise expressly permitted. Collections, archives, animals, and specimens may not be removed from Society premises for personal use under any circumstances.

Confidentiality

Individuals must treat as confidential all non-public information related to collections, donor and member data, animal care protocols, security systems, financial information, research, internal deliberations, and other pertinent information.

Confidential information may not be shared with outside parties, used for personal benefit, or leveraged to inform private collecting, employment, or consulting activities.

Access to collections and internal information is a privilege and must be exercised with discretion and respect for professional and ethical obligations.

Affiliations with Other Related Institutions

The Society recognizes that many staff, volunteers, board members, and associated persons maintain professional or personal relationships with other museums, aquariums, historical societies, nonprofits, universities, or cultural institutions. These affiliations often benefit the field, but they may also introduce conflicts of loyalty or access to privileged information.

Individuals must disclose all outside museum-related affiliations that may intersect with their duties at the Society. When an affiliation could influence or appear to influence decision-making, especially in areas such as partnerships, collections activities, collaborative programs, or vendor selection, the individual must disclose this

partnership and if appropriate, recuse themselves from discussions and decisions.

No individual may use their position at the Society to improperly benefit another institution with which they are affiliated, nor may they share confidential or proprietary information learned through their role at the Society. In cases where the Society collaborates formally with another institution, all participants must act in the best interest of the Society and the public trust.

Receiving Gifts and Favors

To preserve the integrity of the Society and maintain public trust, no staff, volunteers, or board members may solicit or accept gifts, favors, loans, special discounts or services from those doing business or seeking to do business with the organization. Items of nominal value, which for the purposes of this Code is identified as no more than \$50, may be accepted, but should be reported to the individual's supervisor, president & CEO, or the board chair.

No individual may receive any commission, compensation, or personal benefit in connection with transactions, relationship, or opportunity that causes a real or perceived conflict of interest with the Society. Individuals with a potential conflict must recuse themselves from related discussions, evaluations, and decisions. All disclosures and determinations under this policy shall be documented in accordance with the Society's governance practices.

Outside Employment and Volunteering

Outside employment, consulting, or volunteer activities must not conflict with an individual's responsibilities to the Society or impair their ability to perform their duties objectively and effectively.

Staff and associated persons may engage in outside work only when it:

- Does not negatively impact the business or operations of the Society;
- Does not involve the misuse of confidential information, privileged access, or Society resources;
- Does not constitute employment or service for a dealer, collector, or commercial entity

that could conflict with collecting or research activities;

- Does not interfere with or impair scheduled work, professional obligations, or institutional priorities; and
- Does not affect the ability to act in a professional manner with objectivity.

Staff, volunteers, and board members are expected to avoid outside activities that would create the appearance of compromised objectivity when acting on behalf of the Society.

Referrals

Staff and associated persons may occasionally be asked to recommend conservators, appraisers, educators, service providers, or other specialists. To avoid favoritism or conflicts of interest:

- Individuals may provide referrals only when acting within their professional capacity;
- Whenever possible, multiple qualified options should be provided;
- Individuals must not refer clients to themselves in a way that uses their Society position for personal gain; and
- No referrals may be given to businesses with which the individual or their immediate family has a financial relationship, unless disclosed and approved in advance.

The Society does not provide monetary appraisals of objects and must not appear to endorse any provider.

Political Activities

The Society encourages civic participation but must as an entity remain nonpartisan. Staff, volunteers, board members, and associated persons are free to engage in political activities as private individuals, but must not:

- Conduct political activity during working hours or on Society property;
- Use Society assets, facilities, digital platforms, or communications channels for political purposes;
- Represent their personal political views as those of the Society; or

- Use their position to influence the political views, actions, or contributions of others connected to the Society.

Board members and senior leadership should take special care to avoid any appearance that the Society endorses a candidate or party. Participation in civic or community boards is permitted when it does not conflict with Society duties or create misperceptions about institutional endorsement. The Society may choose to advocate for institutional self-interest by rallying political or public support for positions or ballot initiatives that benefit the institution or field as a whole. An example would be to encourage support for increased funding for museums.

Nothing in this code restricts an individual's right to vote, express personal opinions, or participate in political life as a private citizen outside of the workplace.

Purchase of Museum Property

No staff member, volunteer, board member, committee member, or associated person—nor members of their immediate family or agents acting on their behalf—may purchase or otherwise acquire objects, animals, specimens, equipment, or materials deaccessioned or disposed of by the Society, except when such items are publicly and openly offered for sale without special access or consideration.

