

Finding Common Ground: Ethics Issues Find Unity Among Museum Disciplines & Professions

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Topics on the Table

- Translating Museum to Living Collection
- Living Collections Sidebar
- CurCom Code of Ethics



Some Key Differences

- “Replicas” retain essentially the same value as “originals”, and can be “exhibited” in many places at the same time
- Our collections die
- Our collections sometimes make too many of themselves without our help
- Orders of magnitude difference in economic value

Deaccession Risk Chart

Deaccession Risk Chart



Sidebar says:

- “Living populations have different and more specialized needs regarding their care and welfare; the acquisition, transfer and disposition of certain plants (e.g., rare, threatened and endangered) are governed by local, state, federal, and international laws.”
- +/- shared with zoos/aquaria
- Biodiversity ethics

Sidebar says:

- “When writing a collections management policy, a museum with living plants and specimens should address the issues of threatened and endangered species, invasive species and plants acquired from foreign countries.”
- Invasive Plant Species Voluntary Code of Conduct (aka St. Louis Declaration)
- CBD (including Nagoya Protocol)
- CITES

Sidebar says:

- You might have other stuff
- Decide if it's part of your permanent collection
- What to do with proceeds



Calycanthus floridus

CurCom Code of Ethics

- Curatorial Work
- Definition of a Curator
- Curator's Values
- Curatorial Responsibilities
- Conflicts of Interest

CurCom - Values

- To serve the public good
 - To serve the institution
 - To serve the museum profession
-
- To wear white hats... to ride off into sunsets...



Magnolia vallartensis

CurCom - Responsibilities

- “...assess the continued relevance of each [plant] to the museum’s mission. They refine the collection through judicious disposal...”
- “Deaccessioning is undertaken solely for the advancement of the museum’s mission.”
- “Proceeds from the sale of collections may not be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections. Any other use may create the appearance that the collection, which is held in public trust, is being sold to finance the operations of the museum.”



Cordia sebestena

CurCom – Conflict of Interest

- General Statements
- Disclosure
- **Personal Collecting and Dealing**
- Appraisals and Authentication
- Outside Employment
- Relationships with Vendors/Gifts

CurCom – Personal Collecting

- “Curators must not develop a personal collection that in any way compromises or is in conflict with the credibility or interests of their institution.”
- “...a personal collection in any area of interest that overlaps with their museum’s identity and mission, a serious potential for an ethical conflict exists.”
- “Curators or guest curators may not be active dealers in the museum’s areas of interest.”

CurCom – Personal Collecting, but:

- Our personal collections could double as gardens, required by some municipalities.
- Accessions have been replaced from the personal collections (gardens of museum staff.
- ...because we can make more of it and it retains essentially the same value.

Discuss!

