
Collecting, Preservation and Access Policy

October, 2010

Part One

Collecting policy

The Library and Archives of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland

History

The Wesley Historical Society (WHS) was founded in 1893 to promote the study of the history and literature of Methodism. An Irish branch was formed in 1926. From its inception the WHS (now the MHS) in Ireland had the endorsement of the Irish Methodist Conference, which in 1926 gave its approval to 'the suggestion to conserve Irish Methodist historical materials ... in co-operation with and affiliation with the parent Society.'

Although the archives remain the responsibility of MHSI and it is a voluntary society it has a quasi-official relationship with the Methodist Church, reporting to the annual Conference, but not under its jurisdiction. Increasingly it has become the repository for registers and journals of individual churches and organizations as well as church related private papers of ministers and lay people.

Location

In 2003 the Society's library and archives moved to a purpose-built archival and study centre in a new suite of buildings at Edgehill Theological College, Lennoxvale, Belfast. For the previous forty years the archives were housed at Aldersgate House, University Road, having had various earlier locations in Dublin and Belfast.

The MHSI Collection:

The library holds a valuable collection of manuscript and early printed material relating to the Wesleys and Irish Methodism:

- *Wesley family*: correspondence relating to John and Charles and other members of the Wesley family including a rare portrait of Susanna Wesley and early musical scores of the musical prodigy, Samuel Wesley.
- *Methodist Preachers*: Diaries, journals, scrapbooks of Irish Methodist preachers including diaries and or sermons of Adam Averell, W Graham Campbell, Adam Clarke (letters and other memorabilia), Alexander Elliott, John Galt, Charles Graham, Alexander Mackey, George McIlwain, William Myles, John Nelson, and Fossey Tackaberry.

- *Methodist Missions*: Minutes and papers relating to the Irish Home Mission Department and the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland) known as Hibernian Auxiliary, Irish Auxiliary and MMS(I).
- *Official Conference Minutes and publications*: Wesleyan Conference minutes, 1752-1878; Wesleyan Conference agenda and minutes as published, 1878- ; Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Conference minutes, 1816-78.
- Local Church records: Membership lists, schedule books, marriage and baptism registers, school registration rolls etc.
- *Periodicals*: *The Methodist Magazine* (Irish Edition-monthly) 1801-1822 (with portraits of Irish preachers); *The Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* (the only complete run in existence) 1823-1878 (bi-monthly); *The Irish Evangelist* (monthly) 1859-1883; *Christian Advocate* (weekly) 1883-1923; *Irish Christian Advocate* (weekly) 1923-1971; *Methodist Newsletter* (monthly) 1973- ; MMS(I): issues of *Missionary Notices* (from 1816), *The Foreign Field* (from 1904), *Kingdom Overseas* (from 1932) and *NOW* (from 1972).
- *Printed books*: 7,000 printed books and pamphlets on Methodist history and biography; Dublin printed editions of Wesley's journals, letters and Christian library.
- *Miscellaneous*: Microfilms of Methodist registers of Northern Ireland circuits, Correspondence between missionaries in the Irish Mission and the WMMS in London, extensive microfilm of the Christian Guardian in Canada; Photographs and other illustrative material, late 18th-20th century; important collection of Wesleyana and Methodist pottery; silver and pewter communion cups and plates; 35mm slides and 16mm film produced by and for the Home Mission Department relating to Irish Missions, subsidised by the Rank Trust.

Collection policy

Conscious of the amount of material of historical importance being lost, particularly at local church level, either through carelessness or accident, the MHSI in 2007 drafted proposals for the 'Preservation of Methodist Records' which were sent to the General Committee of the Irish Conference and were accepted and printed in the Minutes of Conference (2007) pps 64-65.¹

In summary, these regulations give effect to the requirement that non-current Methodist records be transferred to secure storage in consultation with the MHSI and recommends the use of the MHSI archives for such purpose.

In developing further its collection policy the MHSI takes as its broad collection mission statement the original resolution of 1926:

¹ See Appendix One

'to [collect] and conserve Irish Methodist historical materials'

In order to identify the extent of records, current and non-current, generated and held by the Methodist Church in Ireland both centrally and locally the WHS in collaboration with the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland aims to record centrally the records of local congregations and Connexional bodies throughout Ireland. With the agreement of the Conference the aim is that these records of holdings, once established, will be verified every five years through the Circuit Visitation Commissions schedule and, where appropriate, non-current records transferred to secure archives, and in particular the archives of the MHSI.

