

IBVM Institute & Irish Province Archives, General Report 2014 – 2022

Storehouses of memory; preserving and honouring the contribution of each IBVM Sister, the IBVM Archives are a rich, vital and vibrant resource for each member of Mary Ward's family.

The Institute Archives – history, function, purpose, overview

The IBVM Institute Archives¹ exists 'To identify, collect, preserve and make available those records of enduring value created by or otherwise, relating to the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto) Generalate', and aims to achieve this aim through a series of policies and actions. This report attempts to give an overview of our developments and achievements from 2014 – 2022.

The Archives have existed since 1821, when Teresa Ball herself oversaw the careful creation and collection of documents of importance in Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham. The Archives have long been of significance to the Institute, its membership and leadership. The oldest document in our care dates to 1814, pre-dating Frances Ball's entry into religious life in York, and we proactively collect non-current records in digital format.

The collections consist of paper based items, but also include items of furniture, paintings, artwork, artefacts, books, maps, drawings, photographic and audio-visual material and a growing selection of digitised and born digital material.

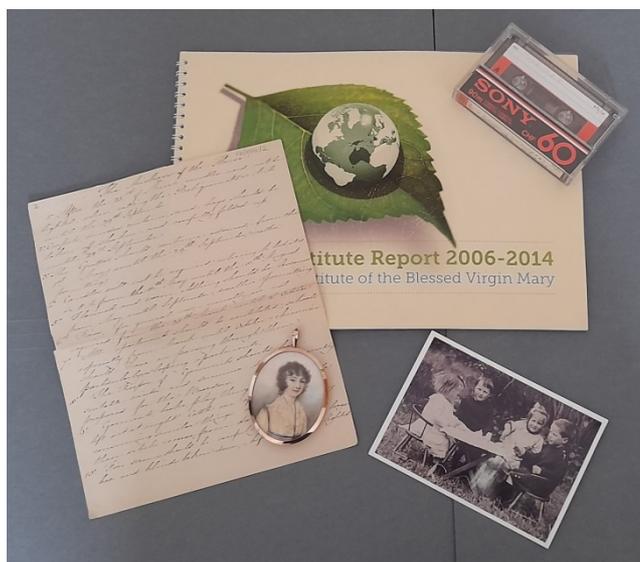
The Institute Archives are located in Dublin Ireland, in a shared building with a secondary school, and are co-located alongside the Irish Province Archives.

The Archives are open 3.5 days a week, from Monday – Thursday.

The Archives are staffed by a qualified archivist, Áine Mc Hugh, and Sr Kathleen Fitzgerald IBVM, former Central Archivist², who are responsible for the Institute and Irish Province Archives. The archivist is answerable to both the Institute Leader and Irish Provincial Leader, and a member of the Institute Leadership Team is appointed with special responsibility for the Archives. An annual report is submitted to each Leadership Team.

As a dual archive, the Institute and Irish Province Archives are jointly funded by the Institute & Irish Provincial Leadership; budgets and financial reports are submitted on an annual basis to both Institute and Irish Province bursars.

The support, interest and enthusiasm of the outgoing Leadership Team in the Institute and global IBVM Archives is especially acknowledged, particularly their commitment to the development of the Archives across the global Institute.



Sample of archival material from the IBVM Institute Archives

¹ Formerly known as the Central Archives, the leadership team under Marian Moriarty advised the name change was appropriate in light of the Constitutions approved in 2009, which referred to Institute Leadership etc rather than General Council etc.

² Staff are occasionally employed on short-term contracts to undertake specific projects (e.g. cataloguing projects, or to provide cover during maternity leave.)

