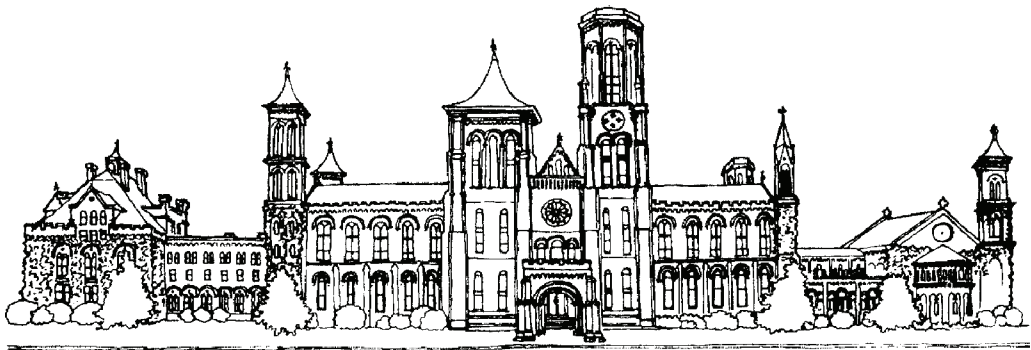




Smithsonian Institution

Handbook for Volunteers Working Behind the Scenes



Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Program
Visitor Information and Associates' Reception Center
Washington, D.C.



Smithsonian

Welcome to the Smithsonian and to the Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Program. As a participant in this program you will play an active role in the “increase and diffusion of knowledge” by contributing to a specific project at the Institution.

This handbook provides information on the Smithsonian, its facilities and services, and specific instructions on policies and procedures to be observed during your tenure as a Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer. Also addressed are a range of topics pertinent to all volunteers.

We are pleased that you have selected the Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Program, and we are confident that your association with the Institution in this capacity will be both challenging and rewarding.

Note: Procedures and benefits listed in this booklet are current as of 7/2008. From time to time, please check with the Program for any changes that may have occurred.

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The Benefactor and the Institution

The Smithsonian Institution was formally established in 1846 with funds bequeathed to the United States by James Smithson, a prominent English scientist who never visited this country.

Smithson, born in 1765, was the natural son of Hugh Smithson, the Duke of Northumberland, and Elizabeth Hungerford Keate Macie of Bath, England. Documents indicate that Smithson, known in his early years as James Lewis Macie, was born in France and, in his youth, came to England for his education. In 1786, after becoming a naturalized citizen, he was graduated from Pembroke College, Oxford. The following year, described as a “gentleman well versed in various branches of Natural Philosophy and particularly in Chymistry and Mineralogy,” he was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal Society.

For most of his life, Smithson elected to travel on the Continent, residing frequently in Paris where he included in his circle of friends many of the most famous scientists of the day. While in Europe, he involved himself with research and scientific writing. By 1802, his identification of a specific variety of zinc ore resulted in naming it smithsonite in his honor. It is not known when the Crown granted permission for James Lewis Macie to adopt his father’s name, but a paper written in that same year bears for the first time the name of “James Smithson, Esq.”

Failing health plagued Smithson as he grew older. Following his death in Genoa, Italy, on June 27, 1829, he was interred in a small English cemetery at San Benigno. Although the Smithsonian Institution learned in 1900 that authorities of Genoa intended to abolish the cemetery, it wasn’t until late 1903 that the Regents sent Alexander Graham Bell, one of its distinguished regents, to escort Smithson’s coffin to the United States. Today, the tomb of James Smithson is now located adjacent to the north foyer in the Smithsonian Institution Building. Renovation of this chamber resulted in a study of Smithson’s skeleton by the Institution’s Department of Physical Anthropology. Findings revealed details that humanize the man about whom so little is

known: Smithson was 5'6" tall, smoked a pipe, had an extra vertebra, and died of natural causes. He was probably a fencer, evidenced by the development of his shoulders.

