

[Review and Care of archives]

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The Universal House of Justice
Department of the Secretariat
Transmitted by email
6 June 2013

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your email letter dated 3 April 2013 requesting statistics concerning the Sacred Texts has been received at the Bahá'í World Centre and forwarded to the Research Department for study. That Department notes that the collection and collation of the Sacred Writings is an ongoing process, and the numbers are continually being revised. The estimates of the numbers of unique works can be given as follows:

- For Bahá'u'lláh, nearly 20,000 unique works have been identified. Most of these Writings have been collected; however, 865 are known to have been revealed, but the texts are not available. Close to 15,000 of the collected works have been authenticated by the Archives Office to date.
- For the Báb, over 2,000 unique works have been identified. Most of these Writings have been collected; however, 74 are known to have been revealed, but the texts are not available. Nearly 1,600 of the collected works have been authenticated.
- For 'Abdu'l-Bahá, over 30,000 unique works have been identified. All of these Writings have been collected and over 27,000 of them have been authenticated.
- For Shoghi Effendi, over 22,000 unique works have been identified. All of these documents have been collected and the majority of them have been authenticated.

It is estimated that approximately ten per cent of the documents described above are in photocopied form. A fraction of the total numbers of unique works have been published in the original languages or translated into Western languages. However, citing exact numbers would be misleading since much of the unpublished and untranslated material consists of day-to-day correspondence and personal guidance and encouragement, which is less likely to be of general interest. The World Centre is actively pursuing a publication programme for the as yet unpublished major works of the Central Figures of the Faith and Shoghi Effendi.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Department of the Secretariat

<https://www.archives.gov/about/info/whats-a-record.html>

Records have "Lifecycles"

Every day in Federal Government agencies, important documents are created. For example, the President may be signing an Executive order; the navy may be gathering data about a new fighter jet; and the Department of Education may be publishing a new resource for teachers. What happens to those documents?

Usually, they follow the "lifecycle of records," a process for organizing, storing, and using records. Officials at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) help documents through this process.

Creation:

A person or organization in the Federal Government produces or receives a record.

Maintenance and use:

While being used, the record is organized and stored with similar material.

Disposition:

A record is evaluated. The creator of a record proposes to the National Archives how long it should be kept. Some records are destroyed (for example, a receipt for the purchase of pencils), while others are kept permanently in the National Archives (such as executive orders). Records schedules are set up to determine how long all Federal records are to be kept by the Government. Only 1–3% of all records are kept permanently, but the total number of documents in the National Archives number in the billions, and the number keeps growing.

Arrangement and description:

Records are put in new boxes and folders at the National Archives. Archivists and archives specialists then write brief summaries of what is contained in the records, which agency created them, and why.

Preservation:

Records are protected from damage. They may be old or fragile, or like videotapes, they wear out, or like floppy disks, they become obsolete.

Reference:

Archivists assist researchers in making use of records. An archivist, archives specialist or archives technician can help in person at one of the National Archives' facilities, on the telephone, through information on the [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov) website, or by mail.

Continuing use:

Records are sometimes displayed or shared for reasons other than their original purpose. For example, when the United States wrote a check to Russia to purchase Alaska in 1867, the cancelled check became proof of America's purchase (original use). That check is used now in exhibits and educational materials to teach people about U.S. history (continuing use).

What's an Archives?

An archives is a place where people can go to gather firsthand facts, data, and evidence from letters, reports, notes, memos, photographs, and other primary sources.

The National Archives is the U.S. Government's collection of documents that records important events in American history. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the Government agency that preserves and maintains these materials and makes them available for research.

Whether or not you realize it, you probably have an archives in your home. It might be in a filing cabinet in your study, a box in the basement, a chest in the attic. It is your personal archives: a collection of material that records important events from your family's history.

Both a family's archives and the nation's archives

- save items to serve as proof that an event occurred;
- explain how something happened, whether for personal, financial, or sentimental reasons;
- may be located in more than one place.

There are ways that your family archives and the National Archives, together, tell your family's story. For example, your family's archives might contain the final certificate for your great-great-grandfather's homestead; the National Archives may hold the original applications for the homestead. Your family's archives may include a photograph from the day your grandmother became a U.S. citizen; the National Archives contains the Government applications for naturalization of persons wishing to become U.S. citizens.

Personal Archives Versus Federal Archives

Every day Government agencies create new records that might be transferred to the National Archives. NARA's holdings are created either by or for the Federal Government. The material comes from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Whereas your family's archives is personal, those held by the National Archives are official. Your family's archives might include your birth certificate. The National Archives holds the original, signed "birth certificate" for our nation—the [Declaration of Independence](#). For more information, visit [What's a Record?](#)

Your family's archives are available only to you and family members. The holdings in the National Archives are available to almost everyone.

About Our Nation's Records

More than 95 percent of the records in the National Archives are declassified, meaning they are available to all researchers. NARA employs approximately 3,000 full- and part-time employees to help facilitate the use of its holdings. Many of the records in the National Archives are available on microfilm, and more than 1.8 million digital images of documents can be seen through NARA's [online catalog](#).