General Collection Guidelines

The MHSI Library and Archives collects:

- *Archives and manuscripts* – original documents, minute books, registers, letters, journals, personal papers
- *Printed materials* – books, pamphlets, membership class-tickets, circuit preaching-plans, circuit and society magazines and newsletters, announcement books, leaflets and ephemera
- *Audio recordings* – vinyl, audio tape and CD
- *Visual resources* – photographs, paintings, drawings, film and video.
- *Wesleyana* – three dimensional and commemorative busts, plates, medals, sacramental vessels and love-cups.
- *Costumes and textiles* – particularly representative examples of past clerical attire and gowns.

Collecting criteria

Using the general guidelines above and within the limited resources of the library and archives the MHSI adopts the following criteria in collecting materials:

- Official records that reflect the life and history of the Methodist Church in Ireland together with unofficial materials, letters, journals and diaries that provides insights which the original records may not always convey.
- Irish printed materials and works of art where the author or artist is Methodist provided they have relevance to Methodist religious and/or social concerns.
- Printed, visual and audio resources that portray Irish Methodism, its people, music, poetry and works of fiction.
- The material of Irish Methodist organisations, special interest groups and informal groups within the Irish Methodist Church.
- A special focus is the recovery and celebration of material relating to non-Wesleyan branches of Methodism, and those aspects of Irish Methodist history that have been neglected or unrepresented in the past, particularly

that branch of Methodism, unique to Ireland, of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Church (1816-1878).

Acquisition

Donations

Because the MHSI is an entirely voluntary society and has only a limited budget it relies heavily on donations and gifts of items. Over the years the archives has been indebted to many Methodist congregations and individuals that have donated copies of books, published and unpublished research material, archives and visual resources.

We are always pleased to accept gifts that fit our collection policy, but do not normally accept any items on deposit or with conditions attached.

Exclusions

We cannot accept:

- large memorial plaques, church furniture or objects that have borderline interest for the Society.
- Pulpit Bibles or presentation hymnbooks, unless of rare historical interest.

Disposal

Gifts of printed material are accepted on condition that unwanted items can be disposed of by either offering to Edgehill Theological College Library or other libraries or individuals, or for sale.

The Archives reserves the right to transfer items from its collections where they are the Property of the Methodist Church in Ireland or the conditions of donation/deposit allow, to a more suitable library or repository if the subject matter:

- Does not match the collection criteria
- The archives cannot accommodate them satisfactorily
- There are additional copies of printed materials already in our collection

Part Two

Preservation policy

Purpose

The policy of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland is to collect and preserve Irish Methodist historical materials (meeting the criteria of our collecting policy), with the aim of ensuring their current and long-term survival for the use of present and future generations.

The purpose of this policy is to develop a plan of action for the safe keeping of the holdings of the MHSI Centre.

Context

This preservation policy is a general statement, which is planned to be complemented by the creation of the following related documents:

- *Conservation and cataloguing programme* (including the trial use of the *Adlib Museum Lite* cataloguing software and the exploration of new funding resources for binding and conservation.)
- *A Disaster Control Plan* has been downloaded and being adapted (based on the Prevention, preparedness, Reaction, Recovery model of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries 1994. Revised 2004. <http://www.m25lib.ac.uk>)
- *Guidelines for handling, copying and packaging*
- *Printed guidelines for loans and exhibitions*

Roles and Responsibilities

The primary responsibility for implementing the resulting plans will rest on the team of volunteers who serve the archives but it is hoped that the wider College community and main library staff will, as has always been the case, support these initiatives.

The Honorary Archivist takes responsibility for co-ordinating preservation activities.

Policy Principles

The MHSI regards preservation of its collections a core function of the Society. The main aim of the library's preservation programme is to preserve collection items and to maintain access to them, consistent with their significance to the collection, usage requirements and current condition.

The Society accepts responsibility to retain and preserve at least one copy of all Irish Methodist historical material collected in accordance with its collection policy, or for which it has accepted a preservation responsibility. Items will be maintained in their original format for as long as practicable, although access may be provided to the original format or to a surrogate copy as appropriate having regard to its condition.

