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## A note on the archives of the British Society for the History of Science, 1947–97

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It is perhaps ironic that a society of historians such as the British Society for the History of Science should have been in existence for some thirty-six years before any attempt was made to create a formal archive of its history. Such an oversight is doubtless attributable to the undue modesty of those involved in the earlier history of the Society, possibly tinged with a distrust of what historians can do with archival records, but it is none the less regrettable that there are not more early records of our Society's activities. The official Council Minutes from 1947 onwards, however, are more detailed than one might expect, and a very useful source of information.

The archive began in 1983 with an appeal to past and present members of the Society to donate relevant papers. The response was relatively limited, but the four boxes of material gathered at that time, plus the earliest Council Minute Books and associated bound volumes of papers, were deposited with the Science Museum Library in London. Subsequently, a small amount of additional material has been deposited by several former officers of the Society, and further material is currently being prepared for deposit. In addition, there is a considerable amount of archival material at the Society's offices in Stanford-in-the-Vale, which will shortly be deposited with the Science Museum Library. A memorandum has now been prepared for all new officers of the Society, indicating the kinds of material that they should retain for archival purposes. However, it is appropriate on this occasion to appeal to all former officers of the Society, and indeed to all who have been significantly involved in the Society, its meetings, or its publications, to examine their filing cabinets for documents of potential archival importance.

Although the Society's archive is currently in a state of flux, it will be useful here to summarize some of its contents as they now stand. A more detailed and accurate listing is in the process of preparation, and the information given here should be treated as provisional and subject to change.

The archive can be consulted on request at the Science Museum Library, London (advance notice of two to three days is recommended). However, since many of the items listed here are in the process of being deposited, those wishing to use the archive should also consult me, or any subsequent Archive officer, first. Permission must be sought from the Society to copy or publish material from the collection, and many of the more recent records will be restricted for a period of time (as yet undetermined).

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1. Foundation records. Letters to F. H. C. Butler concerning the foundation of the Society, 1944–47.
2. Company records. Correspondence relating to the Society's incorporation, 1952–56. Legal agreements and contracts, 1953–73. Correspondence relating to the amendment of the articles of association, 1964–67. Annual returns for company registration, 1958–78, 1986–. Correspondence with Companies' House, 1986–. Correspondence with the Charities Commission, 1986–.
3. Council. Minutes of Council, 1946–69, 1970–. Minutes of executive officers' meetings, 1963–76 (and later). Agenda papers and officers' reports, 1986– (some earlier). Associated correspondence, 1948–49 (and later). Agenda and minutes of the AGM (subsequently EGM), 1971–83, 1986–.
4. Papers of officers. The archives associated with the different offices in the Society are particularly patchy, although it is hoped that the anniversary celebrations will bring to light further materials.  
Editors. Papers of D. M. Knight (1981–88) and J. H. Brooke (1988–93).  
Presidents. Papers of C. A. Russell (1986–88) and D. M. Knight (1994–96).  
Honorary secretaries. Papers of H. G. L. Bevan (1973–77), W. F. Bynum (1977–81), G. N. Cantor (1981–87) and C. W. Smith (1989–95).  
Honorary treasurers. Papers of F. H. C. Butler, 1948–49.  
Newsletter editors. Papers of P. M. D. Collins (1980–85) and M. E. W. Williams (1985–89).
5. Membership. Bound volume of members' signatures, 1947. Correspondence relating to membership, 1947–49. Membership lists, 1955–60, 1983– (includes membership list for the Philosophy of Science Group, 1955–60).
6. Conferences. Published materials and printed papers (patchy). Administrative papers and correspondence, 1986–.
7. Publications. Samples of printed forms issued by the Society, 1947–48. Copies of many of the publications and published ephemera of the Society, including: *BSHS Newsletter*, *List of Theses in History of Science*, membership brochures, *Guide to History of Science Courses*, Teaching the history of science, Directory of resources, and List of members. Papers relating to the production of the Society's publications, 1986–.
8. Prizes. Submissions for, and correspondence relating to, the Singer Prize, 1990–94.
9. Relations with other societies. Letters and associated papers from the Royal Society concerning representation of the Society on the National Committee for the History of Science, 1964–76.