

CONWAY HALL

HUMANIST LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

draft ARCHIVES POLICY

BACKGROUND

The Humanist Library and Archives (HLA) is the repository for the archives of the South Place Ethical Society (SPES) and the National Secular Society (NSS). It houses also some archives of kindred organisations and prominent Humanist individuals. The archives in the Library's care are freely accessible for reference by the general public.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy defines the roles, purpose, and activities of the HLA in managing all the archives in its care now or in the future.

DEFINITIONS AND VALUE STATEMENTS

Archives are the past present and future records produced by people and organisations in their day-to-day activities. They can be correspondence, title deeds, diaries, plans, minute books, film, sound recordings, photographs, pictures and computer generated records... Archives are 'the sources for tomorrow's historians, scientists, teachers, genealogists, students and other researchers... Many documents obsolete for business or legal purposes are still of enormous historical interest.'

(British Records Association)

Records

- Records are elements of information or data arranged and retained as working tools for the organisation or individual creating them.
- Records embody a structured corporate 'memory' that has the capacity to survive long beyond the demise of its creator.
- Records and archives can take any form or be in any medium, analogue or digital, appropriate to the information they embody.
- When records cease to be of value for current business they have the potential to become archives.
- Records judged not to be of permanent value should be disposed of in accordance with legal requirements and best practice standards

Archives

- Archives are records retained beyond the term of their operational or legal value, as sources for the history of the creating organisation or person, or of the wider society of which they form part.
- The decision to retain records as archives is taken after appraisal of their long-term operational, legal or historical value, and implies an obligation to preserve them in perpetuity.
- The organisation responsible for records and archives has an obligation to manage them in accordance with all relevant legislative requirements and national and international standards of care.

PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING AND KEEPING ARCHIVES

Archives and records are preserved:

- For present and future business reference: archives and records are the memory of the organisation
- Because laws or codes of conduct require their retention and/or prescribe how they are kept. (eg company records, personal records subject to the Data Protection Act)
- As primary sources for tomorrow's historians, scientists, teachers, genealogists, students and other researchers. Many documents obsolete for business or legal purposes are still of enormous historical interest, often unrelated to their original use or purpose.

ARCHIVE COLLECTING POLICY

Scope of archives held and acquired

- The HLA will acquire the archives of its governing body (SPES) and of the NSS by agreement as the Society's agent. It will also acquire archives of bodies subsidiary or directly related to the two Societies. It will acquire archives of members of either Society or prominent Humanists closely related to them.

Relations with repositories with complementary collecting policies

- When considering acquisition of any archives not generated directly by the two Societies, the HLA will be aware and consider the interests and collecting policies of other archive repositories, liaising directly with them where necessary.
- The aim will be to agree the most appropriate repository to receive any given archive(s), bearing in mind existing collecting arrangements and collections, and also the institutions' interests and resources. The objective is to minimise competition and maximise co-operation and the best use of scarce facilities and curatorial resources.

- Given the two institutions' shared interest in the archives of Humanism, there will be a strong presumption in favour of this approach when liaising with Bishopsgate Institute Library.

Methods of acquisition

The HLA may acquire archives by:

- Transfer from the administrative and managerial sections of the two Societies
- Donation or bequest
- Long-term loan
- Purchase

Donations

In the case of donations the following conditions must be met:

- The donor has the authority to transfer the material and enters into a formal deposit agreement transferring both physical ownership and intellectual property rights
- The material becomes the property of the Humanist Reference Library, with absolute power to administer as it sees fit, including the selection and/or disposal of part or all where this is considered professionally appropriate
- No unnecessary or onerous restrictions are imposed on access or availability for research
- The physical condition of the material and any consequent conservation implications will be considered, as will the cost implications of processing, housing, and providing appropriate access

Long-term loans

- Although there is a strong presumption in favour of outright donation, long-term loan may be considered where the material is considered to be of special significance or interest, and/or there are significant obstacles to the owner transferring legal ownership.
- Long-term loans will be subject to specific agreements on a case-by-case basis, governing the nature and term of the loan, and any agreed conditions of use or access. Such agreements will include defined provision for recovery of sums expended on the care and curation of the materials if the loan is terminated prematurely.

Appraisal, selection and disposal

- To ensure the efficient use of scarce resources of space and time, HLA will appraise all records acquired to ensure that only material of administrative or historical significance is selected for retention as archives, and that material judged of little or no value is discarded.
- Care will be taken to meet all necessary legal and best practice safeguards when disposing of records not selected for preservation.

MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES

Standards

- The HLA will endeavour to manage the archives in its care in line with accepted national and international standards and best practice guidelines.
- In its overall approach it will aspire to the *National Archives' Standard for Record Repositories, 2004*, which sets out best practice in the core areas of archival provision, and its supporting *Framework of Standards*,
- In specific areas of work the guiding standards will be as below

Preservation

- HLA will strive to provide accommodation for the archives in its care which meets so far as possible the environmental requirements of *BS 5454:2000 Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents*, and media-specific standards for the care of non-paper records such as photographs, magnetic media, digital media etc.
- Records in media for which the HLA cannot provide storage to the relevant standards (in particular film) will not be acquired and efforts will be made to direct such material to appropriate repositories.

Security

- In order to ensure the long term preservation of the archives in the HLA's care, and their safe transmission to future generations, all archive storage at HLA will meet so far as possible the security requirements of *BS5454*.
- Procedures will be put in place to ensure the security of archives removed from their storage for research or any other reason, and their safe return.
- There will be a strong presumption against loans of archives other than to approved institutions for defined, limited periods and purposes.

Conservation

- All conservation work on the archives will be in line with the guidance of *BS 4971:2002, Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents – Recommendations*, and the advice of professional archive conservators.
- A conservation work programme will be devised, with priorities, and the necessary funding obtained or sought.
- Conservation work requiring any significant level of technical expertise will be entrusted only to professional conservators.

Arrangement, cataloguing, finding aids

The arrangement of the archives at HLA, and the creation of catalogues and finding aids, will be undertaken in compliance with appropriate national and international standards, and in particular:

- *General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD(G), second edition, 2000*

- *International Council on Archives, International Standard Archival Authority for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, (ISAAR (CPF), 2004*
- *National Council on Archives Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names, 1997*
- *UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT), archives subject thesaurus, 2004.*

Access

- The HLA will aspire to the *National Council on Archives: Public Services Quality Group, A Standard for Access to Archives (2008)*
- Procedures will be put in place to facilitate public access to the archives at HLA while at the same time ensuring their security and safe handling. In particular the Library rules will include appropriate specific provisions for access and use of the archives.

ADOPTION AND REVIEW OF POLICY

This Archives Policy was adopted by the HLA Library Advisory Group on xxxx
The Group will review the Policy on xxxx