A nephew was named to receive the whole of his estate with the exception of a small bequest left to a loyal servant. The will specified that should the nephew die without heirs the balance of the legacy would pass "to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge." In 1835, the nephew died without children, and the United States became heir to a great fortune.

For ten years the halls of Congress reverberated with debates concerning the interpretation of the will, the inheritance guarded all the while by John Quincy Adams. Was this Institution of learning to be a library, a school, an experimental farm? Should it be an observatory, a laboratory? Unable to agree, Congress completed an act of establishment in August of 1846, producing a multifaceted organization involved in research and dispersal of academic findings. On May 1, 1847, the cornerstone of the first Smithsonian Building was laid, and after innumerable delays, the building was completed in 1855.

Why did the United States receive this fortune? Was Smithson a sad and embittered man who felt his homeland had deprived him of the recognition and fame to which he had aspired for so many years? Did he believe the United States to be the country best able to carry out his wishes and, in so doing, perpetuate his name? The inspiration for this unprecedented act of generosity to a country he had never visited will remain forever a mystery.

Today, the Smithsonian Institution is an independent federal establishment devoted to public education and national service in the arts, sciences, and history. It is composed of 19 museums and galleries and the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and New York, and numerous research facilities in the U.S. and abroad.

Financial support is provided through federal appropriations and private funds derived from investments, grants and contracts, gifts, sales, and other revenue. Centered on the National Mall between the Capitol and the Washington Monument, the Smithsonian Institution has indeed firmly established itself as a respected Institution dedicated to "the increase and diffusion of knowledge... ."

Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Program

Program Purpose

The Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Program (BVP) is the central registration and placement point for all volunteers working behind the scenes at the Smithsonian. Functioning in this capacity, the BVP provides assistance to Smithsonian staff by recruiting and placing individuals who wish to contribute their time and expertise to the ongoing work of the Institution. The Program's objective is to match qualified volunteers' interests with Smithsonian projects, which vary in scope and duration. Once a volunteer placement has been arranged, on-site training and supervision are provided through the sponsoring department or division.

Volunteer Qualifications

Positions are open to all individuals who meet the qualifications established for each project, including having successfully completed a federal background check. All Behind-the-Scenes volunteer positions require that volunteers be available during business hours, Monday through Friday, and be at least 16 years of age. For those who are able to commit to a year or more of volunteer service, the minimum time commitment is 6 hours per week.

Program Responsibilities

The BVP staff has the following responsibilities:

- to track the progress of volunteers' federal background check and inform them when they have passed.
- to maintain a central register of its volunteers.
- to maintain the service records for its volunteers.
- to receive and fulfill requests from the professional staff for volunteer assistance.
- to complete Smithsonian identification (SI ID) badge paperwork for all active BVP volunteers with prior approval from the volunteers' supervisors.

- to provide volunteers with a general orientation and information about the Smithsonian, its programs, and activities.
- to distribute annual service awards to volunteers' project timekeepers.
- to provide ongoing support and assistance to facilitate positive staff/volunteer working relationships.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mutual understanding of rules and responsibilities is fundamental to sound working relationships between Smithsonian staff and volunteers. The following guidelines are offered to promote successful working relationships:

Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer

The BVP Volunteer has the following responsibilities:

- to be prompt and reliable in attendance and to notify the project supervisor of any absence or planned vacation.
- to report arrival to the timekeeper and to record service hours each day (see [Procedures](#), p. 9).
- to keep a personal record of duty-related travel expenses (see [Volunteer Benefits: Income Tax Deductions](#), p. 17).
- to follow instructions and request clarification when in doubt.
- to refrain from making statements that could be construed as Smithsonian policy or signing official correspondence (also see [Public Opinion](#), p. 19).
- to alert supervisor that SI ID badge needs to be renewed before expiration date.
- to observe Smithsonian standards of conduct.*
- to review and periodically discuss assignment progress with project supervisor.

