In October 2013, 1,130 people, including me, attended the Paleoamerican Odyssey (PO) conference in Santa Fe. According to the Center for the Study of the First Americans (CSFA), which sponsored the meeting, 46 percent of the attendees were professional archaeologists and 54 percent were nonprofessionals, and attendees traveled to Santa Fe from 16 countries and most U.S. states (Michael Waters, personal communication 2013). The conference, like its 1999 predecessor, Clovis and Beyond, featured lectures, posters, panel discussions, and Paleoamerican artifacts showcased by 39 museums and universities and 11 private individuals. Of the 13 private site collections displayed, 11 had been previously published in scientific journals and books, and the other two had been studied by professional archaeologists and students; indeed, invitations to share private collections had been issued with their previous scientific exposure in mind (Michael Waters, personal communication 2014).

Professional and nonprofessional visitors alike packed the collection rooms, eager to glimpse Clovis caches and other assemblages most had

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American Antiquity 79(3), 2014, pp. 385–400
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known only from the literature. Yet the displays caused discomfort for some archaeologists, who felt that, from an ethical standpoint, CSFA should not have permitted nonprofessionals to exhibit any materials held outside the public domain. From my interactions with colleagues, I would not characterize that as a majority perspective at the conference, but neither was it isolated to just one or two archaeologists.

This is no surprise, really, because archaeologists have long wrestled with ethical issues related to the ownership and commercialization of prehistoric material culture (e.g., Chase et al. 2003). Legislation prohibits collecting artifacts in many circumstances, although not, of course, from privately owned land (at least not in the U.S., which is the focus of this paper). Yet, even in the latter case, it is probably fair to say that many professionals believe that private collecting is, if not illegal, nonetheless still unethical. They may see such collecting as the transferal of ownership of objects representing a collective human past to a single person with no obligation to share the objects with other stakeholders and, worse, the right to sell them for profit.

Neither this sentiment nor the response of erecting and maintaining barriers between archaeologists and collectors is unreasonable or necessarily inconsistent with the values encoded in the Society for American Archaeology’s (SAA’s) Principles of Archaeological Ethics (among other archaeological ethics codes). However, in this essay I argue that ethical collaboration between archaeologists and artifact collectors not only can be achieved, but also should be viewed under many circumstances as its own ethical mandate. I speak as a Paleoamerican archaeologist and ten-year director (2002–2012) of Utah State University’s Museum of Anthropology. In both capacities, I have collaborated in diverse ways with nonprofessional archaeologists, including some private collectors. To the best of my knowledge, that engagement has benefited the archaeological resources involved, the discipline of archaeology, and multiple publics. I am unaware of the collaborations producing outcomes that could be perceived as negative (and certainly I took steps to ensure that they would not be).

I argue my position first by exploring SAA’s ethical principles in an effort to show that they do not categorically rule out collaboration with any particular group of people—quite the contrary, in fact. I weave a few personal experiences and individual case studies into that discussion. I then present a more robust case study that explores the practicalities of a collaborative approach. I demonstrate and discuss how the Clovis archaeological record could have been impacted had there not been a long history of positive archaeologist-collector relationships in this archaeological niche. The Clovis case illuminates the win-win-win potential that collaboration can hold for archaeologists, collectors, and the cultural resources both populations value.

**Ethics and Artifact Collecting**

In 1996, SAA adopted eight Principles of Archaeological Ethics addressing stewardship, accountability, commercialization, public education and outreach, intellectual property, public reporting and publication, records and preservation, and training and resources (SAA 1996). Of these, “stewardship” and “commercialization” most obviously encompass the ethical domains that lead some archaeologists to avoid collaborative relationships with collectors. I discuss these in turn below, in hopes of showing that neither principle need be interpreted as a blanket condemnation of archaeologist-collector collaboration. I then introduce other SAA principles to the discussion to make the case that archaeologists should actively seek out opportunities to work with collectors, rather than avoiding or marginalizing them.

**Stewardship**

Based on many conversations with friends and colleagues over two decades as an archaeologist, it is clear to me that one of the two primary reasons some are unwilling to work with artifact collectors relates to the overarching issue of ownership of the past. SAA’s principle of stewardship comes closest of its eight ethical standards to capturing this objection (although it does not precisely mirror it, an important point to which I will return).

Certainly, every archaeological textbook devotes at least a few pages to the idea of ownership of the past, and many professional articles and
volume contributions address this theme (e.g., Bienkowski 2013). Often the conversation unfolds in the abstract, which can be thought-provoking yet, at the same time, inherently frustrating because the question of who owns the past is fundamentally unanswerable. We all own the past; none of us own the past; descendant populations own the past; museums own the past—these are typically cited owner-contenders, yet in a philosophical world they are not even mutually exclusive. We can all own an abstract past at the same time as none of us do.

Often the real debate over ownership, whether stated as such or not, is about who owns an intellectualized past, but rather who possesses its material expressions (e.g., Chase et al. 2003; Hollowell-Zimmer 2003). When the debate moves to the realm of material culture generally—and more pointedly to a particular artifact—then we are on concrete ground. When we have that conversation, most discussants would add a few more entities to the list of prospective owners, including, most obviously, the owner of the property on which an artifact is found, the person who finds the artifact, or a descendant of the artifact’s maker.

Laws in the United States (at the federal, state, county, and city level) offer guidelines that work pretty well to guide ownership attributions—if we are interested only in the legal realm, and not the more nuanced ethical domain. Ethically, I do not see the issue of artifact ownership as any more clear-cut than when discussion focuses on the past as an abstraction. To wit, I am a land owner, but because I am also an archaeologist, I would not choose to keep as my own an artifact I recovered on my property. The law says I can do so; my personal ethical code dictates that I cannot.