No individual may use privileged information to gain advantage in acquiring objects or materials that the Society is considering for acquisition or disposal. The Society's interest always takes precedence.

All purchases must occur through standard public channels with no special discounts except those publicly available. Exceptions may be made for live animals to prioritize their best interests.

Personal Collecting

Staff, board, and associated persons with the Society who do engage in personal collecting should be mindful to avoid even the appearance of conflict. Generally, collections that are bequeathed or of relatively small size for personal enjoyment are not considered conflicts. However, persons may not collect in competition with the Society once they are employed or serving in some capacity related to the governance of its

collections. Any staff, board member or associated people who do have a collection within the Society's scope must preference Society interest to non-compete and disclose their collections to their supervisor, the board or president & CEO.

Those staff, board and committee members of the collecting bodies of the Society are strictly prohibited from collecting in areas they are responsible. Furthermore, any DCHS staff or associated people who wish to transfer all or part of their personal collection to the organization must do so first as a gift or at fair market value. No personal collection may be stored at the Society unless it is part of an identified project that forwards the mission. If objects or other materials are lent to DCHS for exhibitions by staff, board members, or associated people, they should lend them anonymously. The same consideration is given to illustrations or imagery in Society publications or exhibitions. Work produced within the organization, for its purposes, is the intellectual property of the Society and may not be used for personal gain.

Dealings

While employed by DCHS, a staff member may not act as dealer, or on behalf of a dealer, of objects or species related to the collection. Dealing (defined as the buying or selling of an object/species for profit) does not extend to the occasional sale, purchase or trade to advance a personal collection. Anything more than an occasional occurrence must be disclosed and approved by the President & CEO.

COLLECTIONS

DCHS is comfortable with its split mission of telling the larger story of impact and influence of the Mississippi River and watershed, on the one hand, and local history as it relates to Dubuque as a river town, on the other. While it maintains a living population (some 2,000 animals, roughly 250 species) and a historic collection (about 22,000 artifacts, an archive and library), the differences in management of both are only in so far as procedures of care. These are outlined in their respective collection policies that provide more detail for, among other things, the acquisition/deaccession or removal of animals or objects. Unless otherwise noted in the following descriptions both living and historic collection

are referred to in the singular as “collection” and “object” refers to any and all categories of historic collection (book, archive print, 3D artifact, natural specimen, etc.).

The Society’s two collecting bodies share the same overarching ethical values of stewardship to safeguard the health of the object or animal, maintain transparent and documented records of ownership, adhere to relevant governing laws and regulating authorities, and make the collection accessible to the public in mission-driven ways. This document provides a brief summation of these principles but does not replace the authority of either the Historical Collections Management Policy or living population policies.

Collection Management & Maintenance

The Society assumes primary responsibility for the safeguarding of its collection with a central priority being the physical health of the object or species. No action for any cause may place the collection in a position of risk. The physical care and well-being of the collection is paramount as the foundational core of the organization. As such, DCHS shall operate with an emphasis on preservation and conservation of its collections. The Society shall establish procedures for the assessment of collections and keep them to professional standards of their respective fields. Compliance with local, regional, and national laws is a given and DCHS must maintain good standing with regulatory oversight from these agencies. The most common Federal Laws consulted include but are not limited to the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) and the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (MBTA).^{*} See Human Remains and Culturally Significant Artifacts and Animal Disposal both Living and Deceased segments for more description and consult the individual policies for final authority.

Staff of the curatorial and living collections departments must be consulted on any move of collection within exhibition, program, loan or offsite activity. The responsibility of the well-being of the collection extends beyond behind-the-scenes care to consideration of transport needs, temporary storage, review of loaning partners’ ability to meet standards of care, and the training of others to handle an object or species. This extends to any object or species on loan to the Society, regardless of type, that it receives the same level of care. The curatorial and living collection teams bear the primary role in the

care of all collections within DCHS, but ultimate responsibility of proper oversight and adherence to ethical standards and adherence to policies rests with the Board of Directors.

Acquisition and Disposal

Acquisition refers to an addition to collection by transfer of ownership to be part of the permanent collection. This may come through donation, purchase, exchange or other transaction where all ownership rights and documentation are transferred to the Society. Both collecting bodies of the organization operate with a mission-forward focus that is guided by the core themes of the master interpretive plan. Any object or species must tie to one or more of the identified themes of being able to interpret ‘river ecosystems’, ‘local river reflections’, ‘conservation’, and the broad ‘human-river river connection’. Temporary exceptions may be made for living populations for humane reasons to hold animals for government agencies such as recovered trafficked species. This is a duty and responsibility for the organization that aligns with our stewardship goals.