- to notify the BVP of any changes in personal information (i.e., mailing address or P.O. box, telephone number, e-mail address, etc.) and of changes in assignment.
- to refrain from using Smithsonian's mailing address or e-mail, long-distance telephone service, computers (including the Internet), or fax machines for personal business.
- to complete computer security awareness training annually if given an SI computer account.
- to return SI ID badge at the end of service to the SI ID Office.

Project Supervisor

The Project Supervisor has the following responsibilities:

- to request and follow-up on the volunteer's personal references, or statements of disclosure.*
- to provide orientation to the purpose and goals of the department and project.
- to introduce key personnel (e.g., the volunteer's timekeeper, the person to whom the volunteer will report for daily assignment/instruction, and staff members who will be available on a regular basis for project consultation).
- to provide adequate work space, proper training, direction, support, and ongoing supervision.
- to provide an SI computer account, if project warrants it, and ensure the volunteer completes the computer security awareness training annually.
- to review emergency evacuation procedures for the work site.
- to accept the volunteer as an auxiliary member of the staff.
- to review expectations for regular dependable attendance and timely fulfillment of assignments.

*see [Ethical Standards](#), p. 18

- to confirm that the volunteer understands general office routine and procedures for recording daily service hours.
- to review and periodically discuss assignment progress with volunteer.
- to provide assignments that are substantive, educational, and progressively more responsible as warranted.
- to ensure prompt and proper reporting of all volunteer duty-related injuries.
- to update volunteer project description(s) at least once a year.
- to authorize the BVP staff to process SI ID badges for volunteers by e-mailing bvpvolunteer@si.edu.
- to obtain proximity cards for volunteers when needed.
- to communicate change of volunteer status or assignment to the BVP staff.
- to distribute annual service awards to volunteers.
- to be accountable for official Smithsonian correspondence prepared by the volunteer.
- to be accountable for administrative decisions and access to secured areas and storage facilities used by volunteer.
- to relieve a volunteer of duties for failure to fulfill commitments or for a breach of ethical standards after consultation with the BVP.
- to request termination or reassignment of a volunteer upon project completion.

Project Timekeeper

The Project Timekeeper has the following responsibilities:

- to authorize the BVP staff to process SI ID badges for volunteers if project supervisor is not available.
- to submit monthly volunteer service hours to the BVP.
- to communicate change in volunteer status or assignment to the BVP staff.
- to distribute annual service awards to supervisors.

Procedures

Smithsonian Identification (SI ID) Badge

—Badge for New BVP Volunteers

—Renewal for Current BVP Volunteers

To obtain an SI ID badge: After receiving approval from the volunteer's supervisor, the BVP completes and signs the "Application for Smithsonian Identification Credential" for each volunteer. The paperwork is then mailed (as instructed by the supervisor) to the volunteer's home or to the supervisor's office, or left in the BVP office for pick up. Volunteers hand deliver this paperwork to the SI ID Office.

While on duty, the SI ID badge must be visible at all times and must be returned to the SI ID Office upon termination of service.

Before receiving an SI ID badge that is valid for no longer than 1 year, **new BVP volunteers** must have successfully completed a federal background check.

Current BVP volunteers with SI ID badges that are about to expire need to alert their supervisors who will authorize the BVP to begin the renewal process. The BVP will confirm that volunteers are active and hours have been reported before completing renewal paperwork. Volunteers hand deliver this paperwork and their current SI ID badges to the SI ID Office. If badges have expired for more than 30 days, volunteers are required to complete another federal background check. If volunteers do not have their SI ID badges to turn in at renewal time, the SI ID Office will charge them a lost ID fee.

Attendance

Before leaving the Smithsonian each day, volunteers must record the total number of hours contributed. If service is performed outside the office or department, volunteers must prearrange with their project supervisors or timekeepers to report service hours at specific intervals but no later than the last work day of each month. In addition, volunteers are strongly advised to maintain a personal log of hours.

Accurate and complete attendance records are **essential for security purposes** and are **necessary for the protection of**

volunteers in case of emergency. Attendance records also support claims for income tax deductions, provide verification of unpaid work experience, document service hours for annual volunteer awards, and confirm eligibility for specific benefits (see [Volunteer Benefits and Recognition](#), p. 16).