On the other hand, I have a friend of Native American descent who possesses an artifact collection she gathered from tribal land (although without tribal permission). I have a European-American rancher acquaintance who collects artifacts from his large acreage and delights in sharing them with local scout troops, school groups, and anyone else with an interest. A third friend considers himself a temporary steward of dozens of Paleoamerican artifacts, many of which he purchased from local community members selling them out of desperation to pay medical bills or feed their families. He made the purchases with the express intent of donating the collections to a museum, so that they would transition from the private to the public realm.

I would consider it arrogant to brand any of the aforementioned (real, not hypothetical) people an illegitimate owner of the materials they possess (see Boardman [2004] for a parallel argument). Do all the artifacts in their collections comply with all cultural resource legislation? No, but that does not change my reluctance to lob charges of ethics violations in their direction. Have I encountered collectors who I do believe have acted unethically toward the archaeological record? Yes, and this is an appropriate point in the essay to emphasize that artifact collectors occupy a behavioral spectrum running the gamut from casual collector (e.g., a fisherman who keeps an arrowhead as a memento of a trip) to looter (someone bulldozing a Mimbres site for pottery to sell). This is also an appropriate place to note that some professional archaeologists fall, or once fell, along this spectrum as well: numerous prominent archaeologists—including current members of the National Academy of Sciences—began their careers as artifact collectors; other still-practicing archaeologists have been convicted of violating antiquities laws.

I conclude that the ethics associated with artifact collecting are as complex and nuanced as the people doing the collecting and, as such, offer poor justification for an archaeologist to refuse to work with anyone who has ever acquired a physical remnant of the past—or to suggest that they be denied access to a conference like PO. As Zimmerman (2013:100) put it in his excellent essay “On Archaeological Ethics and Letting Go”:

> Ethical practices almost always contain structural contradictions that echo the choices made to establish them in the first place. Thus, they can hardly be absolutes. When held to be so, they can become profoundly detrimental. When archaeologists will not let go, their obduracy can turn themselves into their own worst enemies.

This quote brings us back to the principle of stewardship, established by SAA to help guide archaeological practice. Again, of the eight principles, this one comes closest to addressing the issue of ownership of the past and its material
expression. The Society’s choice of the word “stewardship” reflects, I presume, its position that no one owns the past, and that all that we can ever do is serve as stewards of its tangible manifestations.

Principle 1 (Stewardship) stresses that the archaeological record is irreplaceable and goes on to state:

It is the responsibility of all archaeologists to work for the long-term conservation and protection of the archaeological record by practicing and promoting [its] stewardship… Stewards are both caretakers of and advocates for the archaeological record for the benefit of all people; as they investigate and interpret the record, they should use the specialized knowledge they gain to promote public understanding and support for its long-term preservation.

It is understandable that some would focus on the phrase that ethical stewards are “advocates for the archaeological record for the benefit of all people” and conclude that an artifact in the private domain cannot, by definition, benefit “all people.” I suggest that this does not necessarily follow, although it invariably does follow when a collector seeks to share what (s)he has found with an archaeologist and is rebuffed or even scorned. That scenario, which I have seen unfold more than once, guarantees that an artifact and the data it may have yielded will remain forever unknown to all—even to the collector who found it and hoped to learn about it.

On the other hand, if an archaeologist focuses on the suggestion that we use our specialized knowledge to promote public understanding of archaeology and its preservation, a collector willing to share a find offers an opportunity to achieve these goals. Consider an archaeologist who works alongside a collector to gather as much data as possible about the artifact, while reinforcing through the process itself the importance of provenience and context. The result, in my experience, is nearly always positive on all fronts because the discipline advances as the collector gains knowledge that often leads to a changed outlook on the very act of collecting. In several cases in which I have been involved, collaboration has culminated in a collector’s decision to donate an artifact or an entire collection to a museum or university, thereby transferring it to the public domain. Shott (2008) makes a similar argument in his pointed and, I think, entirely on-target essay “A Proposal for Conservation of Private Collections in American Archaeology,” printed in The SAA Archaeological Record.

Commercialization

At this point, some readers will respond that, while the above scenario is rosy, sometimes an archaeologist’s willingness to study a collector’s find will increase the market value of the specimen and encourage the collector to sell it for profit (e.g., Elia 2003; Harrington 2003). Worse, such a sale can promote more collecting by those with the express intent to similarly profit. There is no doubt that this does sometimes occur, and, when it does, ethical boundaries are not merely crossed, but obliterated. This is true not just from the perspective of the archaeologist who values the past for its own sake, but also, I would add, from that of the perspective of the many private artifact collectors who fall far from the extreme of looting on the continuum of collectors mentioned previously.

I do not intend to minimize the heartbreak the archaeological community experiences when we learn that an irreplaceable artifact has been sold to the highest bidder; it naturally feels wrong to us that something with intellectual value should be subject to sale. The pain is magnified if it appears that a sale may diminish an object’s accessibility to science, knowing as we do that private collectors, like archaeologists, occupy a spectrum of willingness to collaborate. That leaves the reality that collaborative relationships can go very right, but they can also go wrong—or at least feel wrong at a visceral level. This, in turn, leaves us with the crucial question: on balance, do the gains of collaboration outweigh the losses? Some archaeologists conclude that they do not. If they never collaborate or even associate with collectors, they will never have to confront the possibility that they may have in some way contributed to the loss of our heritage.

My position is different, and I hope that colleagues who choose the risk-avoidance approach—including those who felt that collectors had no place at PO—will consider why I think risk tolerance, coupled with risk management, is
more productive. First, as I have read case studies and reflected on my own experiences, I conclude that only rarely does an archaeologist’s input inflate an artifact’s value and lead to its sale. Second, I believe that, even in a worst-case scenario where professional input does promote commercialization, archaeology may still be better off for the professional-collector interaction. Finally, Principle 3 (Commercialization), like Principle 1, is nuanced and neither states nor implies that archaeologists must decline to study artifacts if doing so will increase their market value.

