



Archive The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain

Archive Collection Policy

Name of the repository: Archives, The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain
Address: Archives, St Mary's Convent, 98 Hunters Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B19 1EB
Identity of the governing body/authority: Leadership Team, Mercy Union Generalate, 11 Harewood Avenue, London, NW1 6LD

Statutory position/obligations

The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain (hereafter GB) is a private record collecting body, so not legally obliged to provide access to researchers. However, guidelines for Catholic archives issued by the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church in 1997, as directed by the 1983 Code of Canon Law (Canon 578), set out recommendations for the keeping and promotion of archives as cultural heritage.¹ In accordance with the *Joint Archives Policy - Institute, Union and Federation Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain*, (January 2007), the Generalate of the Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB recognises that "the archives are, in principle, at the disposition of Sisters and other persons concerned with research".²

Advice given in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), together with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) is used by the Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB as a guide to archival access.

Mission statement

"Our rich heritage as Sisters of Mercy centred in Jesus Christ impels us ... to use our collective resources to reach out, embrace and be embraced by a suffering world, so that all may have life to the full."

(MIJN Mission Statement 2001).

The Archive aims to collect and disseminate evidence of past and present activities, aims and associations of The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB, Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Associates and those reached by The Union of the Sisters of Mercy for legal, administrative, personal, cultural and historical reasons. This is intended to raise awareness of the presence of Mercy, and use our rich heritage to reach out and educate. Collection and dissemination of relevant material also ensures the preservation of 'irreplaceable storehouses of pastoral knowledge

¹ *Church Archives: The Pastoral Function of Church Archives; Archives in Canon Law*, 2nd edition, 2001 (The Catholic Archives Society)

² *Joint Archives Policy - Institute, Union and Federation Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain*, January 2007 (IFU Joint Commission on Archives)

and even renewal', as highlighted in *Standards for Mercy Archives*.³ Mercy International Association's Vision also applies to the Archive collection policy (see below for diagram). The Archive will particularly seek to acquire material which is of historical interest but is in danger of neglect or destruction. The Archive is committed to long-term preservation of unique documents through suitable storage and management by the Archivist.

Vision in Action of the Mercy International Association "...to integrate the activities of Mercy International Association in service of the mission of Mercy today...":



Geographical area

The Archive of The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB will acquire material only from within those areas of the United Kingdom and the world where Sisters of Mercy connected with The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB and its formative communities have been and are operative. Where appropriate, archives relating to worldwide Mercy missions will be collected.

Subject area

The Archive of the Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB has an active interest in collecting: legal and administrative documentation of Convents of Mercy from 1839 (although certain routine financial records will not be sought); papers and artefacts concerning Sisters of Mercy and Catherine McAuley (personnel); associated ecclesiastical personages; archival records concerning Mercy schools, hospitals, nursing and care homes, and Mercy missions. Accessions from Sisters of Mercy, businesses, charities, families and individuals in keeping with the subject area will be accepted. In the instance of archives relating to the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy or the Federation of the Sisters of Mercy being identified as in danger of neglect or destruction, these are accepted to be more appropriately held by the Archive of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy in Bermondsey or the Federation as applicable.

Chronological period

Most material dates from around the 1840s to the present day. The Archive strives to actively collect papers of archival interest to the congregation, irrespective of date.

³ *Standards for Mercy Archives* (Mercy International Association, Draft 3, March 2006)

Genre or media of records held

Manuscript, printed, photographic, audio and audio-visual, as well as electronic archival records are within the scope of the collections policy, although the long-term preservation of electronic records will be within the limitations of the Union Archive Preservation Policy (see separate Preservation Policy). The Archive will also collect certain artwork and artefacts where these are in keeping with the subject area. Where documents in other repositories or in private hands are found to relate closely to the holdings of The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB Archive, the Archivist will seek to acquire copies of such documents.

The advice of The National Archives, Archives Sector Development will be sought, where needed, to ensure appropriate and responsible acquisition.

Cooperation/demarcation with other repositories whose collection policy overlaps

When advising potential depositors, the Archive will draw attention to the existence of other repositories with similar or overlapping interests to ensure that material is offered to the most appropriate institution. This particularly pertains to the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy, the Federation of the Sisters of Mercy GB or other worldwide Mercy congregations.

Archives concerning other orders, diocesan, parish or church history are acquired only when having a direct relevance to the activities or lives, past or present, of the Sisters of Mercy.

Where such documents do not complement or enrich the Archive's existing holdings, or where these are more appropriately held elsewhere, they will be directed to the relevant diocesan or other repository. The Union Archivist works closely with all interested parties to ensure this appropriate placing. The advice of the National Archives, Archives Sector Development will be sought where appropriate.

Methods of acquisition

Donations are preferred to deposits on loan. Purchases will be made only of documents of outstanding importance to The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB. Within The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB, active survey and rescue work is undertaken by the Archivist, alongside relevant individuals. Where potential archival materials are found in the quarters of a Sister who is seriously ill or has died, the Sister in charge will transfer these to the Archive or undertake discussions with the Archivist. Family papers will be offered first to family members but personal papers relating to convent living or religious life should be retained by the Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB. The Archivist will seek to ensure transfer of records held throughout The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB to the Archive if they are deemed of historical significance to The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB. Transfer would take place once the end of their current lifecycle is reached, and will be achieved by the implementation of the Union Sisters of Mercy retention schedule.

Conditions associated with accessions

All deposits, whether gift or loan, must be accompanied by a deposit agreement signed by the archive's owners and the Archive, covering ownership, copyright, access arrangements and provision for materials not selected for permanent retention. Finding aids may be required with deposits where bulk is likely to render the documents otherwise inaccessible until processed.

Selection/deaccessioning policy

Following deposit and during the cataloguing process the Archivist shall evaluate the collection and identify any materials not required for permanent preservation. Disposal will be arranged with the agreement of the depositor and in line with the deposit agreement. The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB will not sell any documents it owns. The Archive shall have authority to transfer records to a more suitable repository if it is considered that the documents would benefit from relocation.

Public availability

Where physical access is required to archival material by external researchers, a request for permission to consult the archives should be made in writing to the Archivist describing material required and research purpose. A letter of recommendation will be sought for academic study. Material previously in the public domain will be available for public access. Other archival material will be subject to The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB closure periods, partly guided by wider access legislation. Access to archival material deemed sensitive requires permission of the Leadership Team of the Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB (requests will be relayed by the Archivist). Decisions will be based upon closure periods and the possible implications of research. Fragile documents are not available for consultation. Access to informational content of archives may, where appropriate and reasonable, be given in response to email requests, in place of personal document consultation.

Processing of data – GDPR and DPA

The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB maintains an Archive to serve the needs of the Sisters and for wider purposes. We archive to secure the permanent availability of recorded memory; to enable research and investigation; enable long-term accountability; discovery of personal, community and organisational memory and to enable educational use. The Archive of The Union of the Sisters of Mercy GB works under the provisions of General Data Protection Regulation (EU GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (UK). Data is processed and material archived under article 89 (GDPR) and sec. 19 in the Data Protection Act 2018: Processing for archiving purposes in the public interest. Access to material in the archive is provided only in line with our own closure periods, designated at the time of accession and cataloguing, and with consideration of the need to avoid substantial damage or distress to a data subject.

Date of this issue of the policy statement: June 2018

Date for its next formal review: June 2021