Policies

A series of policies provide the framework for the operations of the Archives, drafted by the archivist to meet international best standards, all are submitted to the Institute Leadership Team³ for approval, and are periodically reviewed and re-assessed. These include (but are not limited to) the following:



- Access Policy
- Collecting Policy
- Cyber Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Digital Preservation Policy
- Loans Policy
- Media Policy
- Preservation Policy
- Volunteers Policy

Role of Institute Archivist

The role of the Institute Archivist has expanded and evolved in recent years, particular in relation to the support and development of all IBVM Archives. Practical measures have included visits to province and region archives, inputs at ELM, and provision of advice and guidance as requested to province and region archivists and leaders.

The day-to-day work of the archive has also expanded as further material is accessioned (received into the archives), outreach activities, researcher requests have increased and as we attempt to grapple with the issue of digital archives and digital preservation.

Managing the collections

Approx. 80 % of the Institute Archive is catalogued, this process of cataloguing is essential in order to enable the archivist to know and establish control over the collections in her care, identify preservation and conservation needs and the appropriate assess access status. Cataloguing is an ongoing process and on occasion, additional staff have been employed on short term or other contracts, to assist in this.

In 2022, in conjunction with the South Asia Province Archives, research was undertaken into suitable cataloguing & archival management software. A software programme known as AtoM⁴ was identified as a viable option, and a proposal on its purchase and implementation has been submitted to the relevant leadership teams. It is hoped, that AtoM may in time, become a suitable option for those province and region archives that are currently without appropriate archival management software.

Oral Archive & Memoir Programme

The Oral Archive & Memoir Programme was initiated in 2007, to compliment the official Institute record, which often precludes the voice and personal spirit of individual Sisters, and the reality of their lived experiences as IBVM members. There is a long tradition of such initiatives in the Institute;

³ Similar policies are in place for the Irish Province Archive, approved by the Irish Provincial Leadership and periodically reviewed. Each province and region archives are similarly encouraged to draft and develop local policies to provide a suitable framework for the functioning and operation of the archive.

⁴ AtoM, Access to Memory is an open-source cataloguing software freely available in many languages and built to meet international standards in archival management. A cloud-hosted option is available nad has been recommended for use by the Institute Archives.

M. Teresa Ball oversaw the writing of 48 'lives' of deceased Sisters, recording their unique contributions to the fledgling branch of the Institute. Under the current programme, Sisters are invited to contribute either through the writing of their own memoirs (personal stories), or participation in an oral archive programme, where interviews are recorded and transcribed. In all instances consent forms are signed, indicating consent to participate and offering the Sister the opportunity to specify any access restrictions which she wishes to apply to her material.

Records Management & Records Retention Schedule

The Institute Archivist has a responsibility to advise Institute Leadership on the implementation of sound records management practices in the management of their records. Historically, the papers of Institute Leaders were transferred to the Archives every 8 years. The prolific use of born digital records & changing legislative requirements has meant that this is no longer suitable & a new, formal schedule for the transfer of records was required.

A records retention schedule was drafted which identifies categories of records which are created or received by Institute Leadership, the appropriate period of retention, and end action of secure destruction or permanent preservation as Archives.

The records retention schedule was submitted to the Leadership Team in 2019, and it was agreed that where possible in future, digital files would be transferred in digital format, reducing the need to print to paper.

Preparation for the receipt of large quantities of digital material remains an area of concern; our current IT infrastructure is insufficient to meet these demands and requirements to render such material, secure, retrievable and accessible into the long term future.

In spite of the drafting of the retention schedule, the records of various committees and other offices including UN remain a concern, as interaction with such groups in this regard, have been limited. This is largely due to a lack of staff time and resources in the Archives.



Outreach

Outreach, making the archival collections accessible and available to users⁵ is central to the purpose of the IBVM Archives. The collections are preserved and deserve to be widely used. An access policy provides a tiered level of access, with material categorised as 'Open', 'Restricted' and 'Closed', according to strict criteria, including reference to international data protection or privacy legislation. All applications⁶ to access material are now processed and approved by Institute Leadership. In general, access is only possible on-site in the Archives Reading Room, where the archivist carefully monitors and supervises the use of the material to ensure its safety and preservation. Permission to re-use images in commercial publications is submitted to the Institute Leadership as appropriate, but the use to which material is put after consultation is beyond our control. To date, our relationships and encounters with researchers have been extremely positive and have yielded a new and rich examination of IBVM history, contributions to women's education and advancement of women in society across the globe.

