

Code of Ethics (COE) History

In as much as a reader may consider that I am taking a stand in reference to the COE and I am in fact, what happened from the conception of the COE and was finally resolved on August 15, 2008 was and is of a greater concern, that concern being ethical behavior.

- The high handled tactics and usurpation of the COE was nothing more than power mongering gone amuck. Those precious few who voiced disdain were sent to their fate-exile and isolation.
- Many award program owners and thus their award programs profess to embrace the COE in their award programs but not abiding by it is an ethical lapse of monumental proportions.
- Many award program owners state copyright to the COE without proper attribution.

Rhonda Serong (hereinafter known as The author) concluded the correct legal status for such a document should be within the Public Domain and personally chose CEM/CEMA (now closed) as the guardian of the COE on the one hand due to the faith personally held that CEM/CEMA would uphold the Spirit of the document and on the other hand because a few of the CEM/CEMA members edited, at her request, the final draft copy.

The author in trusting CEM/CEMA re the COE made a grievous error in judgment as an un named person literally stole the COE claiming near ownership and certainly massive control over the COE document for / by / and-or on behalf of CEM/CEMA.

Then because some award program owners did recognize and ultimately acknowledge publicly within their award programs that the author had written the COE document (if you know the authors writing form it is easy to ascertain authorship) the author was taken to task by that certain CEM/CEMA person with a flurry of private and public statements which were known by Denny Lancaster, who was an active member of CEM\CEMA at that time, to be false and groundless. [Reference:](#)

The original declaration made by the author to CEM/CEMA was signed as Co-author of the Declaration of Ethics and was signed as such because:

- As a few CEM/CEMA members assisted in editing the authors final draft of the COE the author believed they should be recognized.
- The author needed all who read and / or used the COE to gain an understanding of the reasoning behind the COE.

You will notice that no where within the original COE declaration made by Rhonda Serong to CEM/CEMA does it state that::

- CEM/CEMA owned or owns the COE document.
- The COE was gifted to the Awards Community.

But the Spirit of the Code of Ethics document that stands alongside the main COE lays out quite clearly the legal situation of the COE at the time of handing the COE over to CEM/CEMA which was in part-

- The COE although displayed within the environs of web sites protected by Copyright, cannot be covered by any Copyright. The COE belongs to all individuals, groups and/or organizations who desire to abide by the spirit and content of the COE for the betterment of the International Awards Community where you may view the '[Spirit of the COE](#)' in its entirety.

CEM/CEMA never placed the COE in the Public Domain as was agreed and the author has been trying to enforce a no copyright policy on same ever since.¹

Finally on August 15, 2008 a great wrong was made right and Rhonda Serong obtained a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike United States License for the COE and gifted the original Code of Ethics (COE) document to the [Award Community News](#).

Her August 15, 2008 statement is quoted below with permission.

Quote: Although CEM/CEMA has been closed for some considerable time I have only yesterday (August 15th, 2008) ascertained that the Code of Ethics (COE) document was never licensed within the Public Domain by CEM/CEMA as was requested by myself many years past and as CEM/CEMA is no longer able to provide safe haven for the Code of Ethics (COE) document I have today, as the prime author of the Code of Ethics (COE) placed the document under a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike United States License and have also gifted the original Code of Ethics (COE) document to the Award Community News for the benefit of the overall Awards Community reserving the right for the owner of Award Community News and myself to jointly decide the future of the Code of Ethics (COE) should the Award Community News prematurely close.

Under the terms of the License we all remain free to remix, tweak, translate, redistribute and build upon our individual Code of Ethics (COE) documents non-commercially on condition we credit the [Award Community News](#) and license our Code of Ethics (COE) creations under identical terms as may be seen by accessing the image link we provide.

New users of the Code of Ethics (COE) can also download, remix, tweak, translate, redistribute and build upon the document producing new (COE) documents based on the Code of Ethics (COE) but all new work based on the Code of Ethics (COE) must carry the same license so any derivatives will also be non-commercial in nature with credit given to the [Award Community News](#).