Over the years, I have interacted with easily over 100 private collectors and been granted permission to study the collections of a few dozen impeccably documented ones. I wrote my dissertation and a subsequent book based in part on materials in private hands (Arkush and Pitblado 2000; Lipe and Pitblado 1999; Pitblado 1998, 1999, 2003) and I built the foundation for a Paleoamerican research program in Southeastern Idaho and Northern Utah by working almost exclusively with collectors (e.g., Pitblado and Jones 2009; Pitblado et al. 2011).

In the latter case, as I conducted initial background research, Idaho and Utah state (SHPO) records for nine large counties revealed less than one previously recorded Paleoamerican site per county. Yet that rich and diverse environment and its vast aerial extent suggested that this could not possibly be a real reflection of its early human record (Pitblado and Jones 2009). Surveying millions of acres to find early sites, particularly without the ability to create predictive models to pinpoint where they might be (which can be done only with a baseline record—precisely what I needed to build) was not feasible.

To resolve the impasse, and in explicit communication and partnership with federal and state units in Idaho and Utah (an important component of maximally productive collaboration), I reached out to collectors in a series of “prehistoric road shows” hosted by the Utah State University Museum of Anthropology. The community response to advertised requests to share their finds with archaeologists (although expressly not for valuation) brought into clear focus that collectors who reach out to an archaeologist—or reach back when we reach out—share our passion for the past, want to contribute to the public’s understanding of prehistory, and have no more desire to sell what they have found than we do. Donate, maybe; sell, no.

On quite the other hand, collectors at the “looter” end of the spectrum—those who dig up artifacts instead of surface collecting, vandalize sites for the fun of it, or traffic strictly for personal financial profit—do not interact with me. Why? For-profit collectors do not need my input to sell a Clovis point. They know its monetary worth (and, lest they forget, a glance at Robert Overstreet’s latest edition of Pricing Indian Arrowheads—ranked 4.5 out of 5 stars at Amazon.com—will remind them). Anything I might say about a Clovis point would increase its market value exactly as much as an art historian’s latest treatise on Monet’s “Water Lilies” inflates its selling price (which is to say, not at all).

What about that worst-case scenario, however, when an archaeologist encounters a profit-oriented collector and poses a real risk of increasing the monetary value of an object by studying or offering an opinion on it? This can occur, for example, when an archaeologist confronts the prospect of authenticating a rare or one-of-a-kind artifact. Archaeologist Barbara Purdy faced this dilemma when in 2009 a Florida fossil collector brought her a find: a mammoth engraved in bone. The collector stated upfront that he wished to sell the piece for as much money as he could get for it (perhaps “many millions” of dollars [Jones 2009]). Purdy asked if she and a team of archaeologists could study the specimen first. The collector agreed, no doubt understanding that professional authentication could mean the difference between making a lot of money on the artifact’s sale and making little or nothing on a suspect specimen.

For her part, knowing that if the artifact were of Pleistocene origin, it would be the oldest portable art of its kind documented in North America, Purdy assembled a team of a dozen archaeologists to conduct the investigation. The results suggested that the artifact was authentic. The team then requested permission to cast the engraving. When the collector again agreed, the researchers arranged for the production of 11 replicas. The studies produced two notable outcomes: Purdy et al. (2011) published their findings in the Journal of Archaeological Science, and the collector sold the artifact to an unnamed...
“antiquities trust” in California for an undisclosed sum that presumably exceeded $80,000—the amount the University of Florida reportedly offered to pay to acquire the engraving on behalf of the public (Genz 2013).

I expect readers will recoil at that story. It certainly seems to exemplify what SAA’s Principle 3 warns against when stating:

Whenever possible, [archaeologists] should discourage, and should themselves avoid, activities that enhance the commercial value of archaeological objects, especially objects that are not curated in public institutions, or readily available for scientific study, public interpretation, and display.

Purdy and her colleagues did not avoid conducting the scientific tests that authenticated the engraving and dramatically increased its monetary value. Hence, they violated SAA’s ethical code—period, end of story.

That is one interpretation, and I cannot in good faith characterize it as an invalid one. However, Principle 3 also states the following: “Archaeologists should carefully weigh the benefits to scholarship of a project against the costs of potentially enhancing the commercial value of archaeological objects.” In my view, the Purdy team’s decision to study what would prove to be a singular archaeological find properly weighed the value of the knowledge to be gained as more important than the fact that the very same knowledge would also enable the artifact’s owner to profit from its sale.

The discipline of archaeology now “owns” an impressive array of data pertaining to the Ice Age Vero Beach engraved mammoth (Purdy et al. 2011). We also have many high-quality photographs taken at various scales, and we have 11 replicas. Only the Gault site in Texas has produced mobile art of similar antiquity in North America—and in that case, all the etchings are in stone (Wernecke and Collins 2010). Thus, the Vero Beach find provides critically important complementary data that have been made widely available. In fact, Mercyhurst University archaeologists, partnering with the Old Vero Ice Age Sites Committee, are currently following up in the geographic area of the find (which a century ago also yielded human bone of possible Pleistocene origin [Sellards 1916]), with excavations initiated in January 2014.

Had the collector not approached Purdy, or had Purdy rejected his overtures rather than asking to study the specimen, archaeologists would know nothing of this unprecedented art and would not be poised to learn more from the Vero Beach site. Savvy artifact traffickers (despite the hopes of the collector) would have paid little for a non-authenticated artifact, and the engraving could well to this day be gathering dust under the collector’s sink. Archaeology would have succeeded in muting the commercial value of the artifact, but, in so doing, would also have lost the opportunity to advance the discipline. My personal cost-benefit analysis of the situation, as counseled by SAA’s Principle 3, is that the collector’s ultimate financial gain neither negates nor outweighs the intellectual gains that archaeologists and the public have reaped through study of the artifact. Put bluntly, the artifact was going to remain in private hands either way; studying it yielded a win for archaeology, as well as for capitalism.