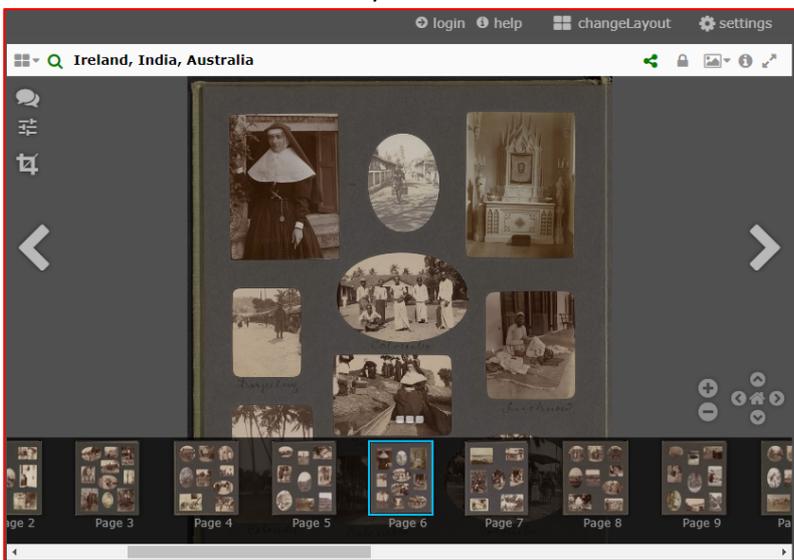
⁵ We serve a wide range of users from IBVM members, past pupils, former staff members, families of deceased IBVM members, pupils, academics, local historians and many others.

⁶ Generic requests for biographical information on deceased members or routine local history enquiries are exempted.



A series of newsletters and online exhibition produced to celebrate the 2021-2022 Bicentenary celebrations have stimulated interest and interaction with the history of the Institute.

One example of the benefits of fostering close relationships with researchers has been seen in recent years in the publication of the biography of Frances Teresa Ball by Prof. Deirdre Raftery and collaborations with University College Dublin Digital Library Team, which has resulted in the digitisation of large scale collection which are hosted online.⁷ Funding for a project on the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin resulted in that project being launched to Google Cultural Institute. IBVM history and achievements has been discussed across the globe through papers presented at International Conferences by various researchers.



Of particular significance is the collection of photographs of M. Michael Corcoran IBVM, Superior General, which features over 500 unique and spell-binding images of Sisters, pupils, staff and local communities in Ireland, India, Australia, Spain, Gibraltar, and Italy.
<https://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:262000>

Researcher Value

The archival collections are not just used for in-depth, close reading and research; they are also valuable tools in enabling IBVM member, Mary Ward family members, pupils and staff to engage with IBVM history and heritage in a real and tangible manner. In spite, of our limited physical space, we successfully host temporary exhibitions and workshops with visiting groups including international Tertians⁸, IBVM communities and post-primary pupils, amongst others.

⁷ Loreto, the Green and 1916 featured material from the Irish Province Archives.

⁸ In 2022, a series of online workshops were held with the groups of international Tertians. It was a novel but extremely rewarding for us to connect with such a wonderful group in this new format.



Group of CJ Sisters visiting the Archives, September 2019
An exhibition titled 'One Institute: From Mary Ward to Teresa Ball' was especially prepared for them.

The Archives have proven valuable in fostering relationships and improving connections between provinces, regions and CJ Sisters. The collections contain the primary evidence of long-standing connections, friendships and a shared heritage and history. For instance in February 2018, we were invited to give a series of inputs at the IBVM-CJ UK Province Links Day, where a talk titled '*Ties of Sisterly Love and Affection*' was presented.