Volunteers must advise their supervisor and timekeeper of any anticipated absence or change in status. Volunteers who are absent for more than 3 consecutive months due to such reasons as illness or vacation will be placed on inactive status (an “N” will be listed next to inactive volunteers on the timesheets). The BVP must be advised of an anticipated return date.

When a volunteer is absent for more than 6 consecutive months and the timekeeper is not able to provide an explanation for the gap in service (e.g., vacation, illness), the BVP must assume that the volunteer has terminated service.

Guidelines detailing supervisor, timekeeper, and department representative responsibilities may be obtained by e-mailing bvpvolunteer@si.edu or by calling 202/633-2987 (voice), 202/633-5285 (TTY).

Field Projects

The field project supervisor must inform the BVP of any volunteer who will be traveling beyond 25 miles of the volunteer’s original Smithsonian duty station and ensure that the following forms are completed and filed with the BVP **before** a volunteer departs for the field project site:

- “Field Project Description Form”: completed by field project supervisor and signed by the field project supervisor’s department head.
- “Registration Form”: completed by any new volunteer.

The project timekeeper is responsible for maintaining the time and attendance records for a field project volunteer. To obtain the necessary forms and guidelines, call 202/633-2987 (voice), 202/633-5285 (TTY) or e-mail bvpvolunteer@si.edu.

Note: The field project supervisor is an SI staff member who accompanies the volunteer into the field.

Change in Assignment

When volunteers want to explore a change in assignments or additional assignments, they must contact the BVP. If they need help in finding new assignments, the BVP will first request positive references from the volunteers' current supervisors before matching assignments to the volunteers' interests and qualifications. If volunteers find a new assignment on their own, the new project supervisor simply asks the BVP to update the database.

Change in Personal Information

The volunteer should notify the BVP of any changes in personal information, such as e-mail address, mailing address or P.O. box, and telephone number by calling 202/633-2987 (voice), 202/633-5285 (TTY) or by e-mailing bvpvolunteer@si.edu.

Injuries

All duty-related injuries must be reported to the Security Office in the facility where an injury occurs and to the nearest Health Unit. The injury must also be reported to the BVP. The volunteer's project supervisor will submit an electronic report using the Automated Incident Reporting System (AIRS, see http://ofeo.si.edu/safety_health/airs.asp) to initiate an SI Occupational Injury and Illness Report (SI-2120) and Notice of Traumatic Injury (CA-1). Volunteers working under the direct supervision of a staff member may be covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA). The Smithsonian accepts responsibility for accidental injury incurred by a volunteer while fulfilling a volunteer assignment.

Termination

Volunteers intending to terminate their service are required to return their official SI ID badge to the SI ID Office.

The volunteer's project supervisor may request termination or reassignment of a volunteer upon completion of the assigned project. After consultation with the BVP, the project supervisor may relieve a volunteer of his or her duties for failure or inability to fulfill commitments (including the timely submission of service hours) or for a breach of ethical standards (see [Ethical Standards](#), p. 18).

Smithsonian Museums and Research Facilities

The Smithsonian's 17 museums and the National Zoo in the Washington, D.C., area are open to the public daily except December 25. Admission is free.

- Eleven museums and the S. Dillon Ripley Center are situated on the National Mall:

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery	AMSG or SG
Freer Gallery of Art	FGA
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden	HMSG
National Air and Space Museum	NASM
National Museum of African Art	NMAfA
National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center	NMAH
National Museum of Natural History	NMNH
National Museum of the American Indian	NMAI
Smithsonian Institution Building (the Castle)	SIB

Note:

Arts and Industries Building (closed for renovation)	A&I
National Museum of African American History and Culture (in planning stages)	NMAAHC

- The National Zoological Park (NZIP) and six other Smithsonian museums are located elsewhere in the Washington, D.C., area:

Anacostia Community Museum	ACM
National Portrait Gallery**	NPG
National Postal Museum	NPM
Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum	RG
Smithsonian American Art Museum**	SAAM
National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center (in Chantilly, Va.)	UHC

- Two Smithsonian museums are located in New York City:
National Museum of the American Indian's
George Gustav Heye Center NMAI-GGHC
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
(admission fee for nonmembers) CH or NDM

The National Air and Space Museum's Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration, and Storage Facility closed to the public at the end of March 2003. The collection is being moved to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near the Washington Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Virginia.

