

International Association for Caribbean Archaeology (IACA)

Best Practice Guide

This document is intended to provide further information on best practice in the discipline of archaeology for those who have already consulted the IACA Code of Ethics. The guidelines in this Best Practice document are advisory rather than binding and designed to encourage high standards in all facets of archaeology among members and colleagues. This document may also be consulted by Complainants or Respondents to evaluate arguments in cases of (alleged) misconduct. As is mentioned in the Code of Ethics, allegations of misconduct will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the IACA Board, the Ethical Conduct Panel, or the Appeals Panel.

1. Fieldwork

Members should adhere to the highest standards of best practices. If unfamiliar with professional standards of governing bodies or national or international organizations, Members are encouraged to consult quality standards documents drafted by the different organizations concerning archaeological field research, such as the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, the Register of Professional Archaeologists, the European Association of Archaeologists, and the Stichting Infrastructuur Kwaliteitsbezorging Bodembeheer.

Field research consists of different stages, which are here organized into stages:

- Desk-based assessment and other preliminary preparations;
- Development of a research proposal or project outline;
- Fieldwork;
- Laboratory processing and analysis;
- Production of the final report;
- Long term curation of excavated materials.

1.1 Preliminary Phase

In this phase there should be a document that deals with the background information of the research location, a desk-based assessment. This document can contain, but not exclusively, the following points:

- Archival research (if applicable)
- Ascertain if there are local procedures and (international) treaties that pertain to heritage and include them in the research.
- The research scope.
- Results of all previous research (if available).

1.2 *Project Outline Phase*

The project outline should consist of:

- Administrative information:
 - Contact information of the competent authority, the initiator, the contractor (project manager).
 - Precise coordinates of the research area.
 - Map with all the planned actions.
- Explanation of the chosen research methods and aims.
- Research questions.
- Clear agreements concerning, for example, dates for the handover of reports, map and catalog data, photographs, and other documentations.
- A curation plan outlining where any and all excavated materials will be stored long-term.
- A plan and agreement with relevant authorities for temporary export of artifact collections or samples for specialized testing (e.g. C14, soils).
- A plan for unexpected discovery of human remains.

1.3 *Fieldwork Phase*

The documents related to the fieldwork should include:

- List of all the participating actors (minimum requirements and their tasks).
- Agreements concerning the duration and dates of the fieldwork and processing.
- Information about the fieldwork strategies and methods during excavation, e.g. how organic and inorganic materials are collected, dimensions of the trenches, specific information about the sampling methods, etc.

1.4 *Laboratory Processing and Analysis*

- Archaeological materials should be stored in a climate-controlled facility, where possible.
- Unnecessary destruction of archaeological materials should be avoided.
- Researchers should follow the most recent best practice guidelines for their specialism.

1.5 *Final Report*

The final report should include:

- Information about the analysis and conservation of the different types of finds (soil, organic, inorganic, ecological, etc.).
- Advice for next steps (e.g. continued excavation, release for further development of the area, mitigation, etc.), if applicable.
- Information about where the physical materials will be curated and where digital data will be archived after the project ends.

Researchers should ideally inform the stakeholders of the research results before publication or wider data sharing.

2. Human Remains

Human remains should be treated with respect appropriate for the community (or communities) to which they belong. When they are excavated, high fieldwork standards (as detailed in Section 1) should be maintained at all times. However, there are additional considerations for archaeologists where human remains are concerned:

2.1 Before Excavation

- Archaeologists should first consider whether it is necessary or desirable to excavate the remains at all. Where possible, they should make this decision in partnership with stakeholder communities (see the Section 5 on Public Engagement). One possible exception to this rule is the rescue excavation of human remains in imminent danger of unavoidable destruction, for example by coastal erosion (see Section 6 on Environmental Impact and Sustainability).
- Local laws and rules for the excavation and analysis of human remains should be followed at all times.
- Qualified bioarchaeologists/oste archaeologists or equivalent (i.e. individuals with a Master's qualification or above in the analysis of human remains from archaeological contexts) should be involved in the both the planning and excavation phases of archaeological projects where human remains are anticipated.
- It is sensible for project leaders to have a plan detailing what action to take if human remains are encountered unexpectedly on any excavation.