Such experiences are very important to bringing the archives,

their physical connections to the past before a wide and diverse group of people, and opens up new opportunities for exploring IBVM history, engaging with contemporary issues and learning from the past.

Storage

The Institute Archives are housed in shared accommodation with a post-primary school since 1999⁹. The Archives remain housed in unsuitable accommodation which cannot meet the needs of the collection for environmental controlled conditions, fire suppression, security, and lacks adequate storage, working, and exhibition spaces. The space is furthermore inaccessible to those with accessibility requirements (the Archives are accessible by external steps only).

The Archives are rapidly running out of physical storage space and if they remain in situ will soon be in the unacceptable position of having to store material in unsecured, unmonitored and unsuitable locations.

As the repository of the Institute Archives, the external presentation of the archives does not match the value of the collections, or the value placed on them by successive leadership teams of both the Institute and Irish Province. This has been identified as an issue in annual reports for many years, and we are conscious that any investment in a more suitable space, must be carefully considered and reflect a sensible, economical and sustainable decision for the longer term. Consideration of the future of the Archives should be a priority.



⁹ Transferred from Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham on its closure in 1999, as a temporary measure.

Other Achievements 2014 – 2022

- Increased use of archives by researchers, increased academic output exploring and interrogating IBVM history
- Increased awareness and use of archives by IBVM members
- Digital Preservation Policy & Strategy for IBVM Archives
- Outreach – digitisation, bicentenary 2021 newsletters and exhibition
- RM Programme & Retention Schedule
- Digitisation programmes, collaboration
- Ongoing Cataloguing
- Oral Archive programme (returned missionaries to Ireland)
- Annual international newsletter (each December) with participation of international archivists
- Participation in Mary Ward Summer School, York 2019
- Connections and collaboration with CJ Archivist, Bar Convent, York
- Mary Ward International/Engagement with CJ Archivists

Mary Ward Institute Archives

Recent collaboration with archivists of the CJ Middle-Eastern European province, has led to the formation of an informal group of IBVM-CJ archivists known as the Mary Ward Institute Archives¹⁰. Communication is infrequent but informal via email, complimented by a twice yearly online gathering, with pre-determined agenda, sharing insights and thoughts into our work. We hope that this will expand to include a wider network of CJ archivists, and incorporate all IBVM archivists.

Potential Impact of Union on Institute Archives

The proposed IBVM-CJ union will have an impact on the Institute Archive, as administrative and other arrangements change. The union should not make any material difference to the management and administration of province or region archives, which will become part of the large CJ network of archives.

However, the Institute Archives will cease to function as a central archive for the new body; instead a new central archive for Mary Ward's reunified Institute will emerge, with location, resourcing etc, all to be considered.

Regardless, of this administrative change, the archival collections currently contained in the IBVM Institute Archive should be retained in situ as a complete and historic collection, without any attempt to separate or split the collections. The Archives will continue to function in preserving and making available the archives of the (former) IBVM, but its collecting function will cease.



IBVM & CJ Sister, Rome, 1904
An example of the long standing
friendship and relationships between
the two branches
Ref: MC/PHO/03/15 from the collection
digitised by UCD Digital Libraries

¹⁰ Britta Muller-Schauenburg CJ has been instrumental in forming this network.

IBVM Archives – A Global Collection

The IBVM Archive¹¹ is a global archive, which includes the Institute, provincial, regional and communal archives, is relevant to and preserved on behalf of each IBVM member, past and present. It is truly a global collection, managed by the appointed archivist.

However, the IBVM Archives as a global whole function and operate in a wide variety of circumstances, with varying degrees of infrastructure and support.

Facilities and infrastructure vary widely across the Institute. Some provinces and regions have an appointed archivist, storage & processing space(s), dedicated budget, approved policies and procedures to ensure the appropriate and efficient functioning of the archives.