Some of the oldest materials in the National Archives are on parchment and date back to the founding of the United States of America. These include the records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses. Some of the more recent holdings include electronic files transferred from the Department of State and are available online through Access to Archival Databases (AAD).

Preservation of Records

To help preserve material, NARA stores archives records in acid-free folders within acid-free boxes that are placed in dark spaces with consistent temperature and humidity.

For many years Federal records were created on paper and stored in files and boxes. These days electronic records are created by government agencies at an astounding rate. To meet this challenge, the National Archives is finding new ways to manage and preserve electronic materials. Learn more about our [Electronic Records Archives](#) initiative.

Anyone over the age of 14 with valid [identification](#) can conduct research in any of the NARA facilities.

North Carolina State University Graduate Degree in Public History

<https://history.ncsu.edu/grad/apply.php>

Public History M.A. and Ph.D.

Public History-MA or Public History-PhD; under Department / Specialty / Concentration, specify your field: Archival and Records Management (transfer agreement with UNC Chapel Hill), Heritage Studies, Museum Studies, Public Memory, and/or Community History.

Wilson Library UNC-CH

<https://library.unc.edu/wilson/uarms/>

Preserving Family Treasures

THE COMMON ENEMIES OF FAMILY TREASURES, Paper **Composition**

THE PROBLEMS

If you held in your hand today a letter written by Benjamin Franklin, or perhaps a receipt signed by his wife or someone in his print shop, and compared it to a letter you or your parents wrote forty years ago, you would be surprised to discover that the two hundred year old documents are in better condition than the more recent ones. Why? "Old" paper was made from good fibers, held together by good sizing, written upon by good ink. But after about the mid-nineteenth century in America paper was mass-produced, the use of wood pulp was substituted for better quality rag, and the writing inks were poorer. Thus "modern" paper (unless specially purchased) is composed of bad ingredients and is full of acidic compounds that begin destroying the fibers soon after manufacture. Depending on how it is stored, many experts agree that most modern paper has a useful life of only 50 to 75 years.

WHAT TO DO

If you are creating scrapbooks, albums, or collections of family memorabilia that you want your children or grandchildren to preserve and treasure:

- Buy acid free, lignin free, alkaline reserve (or buffered) paper, folders, storage boxes and containers.
- If you find old letters crumbling, scrapbooks and photo albums falling apart, then:
- "Encapsulate" or folder letters and pages, in good quality plastic sleeves.

If the album or scrapbook is not a family heirloom or artifact (e.g. one that you began not long ago, but which is now falling apart or, you suspect after reading this, is not "archival" in nature) re-mount everything in a good quality album or scrapbook.

What about important memorabilia being created today (letters & documents, like your child's or grandchild's first writings, drawings, etc.)? Use an archivist's Ph pen to test for acid in paper. If acidic, have a conservator deacidify, or use deacidification spray solutions, for example commercial products like Wei To' or Bookkeeper sprays (but remember, always test for ink solubility, and use in well-ventilated area).

- "Encapsulate" items in plastic.
- The Environment: Temperature & Humidity
- The Environment: Light
- The Environment: Mold
- Adhesives & Fasteners
- Insects
- People

<https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/digitizing>

Digitizing Family Papers and Photographs

Digitizing your originals can allow you to view and share your items without handling, which can cause damage. Keep your originals after you digitize them, because digital files have their own preservation risks and can easily be lost. Whether digitizing your family papers yourself or having a company do it, it is important that the originals be handled carefully so they are not damaged in the process.

A few considerations in digitizing:

For flat paper and photographs, make sure the original fits completely on the surface of the scanner. The lid of the scanner can crush and crease the original if the paper doesn't fit on the scanner.

For books, use a copy stand instead of a flatbed scanner. Use book supports, wedges or a cradle so the binding is opened comfortably without force.

Automatic feed scanners are not suitable for fragile, weak, bent, or valuable papers; papers can jam and become torn in automatic feed scanners.

Determining how far a book can open safely without placing stress on the binding

A book cradle that is used with a copy stand for taking digital images

File Naming: Use only the letters of the Latin alphabet (A-Z, a-z) when creating alpha-numeric identifications. Don't use spaces, punctuation or symbols. Use hyphens and underscores instead of spaces.

Add basic Metadata to files: Who, What, Where, and When. Metadata helps find and identify files later in time; there are a number of metadata options.

Back Up your Files- Follow the 3-2-1 Rule. Three copies, stored on two different media, and one copy located off-site.

For more information on digitizing records:

Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative website - www.digitizationguidelines.gov

American Society for Media Photographers Best Practices - <http://dpbestflow.org/>

Universal Photographers Digital Imaging Guidelines - www.updig.org/

Wilhelm Imaging Research - www.wilhelm-research.com/

Image Permanence Institute - www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/