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## Front Matter

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# PROVENANCE

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## ARCHIVAL ETHICS IN PRACTICE

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## FROM THE EDITOR

**Sheryl B. Vogt**

This special issue of *Provenance*, "Archival Ethics in Practice," had its beginnings in a Society of American Archivists (SAA) workshop on ethics. Held in Georgia in November 1990, the workshop was co-sponsored by the Society of Georgia Archivists (SGA) and led by Bruce Stark of Yale University.

Discussions generated in the workshop continued over the course of months, especially in light of the forthcoming, newly revised SAA "Code of Ethics for Archivists." The recurring theme of these discussions—But what happens when you put ethics set by professional standards into practice?—naturally germinated as an idea for a program session at the next Society of Georgia Archivists's meeting. On St. Simons Island, March 1991, three experienced archivists presented papers on the practical considerations of following ethical guidelines in performing the archival functions of collecting, processing, and providing access. The session was well received, and those promoting the

idea saw potential for presenting the concept at an annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists.

Throughout 1991, the SAA code was before the society's membership for review, and in 1992, it was formally approved. Brainstorming ideas in the fall of 1992 for SAA's Manuscript Repositories Section program committee was the opportunity to bring the session to the national arena. "Archival Ethics in Practice," chaired by Anne Caiger with papers by Thomas Wilsted, Virginia Cain, and Ronald Becker, reached a larger audience, September 1993, at the New Orleans meeting. Wilsted, Cain, and Becker shared their perspectives of ethics on the front line by focusing on three primary archival functions: collecting, processing, and providing access. Building on the code, the three speakers were to integrate the practical aspects of the complex ethical issues archivists face in managing resources and services daily.

Now, SGA brings the discussion full circle with this theme publication. The experienced archivists from the New Orleans meeting have provided their papers, SAA has granted permission to reprint the Code of Ethics for Archivists and Commentary in its entirety, and Maynard Brichford, chair of the SAA Ethics Task Force, has graciously contributed an introduction to the issue. *Provenance* Editor Margery Sly, along with SGA President Virginia Cain, were instrumental in planning the issue and gathering material; more importantly, both were steadfast colleagues through the editing process. We deeply appreciate the efforts of so many to bring the idea to its logical conclusion.