

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
January 27 – 30, 2011  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct:  
Annual Report  
(Prepared by: Tim Pyatt, chair)**

**Annual Meeting Sessions**

The sessions proposed by the CEPC “A Code for Success? Ethics for Processors” and “Updating the Code” were not selected for 2010 Annual Meeting program. However, “Ethics for Processors” was presented as the program at the Privacy & Confidentiality Roundtable’s 2010 annual meeting with roughly 60 attendees. “Updating the Code” was revised to become the lunchtime “Forum on the Code of Ethics” at *DC 2010*, which attracted about 50 attendees (not counting CEPC members). Notes taken by the Committee on comments made at the Forum are appended to this report.

**SAA Code of Ethics Revision**

With the SAA Council’s approval to proceed with the proposed revision of the Code of Ethics, CEPC reviewed the existing documents and discussed potential edits and changes. Sections of the Code were parsed and assigned to CEPC members to work on, with a goal of completing a discussion draft by the end of October 2010, refining that draft in November, and submitting a draft to the Council for review at the winter 2011 meeting.

CEPC also discussed the draft SAA Values Statement and its relationship to the Code. An endorsement of the Values Statement was submitted to the Executive Committee by CEPC in October.

**Future of CEPC After the Code Revision**

At the 2010 Annual Meeting, the CEPC also discussed what its future would be after revision of the Code is complete, as maintenance of the Code is CEPC’s primary function. We suggest that the Committee focus on developing resources, such as case studies and a bibliography, to support the Code and maintain these activities going forward. CEPC sees *Campus Case Studies* as a potential model for the ethics case studies.

**Appended:** 2010 Annual Meeting Minutes (Appendix A), Notes from the 2010 Open Forum (Appendix B), CEPC SAA Values Statement Endorsement (Appendix C).

**SAA Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct Minutes  
August 10, 2010 Washington, D.C.**

**Present:**

Tim Pyatt (Chair)  
Tom Hyry (Council Liaison)  
Elena Danielson  
Roger Myers  
Tiffany Schureman  
Mimi Games (Observer)  
Robert Leopold  
Philip Eppard  
Jean Green

Also attending a portion of the meeting: Nancy Beaumont (Executive Director, SAA)

**1. Welcome and introductions**

- a. Incoming/outgoing members: Outgoing intern Tiffany Schureman was present; incoming member Philip Eppard was in attendance as was an observer, Mimi Games. In addition to Phil, Tim Pyatt was reappointed to fill the other vacancy on CEPC. Benn Joseph will be the new intern.
- b. Chair status: Tim Pyatt was reappointed as chair for another one year term.
- c. Congratulations to Elena Danielson for her new book, *The Ethical Archivist* Elena research for her book helped CEPC with its scan of other codes.

**2. Approval of 2009 Minutes**

- a. Draft distributed via email and wiki: Minutes were approved as written
- b. Volunteer for 2010 minutes: Jean Green volunteered to take minutes.

**3. Code revision update**

- a. Recap of proposal, sent via email and posted on wiki: Tim gave brief history of the code revision process and discussions at previous meetings. SAA Council approved that we should go forward with the code revision but the proposal has not been publicly distributed to membership. Council wants us to look at the code in conjunction with the draft statement issued by the Values task force.
- b. Report from Council on revision (Tom Hyry): Tom Hyry, CEPC Council Liaison, gave some background on code revision including Clark controversy. In of light of this controversy SAA Council thought code was not a particularly useful document – revision was in order. Mark Greene’s Presidential Address gave an overview of what our values we should have as archivists. In response a task force created to draft a values statement. This draft has been reviewed by Council as well as legal counsel and will now go out for member review.

**ACTION: SAA Council needs a response to values statement from CEPC**

Update from Nancy Beaumont: Nancy has talked with legal counsel and received reconfirmation that an aspirational code of ethics should still be our objective. The values statement is not a commentary on code of ethics and legal counsel suggested a few minor changes in language of the values; believes terms like “responsibility” and “anti-trust” makes the Society vulnerable. Nancy thinks the code should drive things; people will pay more attention to a code of ethics. She emphasized that the values statement and code are separate documents.