The License means that pages that display the Code of Ethics (COE) must now (at a minimum) have displayed at the bottom of all relevant Code of Ethics (COE) page/s the following:

1. The correct Creative Commons [License Image](#)

The above image is to be linked to [Creative Commons](#) with image alt and / or title tags as follows: The Code of Ethics (COE) is licensed under a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike United States License.

2. Also displayed aligned with the image must be the following text content:

The Code of Ethics (COE) is licensed under a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike United States License with credit being given to [Award Community News](#) and being linked to ACN in accordance with the terms of the License.

The credit being given to Award Community News is considered correct in that although I was and remain the prime author of the original Code of Ethics (COE) I have never sought recognition for its composition and I consider that the Award Community News is an excellent medium within which the Code of Ethics (COE) may continue to progress.

I am aware that some may consider this to be a huge inconvenience however I consider the small amount of work involved to be minor when compared to the benefits many of us have had by displaying and using the Code of Ethics (COE) over the past years.

No one is going to 'police' web sites to see if we have our Code of Ethics (COE) Licenses displayed. That is not the purpose of the exercise. If we don't license our Code of Ethics (COE) pages then, in time, we will begin to lose credibility to those among us who have the License displayed so will have no one to blame but ourselves.

The exercise re the Code of Ethics (COE) has been to provide it with some protection of display and use and I look forward to those among us who currently use the Code of Ethics (COE) accepting this new arrangement.

I sincerely thank you for your patience in reading the above.

Rhonda. End Quote

The original declaration made by Rhonda Serong to CEM/CEMA:

To Whomever this may concern:

Quote: For the purposes of this statement the Code of Ethics/Statement of Ethics will be known as the (COE). Reason: As the (COE) was created to be adapted for the use of individual Award Programs varying Titles may also be used.

The Spirit of the (COE) and the reasoning behind the (COE) being created and then gifted to the Awards Community were and remain as follows:

The Spirit of the (COE) was and is that individuals, groups and/or organizations worldwide could have freely available a flexible standard format which could be used as the backbone of ethical Award Programs.

That no one individual, group and / or organization can or should own such a vehicle, therefore the (COE), in its entirety, is International Property.

Any individuals, groups and/or organizations believing in and standing behind the (COE) may legally without restriction offer the (COE) in the form of a document from their website for use by other individuals, groups and / or organizations who may wish to adhere to such a (COE).

The (COE) is to be offered to any individuals, groups and/or organizations without restrictions: this means that mandatory group and/or organization membership may not be part of the overall use of the (COE).

The (COE), although within the environs of websites protected by Copyright, cannot be covered by any Copyright. The (COE) belongs to all individuals, groups and/or organizations who desire to abide by the spirit and content of the (COE) for the betterment of the International Awards Community.²

Signed:

Rhonda M. Serong

(Co-author of the Declaration of Ethics) End of Quote.



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Footnotes:

¹Nothing modern and creative is in the public domain anymore unless the owner explicitly puts it in the public domain. Explicitly, as in you have a note from the author/owner saying, "I grant this to the public domain." Those exact words or words very much like them.

²An assumption that the poster had the right to post the item in the first place. If the poster didn't, then all the copies are pirated, and no implied license or theoretical reduction of the copyright can take place.

³Public domain case law ([legal proceedings](#)) reads in part "granting something to the public domain is a complete abandonment of all rights."

However the factual documentation of the COE supports that the document was not placed in the public domain by the author until August 15, 2008.

Therefore the [Creative Commons License](#) applies, to wit: Creative Commons licenses are non-revocable. This means that you cannot stop someone, who has obtained your work under a Creative Commons license, from using the work according to that license. You can stop distributing your work under a Creative Commons license at any time you wish; but this will not withdraw any copies of your work that already exist under a Creative Commons license from circulation, be they verbatim copies, copies included in collective works and/or adaptations of your work.

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