However, other provinces or regions do not have an appointed archivist, no dedicated space for storage or processing, no dedicated budget, policies or procedures. These discrepancies need to be urgently addressed.

The Institute Archivist made presentations on the value, importance and resourcing required for IBVM Archives at ELM 2014 and ELM 2017. An in-depth survey was undertaken in 2016 in advance of the ELM 2017 meeting which identified many of the issues facing provincial and regional archives. It has been heartening to note the improvements which have been made in the support and resources available to some province and regional archives in the intervening years; however for others, the situation has remained unchanged.

This is an area which must be addressed by incumbent provincial and regional superiors to improve the status and functioning of the IBVM Archives, on behalf of all IBVM members, past and present.

Current and previous IBVM archivists across the globe have ensured the preservation of this rich and valuable collection, but they must be supported in their work.

IBVM Archives Policy

The IBVM Archives Policy (first approved in 2014, revised 2017) and most recently revised and approved in 2022, provides a sound, generic framework for the functioning of all IBVM Archives. It clearly defines the role of the Archives, duties of the archivist, and responsibilities of the provincial or regional leader, the role of the Institute Archivist and provides template policies for effective management of the archive. The policy is supplemented by a handbook which offers concrete examples for its implementation.

All Provincial and regional leaders are encouraged to continue its implementation.

This Archives Policy has clearly articulated the role of the Institute Archives in guiding, assisting and supporting IBVM Archives around the globe.¹²

IBVM Archivists Network

A mutually supportive network of IBVM archivists is crucial to enabling and empowering archivists to achieve their work. The foundations of a community of archivists were laid in 2006, which has evolved in the years since to become a supportive, communal network of colleagues, who work closely together to support one another.

Various platforms have been utilised to facilitate this, including a closed google group for communicating, sharing questions, concerns, queries and updates. Zoom meetings are now a regular occurrence with most colleagues attending in spite of difficulties with time zones, and has resulted in a warm, collegiate working group, offering advice, insight and support.

¹¹ Quote from IBVM Archives Policy

¹² It was long understood that the IBVM Institute Archives had a role in guiding and advising provincial and regional archives, but until the IBVM Archives Policy approved firstly in 2014, there was no clear formal articulation of this. Previous Institute Archivists, most notably Sr Kathleen FitzGerald IBVM and Sr Paula Doolin IBVM had produced guidance documents and worked to create a sense of connection amongst IBVM archivist in each province and region.

A formal arrangement and structure for bimonthly meetings with a pre-defined agenda has been put in place, which aims at addressing common issues and dilemmas.

Time zones differences have made it difficult for archivists to attend the calls; summaries of meetings are recorded and distributed so that archivists remain connected with developments and conversations. It is likely that it will be necessary to arrange regional meetings in the future to ensure that archivists in the USA and Southern America can avail of the group discussion.

Archives Support Group

The IBVM Archives Support Group is an advisory and support group, initiated in 2013, and re-invigorated in 2022, to 'support and encourage the keeping of IBVM archives'. Current membership consists of the Institute Archivist, Australia & South East Province Archivist, Indian and South Asia Province Archivist, Canadian Region Archivist and Eastern African Archivist. It meets on a bimonthly basis, with a formal agenda, and membership runs for 2 years. The terms of reference of the ASG can be viewed here:

IBVM Archives Support Group (ASG)	
Aims & Objectives	
•	To support and encourage the keeping of IBVM archives across the Institute and offer support for the archivist
•	To provide a forum for discussion and sharing of knowledge and experience amongst IBVM archivists
•	To encourage a common approach in the management of IBVM archives across the Institute and promote records management
•	To share insights, knowledge in new developments in archives and records management which would improve the functioning of IBVM archives
•	To research (as appropriate) projects which would improve the management of IBVM archives and implementation of an effective records management programme across the Institute
•	To assist networking and sharing among IBVM archivists
•	To encourage and support participation in professional development opportunities
•	To assist promotion of the use of archives by researchers