Tim asked Nancy who has ownership of and updates the Values statement? Tom said SAA Council and Nancy agreed. Tim then asked whether what is the role of CEPC without need to revise or update the code? More discussion on the future role for CEPC after Code revision occurred later in the meeting.

#### **4. Forum on Code Revision – Thursday, August 12 at 12:15pm**

Rand Jimerson (former CEPC chair and member, values task force) to attend and will talk about the values statement. Elena will give a summary of the scan of other codes and Tom will provide Council’s perspective. Tim will moderate the discussion. This forum will part of our information gathering. Discussion followed about whether the membership has expressed dissatisfaction with the code. The conclusion was that it was more observations by CEPC members than the membership at large. Consensus of the group was that we should still move forward based on feedback from SAA Council and comparisons with other professional association codes of ethics. There is nothing about conflicts of interest in current version of the code, for example.

Tiffany volunteered to take notes at the Forum (will be posted to PB works wiki)

#### **5. Presentations to SAA Sections and Roundtables**

The two program proposals submitted by CEPC did not make it to main program, but the proposal on ethics for processors was presented at Privacy & Confidentiality Roundtable. In addition an update on revision to the Code of Ethics was announced to the College & University Archives Section. CEPC members were asked to encourage members to attend the Forum and to look for forthcoming information – we want wide comment from membership. Robert noted that Cultural Property Working group was another interested group.

#### **6. Code Revision, Next Steps**

The committee brainstormed about ways to disseminate information and solicit comment. These included:

- Blog and wiki – can SAA support and who will moderate? Elena to follow-up with Brian Doyle (SAA)
- Use of SAA’s Facebook page?
- Code revision

Robert proposed idea of parsing out sections for revision. Each CEPC member will volunteer to take a section and look at the values statement to see how that meshes with code. Volunteers were as follows:

Roger – Preamble and Purpose  
Robert – Privacy and Judgment  
Jean – Professional Relationships  
Tim – Trust and Conflict of Interest  
Elena – Access  
Phil – Authenticity and Integrity/Security and Protection

It was agreed that the Law section will be eliminated and that we should all look at the titles of sections to see if we can come up with something better. Aspirational tone in intro applies to all elements. Use phrases like “**archivists strive to...**”

Tim will set updraft on PBWorks – drafts should be completed by **end of October**. We will follow-up on this with a conference call in early November. Our goal is to submit the draft revision for SAA Council review at their winter meetings. Next steps will be determined by Council’s recommendations.

## **7. Other Business**

**Values Draft:** There will be an open call from comment from membership that will have a deadline in November; CEPC needs to be heard from formally. As we working on the code, look critically at the values statement and see if there is anything missing or anything that is not right. Send comment to Tim who will compile them and post on PBWorks for CEPC review before submitting.

**Future role for CEPC:** After the revision is complete, developing resources to support the Code, such as case studies and a bibliography, could be an ongoing activity. Depending on the status of the Cod revision, this will be an agenda item for next year’s meeting.

### **SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:**

- Work on Code assignment – needed by the end of OCTOBER
- CEPC conference call to discuss draft – early NOVEMBER
- Comments on Values statement by CEPC – needed by NOVEMBER
- Structure for membership comment – needed after winter SAA Council meeting assuming we are approved to move forward

**Ethics Forum**

**Thursday, August 12, 2010**

**In attendance: ca. 50 (besides CEPC)**

**Introduction to Values Statement and Revision of Code of Ethics:** Recap of code revision. Rand noted that values statement should lay out core principles/essential tenets; these are not static documents, we need to think about them continuously; discussion of Values Statement began with Mark Greene's Presidential address. SAA needs to go beyond just saying what we do and what we don't do; we have responsibilities to the other members of society that are impacted by archivists' decision making. We are involved in wider issues than just our day-to-day activities

**SAA Council comments from Tom Hyry:** The Values statement has been approved to go out to general membership for comment – it will go out in the next week or two – please read it carefully and give feedback. We are sticking with the idea that this has to be an aspirational code and not enforceable – practically we cannot enforce.