Preservation Management

The MHSI will keep under review its procedures in its library and archives to prolong the useful life of collections.

- Within its existing budget, and any additional funds which may be acquired, undertake conservation treatment of its most vulnerable holdings.

These measures are aimed at:

- Recognising potential threats and preventing or minimising their impacts.
- Stabilising damage that may have occurred and preventing further loss.
- Repairing damage of loss that significantly interferes with use or detracts from the usability and values that give the collection special significance.

Any new volunteers will be given preservation training, and existing volunteers are encouraged to make use of courses run by the Association of Church Archives of Ireland or similar events.

The MHSI will seek to conform to relevant standards and best practice guidelines including:

- BS 5454:2000 - Recommendations for Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents

Acquisition

Archival material is acquired in accordance with the MHSI collecting policy. The MHSI is not currently equipped to preserve collections that are largely machine-readable (audio-visual and digital). It therefore does not actively pursue those types of collections at present, and would seek specialist advice on any such material within its collections.

Accommodation, Security and Environment

The MHSI will seek to ensure appropriate and secure accommodation for all its holdings, whether they are stored, processed or used.

Appropriate accommodation includes environmentally controlled and monitored space, enclosures that conform to archival standards, security, pest management and disaster preparedness. In this, the MHSI aims to adhere as far as possible to BS 5454:2000.

Disaster and Emergency Preparedness

- The MHSI will create and maintain a Disaster Contingency Plan to protect its holdings by responding to emergencies.
- In a disaster or emergency, the first priority will be the safety of people followed by immediate action to rescue or prevent further damage to the records. Emergency response and recovery actions will take precedence over all other MHSI activities.

Copying

Recognising that copying is a potential source of damage to collection materials, the MHSI will apply restrictions to the copying of at risk materials by and for users.

Cooperation

The current arrangement will continue with PRONI for the provision of surrogate copies of baptismal and marriage registers as well as of minutes of Church councils with copies maintained offsite at PRONI as well as at MHSI.

In addition the possibility of filming the important and widely consulted run of *The Irish Christian Advocate* (1883-1972) is being pursued.

Exhibition and Loans

Exhibition and loans will only be approved if the host body can show that the standards of care in the temporary location are similar to those of the MHSI and meet the requirements of BS 5454:2000.

The MHSI will encourage the use of facsimiles for both in-house and external displays.

Access

- Public access to original documents is and will continue to be in the controlled conditions of an invigilated reading room.
- For a limited and defined range of printed library material permission will on occasion be given to extend reading facilities to the supervised main library.
- Readers will always be advised of the rules and read Handling Guidelines before being issued with documents.
- Badly damaged or vulnerable material may be restricted.

Part Three

Access policy

Policy on Access and Use:

The aim of this policy is to outline the conditions of access to the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland Archives (Archives) by members of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the general public.

Many of the collections held in the Archives are unique and irreplaceable. The following regulations are in place to ensure that these collections are preserved for future generations and to encourage their use for research in a broad range of topics and issues in which the Methodist Church in Ireland has been associated and involved for over 250 years.

Although the Archives are the private property of the MHSI it is the aim of the Society to foster access in keeping with current policies in public archives and within the limitations of its budget, opening hours and voluntary staff.

It is informed by several guiding principles:

- Respect for open inquiry in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (UK 2000) and the Freedom of Information Acts (Ireland 1997 and 2003).
- The protection of corporate and personal privacy.
- Donor and Depositors Agreements.

Access by visitors for research purposes:

- Access is granted to all users subject to the rules of the Archives.
- Research visits by external enquirers must be made by prior written, email or telephone appointment.
- All users must read the rules and sign the Society's visitors' book indicating an understanding and acceptance of these terms on each visit to the Archives.
- The Archives aims to meet responsible requests for access to information.
- Those visiting the Archives for the first time and who are not members of the Methodist Church in Ireland are asked to provide proof of identification. (e.g. Driver's licence; passport, and/or letter of introduction.)
- Microfilm and microfiche readers are available for reading surrogate church registers, documents and newsprint.

Disabled Access

There is disabled parking adjacent to the Archives with full access to the reading room. There is also a disabled toilet on the premises.

Collections with Restrictions:

- All records more than 80 years old are open to general access without restriction. Records less than 80 but more than 30 years old are open to public access with the exception of any deposits which have specific restrictions placed on their conditions of deposit.