IBVM Community, Glen Cowie, South Africa
From the South African collection, ref SA/CTY/GCO/02/04/04

Archives Policy, transfer of Provincial/Regional Archives

In some circumstances in the past, it was deemed necessary to transfer the records of former IBVM provinces to the Institute Archives for safe-keeping and appropriate management. This included the transfer of the South African Province Archives in 2013 and elements of the Peruvian Archives in 2014.

The Archives Policy submitted for approval in 2022, Section 13: Ownership outlines clear new recommendations on the future management and storage of the archival collections of provinces and regions. Underpinning this section is the understanding that province and region archives are part of the wider IBVM collection, and form a vital part of Institute patrimony.

Ownership remains with the Institute, and collections should remain in the country/geographic region of origin.¹³ Unilateral decisions on the future of province or region archives (including alternative models for storage, management, etc) cannot be made at local level alone but require the approval of Institute Leadership and Institute Archivist. The intention is to prevent decisions which could result in the dispersal, sale or otherwise of

the archival collections, and the removal of the collections from the country of origin.

These provisions require those in provincial and regional leadership to pre-empt a situation where the province or region can no longer manage the archives for in their current context, making sustainable decisions for their future care and management.

¹³ A geographic region which is culturally aligned and which has an IBVM presence is identified as a preferable second choice.

Future of IBVM Archives (Global Collection)

The rich, varied and unique collections held in the IBVM Province & Region Archives are testament to the value traditionally placed on the archives. The management and curation of the archives requires a level of investment in terms of personnel, finance, physical space, and it is acknowledged that this can be difficult for individual provinces and regions to manage.

The establishment of an IBVM Archives Trust to 'oversee, supervise and guide the care, management and promotion of our archival collections across the globe', has been recommended in previous annual reports. It has also been acknowledged that the current movement towards union may render such a move premature, but it should continue to be considered.

In the interim, there are collective responses which should be explored to support those provinces and regions for which the management and resourcing of their archives is problematic. This could include the sharing of resources amongst provincial and regional leaders, e.g. the establishment of local mentorship relationships or formal oversight procedures for archivists in neighbouring provinces or regions, providing access to literature and training opportunities, and providing practical support in the purchase or shipping of archival supplies between areas where it is difficult to access appropriate supplies.

Leaders and individual Sisters should be reminded of the value of the archives and their unique place in Institute heritage. The attention of province and region leaders is especially drawn to IBVM Archives Policy and in particular Section 13: Ownership.

The IBVM global archive can play a vital role in supporting and informing the current discernment towards union with Congregatio Jesu (CJ).

Conclusion

The Institute archival collection, containing primary source evidence of the lived realities, ministries and missions of IBVM members, its administration and leadership, for over 200 years, is a tool for advocacy and promotion for the Institute in the modern secular world.

They are resources for exploration, interrogation, celebration and re-assessment of the evolution of this branch Mary Ward's Institute, of women *'at the heart of the Church, called to follow Christ in a discipleship of love, ready to labour with freedom and joy, that in all things God may be glorified.'*¹⁴ They are unique and life-giving resources which are equally available and administered on behalf of each IBVM member, honouring and witness to previous generations.

The rich and diverse variety of their content is testament to the many IBVM women and lay staff, who have laboured with dedication and love to collect and preserve these archives.

However, they require ongoing investment, support and resourcing from Institute, province and regional leaderships to ensure that they can continue to function, meeting their primary purpose of acquiring, preserving and making available records of enduring value into the future.

Kathleen FitzGerald IBVM
IBVM Institute & Irish Province Archives

Áine Mc Hugh
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¹⁴ IBVM Constitutions 2009, Volume II: Chapter 1, 1.2.