Along with adherence to interpretive relevancy, no object or species shall be accepted into permanent collection unless it can be kept in healthy condition, be adequately cared for and have clear provenance of its origin and ownership history. Furthermore, the source of the object or species must be sustainable. A key goal of the organization is to model sustainability in its actions and that extends to evaluating packaging, carbon cost, and wildlife resources. Most acquisitions at the Society are done as donation or in good faith partnership. However, if fees are incurred, they must be approved by the governing committee, the president & CEO. For any substantial cost (such as an animal that may require a new habitat), the acquisition must be approved by the board of directors. For *artifacts*, while most of the acquisitions of the Society are done as donation or in good faith partnership, when fees are incurred, they must be approved by the advising committee, the president & CEO, and for substantial costs, such as an artifact which may require permanent display space, the acquisition must be approved by the board of directors. Without neglecting the safety of the artifact, environmental sustainability in collection care and management may be evidenced through evaluating packaging, use of reusable or recyclable materials for documentation and handling, and the carbon footprint of accessions and loans.

Documentation of Collection

All artifacts and species acquired for the Society's collection shall be registered, cataloged and acknowledged in the Society's records in a timely manner. The responsibility for collections documentation shall be the duty of the curator of historic collection while some tasks may be delegated to the collections technician. Similarly, the responsibility of records of living population shall be the duty of the curators of individual areas and the registrar. It is the obligation of all to maintain thorough information, attaching all relevant documentation, updating image, status, concerns or treatments as needs arise. Avoidance of bias with word choice, alignment with industry-standard lexicon and periodic review for consistency and accuracy of the record are further best practices to ensure ethical management. For full procedure and guidelines to deaccessioning and disposal consult the Historic Collection Management Policy and living population policies.

Deaccession or removal from collection is the prerogative of the organization and it must remain free to do so for the health and relevancy of its mission. For this document, removal and/or deaccession refers to the formal disposal of that object or species from record management and standard of care while the term 'disposal' is a sometimes-used method of its removal. Where possible, all efforts are made to transfer removed or deaccessioned objects or species to like-minded organizations (and under Federal Laws), but at times, disposal is the appropriate action. Removal is a selective process guided by policy, requires staff recommendation, special committee approval and final board oversight to formally remove any object or species. If removed, preference is given to transfer the object to another nonprofit or educating body but where possible deaccessioned objects may be sold. Any proceeds realized from sales of these deaccessioned objects or animals may only be used for further acquisition or direct care of their respective collections. What constitutes care of collection for each collection is detailed in the individual collection policies.

Human Remains and Culturally Significant Artifacts

Compliance with the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) is a basic standard that DCHS is committed to maintain. It aligns with our core values of integrity and inclusivity to recognize the dignity of others. Active acquisition of cultural relevant artifacts,

including those adjacent to a culturally significant origin (such as made-for-trade or works of artistic license) will be considered on a case-by-case basis and demand the highest level of documentation to ensure ownership rights, research and expert advisement from descendant communities or peer advisors prior to their acceptance. For those artifacts already in collection, while compliant with NAGPRA (1990), DCHS understands that meaning changes, new connections may emerge and will honor those conversations to remain a good steward of a collective memory. Best efforts will be given to these artifacts to better connect them to their origins whether that is in the form of improved identification, word choice in catalog documentation, method of storage or repatriation.

Animal Disposal both Living and Deceased

Living collection is unique in that its disposal may involve the disposition of living animals and/or the remains of a deceased animal or their parts. Responsible management of living animal populations necessitates that some individuals be acquired, and that others be removed from the population at certain times. Animals acquired with the intention of, or are a surplus population identified for use as, animal feed are not accessioned into collection and do not fall under the same record management of formal deaccessions. However, mandatory restrictions upon the removal of live animals, including governmental regulations, permit conditions, loan conditions, and other agreements, must be observed. This includes the care and removal of dead animals and their parts meeting the requirements of all applicable regulations and laws such as the *Migratory Bird Act of 1918* that protects the American Bald Eagle and its parts.