- Information containing personal data will be provided in accordance with the Data Protection Acts (UK 1998); (Ireland 1998 and 2003).
- For the protection of its collections, the Archives reserve the right to restrict the use of materials which are not processed, of exceptional value, or fragile.

Access for Publishing:

Access to the collections does not mean an automatic right to publish. If unpublished material is to be quoted or photographic images reproduced in any published format permission must be obtained in writing from the Archivist. It is the researcher's responsibility to be aware of the UK and Irish Copyright and Privacy laws.

Circuit and Society Loan Procedures:

Circuits and Societies who have deposited their collections in the MHSI Archives may borrow them for a specific purpose over a limited time as agreed with the Archivist.

Copyright and Royalties:

The MHSI remains the copyright owner of unpublished manuscript items and photographic images held by the Archives.

Photocopying Policy:

The Archives provides copies for personal research use only and permission is granted at the discretion of the Archivist. The Archives retain full rights to all reproductions under its custody. The Archives is unable to respond to requests to copy complete files or large parts of a records series. Archives and documents which are fragile, faded manuscript records, or those contained in brittle bound volumes, may not be photocopied. No photocopies of its papers/documents are to be deposited in other Archives or Libraries.

Reference Assistance:

- General Reference assistance can be given by letter, e-mail, or telephone. Specific requests must be in writing or by email.
- All researchers other than Circuit/Society/Connexional depositors and MHSI members will be requested to give a donation to the MHSI funds in lieu of a research fee and photocopying charges will apply.
- Requests for donations will be waved for bona fide University students undertaking academic research. A copy of the thesis/essay will be donated to the Archives on completion of the thesis/essay.

June 2010

Appendix One

Minutes of Conference (2007) page 64-65

THE PRESERVATION OF METHODIST RECORDS

The Conference directs:

1. that all Church Records, Connexional, District, Circuit, Society and Institutional, be held securely and safely. These include Legal Deeds, Baptismal and Marriage Registers, Registers of Graveyards, Minutes of Circuit, Leaders' and Trustees' Meetings and other committees, Schedule Books, Membership Registers, Furniture Books, Preaching Plans, Annual Reports and Accounts, Plans and Correspondence relating to property transactions, Programmes and Orders of Service relating to Special Events, Records of organisations in the circuit, Minutes of District Synods and their committees, Minutes and Reports of Connexional Departments, Boards and Institutions, etc.
2. that all documents no longer in current use, including print-outs from electronic records, be lodged with a competent authority for safe-keeping and future reference. For this purpose it recommends the use of the archives of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland (MHSI). Where consideration is to be given to depositing original material in other archives this should be done in consultation with the MHSI Archivist.
3. that all documents and registers retained be kept in a secure place (where possible a fire-proof safe), and that electronic records be printed out at least once in every five years.
4. that the question of the Visitation Commission be amended to read: What Deeds and Records relate to the Circuit? Where are they kept?

Appendix Two

Methodist Historical Society of Ireland

Regulations for use of the Archives

All users must read these rules and sign the Society's visitors' book indicating an understanding and acceptance of these terms on each visit to the Archives. These regulations include:

1. All coats, umbrellas, bags and briefcases must be left in the designated area.
2. Mobile phones must be switched off or to silent mode.
3. All work must be done in pencil.
4. Volumes or manuscripts may not be marked, altered or defaced.
5. Users may bring their own laptop computers to use for research purposes. Power points are provided.
6. Cameras (excluding flash) may be used at the discretion of the archivist.
7. Gloves must be worn when handling photographs and other sensitive material.
8. All materials are to be placed flat on the tables and are not to be held in the lap or propped against the edge of the table. Documents ought not to be leant on when taking notes.
9. Only one folder of loose papers may be opened at one time in order to avoid mixing.
10. Papers are not to be rearranged under any circumstances. If a researcher thinks something is out of order, s/he could call it to the archivist's attention.
11. Items may not be removed from the archives. In certain instances printed material may be moved temporarily to the main library for further supervised consultation.
12. Food and drink is not permitted in the archives research area. There is a non-smoking policy in the building as a whole.
13. Children under the age of 16 unaccompanied by an adult are not allowed into the archives. No animals are permitted into the archives.
14. Failure to observe these requirements may result in the loss of access privileges to the Archives.