



JERUSALEM ♦ AMMAN ♦ NICOSIA ♦ BAGHDAD ♦ DAMASCUS

I. Introduction

In 2010, then-ASOR President Tim Harrison saw the need for a single, comprehensive document that would provide clear guidelines, consistent with ASOR's Mission and Strategic Plan, to all those involved in furthering ASOR's mission. To accomplish this goal, President Harrison created an *ad hoc* Ethics Working Group that was charged with seeking input in order to prepare a draft holistic professional conduct policy for ASOR. This process has continued with robust support from current ASOR President Susan Ackerman.

The document you are reading is intended as a guide for ASOR members and those who serve ASOR in any capacity. It is intended to reflect ASOR's current perspective on best professional practice. Additionally, this document serves as a touchstone for anyone tasked with assessing research projects that may be proposed for ASOR affiliation; and/or any research report, publication or presentation that may be submitted for publication or for presentation in any ASOR program.

This document will be reviewed annually by a subcommittee of the ASOR Board of Trustees, which will serve as an organ of institutional memory and advocacy. This subcommittee will record complaints and will bring forward for discussion any action that this subcommittee's members consider not to be in accord with the mission and strategic plan of ASOR, or to contravene the content of this document.

Where any conflict exists between this document and another policy created by an ASOR committee, this document shall serve as the guide, alongside the provisions of *ASOR's policies on Investment and Spending, Joint Ventures, Non-Discrimination, Records Retention, Whistleblowers, and Website and Social Media Privacy Policies* and the *Conflict of Interest Statement for the American Schools of Oriental Research*.

II. Preamble

As scholars, scientists, explorers, archaeologists, historians, epigraphers, museum professionals, educators, and interpreters of material traces of the human past, ASOR members seek to support ASOR in achieving its Mission, which distills our individual and collective responsibilities to archaeological heritage, diverse publics; and colleagues.

ASOR's Mission is to initiate, encourage and support research into, and public understanding of, the cultures and history of the Near East from the earliest times:

by fostering original research, archaeological excavations, and explorations.

by encouraging scholarship in the basic languages, cultural histories and traditions of the Near Eastern world.

by maintaining an active program of timely dissemination of research results and conclusions.

by maintaining the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse.

by promoting and advocating the highest academic standards in teaching about the Near East and in interdisciplinary research.

by offering educational opportunities in Near Eastern history and archaeology to undergraduates and graduates in North American colleges and universities, and through outreach to the general public.

In keeping with ASOR's mission, these guidelines are focused on four areas:

- 1. Training** to the highest standards of professional expertise, and **education** for future generations;
- 2. Stewardship** of archaeological heritage, which is the limited, irreplaceable record of the human past.¹ Stewards of archaeological heritage act as both caretakers and advocates.
- 3. Discovery** of new knowledge about the human past depends on investigations in field sites, libraries, archives, museums, and other locations that enable exploration, study, documentation, analysis, and training;
- 4. Dissemination of knowledge** through publication and archiving of data, analysis and interpretation.

III. In order to achieve ASOR's Mission, which includes maintaining the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse;

¹ As set forth in the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage at Valetta in January, 1992, the notion of archaeological heritage also explicitly includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, moveable objects, monuments of other kinds as well as their context, whether situated on land or under water. All artifacts of any type, including those in which are preserved traces of language, creativity, cultural activity, technology or other indications of humankind from past times are considered elements of the archaeological heritage. Cf., <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/143.htm>

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- A. With respect to **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**, ASOR members endeavor to:
1. educate diverse publics regarding historical and archaeological interpretations of the past and the methods used in archaeology and history to understand human behavior and culture;
 2. enlist public support for the preservation and scientific study of the archaeological heritage;
 3. provide the public and elected/appointed representatives of the public the necessary data to ensure appropriate decision making with respect to preservation of archaeological heritage;
 4. consider Open Access repositories in data management plans, so that, following publication, the resulting collections, records, and associated documentation, whether in traditional or digital formats and with the metadata necessary to allow these data to remain intelligible, can be preserved and made accessible to other scholars and, where appropriate, to the public;
- B. With respect to **STEWARDSHIP**, ASOR members endeavor to:
1. consider appropriate site protection, artifact storage and data management in initial research designs and funding plans; so that all objects of study and research data are properly curated in perpetuity. In the case of site excavation, such plans include the protection of sites after the conclusion of research, taking into account the natural conditions affecting the site and the demands of multiple uses. In the case of artifact studies, exhibits, and surveys, such plans consider the environment and security of future display and/or storage;
 2. avoid the alteration of archaeological heritage and cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence;
 3. protect archaeological heritage from adverse effects resulting from military actions, warfare, and local political instability, including support for the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its First Protocol;
 4. explore innovative strategies and support legislation designed to eliminate the illicit trade of antiquities and to enhance the protection of the world's archaeological and cultural heritage, whether on land or under water, as called for in the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention,² the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater

² http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13039&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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Cultural Heritage,³ and the 2013 Noto Statement on the Future of Underwater Cultural Heritage Protection and Preservation in the Mediterranean⁴; and, where relevant, encourage States to ratify and implement these conventions;

5. urge all governments to adhere to the terms of the 1954 Hague Convention and its First Protocol and, where not already ratified, encourage States to ratify and implement them at the earliest possible opportunity;
6. co-operate with competent national authorities of any occupied territory in which research is planned;
7. encourage all state parties and all international and national funding bodies, including UNESCO, ICOM, ICOMOS, and the World Bank, to play a leadership role in efforts to protect the world's archaeological and cultural heritage from unnecessary destruction through development; and encourage partnerships among governments, developers, and specialists such as archaeologists, historians and conservators for the study and conservation of archaeological heritage;
8. use archaeological heritage for the benefit of all people and not as a commodity to be exploited for private enjoyment or profit;
9. support efforts that are in accordance with national law and international conventions to establish, fund and enforce the prohibition and prevention of the looting of archaeological sites and the trade in illicit antiquities; and cooperate with law enforcement by providing authentications and valuations upon request from such entities;
10. refrain from activities that contribute directly or indirectly to the illicit markets for antiquities and to the value of artifacts in such markets through their publication, authentication, or exhibition.

