

GUIDELINES FOR BAHÁ'Í BOOK COLLECTORS AND RESEARCHERS ABOUT PERSONAL PAPERS AND ITEMS

Book collectors or Bahá'í scholars conducting research for books often come across or learn about the existence of documents that would be classified as archival collections of an individual Bahá'í—personal papers and belongings, normally of a literary nature. These items do not have to be concerned with Bahá'í matters, especially if they document a person's professional or public life.

National Bahá'í Archives are concerned that all such materials be properly safeguarded, assessed, and transferred to the most appropriate Bahá'í archives, based on the individual's geographic location or record of Bahá'í activity. Archives or archives committees are normally glad to have book collectors function as their “hands in the field,” and are happy to advise collectors about doing an initial appraisal, selecting, packing, shipping, and storing material.

Issues Involved and Questions to Ask

1. Who is the Bahá'í?
 - Biographical data (including personal and family origins)
 - Bahá'í history and service record
 - Professional or community activity

2. Inventory the materials. Always maintain items' original order while doing the inventory, if possible. List the volume and dates or date ranges of such items as:
 - Books (especially those with annotations)
 - Letters of Shoghi Effendi, Hands of the Cause, pioneers, NSAs, LSAs
 - Personal correspondence
 - Photographs, albums, slides, films, or other audiovisual materials
 - News clippings, scrapbooks
 - Tape recordings, records
 - Diaries or pilgrim notes
 - Relics

3. Determine the most appropriate repository or recipient of the collection. Contact the National Bahá'í Archives to apprise it of the collection and consult about the most appropriate location.
 - Are materials from this person already held elsewhere?
 - Where would materials best be used by future researchers?
 - Should an LSA be consulted?

4. Do not remove materials from the premises without securing legal transfer of ownership of the materials from the donor or the donor's family to the appropriate archival repository, noting any restrictions they may wish to place on the collection. The National Bahá'í Archives can provide a sample deed of gift to use as a model, if local archives do not have their own available.