Let me be very clear about what I am and am not arguing here. I am not claiming that a cost-benefit analysis will always point to collaboration as the best course of action for every archaeologist-collector interaction that could commercialize an artifact. I am asking that archaeologists embrace SAA’s suggestion that they carefully weigh ethically sticky cases, rather than assuming that a collector’s financial gain (or mere possession of an object) is necessarily archaeology’s loss and that collaboration must therefore never proceed. I will also say that reasonable archaeologists will sometimes reach different conclusions precisely because SAA’s ethical code was—blessedly and brilliantly—written to encompass the gray areas of real life.

Other Ethical Principles
Having tried to show that Principle 1 (Stewardship) and Principle 3 (Commercialization) neither state nor suggest that archaeologists must always avoid collaboration with artifact collectors, I turn briefly to the other principles enshrined in SAA’s ethics code. The following constitute what I read as particularly relevant excerpts (all italics are mine):
Principle 2 (Accountability): “Responsible archaeological research requires ... a commitment to make every reasonable effort, in good faith, to consult actively with affected group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties.”

Principle 4 (Public Education and Outreach): This principle emphasizes that archaeology has “many publics” and states that “archaeologists should reach out to, and participate in cooperative efforts with others interested in the archaeological record with the aim of improving the preservation, protection, and interpretation of the record.”

Principle 5 (Intellectual Property): “Intellectual property, as contained in the knowledge created through the study of archaeological resources, is part of the archaeological record [and] it should be treated in accord with the principles of stewardship ... [M]aterials and documents must be made available to others.”

Principle 7 (Records and Preservation): “Archaeologists should work actively for the preservation of, and long term access to, archaeological collections, records, and reports. To this end, they should encourage colleagues, students, and others to make responsible use of collections, records, and reports in their research as one means of preserving the in situ archaeological record, and of increasing the care and attention given to that portion of the archaeological record which has been removed and incorporated into archaeological collections, records, and reports.”

Principles 2, 4, 5, and 7 send a powerful message that archaeologists should make every reasonable effort to collaborate with all of the many publics with whom we come into contact. When I noted earlier in this essay that I believe that archaeological ethics compel us to collaborate with collectors whenever we reasonably can, I draw support for my position not just from my own experiences, but from these very clearly articulated directives.

The Society counsels us to consult in good faith with all affected parties to create a working relationship that benefits all involved. Alienating the component of the public that has collected artifacts—by pronouncing them unworthy of showcasing their collections at PO, for example—violates this ethic. Alienating collectors also makes it very difficult for archaeologists to help those collectors increase the care and attention they bring to the collecting process, as Principle 7 asks us to do (and which Principle 4 mandates we do as part of our public education efforts). Brian Fagan (2003a) makes a similar point in his essay “The Arrogant Archaeologist.”

Principle 7, in fact, perhaps more than any other, reflects my position that archaeologists are ethically obligated to collaborate with those who possess collections, unless there are real “countervailing interests” (most likely involving commercialization) that can be clearly and disparately articulated. That is because doing so preserves the archaeological record, which, according to Principle 5—and every Archaeology 101 introductory lecture ever delivered—expressly includes our documents and data, and not simply artifacts themselves.

A Case Study: The Clovis Archaeological Record

I am finishing this essay in late December, after continuing an annual tradition of watching the film It’s a Wonderful Life. The premise of glimpsing what life would be like without our having lived is compelling, and in this spirit I move from a philosophical treatment of the ethics of collector collaboration to a more tangible case study, one that envisions an archaeology without collaboration. In response to the PO conference that spawned these reflections and because I know Paleoamerican archaeology best, I offer a comparative look at the North American Clovis record with—and without—archaeologist-collector collaboration. The point here is not to exhaustively evaluate current understanding of Clovis, but instead to glimpse the breadth and depth of the contributions made to the enterprise by private collectors.

Two lists of Clovis and Clovis-aged sites have been particularly influential in Paleoamerican archaeology over the past decade or so. One appears in Waters and Stafford’s (2007) Science piece re-
porting radiocarbon dating refining the Clovis time frame. The other comprises 14 sites that Grayson and Meltzer (2002:343) identified as unequivocally demonstrating that First Americans preyed upon megamammals. Both articles and their tables of Clovis and Clovis-aged sites sparked diverse research and enjoy high citation statistics.

I combined Waters and Stafford’s (2007:1124) Table 1 sites (#1–24), “Summary of 14C dates from Clovis and Clovis-age Sites,” with Grayson and Meltzer’s (2002:343) Table 7, “Archaeological Sites with Evidence Suggesting Human Predation on Now-Extinct Pleistocene Genera.” This yielded 30 Clovis and Clovis-aged sites for which I compiled data on who found the sites, when they were discovered, and how archaeologists became involved in their investigation (Table 1). A glance at the “Site” column shows that it robustly represents the extant record of the Clovis era and constitutes a reasonable sample for the discussion that follows the table.

Of the 30 Clovis-era sites in Table 1, professional archaeologists found six (the shaded cells, denoted by the superscript “b”). In two of those cases—Murray Springs and Jake Bluff—excavators C. Vance Haynes and Leland Bement (personal communication 2013) credit local community members with sharing knowledge that ultimately helped lead them to their discoveries. In the case of Bonneville Estates, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) personnel monitoring an off-road race saw dust generated by active looting near Bonneville Estates, which led to discovery of the site itself later the same day (Kelly Graf, personal communication 2013). In only two cases—Indian Creek and Aubrey—can I confirm that professionals found the site without nonprofessional involvement of any sort (Leslie B. Davis and C. Reid Ferring, personal communication 2013).