2.2 During Excavation

- When human remains are found unexpectedly, work on those remains should pause and a qualified bioarchaeologist/oste archaeologist should be contacted as soon as possible to advise on the correct procedures.
- Proper health and safety guidelines should be followed at all times, particularly those of the country where the excavation is being carried out, but also additional precautions relating to specialist work being done (for example, when there is a biological hazard).
- Project leaders should be aware that engagement with human remains can be a psychologically difficult process. They should prepare and make known a list of locally available mental health services that they can direct people towards if necessary.
- Project leaders should consider using screens to shield the excavation site from view if it is located in a public or highly frequented space. This is because members of the public should

be able to choose where and how they encounter human remains. Signs can also be used to warn site visitors that human remains will be visible.

- Communication with and involvement of stakeholders is very important but may not be possible in some cases (e.g. where there are safety issues). Stakeholders should be treated sensitively and in accordance with Section 5 on Public Engagement. Where possible, the preference is always for open communication and stakeholder involvement.

2.3 After the Excavation: Bioanthropological Analysis

- If the human remains are to be analyzed (in some cases, descendant communities may object to this), then they should be analyzed by qualified bioanthropologists/oste archaeologists. The only exception to this rule is student training, and this must be carried out under the supervision of a qualified person.
- Bioanthropologists should consider stakeholder wishes when deciding whether to conduct their analyses on location, or abroad.
- IACA Members should (to the best of their knowledge) not work with or consult on human remains that have been acquired illegally (under the terms of the 1970 UNESCO Convention) or unethically, unless this work is for remediation purposes. See also Section 3 on Looting and the Antiquities Market.

2.4 After the Excavation: Curation or Reburial of Human Remains

- In some cases, there may be multiple stakeholder groups who have differing opinions about what should happen to the human remains. Archaeologists may attempt to facilitate discussions, during which they should remember that the goals of their research should be balanced with the objectives of other stakeholders.
- Human remains should not be viewed or regarded as property save in practical applications for legal compliance, and should therefore never be bought and sold.
- Curation
 - Human remains should be curated in accordance with local laws on reburial, as well as the wishes of the stakeholder community.
 - Where curation occurs, professional standards should be followed as closely as possible (for example, climate-controlled storage facilities). Long term curation should preferably be carried out in the country of origin. If long term curation must occur elsewhere, permission should be acquired (for example, from the main heritage body) and every effort should be made to maintain meaningful links with stakeholders so that the remains can return to their local context when or if facilities become

available, and so that local communities can continue to have control over what happens to the remains while they are curated abroad.

- Paperwork, photographs, site reports, results of specialist analyses, grave goods, coffin fittings, and other associated artifacts should be curated (in the long term) with the human remains to which they belong (copies of paperwork and photographs are acceptable, if the excavator requires the originals).
- Reburial
 - Where reburial occurs, this should happen respectfully, in a suitable location, and with the involvement of stakeholders as appropriate.
 - Where appropriate, stakeholders should be consulted about whether artifacts found in association with human remains should also be reburied.

2.5 After the Excavation: Destructive Sampling

- Project leaders should think very carefully about what types of sampling are appropriate for the human remains in question. Sampling should follow the most recent best practice guidelines (for example, those concerning sampling for the purposes of repatriation). Samples of human remains should only leave the assemblage with express written permission (in most cases, from the landowner, the curator, or the local heritage organization that has given permission for the excavation) and if the sample of human remains is not completely destroyed, it should be returned to the assemblage as soon as possible.
- The same human remains should not be repeatedly sampled to provide the same data (for example, by different research groups). Curators should maintain detailed records of what has been sampled and why.
- Sampling methods that hinder the subsequent application of other techniques should be avoided.
- Applications for sampling permission should include information on the predicted amount of damage to the remains, as well as detailed sampling justifications, and should be submitted prior to the beginning of the technical analysis.
- Skeletal elements that will be damaged during sampling should be thoroughly recorded before sampling commences (e.g. photographs, measurements).
- Results of the analyses should be provided to the curating institution and descendant communities or other relevant stakeholders.

2.6 After the Excavation: Images

- Photographs and (3D) models of human remains should be presented sensitively and appropriately for the context. For example, IACA does not support the gratuitous use of such

photographs in a non-professional social media setting. In some cases, human remains may need to be pixelated out (for example, where there are close living relatives of the deceased) or there may need to be a sensitive content warning.

