Nebraska State Historical Society  
Institutional Values  
and  
Code of Ethics  

VALUES  
Nebraska's history is an essential part of the fabric and identity of the state. The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS), the state's leading—and official—historical organization's mission recognizes and adheres to these institutional values as it seeks to interpret and preserve that history:

Preservation  
Preservation of Nebraska’s past is important; it is our legacy. In everything we do we strive to balance preservation of the state’s historical resources with the need for public access to them.

Public Service  
We exist to serve the people of Nebraska. As stewards of public resources the NSHS seeks to interpret Nebraska history to enrich and enlighten all. Through public access and a wide range of services we hope to promote inquiry, dialogue, diversity of opinion and support.

Trust  
The NSHS staff and trustees are committed to meeting the highest standards of personal integrity and professional ethics.

Excellence  
We recognize and value the talent, expertise and contributions of all NSHS staff and trustees, and together we strive to meet the highest professional standards.

CONDUCT  
The Nebraska State Historical Society's reputation for integrity is its most valuable asset. The trustees, staff, and volunteers of the NSHS recognize that their first duty to the institution is to act in all things in a manner that merits public trust and confidence.

Trustees, staff, and volunteers of NSHS shall observe the highest standards of honesty and good faith in all transactions touching their duties to the NSHS. They shall not use their positions with the NSHS, directly or indirectly, for private gain, or to obtain favors or benefits for themselves, members of their families, or any other persons. The following statements are meant to define the relationship between the NSHS and its trustees, staff, and volunteers.

1. NSHS trustees, staff, and volunteers have both the right and the obligation to present information related to Nebraska history and culture, regardless of format.
2. NSHS trustees, staff, and volunteers have the right to use their own time to any legitimate purpose they choose.
3. The NSHS has the right to expect its trustees, staff, and volunteers to conduct themselves in a manner that supports the mission of the institution and protects its public reputation and credibility.
4. NSHS trustees, staff, and volunteers are obligated to insure that their personal publications, speeches, or other activities are not construed to be the policies or opinions of the NSHS.

DISCLOSURE  
Disclosure is fundamental to understanding and dealing with potential conflicts of interest. Disclosure provides an opportunity to examine a proposed activity to determine whether an actual or potential conflict of interest may exist and if so, to resolve it in a manner that is mutually satisfactory to both the NSHS and to the individual.

Each trustee shall disclose to the board any personal, business, or organizational interests and affiliations that could be construed as a conflict of interest. This disclosure shall be made at the time any conflict or potential conflict of interest becomes apparent. Trustees shall abstain from voting on any issue where a conflict of interest may exist.

NSHS staff must disclose personal professional activities, outside employment or consulting, and private collecting to their division head. Disclosure must occur prior to concluding agreements or contracts, or beginning actual participation in such activities. In the case of personal collecting, disclosure shall occur at the time of employment, or at other times as designated by the director. If actual or potential conflicts of interest cannot be resolved, the matter shall be brought to the NSHS director. If the issue remains unresolved to the satisfaction of all involved parties, the advice and counsel of the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission shall be sought.
CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest, either real or apparent, may exist whenever proposed activities of NSHS staff fall within the mission of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Broadly stated, the mission of the NSHS is “to collect, preserve, research, and interpret the history of Nebraska.”

Conflict of interest for trustees, staff, and volunteers may include (but is not limited to) these considerations:

1. Converting NSHS property to private purposes or using NSHS personnel, equipment, or supplies in private endeavors.
2. Using their positions or confidential NSHS information for financial or other personal gain, or in any way contrary to the best interests of the NSHS. (Holding office in, or being recognized by, professional organizations with which the NSHS has a supporting or cooperating relationship shall not be construed as using NSHS employment for personal gain.)
3. Soliciting or proselytizing for charitable, religious, public service, or other organizations during duty hours (for staff) or using in any way the name of the NSHS for the benefit of such organizations.
4. Competing with or impeding the NSHS’s mission.
5. Participating in the solicitation of bids or in the awarding of contracts that may result in financial or personal gain to the trustee, employee, or volunteer: to members of their family, or to a business with which they may be associated. For staff, advertising or soliciting for private consulting or outside employment of any type wherein the advertisement or solicitation refers to their employment with the NSHS.
6. Accepting any economic opportunity under circumstances in which there is a significant possibility the opportunity is being provided to influence the individual’s conduct in the performance of official NSHS duties.
7. Advertising or endorsing, whether or not compensation is received, any product or service in which the advertisement or endorsement refers to an individual’s association with the NSHS.

OBLIGATIONS

Trustees

Trustees, while serving on the board, shall be prudent in the acquisition, retention, and/or disposition of their personal collections, and shall not engage in collecting activities or in the investing or selling of artifacts and historical objects to their own advantage if such advantage is gained through the exploitation of their positions at the NSHS. Items from the NSHS collections, including deaccessioned items, shall not be given, sold, or otherwise transferred, publicly or privately, to trustees, or their immediate families or representatives.

Each trustee is obligated to maintain a concerned and committed involvement in its governance. Each trustee must be willing to stay informed on NSHS matters, faithfully attend meetings, participate in committee activities, and support measures as may be requested by the President and/or the full board.

Staff

Staff members are obligated to conduct themselves in a manner that supports the mission of the institution and protects its public reputation and credibility. Additional guidelines and standards for staff conduct are itemized in the State of Nebraska Personnel Rules and Regulations.

