

SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY RECORDS IN LOCAL BAHÁ'Í ARCHIVES

Why Have a Local Bahá'í Archives?

“The importance of the institution of Bahá'í Archives is not due only to the many teaching facilities it procures, but is essentially to be found in the vast amount of historical data and information it offers both to the present-day administrators of the Cause and to the Bahá'í historians of the future. The institution of Bahá'í Archives is indeed a most valuable storehouse regarding all the aspects of the Faith, historical, administrative, as well as doctrinal.” (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 25, 1936)

The Spiritual Assembly, as a permanent body, is responsible for maintaining all its records, including minutes, correspondence and financial records, throughout its existence as a Bahá'í institution. Each officer, therefore, on completing his or her term of office, shall turn over to the Assembly all records pertaining to the business of the Assembly.

What Types of Records Are Suitable for the Archives?

The Bahá'í Archives houses the official, inactive records of the Spiritual Assembly, its officers and committees. In addition, the Archives houses other archival material concerning the Bahá'í Community, such as relics, personal papers of Bahá'ís, photographs, tape recordings, local Bahá'í bulletins and newspaper clippings.

Which Assembly Records Should be Kept Permanently in the Archives?

Spiritual Assembly records having permanent historical or administrative value should be placed in the Archives when no longer needed in the current business of the Spiritual Assembly. This can be done once a year after Ridván. Other records can be disposed of.

<u>Disposition of Inactive Records</u>	<u>Placed in Archives</u>	<u>Destroyed</u>
Annual Reports	X	
Minutes	X	

<u>Disposition of Inactive Records</u>	<u>Place in Archives</u>	<u>Destroyed</u>
Feast Letters		X
Other routine mailings from the Bahá'í National Center		X
Unique correspondence with National Assembly,		

Bahá'í National Center or other Bahá'í Institutions	X	
Correspondence with Individuals	X	
Routine advertisements, etc. from non-Bahá'ís		X
Birth, Marriage and Death Registers	X	
Cash or Financial Journal	X	
Annual Financial Report	X	
Other Financial Records		X
Local Committee Reports	X	
Local Bulletins, Newsletters or Calendars	X	
Local Publicity Files or Scrapbooks	X	
Personal Status Case Files	X	
Local Membership Lists or Directories	X	
Enrollment, change of address, etc. forms		X
Duplicate annual reports, minutes, bulletins, etc.		X
Photographs of Spiritual Assembly, Bahá'í community or community activities	X	

Who Should Be In Charge of the Archives?

The Spiritual Assembly should appoint someone to be responsible for its archives. This can be the Assembly secretary, another Assembly member, or a member of the community can be appointed archivist.

How Can Missing Records Be Identified?

An annual inventory of the Archives should be made and a copy presented to the Spiritual Assembly. The inventory can be compared with the previous inventory to ensure that no records are missing.

Should Researchers Be Allowed in the Archives?

The Spiritual Assembly should establish an access policy for their inactive records. The Assembly will need free access to its records when researching questions before the Assembly. Private research should require the permission of the Assembly or the person in charge of the Archives and researchers should be shown only non-confidential material. Records should be kept of all those using the Archives and of all files borrowed, to ensure that such material is eventually returned.

What Should Be Considered in Storing and Protecting Records?

Records should not be stored in places such as attics and basements where they will be subject to high temperatures, temperature and humidity fluctuations, or water damage. It may be necessary to store very valuable records in commercial storage space, such as safe deposit boxes. Protection against the following enemies of records should be kept in mind when storing records: 1) Fire 2) Flooding 3) Excessive humidity (over 68%) causing mold 4) High temperatures (over 80 degrees F; 27 degrees C) 5) Sunlight 6) Insects and rodents 7) Rubber bands, paper clips and scotch tape 8) Theft and borrowed records never returned.

What Should Be Done with Personal Papers of Bahá'ís?

Some Spiritual Assemblies will be given the personal papers of Bahá'ís. These may consist of letters, books, photographs, relics, diaries, personal recollections or manuscripts. Any collection of personal papers should be kept intact and not interfiled with the Assembly records or other personal papers. For further information see the National Bahá'í Archives personal papers information sheet.

When An Assembly is Lost, What Should Be Done with Its Records?

If possible, they should be stored by a former Assembly officer or member, or by a reliable member of the community until the Assembly is reformed. If none of these alternatives are available, the Assembly records and other archival material should be sent to the National Bahá'í Archives for storage. The Assembly's library, including publications like *American Bahá'í*, should *not* be sent to the National Bahá'í Archives.

LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY RECORDS INVENTORY FORM

1. Name of Spiritual Assembly: _____

2. Date of Inventory: _____

3. Location of Records: _____

4. Type of Records (record date range (i.e. earliest and latest dates) and number of folders/boxes for each category of records)

Minutes:

Annual Reports:

Correspondence with National Assembly:

Correspondence with Bahá'í National Center:

Correspondence with Auxiliary Board:

Correspondence with Local Spiritual Assemblies:

Correspondence with Individuals:

Correspondence with Public:

Other Correspondence:

Personal Status Case Files:

Other Subject Files:

Financial (Cash) Journals:

Contribution Receipts:

Committee Reports:

Records of Local Committees:

Local Bulletins/Newsletters/Calendars:

Membership lists/directories:

Publicity Files or Scrapbooks:

Photographs:

Personal Papers of Individual Bahá'ís (specify names):

Other (specify):