Slightly different rules may apply in the case of a) objects made from human remains, and b) human remains that can be identified as cast-offs, for example hair. These items should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, with cultural sensitivity.

As archaeologists, it is our responsibility to treat past individuals and communities with respect and to prioritize the needs of living descendant communities above the goals of our research.

3. Looting and the Antiquities Market

Over the past few decades, Caribbean archaeologists have witnessed the looting and destruction of archaeological material on a surprising scale: petroglyphs hacked from rock and sold privately, Amerindian sites pillaged to the point of cultural sterilization, cannons dragged from colonial ruins, historic water-wheels and copper pots sold as scrap metal, and an explosion of fake artifacts that rivals any region of the world, to name just a few. These problems are partly driven by the commercialization of cultural material in the “antiquities market.”

3.1 Buying and Selling of Archaeological Artifacts

Never participate in the buying or selling of looted archaeological artifacts. IACA Members who purchase looted historical or ancient artifacts (regardless of the technical legality or intended benevolence) are engaging in a precarious ethical transaction that commercializes the remains of the past and accelerates its destruction.

Removing an artifact from its provenience without standard archaeological documentation is known as “looting.” Those who purchase looted artifacts are herein called “unethical collectors.” Occasionally, they are the same person, but looters are often local people from at-risk communities, whereas unethical collectors are typically wealthy expatriates from other countries. This dynamic is inherently unequal and ultimately exploitative of local people — not only because looters earn a fraction of what the unethical collector can gain on the global antiquities market, but also by destroying local heritage in the process. Moreover, exchanging money for “antiquities” is a market transaction wherein the buyer creates demand for additional supply, thereby incentivizing continued destruction of the archaeological source. Because archaeological sites are finite resources that should be protected for posterity, any participation of IACA Members in the antiquities market is inherently unethical.

Many local collectors (and museums) purchase artifacts as a way of protecting their island's threatened heritage. While this is a concern, exchanging money for artifacts encourages the continued destruction of said heritage.

IACA Members should do everything possible to discourage looting in their communities and research areas, including notifying law enforcement authorities, where appropriate. Members are also encouraged to participate in the education of local communities, police, and customs officials in the identification of archaeological materials commonly traded or exported illegally.

3.2 Dealing with Unprovenienced Material

IACA Members should avoid researching, "authenticating," or otherwise validating unprovenienced material in private collections. Without proper documentation, an artifact's contextual information (and thus, virtually all meaningful data) is lost. Some artifacts can be "authenticated" and thereafter studied as can any object in an archaeological laboratory, but there are far too many well-provenienced objects in the region's museums to favor those of private (invariably unprovenienced) collections. Authentication (intentional or not) enhances the commercial value of a private collection and legitimizes the means by which it was formed, ultimately increasing demand for more looted material. (The emphasis here is on private collections, but researchers should also be wary of studying objects in public institutions that are on loan from a private collector, as such objects are still privately owned and vulnerable to sale in the future.)

Most unprovenienced artifacts are either fake or looted, but there are exceptions. On some islands, the vast majority of materials available for study at public institutions are unprovenienced donations from local collectors, leaving researchers little choice in the matter. It can also happen that a local museum was unable to maintain the provenience of archaeological materials, resulting in the loss of critical contextual data. And there are also unprovenienced artifacts in historic/legacy collections (e.g., acquired before the 20th century) that may hold great research potential (this is true of unique special finds, such as ornaments made from animal remains, as well). These situations are not as ethically compromised because the objects are public and not at risk of being commercialized, but researchers should strive, where possible, to focus on objects from well-documented archaeological contexts. The origins and the means by which artifacts from legacy collections were acquired should be scrutinized however. Members' interpretations of the past must be grounded in evidence, rather than in potentially dubious artifacts whose authenticity (and origin) are questionable.

3.3 Promote Legislation

In parts of the Caribbean, there are strong cultural heritage laws that explicitly forbid commercial exchange of artifacts. Where there are no laws, Members are expected (at the very least) to adhere to the terms of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit

import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property — to which every Caribbean nation is signatory. Additionally, IACA Members should aim to help implement and promote local legislation in the islands where we conduct research. Local officials, collectors, and other stakeholders may not be aware of the importance of heritage conservation (or the importance of contextual information) – it is therefore our shared responsibility to provide information and promote the sustainable stewardship of heritage sites (see Section 5 on Public Engagement).