- In addition to the basic research carried on in each of the museums, the Smithsonian also maintains a network of research facilities in Washington, D.C., and around the world. These are:

Archives of American Art in New York City and Washington, D.C.	AAA
Conservation and Research Center of the National Zoo in Front Royal, Virginia	CRC
Smithsonian Institution Marine Station in Fort Pierce, Florida (NMNH)	SMSFP
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, MA (headquarters). Field facilities: elsewhere in Massachusetts, Arizona, and Hawaii	SAO
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater, Maryland	SERC
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama	STRI

**The National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum are collectively known as the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture. Note: The National Gallery of Art, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars are separately administered bureaus.

Smithsonian Services and Transportation

Services in the Museums

Information about Smithsonian events and exhibitions can be obtained daily at the Smithsonian Information Center in the Castle (8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.), at most museum information desks (10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), at the Donald W. Reynolds Center museums (11:30 a.m.-7 p.m.) or by calling Smithsonian Information at 202/633-1000 (voice/tape), 202/633-5285 (TTY).

Health Units are equipped to handle emergency medical needs and are located at NASM, NMAH, VB (Victor Building), and NZP.

Food facilities are available in most buildings. The type of service varies from fast food to buffet (see **Volunteer Benefits: Benefits and Discounts**, p. 16).

Transportation —Shuttle

Shuttle service for Smithsonian personnel operates Monday through Friday to most buildings (for schedule, see your orientation packet or PRISM, the Smithsonian's Intranet).

—Parking

Limited free public parking is available on Madison and Jefferson Drives on the Mall. Three-hour posted times are strictly enforced (also see **Volunteer Benefits: Benefits and Discounts**, pp. 16-17).

Bicycle racks are located at most Smithsonian buildings; check with the Security Office for the nearest rack location. Tamper-proof locks are recommended.

The Metrorail stations located near Smithsonian buildings are shown on the back of this handbook. For comprehensive information on Metrobus and Metrorail schedules, including a map and details on Metrorail's parking facilities, contact:

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 5th St., NW
Washington, DC 20001
202/637-7000 (voice) or 202/638-3780 (TTY)
Web address: MetroOpensDoors.com or
www.wmata.com

Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Benefits and Recognition

Benefits and Discounts

The following benefits and discounts are available to all Behind-the-Scenes volunteers **upon presentation of a valid Smithsonian ID badge** (for more information on any of the benefits listed below, call 202/633-2987 weekdays or e-mail the BVP staff at bvpvolunteer@si.edu):

- 20% discount in the Smithsonian Museum Stores and from the *Smithsonianstore.com or *Smithsonian Catalogue (for discount mail-order code, contact the BVP or Smithsonian Information at 202/633-1000).
- *Reduced rate on Smithsonian Associate memberships.
- Reduced rate at selected Smithsonian public-food facilities.
- Use of staff food facilities Monday through Friday in NMNH and Castle. Food served in staff facilities is already discounted.
- Use of the physical fitness recreation facility at NASM.
- *Monthly mailings (for active volunteers only) of *The Torch*, the Smithsonian employee newspaper.
- *Annual tax letter sent after February 20 from the BVP stating number of days and hours worked, which can be used by volunteers to claim travel-related tax deductions or by students for school/community service credit.
Note: The tax letter is not required to take the IRS deduction.
- One free IMAX®, Planetarium, or Butterfly Pavilion ticket per week, subject to availability (does not include special feature-length commercial movies), and additional tickets at a reduced rate.