Use of Animals

Certain animals may be formally designated as "Ambassador Animals" for program and outreach participation by DCHS staff but require the same standards of animal welfare and staff training applied to all in living collection. DCHS recognizes that animal encounters in educational programs have many benefits for establishing empathy and connecting visitors to the importance of river ecology, watershed conservation and the core interpretive theme of the human-river connection. In these opportunities, the safety and welfare of animals involved is priority to meet their physical and behavioral needs in these situations which include touch pools or touch environments as

well as offsite travel for program presentations. Internally led annual training is required and led by living collection's Animal Ambassador Team. Trainings advance with specialty tiers for higher certification and responsibility. Animals may not be used or handled for any purpose outside of education or mission-forward activities. As an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, DCHS follows the standard Animal Ambassador Policies (revised 2022).

Loans

Loans to and from DCHS will be based on educational value and mission connection. It is the responsibility of the curators and registrars of the respective collections to ensure that complete and accurate records are kept for incoming and outgoing loans. DCHS recognizes the value of loans to enhance exhibitions and programs. However, it prioritizes those on a temporary basis rather than long-term to limit potential strains on record keeping and commitments to perpetual care of objects or species not of collection. Since use in display can enhance the value of an object exceptions may be made solely on their prospective value to the public.

Appraisals

Ascribing a monetary value to an acquisition is strictly prohibited for all staff, board, volunteer and persons otherwise associated with the Society. To avoid a conflict of interest, whether perceived or actual, any appraisal is done by the donor prior to the submission for consideration to collection. Society representatives may suggest appraisers or companies to perform the function but are restricted from conducting an appraisal themselves or providing preferences for any one service provider. Donations may be considered for tax deduction purposes and staff involved with these transfers should be familiar with the IRS Publication 526 on charitable contributions to understand when an appraisal is necessary. Regardless of estimated value, all donors to historic collection receive a Deed of Gift that serves as the contemporaneous written acknowledgment (CRE) that can be required for tax filing. However, a copy of the external appraisal record must be provided and attached to this record for it to fulfill the requirement.

Historic collection staff may assign values for internal needs, such as insurance valuation estimates for loans, or otherwise as outlined in the Historic Collection Management Policy.

Reproduction of Image and Form

Requests for replication of collection will be considered on a case-by-case basis but its use must never trivialize or discredit the original or be counter to the Society's mission. See the individual collection policies for requirements beyond safeguarding the integrity of the object or species. In general, uses for research and education are preferred over commercial but the latter is not restricted as long as proper credit is applied. Production quality of any reproductions created or sold must be a credit to the original and not diminish its character. For further descriptions on commercial use see Museum Management Practice.

Availability of Collections, Archives and Record Materials

The Society assumes primary responsibility for the safeguarding of materials in its collection and therefore must regulate access to them. Nevertheless, the collection and archives should be made available to the general public, scholars, and peers within operating hours and have these times published regularly.

Public access to collections is available through exhibitions, educational programs, online platforms, and the Captain William D. Howell, Sr. River Library by appointment. Public access also extends to the loaning of collection to approved peers for purposes of research or other educational pursuits like exhibition. When providing access to the collection, staff will provide appropriate identification and credit lines but will not reveal confidential information related to donor, appraisal value or other sensitive details. Society staff makes its collections and records accessible for research but is mindful of access and/or use being consistent with accepted legal, security and preservation practices. Best efforts are made for honoring special requests for information and access to collection, but it is subject to staff availability and safety of the collection.

Documentation of records related to all collections is the primary responsibility of those associated curators and registrars. These records comprise legal documents that establish DCHS ownership and are generally not made publicly available in their full form. However, it is the duty of staff to maintain proper chain of custody documentation in an honest, clear and retrievable manner to meet professional standards and be accountable to the

public we serve. Records are created in a timely manner and kept on permanent file, whether or not the object or species remains in collection. Some exceptions do occur such as species maintained in large numbers, like shoaling fishes, and thus do not have individual record. For living collection there is the addition of an Animal Vendor Profile that is kept as part of documentation which includes copies of all relevant animal permits to demonstrate legal, ethical, and sustainable practices. Similar documentation is required under unique circumstances for objects not in historic or living collections yet used for education handling purposes. This is primarily related to natural history specimens to demonstrate their lawful and sustainable acquisition such as the ivory narwhal tusk.

PROGRAMS AND INTERPRETATION

Educational programs, exhibits, events, outreach activities, and advocacy shall advance the DCHS mission. As a public trust and steward of historic and living collections, DCHS shall provide public access to collections in relevant, meaningful, and purposeful ways. The integration of the human connectivity to collections and living populations shall be at the forefront of interpretation. These efforts are guided by the Interpretive Master Plan core themes.