3.4 *Economic Sustainability*

These principles and guidelines are mostly focused on the commercialization of portable artifacts, not necessarily the monetization of archaeological sites themselves, nor immovable features or replicas of portable artifacts. Heritage tourism presents its own risks to archaeological material, but if done thoughtfully, can offer sustainable protection to archaeological sites and economic incentives to the surrounding community. Replica-making, especially, is an excellent alternative to looting in which many local artists already participate. IACA encourages and supports replica-making as a sustainable economic solution. Note, however, that upon encountering replicas (or fakes) in public institutions, researchers must ensure such objects are properly labelled, so that they are not mistaken for genuine artifacts in the future (and therefore interpreted as such).

4. Curation and Archiving

Members should adhere to the highest standards of best practices. Thus, Members are encouraged to consult quality standards drafted by the different organizations concerning the storage and labeling of artifacts for long-term curation and the development and maintenance of archival systems. Suggested organisations include:

- European Association of Archaeologists (<https://www.e-a-a.org/>)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (<https://www.archaeologists.net/>)
- Stichting Infrastructuur Kwaliteitsbezorging Bodembeheer (<https://www.sikb.nl/>)
- Register of Professional Archaeologists (<https://www.rpanet.org>)
- National Parks Service (https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_7.htm)
- Secretary of the Interior (<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/hp-fact-sheet-secretary-%20interior-professional-qualification-standards.pdf>)
- Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives (<https://www.inrap.fr/en/legislation-procedures-and-funding-12007>)

5. Public Engagement

IACA Members shall abide by laws covering public engagement, if these exist, and where possible, IACA Members shall also:

- 5.1 Strive to provide a summary of all main research activities and findings in local common language for non-archaeologists and share physical and digital copies of fieldwork reports, research results and publications with local stakeholders, community representatives and/or local public libraries.
- 5.2 Involve descendant communities, stakeholders, and the public in the design, implementation, and dissemination of projects, to ultimately enhance their quality and societal impact. Individuals or groups can take part in defining future research directions, research questions, policy, implementation of project outcomes, or dissemination and conservation actions.
- 5.3 Accede to reasonable requests for access to sites (with consideration for safety of the site) and for information for dispersal to the general public and living descendant communities.
- 5.4 Take the necessary measures to reduce language, cultural, and other barriers to public engagement with archaeology, and where possible include local representatives or living descendant communities in research projects and dissemination.

6. Environmental Impact and Sustainability

IACA Members will act to foster an environmentally ethical approach to the management of archaeological resources and the natural and cultural environments in which they occur. Members hold an ethical duty of care to minimize, as much as possible, the ecological impact of all aspects of their work. In addition to Section 6 of the IACA Code of Ethics, best practices recommendations include, at a minimum:

- a. Members must be mindful of their collective and individual ecological impact in the course of conducting archaeological activities, especially in environmentally sensitive areas and when guests in a host community.
- b. IACA Members will be aware of their responsibilities towards society, future generations, and the Earth for an environmentally sustainable practice.

In addition to these recommendations, Members may wish to reflect upon the environmental positionality of their work and responsibility to “engage with environmental matters in the present and future” (Shaw 2016: 454). Some considerations could include:

- Documenting socio-ecological resilience and adaptive strategies of the past to address present environmental challenges and policy applications.
- Embracing the role of archaeological public engagement, discourse, and collaboration in addressing environmental matters at local, national, and international levels.

- Mitigating and preparing disaster risk assessments and disaster responses for archaeological materials and sites (e.g., sea level rise, climate change, storms, famine).
- Critically consider the “sustainability” concept and the dimensions of “sustainability” with which archaeologists should engage. (See Carman 2016 for discussion of the “sustainability” concept).

