

Museum Essentials: Working Ethically

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Museums are very trusted organisations but we can't take that trust for granted.

The Code of Ethics provides a framework for museums and what I find fascinating about the Code of Ethics and ethical practice is that it's not that black and white. It's actually asking you to consider in depth the decisions maybe you take for granted day in day out, and to be able to justify the decisions you made not only to yourself and your organisation but also to those who you're accountable to, ultimately that means your visitors.

I think it's very important that everyone involved in our work understands and knows about the ethics that governs us, and not just are told about them, but actually are able to apply them in their day to day work.

So, there are three main principles of the Code.

The first, public engagement and public benefit is of paramount importance. Why do we exist as museums if it's not for the public?

The second part is the stewardship of collections and our responsibilities to ensure there's due diligence and due care but also in terms of how they're interpreted.

The third part is individual and institutional integrity. I think it's really important that we as museum professionals don't just adhere to the Code on an organisational level but that it also governs how we work as individuals within museums.

So it's wide ranging but paramount if we are to have that connection with our public.