*Starred items do not require a valid SI ID badge.

- Free weekday parking after 3 p.m. and weekend parking at NASM, NMAH, and NMNH; free parking at NASM's Udvar-Hazy Center and at the Zoo.
- Free admission to the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

Income Tax Deductions

Although the value of services rendered to a nonprofit organization is not deductible, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) **does allow** deductions for out-of-pocket, **unreimbursed travel expenses**. Allowable deductions include round-trip public transportation or travel by private automobile, including parking fees, tolls, and a standard mileage rate determined annually by the IRS. For more information, consult a certified public accountant or the IRS Web site.

Appreciation

Behind-the-Scenes Volunteers are invited to an annual appreciation reception each year.

Individual service awards for continuous participation are presented annually as follows:

1 year	Certificate
2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years	SI Volunteer Pin
All intervening years	Attachment for pin indicating specific year of service reached

The Institution also pays tribute to its volunteers in *The Torch*, a monthly newspaper for Smithsonian Institution employees.

Ethical Standards for Smithsonian Institution Volunteers

Ethical standards for Smithsonian Institution volunteers are consistent with standards of conduct for Smithsonian employees and reflect those standards unanimously endorsed by the American Association of Museums for all member institutions.

The Smithsonian Institution acknowledges the valuable contribution it receives through the interest, time, and experience given by volunteers, who serve its various museums and other bureaus and offices. Because of the nature and extent of involvement of volunteers in Smithsonian programs and activities, standards of conduct are set forth for the protection of volunteers and of the Institution.

Volunteer service shall be undertaken for the betterment of the Smithsonian and not for personal gain, other than the inherent reward and personal satisfaction derived from such participation. A Smithsonian volunteer may not accept compensation for performance of Smithsonian tasks as a volunteer. Personal compensation includes gifts, fees, gratuities, or other dispensations to the volunteer or to members of the volunteer's immediate family or household.

Volunteers who have access to museum collections, research, staff activities, and associated privileged information must respect the confidentiality of their positions as well as the significance and integrity of the collections.

To eliminate the possibility of a conflict of interest, each Smithsonian volunteer who is working in an activity area that is related to an outside activity in which the volunteer or a member of his or her family or household is personally involved, or who is active in a related employment or other commercial context, must disclose the nature and extent of such involvement to his/her Smithsonian staff supervisor and whether it is carried out personally or by a member of the volunteer's immediate family or household. Failure to make a timely disclosure is grounds for dismissal of a volunteer.

Examples of possible conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest that require disclosure include:

1. a volunteer working directly with Smithsonian collections if either the volunteer or member of the immediate family or household is involved with collecting or dealing in those same types of objects or materials.
2. a volunteer who serves or contracts to serve as a paid tour guide in a Smithsonian museum.
3. a volunteer accepting money for volunteer work.
4. a paid Smithsonian staff member doing volunteer work in the same department where they work for pay.

In many situations it will be sufficient for the volunteer to disclose the outside activity that might be a conflict of interest. In certain cases, the volunteer may be asked to serve in other Smithsonian activities where there is not an actual or apparent conflict of interest. In an extreme case, the volunteer may be asked to terminate Smithsonian service so that his or her other activities might be pursued without any conflict of interest.

Smithsonian staff supervisors must make a written record of disclosures by volunteers assigned to them and, if there might appear to be a conflict of interest, consult with a Smithsonian Ethics Counselor in the Office of General Counsel.