A. Appraising

§ NSHS staff may not appraise, either for a fee or as a service, objects or property of the type collected by or associated with the operation of any department of the NSHS. Reporting or otherwise making available prices or values reflected in published lists, catalogs, or auction reports does not constitute appraisal.

B. Collecting

§ Dealing or brokering in items and materials represented in the NSHS’s collections is prohibited for NSHS staff. NSHS staff may not compete with the NSHS in any personal collecting activity involving items that the NSHS (if given the opportunity) might choose to acquire under its mission statement and/or formal acquisition policies. Exception are books or periodicals generally available for purchase by the public.

§ Collecting by staff of items or materials generically similar to those within the NSHS’s collections should be done with care to maintain the necessary distinction between staff official and private activities. The utmost discretion must be exercised to insure that no real or apparent conflict of interest arises between an employee collecting for him/herself and the NSHS.

§ NSHS staff shall inform the appropriate division of personal acquisitions in which the NSHS might have an interest based on its mission statement and/or formal acquisition policies. The NSHS reserves the option, for a period of ninety days after being informed of such acquisition by an employee, to purchase the item(s) at the same price paid
by the employee, including reimbursement of associated costs such as admissions and transportation. § NSHS staff or members of their immediate families (spouse, children, parents, or others bearing the same relation to a spouse) may not acquire any item or materials from the collections of the NSHS even if they have been formally deaccessioned. § NSHS staff may not have in their homes any item or materials from the NSHS’s collections or otherwise owned by the NSHS except during the performance of official NSHS business.

C. Consulting/Outside Employment
§ Consulting in any area of Nebraska history for individuals, organizations, or agencies within the state is part of the NSHS’s mission. NSHS staff are expected to provide such services as part of their regular duties as time and resources allow. § Private consulting within the state on any topic relating to Nebraska history may be a conflict of interest. Private consulting done out of state that uses the name of the NSHS or the title of any NSHS employee may also be a conflict of interest. Private consulting within or outside the state may be undertaken only with permission of the employee’s division head and the NSHS director. § Projects falling within the NSHS’s mission that the NSHS chooses not to perform may be undertaken by a NSHS employee, subject to a case-by-case approval by the NSHS director. § As time and resources allow, NSHS staff may engage in professional consulting under the auspices of organizations or institutions with which the NSHS has a supporting or cooperating relationship including, but not limited to AAM, AASLH, or SAA. When such professional consulting is undertaken on the employee’s own time, the employee may accept reasonable honoraria and reimbursement of travel and other expenses. § NSHS staff may undertake outside employment as permitted in the State of Nebraska Personnel Rules and Regulations. Care must be taken, however, to prevent conflicts with regular duty hours, public service, any applicable union contracts, and other interests of the NSHS. The employee’s supervisor and the NSHS director shall be informed of the employee’s intent to accept such employment. § Outside employment or teaching that uses the name of the NSHS or the title of the employee or that otherwise draws upon NSHS resources may constitute a conflict of interest. Outside employment for which the employee is qualified by reason of his/her affiliation with the NSHS may constitute a conflict of interest. Such employment may be undertaken only with permission of the employee’s supervisor and the NSHS director.

D. Gifts
§ The acceptance of gifts by NSHS staff from sources outside the NSHS shall be governed by the rules and guidelines established by the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission.

E. Referrals of Vendors
§ NSHS staff shall be circumspect in referring the public to commercial vendors of goods and services such as appraisers, restorers, or dealers. Whenever possible, the names of more than a single source should be provided so that no appearance of personal favoritism is created, along with a verbal or written disclaimer that providing such a list does not constitute an endorsement. To the extent possible the NSHS will keep standard lists of providers of goods and services.

F. Speaking
§ Public speaking to groups, organizations, or agencies on topics of Nebraska history is part of the NSHS’s mission. NSHS staff are expected, as part of their duties, to provide such services as time and resources allow. When speaking is undertaken as part of an employee’s regular work schedule or assignment and supported by the expenditure of NSHS funds or the use of NSHS resources, the employee may not accept personal payment or reimbursement of travel and other expenses. § When public speaking engagements are prepared for and undertaken outside an employee's regular work schedule and assignment, and travel and other expenses are not provided by the NSHS, the employee may accept reasonable honoraria and/or reimbursement for travel and other expenses. In such cases the employee’s division head and the NSHS director shall be notified.

G. Writing and Publishing
§ The publication and other dissemination of information about Nebraska history is an important part of the NSHS’s mission. NSHS staff are encouraged and expected as part of their duties to engage in writing and publishing as time and resources permit. § NSHS staff may accept payment for articles, books, or other publications written outside of regular work schedules or assignments and utilizing material or data gathered as part of their duties with the NSHS, subject to the following limitations: o The employee’s activities at the NSHS must not be conducted so as to benefit personal research. Regular work assignments must be given priority.
The employee's supervisor and the NSHS director must be notified of all such outside research, writing, or publication projects, including those for which no payment is received (excluding book reviews for scholarly journals), if the project is in any way related to the employee's NSHS affiliation.

**Volunteers and Emeritus Trustees**

Volunteers are obligated to conduct themselves in a manner that supports the mission of the institution and protects its public reputation and credibility.

_____________________________  _______________________
Signature Date

_____________________________
Please Print Your Name

_____________________________
Title
NSHS Board of Trustee/NSHS Emeritus Trustee/NSHS Volunteer/NSHS Staff

Approved by NSHS Board of Trustees, June 8, 2007