Let us consider briefly what it would mean to current understanding of Clovis if the 24 nonprofessionals who made a conscious choice to share their finds instead chose not to collaborate with a professional scientist (I explore shortly the likelihood that the 24 discoverers were, in fact, also artifact collectors). That is, what might we conclude about Clovis lifeways based only on archaeological evidence from our six professionally discovered Clovis-era sites? Consider the following list (intentionally simplified only to make a point):

- Clovis-era people subsisted on diverse resources (multiple species at Murray Springs, Indian Creek, and Bonneville Estates, and a maritime diet for Arlington Springs Man).
- When Clovis hunters procured megafauna and showed a dietary preference, they opted for bison (at Murray Springs, Jake Bluff, Indian Creek, and Aubrey).
- Clovis hunters avoided mammoths, given the evidence for just one kill (Murray Springs).

What would have been the ramifications of these rudimentary conclusions for the debates that have defined Clovis archaeology as we know it? They are far-reaching, but to pinpoint just two, archaeologists would never have entertained the notion that Pleistocene humans caused the death of all megafauna through “overkill” (e.g., Martin 1967) or that Clovis-era humans were megafauna-hunting “specialists” (e.g., Waguespack and Surovell 2003). With 14 widely accepted episodes of mammoth and mastodon predation, both scenarios have generated a lot of ink. Reduce \( n = 14 \) cases to \( n = 1 \), however, and neither intuition nor statistical analyses (e.g., Surovell and Waguespack 2008) will render 1 a sufficiently large number to seriously entertain a scenario of proboscidean hunting so specialized that it drove the animals to extinction.

We could continue in this vein (and almost certainly extend it to any sample of Paleoamerican sites with the same results; see Hall et al. [2002], LaBelle [2003], and Seebach [2006] for three great examples of just such an exercise), but I hope that the broader point is clear. Were it not for the willingness of nonprofessionals to share Pleistocene-aged finds with archaeologists, we would have an even more depauperate Clovis-era record than we currently do—so depauperate that we would be hard pressed to draw any meaningful inferences about Clovis lifeways. To the extent that we did draw inferences such as those listed in the above bulleted list, they would have little in common with those driving contemporary Clovis research.
### Table 1. North American Clovis and Clovis-Age Sites and the Circumstances of Their Discovery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Discoverer</th>
<th>Date &amp; Circumstances of Find</th>
<th>Reference(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murray Springs, AZ&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Vance Haynes and Peter Mehringer, geoarchaeologists</td>
<td>After learning from the Lehner site the stratigraphic position of the “Black Mat” and its relationship to the Clovis occupation surface, Haynes and Mehringer found nearby Murray Springs in 1966.</td>
<td>Haynes and Huckell 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake Bluff, OK&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Lee Bement, archaeologist</td>
<td>Directed to the area in 1992 by a state of Oklahoma game warden, Bement found the Cooper Folsom site and, two years later, Jake Bluff 400 m from Cooper.</td>
<td>Bement and Carter 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Creek, MT&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Leslie B. Davis, archaeologist</td>
<td>Davis discovered Indian Creek in 1982 during CRM reconnaissance of the Limestone Hills for the Montana Department of Military Affairs.</td>
<td>Davis 1993; Davis and Greiser 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville Estates, NV&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Steve Dondero and Tim Murphy, Elko District of the BLM</td>
<td>Dondero and Murphy witnessed cave looting in 1986 and recorded the site, which may have been previously discovered by Robert Heizer pre-1953. The (re)discovery led to a long-term field project involving BLM and university archaeologists.</td>
<td>Graf 2007, personal communication 2014; Rudy 1953:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlington Springs, CA&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Phil Orr, museum curator</td>
<td>In 1959, Orr was constructing an access road to fossil localities when his equipment bogged down in the mud. While extricating it, Orr noted human bones.</td>
<td>Dandridge 2006; Orr 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aubrey, TX&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>C. Reid Ferring, geoarchaeologist</td>
<td>Ferring and his two young sons discovered bison bones eroding from Pleistocene/Holocene sediments in 1988. Ferring later excavated the site.</td>
<td>Ferring 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lange-Ferguson, SD</td>
<td>Les Ferguson, rancher</td>
<td>Ferguson discovered a mammoth femur in 1960 and showed it to archaeologist Adrian Hannus in 1980.</td>
<td>Hannus 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloth Hole, FL</td>
<td>River divers</td>
<td>Divers had collected ivory artifacts since 1960, prompting professionals to investigate much later.</td>
<td>Hemmings 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anzick, MT</td>
<td>Ben Hargis, construction worker</td>
<td>In 1968, Hargis found a stone tool and dug around with his wife and a friend. Since 1998, human remains have been held by the Anzicks, the land owners.</td>
<td>Lahren 1999, 2000; Owsley and Hunt 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dent, CO</td>
<td>Frank Garner, railroad foreman</td>
<td>Garner noted mammoth bones in 1932 and informed Dent railroad depot operator Michael Ryan, who in turn reported the bones to Father Conrad Bilgery.</td>
<td>Brunswig 2007; Figgins 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paleo Crossing, OH</td>
<td>Jim Remington, artist</td>
<td>Remington found a lithic scatter and fluted points in 1989 and alerted archaeologist David Brose.</td>
<td>Brose 1994; Eren et al. 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domebo, OK</td>
<td>J. E. “Buck” Patterson, citizen</td>
<td>In 1961, Apache, OK, resident Patterson reported eroding tusk to archaeologist Adrian D. Anderson.</td>
<td>Leonhardy 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehner, AZ</td>
<td>Edward Lehner, rancher</td>
<td>Lehner discovered mammoth bones in 1952 and reported them to archaeologist Emil Haury. In 1988, Lehner donated the site to the Bureau of Land Management.</td>
<td>Haury et al. 1959; USDIO-BLM 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawnee-Minisink, PA</td>
<td>Donald Kline, citizen</td>
<td>Mt. Bethel resident Kline discovered the site in 1972 and tested it with friends. They contacted American University archaeologists, who continued work.</td>
<td>Gingerich 2011; Kline 1985; McNett et al. 1977</td>
</tr>
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Site | Discoverer | Date & Circumstances of Find | Reference(s)
--- | --- | --- | ---
Colby, WY | Paul Frison, Lloyd Wilson, and Donald Colby, citizens | The landowners had noted mammoth bones on their property in 1907. D. Colby found a Clovis point in 1963. George Frison recognized it as a site in 1973. | Frison and Todd 1986
Lubbock Lake, TX | WPA Construction workers & two boys | Construction workers found bones of extinct bison in 1936; two visiting boys found a Folsom point on a spoil pile and reported it to Dr. W. C. Holden. | Holden 1974; Holliday and Johnson 1990
Kanorado, KS | Landowner and sons | Owners of the property reported large bones and a mammoth molar to K. Don Lindsey (Denver Museum of Natural History) in 1976. | Holen and Holen 2011; McKee 2009
Cactus Hill, VA | Colonel Richard Ware, citizen | Colonel Richard Ware reported the site, known to artifact collectors by the early 1980s, to retired state archaeologist Howard A. McCord. | Johnson 2012; McAvoy and McAvoy 1997
Wally’s Beach, AB, Canada | Shayne Tolman, teacher | Tolman discovered a Hell Gap projectile point in 1996, which led to 1996–1998 finds of extinct fauna bones. He later earned a Master’s in archaeology. | Kooyman et al. 2006; McNeil et al. 2004
Union Pacific, WY | Ivan Hayes, dragline operator | In 1960, Hayes was clearing a spring on private land when he unearthed mammoth bones. He told a friend, who contacted archaeologist George Agogino. | Irwin 1970; Irwin-Williams 1962; McGrew 1961
Sheaman, WY | James Duguid, geology student | In the late 1950s, Duguid found and dug into Sheaman. Duguid eventually notified archaeologist George Frison, who excavated the site in 1977–1979. | Frison and Stanford 1982
Escapule, AZ | Louis W. Escapule, citizen | Escapule found the site in 1966 and received landowner permission to excavate. He soon reported his finds to James E. Ayers (Arizona State Museum). | Hemmings and Haynes 1969
Hebior, WI | John Hebior, citizen | Hebior found mammoth bones on his property in the 1960s–1970s and reported them to archaeologist David Overstreet in the early 1990s. | Johnson 2007; Milwaukee Public Museum 2013; Ramde 2008
Miami, TX | Charles Puckett, citizen | Puckett found the site in 1933 on the C. R. Cowan Ranch. Avocationalist J. A. Mead tested the site in 1934 and in 1937 alerted archaeologist E.H. Sellards. | Holliday et al. 1994
Naco, AZ | Marc and Fred Navarrette, citizens | The Navarrettes spied a skull and tusks in an arroyo in 1951. They dug and found more bone and a spear point, then contacted the Arizona State Museum. | Haury et al. 1959
In fairness, I cannot confirm that each of those 24 nonprofessionals kept their Clovis artifact finds (i.e., were artifact collectors and not just “discoverers”). I know with certainty that many did, either because the literature is clear on the point or because I have seen the collections. I also know that, of those who did not keep their finds, most gave them to museums or to the professionals who worked at the sites, again because the literature is clear about their disposition. In the remarkable case of Ed and Lyn Lehner, the couple donated the Clovis site bearing their name to the BLM for the public to enjoy in perpetuity (Masse and Gregonis 1996). If any of the 24 discoverers sold their finds for profit, I am unaware of it—which suggests that even if such a sale occurred, archaeology and archaeological knowledge were not compromised as a result.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