C. With respect to **DISCOVERY**, ASOR members endeavor to:

1. conduct research according to highest possible professional standards current in the various disciplines;
2. support and encourage efforts to document the archaeological heritage through surveys, inventories, display and study of artifacts;
3. ensure that all individuals participating in the excavation, survey, study or other research shall be fully qualified to carry out their responsibilities or, in the case of apprentice team members, that they be appropriately supervised;
4. refuse to practice discrimination based on categories such as gender, religion, age, race, disability, and sexual orientation in assembling a research team;
5. take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of team members involved in a project;

³ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/underwater-cultural-heritage/2001-convention/official-text/>

⁴ http://www.ucy.ac.cy/marelab/documents/Sailing_/Noto_Statement-1_copy.pdf

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6. develop a research design and include, where relevant, a curation plan for excavated objects and a conservation plan, prior to the start of research, and inform colleagues of their role in the overall project;
7. show sensitivity toward and respect for groups affected by research, and make every effort to act cooperatively with them.

D. With respect to the **DISSEMINATION of KNOWLEDGE**, ASOR Members endeavor to:

1. undertake a prompt and complete final publication, including the use of venues and languages accessible to the general public, including the general public in the host nation of the research project;
2. acknowledge others' material contributions and intellectual products with citation of the source or other appropriate courtesy;
3. be transparent when introducing data of uncertain reliability to the realm of public knowledge, especially through outlets lacking peer review or oversight, or when research and publication includes unprovenanced or illegally exported artifacts;⁵
4. obtain permission from project, archive, collection or museum directors prior to the publication or presentation of material from a project, archive, collection or museum.

E. With respect to **PROGRAMS AND PUBLICATIONS**, ASOR members

1. will not allow **ASOR publications and presentation venues** to serve the initial place of publication or announcement of any object acquired by an individual or institution after April 24, 1972, with the following exceptions:⁶
 - a. the object was documented as already in a collection before April 24, 1972; and further, if that object is no longer in its country of origin, it must have been legally exported;

⁵ Scientific investigations by archaeologists find but a fraction of the known archaeological heritage. Some may be discovered during the course of construction, road building, or building renovation, through agricultural activities and shepherding, by shepherds or explorers climbing into caves, or in excavation dumps from digs completed long ago, to name but a few. In some instances, the original place of archaeological deposition of an unprovenanced artifact may be recoverable with some degree of certainty, such as when a missing part of an excavated sculpture comes to light. In other cases, recovery of an original archaeological find spot is not possible, except through supposition. Artifacts which lack a defined archaeological findspot have a greater potential to undermine the integrity of archaeological heritage in view of the possibility of admitting suspect artifacts into archaeological heritage. Additionally, artifacts that lack a defined archaeological findspot are more likely to travel through illicit channels of distribution and/or exportation which include processes that may mask or confuse the identification of the artifact or its true findspot.

⁶ April 24, 1972 is the date of entry into force of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. See footnote 2 *infra*.

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- b. the object was acquired after April 24, 1972 but it is considered to be a forgery and is published as a forgery;
- c. the object's publication or announcement serves to emphasize the degradation of archaeological heritage;
- d. when an artifact bears a cuneiform text, the following may be considered for publication in *The Journal of Cuneiform Studies and its related annual book publications*:
 - i. ASOR recognizes the exceptional circumstances that have led to the looting of Near Eastern archaeological sites in zones of conflict since the early-1990s, most prominently in Iraq but also in Syria and elsewhere. Among the wide range of looted or stolen artifacts, cuneiform tablets are distinctive in two ways (1) they are readily authenticated; and (2) their content provides information independent of provenience. The large number of looted tablets now in collections outside the Middle East means that scholars are constrained in pursuing Sumerological and Assyriological topics without reference to these tablets. Therefore, in accord with its existing policy, established in November, 2004 by ASOR's Board of Trustees, ASOR allows this limited exception to its publication and presentation policy: *The Journal of Cuneiform Studies and its related annual book publications* may serve the initial place of publication or announcement of a cuneiform text without a known provenance dating to before April 24, 1972 or acquired by an individual or institution after April 24, 1972, if the conditions outlined in paragraphs E.1.d.i.(1),(2), (3) below are met.
 - 1) the author notes that the text-bearing artifact is unprovenanced in a prominent manner in all references to the artifact, or to its content, in the original and in any subsequent mentions; and
 - 2) if the author demonstrates that an effort has been made to determine the probable country of origin—which is the location of its final archaeological deposition within a contemporary nation-state--and
 - 3) if, prior to publication, the author receives and is willing to transmit to ASOR a written commitment from the owner of the artifact asserting that the artifact will be returned to the Department of Antiquities or equivalent competent authority of the country of origin following any conservation or publication.
- e. The option outlined in as outlined in paragraphs E.1.d.i.(1),(2),(3) may be exercised with respect to the inclusion of an object in a presentation at ASOR's PROGRAMS including the Annual Meeting, subject to the same conditions.

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2. may consider for inclusion in **ASOR publications and presentation venues** research that has been undertaken in occupied territory and its contiguous waters as defined by the United States Department of State when that research is required strictly to safeguard, record or preserve the archaeological heritage of the occupied territory, or when permission of the competent national authorities of the occupied territory has been obtained by the researcher.