**From audience:** The values statement has social responsibility concerns; would this now be a job responsibility?

**Summary of Code review from Elena:** Discussion around revision of Code of Ethics is more important than the final product; environmental scan – we looked at 10 codes of ethics and concluded that we do need an aspirational code because our organization is diverse. The American Historical Association: preservation of historical materials and access to historical materials – threats to open access include political and commercial concerns that would monopolize information. The Association of Art Museum Directors – a director will not deal in works of art, shall not provide authenticity statements or statements of monetary value, shall not receive stolen property ; the Association of Canadian Archivists; Special Collections Librarians; Institute of Certified Records Managers – you shall not reveal any proprietary information; discussing codes of ethics makes people aware; AHA makes public stance statements and SAA could do this and they would be defined in advance.

**Membership comments (with note to what section of the Code they pertain to):**

- Values Statement as a preamble to Code of Ethics or integration of Value Statements and Code (**Preamble**)
- Both statements say not only something about the profession as a whole but are statements to society as a whole – we keep in mind all audiences – e.g., this is an introduction to people who are new to the profession and that it will be available to the public (**Preamble and Purpose**)
- Has CEPC thought about creating a Bill of Rights? (like ALA) – we will look at this to inform our work; should we say that we are linking and considering how our Code relates to others like ALA, ACA, etc.

- In 2005 people thought we should have three codes: Ethics, Personal Behaviors, Institutional Best Practices: are these all included in code? Is the institutional aspect being included as well as the personal aspect? In the 1992 there were parts relating to institutional aspect. **Tim**: we want to write a code that brings in information from Values Task Force, research, etc.; Elena: making distinction in the use of terms (currently says Archivist(s)) (**Professional Relationships, Trust, Privacy, and Security and Protection**)
- Wish there was more out there in our profession to go to re: what these codes mean; have a series of case studies or a regular section in our professional literature; have interns read code of ethics; in 2005 there were case studies based on the 1992 code, should we do this again **Tim**: we have talked about in the CEPC as a resource.
- Core Values v. Ethics: what is the insight that archivists contribute to the world? Would like to have something like this to share; **Rand**: probably addressed in History and Memory section of values statement – might want to highlight this as its own separate heading (**Authenticity and Integrity**).
- Might there be an opportunity to have an advocacy committee to provide support/advice for SAA members? Do other associations do this? **Tim**: there will be supporting documents to give to your institutions, etc. to lay out values, ethics, guidelines; **Rand**: we have to be careful because we don't have the legal support to get into litigation issues; difficult balancing point as to how far we can go w/o risking litigation problems; **Tom**: guidelines about what you can support, when we do it. When we don't is a compelling idea; I'm pleased you're doing this - code of ethics didn't help in the past, had to leave that institution; now when I write a contract with anyone, I put in that "I will follow the ethical standards of ..." – Independent Consultant
- **Rand**: aspirational code suggests that we aim high, encourages members to think about what motivates them and raise the bar and make it something we can be proud of

CEPC Comments on Values Statement 10/15/2010

The Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct discussed the draft Core Values of Archivists at its annual meeting in D.C. (8/11/2010). Overall CEPC found the document to be a valuable tool in helping define the core principles of archivists. As we work on the revision to the SAA Code of Ethics, CEPC sees the Values statement as a complementary work with many ties to the Code. At the Forum on the Code revision, it was even suggested that the Values statement be considered a preamble to the Code and perhaps be part of a suite of defining documents for the profession – the Code of Ethics, Values statement, and a Bill of Rights (such as what ALA has written). CEPC is using the Values statement draft to inform its work with the Code revision as the content of several sections of the statement map directly to elements of Code.

Concerns about the Values statement raised by CEPC mostly centered on whether there would be confusion about the two documents by SAA members. Ideally the process would have been reversed – Code revision, then Values statement. In at least one case, a SAA member thought the Values statement was the Code revision. The solution to this potential dilemma is to insure that the differences in the documents and their purposes are clearly explained when revised Code comes up for member comment.

In summary CEPC endorses the Value statement and encourages Council to adopt it. Like the Code, we see this as a dynamic document that will be reviewed and updated regularly. While the Code does (and will continue in the revision) outline aspirational behaviors for archivists, the Values statement can go further in outlining core principles and will be an important addition to the guiding documents offered by SAA to the profession.