Accessibility

DCHS shall present and interpret collections and populations in ways that are as accessible as possible to all visitors. DCHS personnel will embrace varied perspectives, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and physical and cognitive needs to ensure accessibility for all visitors. DCHS shall involve community members, scholars, and diverse perspectives to inform and advance public programs. Community-engagement, committee composition, and advisory groups shall ensure relevancy for a diverse and broad audience.

Evaluation and Visitor Studies

DCHS shall respect the rights and privacy of all visitors who participate in visitors studies and evaluation. All visitors or focus groups will be informed about the study and its intended objective(s). It shall be made clear to all visitors that participation is optional. Confidentiality shall be an utmost priority.

Interpretation

In its interpretation of objects and living collections, DCHS shall strive to promote intellectual transparency, honesty, and verifiable facts. Use of Artificial Intelligence is not prohibited but must align with scholarship integrity. Content shall be reviewed, evaluated, and developed to remain factual and relevant to all visitors. Programs, exhibits, and interpretation shall be thoughtfully developed to remain unbiased, non-partisan, and non-political. DCHS shall present diverse perspectives and shall not be hindered by subjects or themes that may be deemed controversial.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Professionalism

DCHS personnel have been purposefully engaged to provide their individual expertise or ability to inform and enhance our cultural institution. All personnel and board of directors shall respect and trust the professional expertise of others. Governance structure incorporates the opinions and professional judgments of relevant personnel toward resolution of issues in their areas of expertise. Responsibility for final decisions rests with the president & CEO or board of directors and all staff members shall support these decisions. However, as diverse voices are valued, personnel, shall not be required to reverse, alter, or suppress their professional judgment in an effort in conformity.

Fundraising

DCHS shall fundraise with honesty, integrity, transparency, and accountability to safeguard public trust, ensure funds are used as intended, and respect and protect donor rights, privacy, and choices. The DCHS Mission shall be the utmost priority. Fundraisers shall accurately represent organizational needs, honor donor intent, remain in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards while fostering relationships built on trust and demonstrating a shared commitment to moving the mission forward. The DCHS shall abide by the following core principles and practices:

- **Honesty and Integrity:** shall be truthful in all communications, accurately portray the organization's mission, and avoid misleading donors or exaggerating impact.

- **Transparency & Accountability:** shall clearly report how donations are managed and spent, and provide accessible information about the organization’s finances and outcomes.
- **Respect for Donors:** shall honor donor wishes for how gifts are used, respect their privacy, and never pressure them to give.
- **Fiduciary Duty:** shall prioritize the organization’s mission and the public trust over personal gain.
- **Conflict of Interest:** shall disclose any potential conflicts and avoid exploiting relationships for personal benefit.
- **Compliance:** shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards.
- **Stewardship:** shall safeguard donor information, send timely acknowledgments, and report impact honestly.

Museum’s collection, all aspects of the commercial venture must be carried out in a manner that will not discredit either the integrity of the Museum or the intrinsic value of the original object. Great care shall be taken to identify such objects for what they are, ensure the accuracy and the high quality of the manufacture, represent good value, and comply with all relevant national legislation.

Core Values

The Dubuque County Historical Society and its National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium and Mathias Ham Historic Site shall be committed to embracing diversity, practicing equity, and ensuring accessibility, and inclusion. DCHS shall continually strive to achieve a welcoming environment in all spaces, where our staff and community feel reflected and valued for their unique perspectives and backgrounds. These values guide and impact all the decisions the organization makes, both internal and external.

Equal Opportunity

DCHS shall practice non-discrimination by prohibiting bias in all employment decisions (hiring, termination, pay, training, promotion, etc.). DCHS shall provide equal opportunity to apply for roles and access further opportunities.

Scholarly Material

DCHS shall hold collections and all associated knowledge in public trust. Research shall be conducted ethically and all contributing parties (original or collaborative) shall be acknowledged or credited for any and all work. All research and tangible products shall serve the mission and public audiences. DCHS retains the ownership of tangible products resulting from research or projects as intellectual property.

Commercial Activities

All facility rentals (events, dinners, weddings, et al.) should remain neutral, support, and never conflict with the organizational mission and its educational goals. DCHS shall not host, endorse, or allow organizational branding, or provide discounted (in-kind) rates for those renting the facility for political events. Rentals shall adhere to strict written contractual agreements, shall not disrupt or put collections at risk, nor obstruct accessibility and must adhere to safety protocols and emergency procedures.

The Museum Store(s) merchandise shall be mission-forward, relevant to collections, and support the educational purposes of the DCHS and its museums. Merchandise shall not compromise the quality of those collections, merchandising for any sale of replicas, reproductions, or other commercial items adapted from an object in the