Commentaries to the *Guidelines for Practice* of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

From the Ethics and Standards Committee

Dear Colleagues:

Presented below are drafts of Commentaries 4, 16-19. prepared by the Ethics and Standards Committee from the initial drafts of CIPP and RATS, along with the comments submitted by Specialty Groups. Please read them carefully and consider any changes you believe should be made to them. The Committee would like to hear what you think. We depend on your input in the preparation of the final versions of these Commentaries. Please take the time to send us your comments. You may respond by e-mail (aandh@idt.net); fax (212-316-1039); phone (212-666-4630); or snail mail (444 Central Park West, New York, NY 10025). We must have your comments by June 15th, 1998.

Thank you.

Ethics and Standards Committee
Rae Beaubien
Karen Garlick
Paul Himmelstein, chair
Richard Kerschner
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Commentary 4a—Health and Safety

A. RATIONALE

- Conservation procedures often involve the use of materials or methods that may endanger the health and safety of conservation professionals, other persons involved in carrying out procedures, and the public. Since, in the past, this issue has not received the attention it demands, it is especially important that conservation professionals be aware of health and safety issues.

B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional must comply with all relevant federal, state, and local standards and regulations (e.g., OSHA, NIOSH). These may pertain to:
  - job safety;
  - use, storage, handling and disposal of hazardous materials;
  - fire prevention.
- The conservation professional must be aware of various hazards associated with cultural property. These include:
  - biological activity within or on cultural property (e.g., microbial, fungal);
  - chemical components of cultural property (e.g., lead, cellulose nitrate films, asbestos, radium);
  - chemicals used in past treatments (e.g., heavy metal compounds);
  - physical aspects of cultural property (e.g., weight, sharp edges, unstable building structures).
- The conservation professional must be aware of various hazards associated with the materials and methods used in conservation procedures. These include:
  - solvents, pigments, dyes, and other chemicals;
  - radiogenic techniques (e.g., x-rays, beta radiography, ultraviolet radiation);
  - physical hazards (e.g., repetitive motions, eye strain, equipment usage [power tools]).

- Conservation professionals must assure that all personnel working under them are informed about health and safety issues, including emergency procedures.

C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should:
  - use methods and materials that are the least harmful to health and to the environment;
  - remain current about health and safety issue by reading appropriate material safety data sheets (MSDS), publications of the AIC Health and Safety Committee, and relevant newsletters;
  - use routinely all appropriate health and safety equipment, including fume extraction units, protective clothing, respirators;
  - use appropriately rated storage systems for solvents/chemicals;
  - provide access to appropriate health and safety training for all personnel;
  - assure that all personnel are encouraged to raise questions regarding health and safety issues.

Commentary 4b—Security

A. RATIONALE

- To protect cultural property from loss, damage, or deterioration when it is in the custody of the conservation professional and to encourage the conservation professional to collaborate with others who have responsibility for the protection of cultural property (e.g., security and fire prevention personnel).

B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Work and storage areas must be equipped with conventional fire detection equipment and individual fire suppression devices to allow for localized emergency response.
- The conservation professional must provide protection against likely physical threats to the cultural property, including water intrusion (flood, leaks from plumbing and roofs, condensation), earthquake, and pests (rats, kids, curators, lawyers).
- All work and storage areas must be protected against unauthorized access by the use of conventional means (e.g., construction barriers and signage, security personnel, electronic intrusion warning devices, and/or secure locks).
- The conservation professional must provide environmental conditions that are appropriate for the cultural property.

C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals should be familiar with the various aspects of insurance coverage, and should obtain appropriate insurance to cover the possible loss of or damage to a cultural property in their care.

D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- Work done off premises (e.g., excavation areas, outdoor sculpture, structures, temporary facilities) may limit the degree to which work and storage areas can be secured and controlled, but a reasonable effort must be made to secure and protect the cultural property in the charge of the conservation professional.

Commentary 4c—Contracts

In this Guideline, "contractual agreements" include job descriptions and terms of employment (conservation professionals employed by institutions), and contracts for conservation services and letters of agreement (conservation professionals in private practice).