



Genealogical Code of Ethics

Suzanne Mainprize, 2022

To protect the public

I will not publish or publicize as a fact anything I know to be false, doubtful or unproved; nor will I be a party, directly or indirectly, to such action by others.

I will identify my sources for all information and cite only those I have personally used. I will quote sources precisely, avoiding any alterations that I do not clearly identify as editorial interpretations.

I will present the purpose, practice, scope, and possibilities of genealogical research within a realistic framework.

I will delineate my abilities, publications, and/or fees in a true and realistic fashion.

I will keep confidential any personal or genealogical information disclosed to me, except to the extent I receive consent to share.

To protect the client (paying or pro bono)

I will reveal to the client any personal or financial interests that might compromise my professional obligations.

I will undertake paid research commissions only after a clear agreement as to scope and fee.

I will, to the best of my abilities, address my research to the issue raised by the client.

I will seek from the client all prior information and documentation related to the research and will not knowingly repeat the work as billable hours without explanation as to good cause.

I will furnish only facts I can substantiate with adequate documentation; and I will not withhold any data necessary for the client's purpose.

If the research question involves analysis of data in order to establish a genealogical relationship or identity, I will report that the conclusions are based on the weight of the available evidence and that absolute proof of genealogical relationships is usually not possible.

If I cannot resolve a research problem within the limitations of time or budget established by contract, I will explain the reasons why.

If other feasible avenues are available, I will suggest them; but I will not misrepresent the possibilities of additional research.

I will return any advance payment that exceeds the hours and expenses incurred.

I will not publish or circulate research or reports to which a client or colleague has a proprietary right, without that person's written consent; I will observe these rights, whether my report was made directly to the client or to an employer or agent.

To protect the profession

I will act, speak, and write in a manner I believe to be in the best interests of the profession and scholarship of genealogy.

I will participate in exposing genealogical fraud; but I will not otherwise knowingly injure or attempt to injure the reputation, prospects, or practice of another genealogist.

I will not attempt to supplant another genealogist already employed by a client or agency. I will substitute for another researcher only with specific, written consent of and instructions provided by the client or agency.

I will not represent as my own the work of another. This includes works that are copyrighted, in the public domain, or unpublished. This pledge includes reports, lecture materials, audio/visual tapes, compiled records, and authored essays.

I will not reproduce for public dissemination, in an oral or written fashion, the work of another genealogist, writer, or lecturer without that person's written consent. In citing another's work, I will give proper credit.

To protect people who provide DNA samples

When seeking data from a living person for genealogical research purposes, I will explain how I would use and share the data and the benefits of that use and sharing.

I will explain risks and consequences, such as uncovering unanticipated relatives, medical implications, unexpected ethnic backgrounds, and intentional misinformation about such situations.

I will explain options for openness and privacy and how other researchers could or could not access the data.

I will explain there are never any guarantees of complete anonymity and privacy.

After providing that information, I will request and comply with the signed consent, freely given by the person providing the DNA sample or that person's guardian or legal representative