There are real tensions bordering on animosity between some archaeologists and collectors. They are greater in some archaeological niches than others, but they are ubiquitous, and they go both ways. Lest archaeologists think they are the only ones doing the scorning, a glance at the editorial page of any issue of *Indian Artifact Magazine* will quickly dispel that notion. A recent article in that publication sports the telling title “Bad Blood: The Source of Problems between Professional and Avocational Archaeologists … And What We Can Do about It” (Neiburger 2007). Note, however, that the title conveys not just tension, but a desire to improve relations, reinforcing that there are also private collectors seeking common ground.

I have tried to show in this essay that the wholesale alienation of artifact collectors is an unhelpful approach to archaeological practice, and that SAA’s ethical code offers no support for it. In fact, the code provides a nuanced perspective on the value of reaching out to all publics and equally nuanced guidelines on how to reach out to collectors appropriately. The code rightly discourages commercialization of the archaeological record, but also suggests that the benefits of increased knowledge should be weighed against what could be lost if research proceeds. In many, if not most, cases, as I have argued, the benefits of collaboration outweigh the commercial repercussions (if there even are commercial repercussions—itself often a questionable premise).

Some archaeologists prefer to avoid navigating ethically fraught waters and either consciously or unconsciously avoid interaction with nonprofessionals with artifact collections. This led to the complaints I heard at PO. I maintain, however, that the avoidance approach itself breaches SAA’s ethical principles by failing to recognize collectors as members of a public to which archaeologists are accountable; by neglecting to establish working relationships with a public clearly “affected by” archaeology; and by failing to engage in the public education that would teach collectors how to improve collections care and management.

