

ARCHIVAL STANDARDS FOR SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY ARCHIVES

The National Bahá'í Archives has prepared the following standards for the guidance of Spiritual Assemblies in organizing their local archives. The purpose of the standards is to ensure that the records and papers possessed by the Spiritual Assembly are preserved and safeguarded. Many of these records and papers are unique; hence, if they are destroyed much valuable information will be irretrievably lost. If older spiritual Assemblies with historically significant archival collections are not able to meet these standards, they can temporarily deposit their archives collections in the National Bahá'í Archives.

- I. **MINIMUM ARCHIVES STANDARDS.** The following are minimum standards for a local archives. They focus just on preserving its collections and do not presume that the archives is actively supporting scholarly or administrative research.
 1. **Storage Space.** Records should be stored in a facility that can be locked and be reserved specifically for the archives collections. It could be a file cabinet, wall cabinet, closet, or room(s).
 2. **Storage Environment and Safety.** The archives storage space should be in a protected environment:
 - a. Stable temperature and humidity (maximum 40-60% relative humidity, 68 degrees Fahrenheit/20 degrees Centigrade)—avoid basements and attics
 - b. No insects or rodents
 - c. No threat of flooding or seepage and away from water pipes
 - d. No threat of fire
 - e. Fire extinguisher(s) readily available
 3. **Contents of Archives.** The local archives should contain the inactive permanent records of the Local Spiritual Assembly and its committees and agencies and any personal papers of Bahá'is that have been donated. The local archives may contain:
 - a. Minutes
 - b. Annual reports
 - c. Significant, unique correspondence
 - d. Financial records and ledgers
 - e. Publicity scrapbooks or files
 - f. Local bulletins or calendars
 - g. Committee records
 - h. Records from teaching campaigns, including posters and flyers
 - i. Membership records
 - j. Photographs
 - k. Audiovisual materials
 - l. Printed or published materials appropriate for reference use with the archival collections
 - m. Personal papers of individuals

- n. Oral history interviews
- o. Relics and artifacts
- p. Rare books
- q. Computer-generated records

4. Acquisition of Archival Material

A record of all items and collections donated to the Spiritual Assembly for its archives should be maintained, listing the name of donor, description of the donation, date of donation, and any restrictions on access or use.

A Deed of Gift form should be developed and issued for all donations involving transfer of legal ownership. Two copies of the deed of gift, signed by an Assembly officer, should be sent to the donor. The donor should sign one copy and return it to the archives. The other copy is their official receipt.

The Assembly should also send a letter with the deed of gift, warmly thanking the donor for his or her donation.

A policy should be established for the regular transfer of non-current Assembly records to be placed in the archives. The records of the Spiritual Assembly itself and its committees are of the utmost importance and are the primary source for documenting the growth and development of the Faith in that locality.

Each collection of records and personal papers should be maintained intact and separate from each other. An inventory that lists the contents and date range of each collection should be filed at the front of the material, with a second copy maintained in a master notebook for easy reference. If the papers of very prominent Bahá'ís are offered, the Assembly should consult with the National Bahá'í Archives about whether such papers would more appropriately be retained at the National Bahá'í Archives.

5. Responsibility for Care of Archives.

The local archives should be under the exclusive control of an appointed archivist or archives committee, which should maintain an inventory of the archives collections and ensure that they are not lost, stolen, or misplaced. Either Assembly officers or members, or community members could be appointed.

II. STANDARDS FOR ACTIVE ARCHIVES. If the local archives plans to actively support scholarly or administrative research pertaining to the history and development of the Spiritual Assembly and its local community, it should meet not only the minimum standards listed above but also the following:

1. **Arrangement of Archival Collections.** The collections of local records and personal papers should be properly arranged, in acid-free boxes and folders, with appropriate finding aids, according to standard archival practice. (See *Guidelines for Bahá'í Archives*)
2. **Support of Research.** Space for students and visiting scholars will need to be provided, and the use of records and other archival material should be under the supervision of the archivist/archives committee. An access policy approved by the Spiritual Assembly will be required to protect confidential records. Finally, a guide to the holdings of the archives should be prepared.
3. **Archives Staff.** An ongoing training program for the appointed archivists/archives committee is essential to allow for the turnover of volunteer archivists. The National Bahá'í Archives stands ready to assist in the development of the training program.
4. **Upgrading of Archives Physical Facilities.** The following guidelines apply.
 - a. Install smoke detectors or heat sensors to detect fires
 - b. Install, if possible, an automatic fire extinguishing system, usually a sprinkler system
 - c. Install a security alarm system to protect against break-ins and thefts
 - d. Install steel, baked enamel shelving (not wood)
 - e. Consult with National Bahá'í Archives or a local university archives about additional preservation measures that can/should be taken
 - f. Facilities to allow researchers to make photocopies, use scanners, cameras, and other equipment should be considered