

CAPDU Code of Ethics - a conversation

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<http://capduethics.pbwiki.com/>

Password - capduites

The following is the result of substantial work by Aspi Balsara and Laine Ruus, with some input from Walter Giesbrecht. This code of ethics is entirely a draft and any and all comments, in either official language, by the membership of CAPDU are encouraged.

Especially encouraged at this point would be a translation into French but also revisions, rewordings, things we missed, and things that are unnecessary.

The relevant sections of this wiki are:

- Introduction
- Goals and principles
- Principles of practice vis-a-vis data and statistics
- Principles of practice vis-a-vis producers and collectors of data and statistics
- Principles of practice vis-a-vis consumers of data and statistics
- References

Introduction

The objectives of CAPDU, as stated in the by-laws of the association, are to “secure and promote efficient access to and use of public data in computer-readable form”. The Code of Ethics sets forth the values of the Association and ethical concerns that arise from the creation, management and use of data. While its purpose is to provide guidelines, it is expected that members are mindful of professional conduct and adhere to it in good faith when working with data.

Goals and principles

Data collection and the appropriate use of data in quantitative and/or qualitative research are the building blocks for developing a valid body of knowledge, informed decision making, and the development of a numerate society.

Data and the statistics derived from them do not in and of themselves contribute to the growth of knowledge and informed decision making; data must be made available to researchers outside the institutional framework within which they were collected, in a format appropriate for a broad range of types of secondary analysis. While most of the data collected about Canada and its residents are collected by government or quasi-government agencies, much of these data are not currently made available to independent researchers. The full research potential of data which are not disseminated widely for secondary analysis cannot therefore be realized. The long-term preservation of data ensures the availability of data for future research, enabling the study of change and other forms of comparative research, and the application of new analytic techniques to the testing of hypotheses.

These quantitative and/or qualitative foundations ultimately contribute to a nuanced understanding and (it is hoped) the improvement of our society and environment. CAPDU members work toward these goals.

Principles of practice vis-à-vis data and statistics:

Members respect assurances and guarantees of anonymity and protection of privacy accorded research subjects in the course of data gathering.

However, it is recognized that members may work with many types of data, some of which carry identifying characteristics (such as company/stock-level commercial databases, qualitative data in

which individuals have insisted on their right to be identified, etc.). Members make appropriate distinctions between these types of data in the conduct of their collection, management, and the provision of access.

Members respect licences, contracts, and other similar agreements under which data are disseminated.

Members respect the terms and intent of legislation brought into effect by national, provincial and applicable local jurisdictions which are applicable as these pertain to data collection, management, and preservation.

Members respect the provisions of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans: English version: http://www.ncehr-cnerh.org/english/code_2/index.htm

In the interests of promoting broadly-based data access, members work towards educating legislators and policy makers in the needs of the empirical research community, and promote the amendment of legislation, regulations and policies which hinder or unduly restrict access to data and statistics.

Members strive to ensure that:

- Data are collected and post-processed in such a way as to ensure their utility for a wide variety of secondary analyses, to fulfill not only the original research objectives of the data collection, but also to maximize their utility for other forms of research.
- Data and statistics are managed in such a way as to ensure their maximum useability for future research.
- Personally-identifiable information which is currently embargoed, may at some time in the future be accessible for allowable/appropriate research purposes. Members ensure that such information is protected but preserved for the future.

Principles of practice vis-à-vis collectors/producers of data and statistics:

Members encourage the development of a culture of data sharing among all data collectors:

- Data sharing allows for the independent verification of research results, thus enhancing the reputation and probity of the original researcher(s).
- Data sharing provides resources for the development of a cadre of future researchers and policy makers with a knowledge of Canadian data.
- Data sharing contributes to knowledge about our society and environment in making possible comparative research across space or across time.
- Data sharing contributes ultimately to the development of a more numerate society, better able to participate fully in a democracy.

Members encourage researchers to make available data for access by other researchers, under the principle expressed in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, (Context of an Ethics Framework, section E):

"Review of the ethics of research helps ensure a more general accountability to society. Accountability, moreover, requires that the whole process should always be open to critical assessment and debate."

Members work towards educating collectors of data and statistics in:

- Appropriate methods of anonymization.
- Appropriate metadata standards to ensure maximum utility of data for primary and secondary analysis.

Members strive to encourage and support the development of infrastructure in Canada, both in the

public and private sectors, to ensure the long-term preservation of data, now and in the future.

Principles of practice vis-à-vis consumers of data and statistics:

Members work towards educating users of data and statistics in:

- Appropriate uses of data and statistics, and avoidance of misuses.
- Appropriate interpretation of data and statistics (both descriptive and inferential), and avoidance of misinterpretation.

Members strive to ensure that users of data and statistics are aware of as many potential sources of same that can be applied to the research question at hand, and that all relevant metadata are available to allow the researcher to evaluate the applicability of data and/or statistical resources to the research question.

Members acquaint users with the principles of citing data files, and assisting where necessary in the compilation of citations conformant with current practices and standards.

References

The following websites helped in drafting the code of ethics and professional conduct.

Economic and Social Data Service. "Ethical and legal considerations."

<http://www.esds.ac.uk/aandp/create/ethical.asp> (accessed April 20-23, 2007).

Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). "Responsible Use Statement."

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/org/policies/respuse.html> (accessed April 23, 2007).

International Sociological Association. "Code of Ethics."

http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/about/isa_code_of_ethics.htm (accessed April 23, 2007).

Medical Library Association. "Code of ethics for Health Sciences Librarianship."

<http://www.mlanet.org/about/ethics.html> (accessed April 23, 2007).

Creating a code of ethics for your organization.,/ MacDonald, Chris

<http://www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/> (accessed April 27, 2007).

WAPOR code of professional ethics and practices

<http://www.unl.edu/wapor/ethics.html>

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