Artifact collectors have repeatedly shown that they are willing and eager to share their finds with archaeologists. Numerous cases—including the development of the Clovis record I described, the marvelous Paleoindian Database of the Americas (PIDBA), a nationwide collaborative effort between archaeologists and private collectors
collectors are worth evaluating consciously and work. However, the risks of engaging with artifact with an open mind. Moreover, chances are good that a realistic risk analysis will point to a likely peril the past to which (s)he has devoted a life’s unduly daunting. No archaeologist wants to imperil the past to which (s)he has devoted a life’s work. However, the risks of engaging with artifact collectors are worth evaluating consciously and with an open mind. Moreover, chances are good that a realistic risk analysis will point to a likely outcome that is more positive than negative. Finally, our own ethical code does not simply provide a road map for ethical collaboration; it all but mandates that we embrace it.

Post-Script. Eight peer reviewers provided 23 single-spaced pages of response to this essay. They offered many comments that helped me clarify points and fix factual errors. Most of those 23 pages, however, represent deep engagement with my points, sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing, and sometimes offering additional case studies. Several reviewers pointed out—and I take their extensive commentary as evidence that they are right—that other readers will want to share thoughts on issues raised here. I therefore extend the following idea to my reviewers and any other reader (professional or nonprofessional) who has made it this far. I will facilitate a Forum at the April 2015 meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in San Francisco, where panelists and audience members can interact on the subject of archaeologist-collector collaboration. If you would like to participate as a panelist—and I will strive to represent highly diverse views—please contact me before the submission deadline on September 11, 2014. If you read this after the panel is full or after the deadline for Forum submissions passes, I hope to see and talk to you at the Forum itself.

Acknowledgments. The ideas expressed in this essay are the product of years of conversations with archaeological colleagues and artifact collectors alike, some of whom (in each group) agree with my thinking and some of whom do not. I am grateful for all those willing to talk through a difficult subject, including and especially the eight anonymous reviewers of this piece and American Antiquity editor Kenneth Sassaman. I also particularly thank my graduate school adviser Vance Haynes and Ph.D. committee member George Frison, who taught me by example how to respectfully and mutually beneficially engage members of the collecting public in the pursuit of the past we all love. I appreciate the efforts of Carlos Torres and Marc Levine to ensure that the paper has an intelligible Spanish abstract. Finally, I dedicate this essay to Richard Shipley, with deep thanks for his unwavering support, friendship, and inspiration.

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You would be hard-pressed to find a professional archaeologist who does not interact with members of the general public over matters archaeological, at least occasionally. Archaeologists are known to most people as those who discover artifacts, if not dinosaur fossils. We remind the public, whenever we can, that context and association determine the information potential of objects, but we lean heavily on artifacts when narrating the past for nonprofessional audiences. So people bring to us the things they find. Sometimes we invite this sort of interaction with artifact identification days and other events. I myself recorded many such finds in the collections of citizens of South Carolina and Georgia, where I worked for 11 years with the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program, which had a public outreach program. Not only did we have opportunities to record information about objects that would have otherwise escaped professional attention, but we also learned about unrecorded sites in the region, some victims of active looting. It was always gratifying to salvage what we could about the contexts of vulnerable sites before they were lost, but even more gratifying to bring collectors into the fold of ethical and responsible practice. Some of these individuals became trusted partners.

The Forum essay that follows in this issue reminds us of the valuable and enduring contributions responsible citizens have made to archaeology. Indeed, Bonnie Pitblado argues convincingly in this essay that our knowledge of Paleoindian archaeology in North America would be greatly diminished without the contributions of the public. The number of people who have scoured the landscape for artifacts, or even stumbled across a find without looking, eclipses that of professional archaeologists by some astronomical factor. I will never forget learning as a student that the Short Chronology of North American archaeology in the early twentieth century was shattered by a discovery made, not by a Harvard or Smithsonian scholar, but by George McJunkin, the African-American cowboy who in 1908 observed bison bones eroding from an arroyo at Crowfoot Ranch near Folsom, New Mexico (Meltzer 2006). The find was not investigated professionally until 1926, four years after McJunkin’s death, and it would be another year before a Folsom point was found in direct association with bison bone. Still, had McJunkin not recognized the remains as those of an extinct species and shared his find with others, professionals may never have known about a site whose context of direct association was instrumental in adding millennia to the history of native North America.

But for every story of success in the annals of archaeology, there are those of tragedy and lost opportunity. Sites are collected and looted, artifacts get sold on the antiquities market, and professional archaeologists are sometimes drawn into wrongdoing as unwitting accomplices. Laws protecting historical resources in the U.S. are hardly adequate to prevent vandalism of sites and the commercialization of artifacts. Under most circumstances, for instance, they do not extend to private land or to the rights of individuals to buy and sell artifacts that were obtained legally. Antiquities laws vary across the globe, of course, and they are often revisited as political and economic winds change direction. There are no universal rights or laws at play in this respect, no moral imperatives to ensure that the material traces of past life are never owned, privatized, commercialized, or wantonly destroyed. We do what we can to work within the bounds of law to mitigate unnecessary negative impacts to the fragile, vulnerable archive of the past.
Beyond law are the ethics of professional practice, the codes of conduct that help to distinguish those whose work aims to further public good from those whose actions serve only private interests. The SAA promulgated its first statement on ethics in 1961 and its current Principles of Archaeological Ethics in 1996, precipitated by the rapidly changing conditions under which archaeology was practiced, much of it inflected by “external” interests (Lynott and Wylie 1995). As Pitblado recounts, most of the eight principles bear directly on professional-public interactions. The first, Stewardship, is the keystone principle, as it states that professionals have a responsibility not only to protect the archaeological record for the benefit of all people, but also to instill a sense of stewardship among members of the public. The underlying premise of this principle is that no one owns the past, and certainly not professionals.

