

## PERSONAL PAPERS IN LOCAL BAHÁ'Í ARCHIVES

These guidelines are designed for local Spiritual Assemblies who do not have an organized, functioning local Bahá'í archives but who have been given the personal papers of a Bahá'í or Bahá'í family.

### What are Personal Papers?

They are the papers accumulated by individuals or families during their lifetime. The papers can include:

Letters	Copies of drafts of talks,	Diaries
Photographs	books, articles, courses, etc.	Legal records
Financial records	Books or other printed matter	Scrapbooks
Tape recordings	Personal articles, like clothing,	Relics
Computer files	jewelry, etc	Artwork

### Why are Personal Papers Important?

Personal papers are important to historians and other scholars because they often contain information not found in institutional records. They document the life of the individual who accumulated them and so are important to biographers. Personal papers also contain valuable material about other Bahá'ís and Bahá'í institutions and communities. They help scholars understand the feelings, motivations, and personal qualities of Bahá'ís and Bahá'í communities.

### How Should Personal Papers Be Handled?

First, each collection of personal papers should be kept intact and separate from other personal papers and from the Spiritual Assembly records. They should not be interfiled with other collections. A record should be kept of whose papers they are and who donated them to the Local Spiritual Assembly. Each collection of personal papers should be given a title, consisting of the name of the individual or family creating the papers, the term "Papers" and the date range of the papers. (For example, "Lilly Smith Papers, 1940-1965") If an individual's Bahá'í library has also been received, the Bahá'í books can be placed in the local Bahá'í reference library. However, books containing handwritten notes or autographs should remain with the personal papers.

Second, each collection of personal papers should be placed in its own box(es) and labeled with the collection title. Personal papers should be stored in the same location as the Assembly records to reduce the risk of being misplaced. The storage location should be one that will protect the papers from dampness, flooding, fire, rodents, insects, high temperature, and theft.

**What Should Be Done with Original Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Or Letters from Shoghi Effendi?**

If possible, the original Tablet(s) or letter(s) should be sent to the National Bahá’í Archives and a photocopy kept with the collection. If this is not possible, a photocopy should be sent to the National Bahá’í Archives. It is important that either the original or a photocopy be sent to the National Bahá’í Archives, both for its own files and so that photocopies may be sent to the Universal House of Justice.

**Should Personal Papers Be Reported to the National Bahá’í Archives?**

Yes, the National Bahá’í Archives would like to know about personal papers in local Bahá’í archives. This will allow the National Bahá’í Archives to better assist local Bahá’í archives and will also be of value to researchers working at the National Bahá’í Archives. Please send to the National Bahá’í Archives the title of the collection and its size (i.e., number of items, folders or boxes).

Occasionally a Local Spiritual Assembly will be asked to transfer a collection of personal papers to the National Bahá’í Archives. The papers may contain material of national or international significance that belong more appropriately in a national Bahá’í archives rather than in a local Bahá’í archives. Other times the papers may be a separated part of a collection already in the National Bahá’í Archives. In such cases it is preferable for the entire collection of papers to be located in just one archives and not scattered in several locations. In most cases, photocopies of the records can be made and retained in the local archives. There will also be occasions when Local Spiritual Assemblies are asked to lend collections to the National Bahá’í Archives to be microfilmed.