

CANADIAN BAHÁ'Í NATIONAL CENTRE ARCHIVES

POLICY STATEMENT

A. Purpose

The Archives office of the Bahá'í National Centre acquires, preserves, arranges and describes, and makes available the records in its care. This includes the records of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, its departments and offices, and its national committees. It also includes some letters of the Guardian, and some relics associated with the Holy Family. Finally, it includes the personal papers of some individual Bahá'ís.

B. Role of the archivist

The archivist is a staff member of the Secretariat, and reports to the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly. The archivist:

1. is responsible for establishing the authority and infrastructure within which to frame an archival program
2. submits to the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly:
 - a) all policies for approval
 - b) an annual report
 - c) requests for a budget
3. develops a records management program for the National Spiritual Assembly and its departments and committees:
 - a) consults with key staff in each department about a records classification system that meets the need of that department
 - b) develops a records retention schedule for systematic transfer to the archives and/or destruction of records of the National Spiritual Assembly and its departments
 - c) submits to the National Bahá'í Archives Committee, a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly, the records retention schedule for approval
4. identifies, acquires and appraises records and personal papers of individuals and other organizations within the Bahá'í national community, whose activities are of national import, for preservation in the archives, according to the acquisition policy
5. provides for the proper storage and preservation of letters of Shoghi Effendi, and tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and all relics associated with the Holy Family which are held by the archives
6. provides for the preservation of all records in appropriate storage materials, in a temperature and humidity-controlled environment
7. arranges and describes all records within the archives according to an established standard. The Association for Canadian Archivists' *Rules for Archival Description* is the recommended standard
8. facilitates intellectual access to the materials in the archives through preparation of indexes and other finding aids
9. provides access to archives by outside researchers while protecting the confidentiality of some information and the privacy of individuals for specified records and periods of time

10. supervises volunteers and/or archival assistants in their work, when circumstances permit
11. consults with and obtains advice from a national archives committee in the matters of education, acquisition of personal papers, and issues related to public programming, when such a committee exists.

C. Acquisition policy

The archives exists first for the preservation of the records of the National Spiritual Assembly. Other records acquired by the archives should be complementary to the functions of the National Spiritual Assembly. That is, the records and personal papers to be acquired outside the Bahá'í National Centre, or the agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly, should be of a national character. The acquisition of all records by the archives, from either internal or external sources, should be documented. Further detail will be found in the acquisition policy, when finalized.

D. Access policy

The archives is open to staff in performance of their duties at the Bahá'í National Centre. Other research requests will be considered, upon application to the archivist or the National Spiritual Assembly secretary. Materials of a personal confidential nature may be subject to certain restrictions. Further detail will be found in the access policy, when finalized.

E. Records management

Records management plays an important role in transferring records to the archives. The archivist and key staff in each department agree to a classification system that meets their needs, and determine the life span of each series of records. The records schedule will be adapted to meet changes in organizational structure and in functions, and will be approved by the National Bahá'í Archives Committee. Non-active or semi-active records which have been clearly documented and are scheduled for destruction may be kept in a designated area of the archives (or, when circumstances permit, a proper records centre), with destruction dates clearly marked. Once a year, scheduled records will be destroyed.

F. Definitions

Archives are defined as the whole of the records created in the course of conduct of affairs. Such records may occur in many forms and on a wide variety of media.

Records are defined as documents that have participated in a practical activity. Such definition excludes documents kept for information purposes only.

Approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, February 1997