Still, while we may agree that no one, or perhaps everyone, owns the abstraction we call the past, laws in the U.S. and many other countries provide for ownership of archaeological sites and artifacts, and so sites and artifacts are bought and sold like other commodities. Exposed in this are the contradictions between stewardship and ownership—not unlike those between democracy and capitalism—which preclude canonical approaches to the ethics of commercialization. I trust most archaeologists cringe at requests to appraise artifacts. The objects are priceless, we might say, or their worth is measured in information, not dollars. Still, many objects in museums arrived and still arrive through purchase, or at least through donation, for which tax appraisals are sought. In such cases someone is asked to put a price on the priceless, to assess the market value of things that we are loathe to commodify. We accept these actions as ethical because they contribute to the stewardship of the past and to the public good, not to personal property or profit.

Other forms of monetary exchange involving artifacts transgress ethical practice even as they operate within the bounds of law. SAA’s Principles include one, Principle 3, dealing expressly with commercialization. To me, an unambiguous violation of Principle 3 is the case of the Vero Beach engraving, which was sold last year shortly after it was published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* (Purdy et al. 2011). The owner of the engraving made his intention known to sell the artifact, and he was hoping to get millions of dollars for it. I do not know whether the authors of this study were aware that publication of the object would potentially enhance its value, but in my estimation its publication violated Principle 3 because there was never any assurance that the object would end up in a public repository. Pitblado agrees with this assertion, but goes on to defend the publication because the owner made the object available for study, and for casting, and thus science had a crack at it before it was sold. The end, in this particular case, justified the means, she argues.

I respectfully disagree, on several counts. First, I question the intrinsic value of the object itself. The Vero Beach engraving is a rendering of an Ice Age creature, a mammoth. Assuming that the artist did not conjure up this image in the mind with no prior exposure to proboscideans, the object puts humans and Pleistocene megafauna in direct contact. But we have long known this to be the case in North America, thanks to finds like Folsom and many of the Clovis finds Pitblado lists in her essay. The Vero Beach engraving is not another Folsom find; it is not another game-changer. Granted, it is perhaps the oldest piece of portable art in North America, but are we going back to the drawing board of “prehistory” because we at last have proof that early people had the capacity to represent themselves in media that endured this long? I trust not.

My second objection has to do with context, and this speaks not only to the limits of this engraving’s scientific worth, but also to its authenticity. The item was not collected from an archaeological context, and thus it lacks relationships to other objects and matrices that would enable us to make inferences beyond the object itself. In other words, its evidentiary potential is limited to physical and chemical properties inherent to the object alone. Sure, it is an interesting and, dare I say, lovely artifact, as were the Folsom points that Jesse Figgins showed Aleš Hrdlička and William Henry Holmes at the Smithsonian Institution in 1927. They were happy to see the beautifully made spearpoints Figgins had brought to them,
but neither gentleman was convinced that they were made by Ice Age people. Like so many other claims for human antiquity in the Americas, the Folsom site, to that point, lacked definitive evidence for the age of the artifacts. Hrdlička advised Figgins to keep digging until he found unassailable proof. In an age predating radiocarbon dating, such proof would have to come from the stratigraphic association between the spearpoints and material of known age.

What we know about the Vero Beach engraving is confined to what can be extracted from its material self, and that does not include datable organic matter. Instead, the object was subjected to a battery of tests to determine its authenticity, but in the end, its age remains uncertain. Is it real or is it a fake? We may never know because now that the artifact has passed from a person who availed it to science to a party that may not be similarly disposed, science may not get a second crack at it and thus may fail in its need to replicate results. Context would have been a great arbitrator in this case, as it is in the case of virtually all archaeological objects.

Given its lack of context, finite interpretive potential, and questionable age, the Vero Beach engraving does not manifest the scientific heft that warrants its publication under threat of its commercial exchange. Because there was never any assurance that this object would be transferred to a public repository, its publication in *American Antiquity* would have been a clear violation of Principle 3.

Archaeology is not a credentialed field. The SAA does what it can to promote ethical and professional practice, but membership is not a credential, not a requirement for academic employment or for landing government contracts. We come closer to credentialing with the Register of Professional Archaeologists, but, here again, we fall short for lack of cultural and political will. I am certain that the public in general would resist any effort to circumscribe archaeology with legal strictures that would block its participation, as should we. The cultural challenge here lies in the ambiguity between professionals and everyone else. We may never be credentialled like doctors and lawyers, but we can, and must, strive to operate in ways that distinguish us from any person or corporation that co-opts the archaeological record for profit.

I fully agree with Pitblado that the SAA Principles of Archaeological Practice do not preclude collaboration between professionals and collectors, and I likewise agree that the code can be interpreted to suggest that collaboration with members of the public is an ethical mandate. This reasoning does not, however, apply to activities that contribute to the commercialization of artifacts. I do not know whether any of the Clovis discoveries Pitblado lists in her essay involved the sale or trade of objects. Had the owner of Crowfoot Ranch sold the Folsom points after Figgins documented their context in 1927, he may not have gotten much for them, but Paleoindian artifacts today demand huge prices on the antiquities market. Just this past year, the Rutz Clovis point from Washington state that was displayed at the Paleoamerican Odyssey conference was sold for over a quarter-million dollars. Did its display at a gathering of so many professionals enhance its value? I do not know, and certainly we cannot control a free market. But we have to monitor the boundary between stewardship and ownership and help our citizenry better appreciate the information value of not just objects, but objects in context. In truth, our Principles do not define the profession as much as they prescribe best practices, and in this sense, members of the general public are invited to join in, just as they are invited to join the SAA. We would do well to define our profession not by how many degrees and publications we accumulate, but by how many citizens we recruit to ensure that future citizens can learn from and enjoy the past as much as we do today. So long as ownership and market exchange prevail, guarding the boundary between public good and private rights means losing access to some information. Personally, I am willing to risk the loss of some scientific information if it helps to curtail the out-of-control monetary inflation of antiquities, the rampant commercialization of archaeology, and the enduring ambiguity of our profession.
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