

BYLAW ON ETHICS STATEMENT

GUIDELINES FROM THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

Guidelines from the Ethics Education Committee for collecting, documenting and curating fossils —The SVP Bylaws (Bylaw 12, Sections 1-6) state clearly the responsibility of vertebrate paleontologists, and specifically SVP members, to uphold professional standards in the collection, documentation and curation of vertebrate fossils.

Professional standards in collection of fossils include obtaining the proper permits and permissions to conduct fieldwork on public or private lands, whether domestic or foreign. The collection of fossils from field localities includes not only retrieving fossils with care but also documenting their provenance in terms of stratigraphic, geographic, taphonomic and paleoenvironmental information. This approach is important for both professional and amateur paleontologists to follow in collecting scientifically significant fossils, even if the fossils legally remain in private collections for some time. The scientific and educational value of the fossils depends on their contextual information as well as their morphology.

Field data, whether in the form of notebooks, electronic files or any other format, should accompany the fossils collected from public lands (and from private lands if so stipulated) to their deposition in a qualified, publicly accessible repository. This means that original field data (or a legible copy of it) must become part of the deposited fossil collection. Fossils and their contextual data must be accessioned and curated in an institution, the mission of which is scientific study and education in perpetuity. Fossils should be accessioned in a timely manner.

Curation entails the proper housing and labeling of fossils, as well as maintaining the association between the fossils and field data about their provenance. This information must be made available to the scientific community and the interested public within a reasonable period of time. Access by researchers to collections is regarded as an essential quality for all registered public collections.

If vertebrate fossils are to be deaccessioned from registered collections procedures should follow the recommended guidelines as outlined by either the American Association of Museums (AAM) and be in accord with in the International Council of Museums (ICOM) code of ethics.

PROTOCOL FOR REPORTING A VIOLATION OF THE BYLAW ON ETHICS

The Vice President is charged with convening a review panel for the purpose of responding to allegations of violations of the SVP Code of Ethics, a code which became part of the Bylaws as of 1995.

All reports of a possible ethics violation should be sent in writing to the Vice President. The review panel may communicate with the accuser(s) if additional information is required, and may conduct independent research to verify information. In all situations, confidentiality will be of primary consideration for all parties.

The Vice President, on behalf of the SVP Executive Committee and review panel, will conduct all communications with the accused. Based on these communications and independent research, the panel will report to the Executive Committee their findings and a recommended course of action. The Executive Committee will discuss and decide on the final course of action and the Vice President will communicate the findings and decision to all involved.

Members found in breach of the Code could face action that includes being expelled from the Society, being prohibited from publishing in the society's journals, and excluded from all society activities including the annual meeting.

For conduct issues related to discrimination or sexual harassment policies of the society, see 7.18 and 7.19 of the society handbook.