Additional resources include:

- Carman, J. (2016). Educating for sustainability in archaeology. *Archaeologies*, 12(2), 133-152.
- Dalglish, C. (2012). Archaeology and landscape ethics. *World Archaeology*, 44(3), 327-341.
- Lipe, W.D. (2019). *Archaeological Ethics and Law*. Crow Canyon Archaeological Center. <https://www.crowcanyon.org/archaeological-ethics-law> (published online 2006, updated 2019)
- Matteucci, R., Gosso, G., Peppoloni, S., Piacente, S., & Wasowski, J. (2014). The " Geoethical Promise": A Proposal. *Episodes*, 37(3), 190-191
- Riede, F., Andersen, P., and Price, N. (2016). Does environmental archaeology need an ethical promise?. *World Archaeology*, 48(4), 466-481.
- Shaw, J. (2016). Archaeology, climate change and environmental ethics: Diachronic perspectives on human: non-human: environment worldviews, activism and care. *World Archaeology*, 48(4), 449-465.

7. Publication

7.1 Publication Content

IACA endorses the Core Practices set out by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE 2020) and encourages Members to be familiar with this area of potential misconduct. Remedial action will be considered by the Conduct Panel where an IACA Member:

- Has been found to have plagiarized or fabricated/falsified data (including tables, images, and text) in any formal publication. Plagiarism is defined as copying the text or idea of someone else and passing it off as one’s own (without crediting the original source).
- Fails to gain permission for use of images or text (including conference presentations).
- Fails to disclose conflicts of interest in any formal publication.

7.2 Authorship

The following rules are also known as the Vancouver Recommendations, which can be found on the website of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE 2020) but are applied in many disciplines, including in archaeology. Many journals will have a version of these rules in their author guidelines.

Authors of a publication should be those who fulfil ALL of the following requirements:

- They have made a significant contribution to the concept/research design, or to the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data for the publication.
- They have been involved in drafting the publication or critically reviewing/revising the publication for intellectual content.
- They have approved the final version for publication.
- They have agreed to be held accountable for the accuracy or integrity of any part of the publication, ensuring that any issues are thoroughly investigated and resolved.

Individuals who have been involved in the concept/research design, or in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data for the publication should be offered the opportunity to become an author, but are not entitled to authorship unless they subsequently fulfil all of the other points.

8. Harassment

Project leaders and organization directors can access resources to help them combat harassment and abuse in their workplace. These may also be useful to victims of these behaviors. Example resources include:

- Swedish Council for Higher Education – Preventing Sexual Harassment in Academia (https://www.uhr.se/globalassets/_uhr.se/publikationer/2020/uhr-efforts-to-prevent-sexual-harassment-in-academia.pdf)
- The 1752 Group – Ending Sexual Misconduct in Higher Education (<https://1752group.com/>)
- Inside Higher Ed – Opinion Piece on Battling Bullying in Academe (<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/08/01/how-deal-bullies-higher-education-opinion>)
- Sciences Po – Guidelines on Dealing with Sexual Harassment (https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sciencespo_guidelines_on_dealing_with_sexual_harassment.pdf)
- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health – Harassment and Bullying Prevention (<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/psychological-health-and-safety/harassment-and-bullying-prevention>)
- Hollaback! – Anti-Harassment Training (https://www.ihollaback.org/harassmenttraining/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIxvXKsdvK7AIVWODtCh02HAD5EAAYAiAAEgl7d_D_BwE)

- CSA Group – Preventing Violence and Harassment in Workplaces
(<https://www.csagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/CSA-Group-Research-Preventing-Violence-and-Harassment-in-Canadian-Workplaces.pdf>)
- Taylor and Francis – Tips for Dealing with Online Harassment
(<https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/tips-for-dealing-with-online-harassment-in-academia/>)
- Sutton, R. (2010) *The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilised Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't*. London: Piatkus.

There are also country-specific organizations that support victims of (sexual) harassment and abuse, for example Victim Support (UK), Lean In (US), CLASCHEs (France), CIMASCAM (Spain), and None In Three (Barbados and Grenada).

9. Process of Intervention

Please refer to the IACA Code of Ethics document for the full process of intervention.

Where ambiguities occur in the French and Spanish translations of the Best Practice Guide, the English version of the Best Practice Guide is to be considered correct.

Compiled By

Andreana Cunningham

Felicia J Fricke

Christina Giovas

Jonathan A Hanna

Tibisay Sankatsing Nava

John Shorter

Amy Victorina

French Translation

G rard Richard

Spanish Translation

Marianny Aguasvivas

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