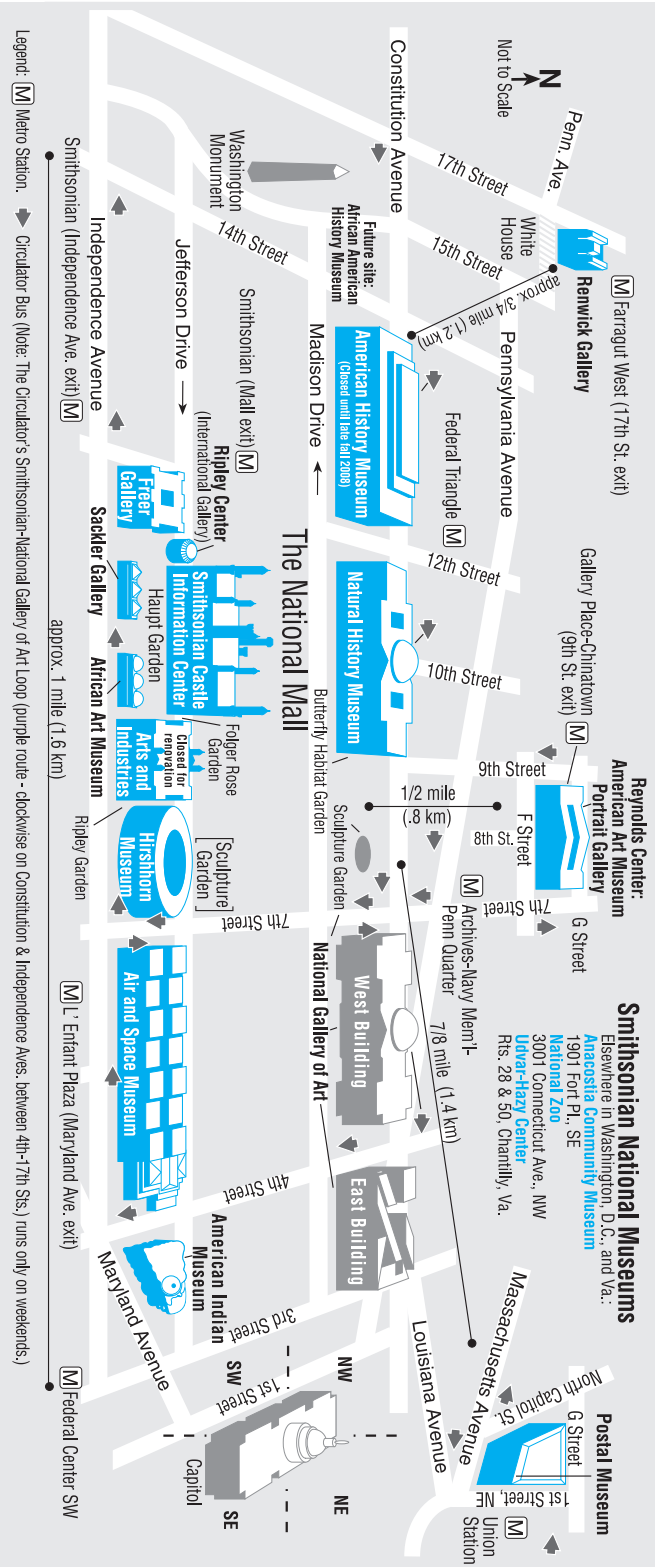
These standards represent basic principles for ethical conduct by Smithsonian volunteers. The directors of Smithsonian bureaus and offices may adopt more detailed guidelines if consistent with the principles outlined in Smithsonian Directive (SD 208).

Public Opinions

While on duty, volunteers are cautioned against expressing personal opinions or judgments regarding any aspect of the Smithsonian that could be misconstrued by the public or media as an official Smithsonian statement. Personal opinions, even those voiced with the best intentions, when taken out of context can prove damaging and embarrassing not only to the Institution but also to the volunteer.

Also, while on duty, volunteers must not wear buttons, t-shirts, etc., that express political or social opinions.

Notes



The Smithsonian Complex

Approximate walking times from the Smithsonian Castle to:

- African Art Museum or Sackler Gallery 2 minutes
- Air and Space Museum 10 minutes
- American Art Museum and Portrait Gallery 20 minutes
- American History Museum 10 minutes
- American Indian Museum 15 minutes
- Freer Gallery 2 minutes
- Natural History Museum 5 minutes
- Postal Museum or Renwick Gallery 30 minutes

On the map, please note the Metrorail station(s) convenient to the museum you wish to visit.