

Research Note

Haverford and Swarthmore Quaker Holdings

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Abstract

This research note provides information about two Quaker libraries and archives: the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College (FHL) and the Quaker Collections at Haverford College (QSC). Although located near each other, FHL and QSC hold different collections and have different missions. This article will highlight their distinct missions, collections and projects; describe their shared projects and systems; and review their strengths and lacunae. Approaches to dealing with harmful language and to developing more inclusive collections is also addressed. Also included is information on scheduling visits, searching collections and what resources are available online.

Keywords

Archives, libraries, critical librarianship, resources, digitisation

Introduction

The story of Quaker libraries and archives starts in the late seventeenth century, when the first Quaker library and archives was created by the London Yearly Meeting. Research into Quaker history usually relies on the contents of these libraries, from Quaker meeting records to manuscript collections created by Friends to Quaker printed materials. Often these libraries are located some distance from each other, covering a specific region. The Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College (FHL) and the Quaker Collections at Haverford College (QSC) are exceptions, located 11 miles apart, just outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. This research note seeks to explain what these repositories share but also how they differ from one another. It will highlight their distinct missions, collections and projects; describe their shared projects and systems; and what their strengths and lacunae are.

In this research note, the missions and values statements of both libraries will be introduced. These visions and policies guide both libraries in developing their collections. The contents of both libraries have been collected and continue to be collected through deposits (both digital and analogue) from Quaker meetings and through donations of the papers of Quaker organisations, families or individuals, and other specialist collections, described below. Furthermore, both libraries purchase collections, working with other Quaker libraries to reduce competition and ensure that the correct materials are held by the most appropriate repository. The goal of this behind-the-scenes work is to build coherent collections for researchers.

The next facet of the libraries' work is collection management and description, both of which are part of the cataloguing process. Description means assigning metadata, as well as creating finding aids and catalogue records; that is, creating the information that aims to make collections easy to find. Both libraries join others in the archival world looking at metadata and finding aids, seeking to root out biases in the systems and language we have used and may still be using. For example, both libraries are working with Archives for Black Lives Philadelphia resources while processing collections and the sections below will make further mention of efforts to remediate harmful language in old descriptions, as well as other reparative archival work.¹

To be specific, remediating harmful language is limited to the finding aids and descriptions created by cataloguers. Primary sources and records are not edited. This work can be done to increase inclusion and recognise the harm of previous work. In the words of Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, 'The power to describe is the power to make and remake records and to determine how they will be used and remade in the future.'² Therefore, as archivists of Quaker archives, we are aware of the impact of our descriptions on current and future researchers, which stem from our own biases and positionalities. Furthermore, as Duff and Harris wrote, 'archivists are working with context ... Context, in principle, is infinite. The describer selects certain layers for inclusion, and decides which of those to foreground.'³ Quakers remain in the foreground of descriptions, but we can make those with whom Quakers interacted move to the front, too.

Once the collections are available to the research community, both archives offer support for the study of Quakerism, aiming to provide sources and spaces for discussion and critical analysis. Additionally, the libraries find ways to promote collections and projects. Projects involving the collections support additional research and interpretation. These projects most recently include funding for digitisation, which provides access to researchers with online access throughout

1 <https://archivesforblacklives.wordpress.com/resources/>.

2 Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, 'Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings', *Archival Science* 2(3-4) (2002), p. 272.

3 Duff and Harris, 'Stories and Names', p. 276.

the world. Digitisation itself is a resource-heavy process. Imaging archives is only the first, and most visible, step, as staff are needed to create metadata to make the digital objects findable. Long-term storage for these digital assets is another important requirement.

FHL

FHL celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2021. Its mission is to collect, preserve and promote the use of materials that document the history of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), its members and attenders, and its principles and connections. More recently, FHL has adopted the goal of collaborating to improve the preservation of global Quaker history through non-extractive post-custodial relationships. While continuing to collect archives related to Mid-Atlantic Quakers, Hicksite and Wilburite (Conservative) Quakers, and Progressive Quakers, FHL searches for publications and papers that support research into global Quaker history. FHL's collections support research in Quaker social history, women's studies, Native American history, the anti-slavery movement, social service, and the peace movement, all of which represent historic concerns of the Religious Society of Friends.

FHL has four permanent full-time staff members, with one fixed-term full-time staff member and one fixed-term part-time staff member. Student employees work on projects in the summertime and assist with projects and library operations in term time. FHL led 37 class sessions last year, with that number increasing each year. Information about access and appointments can be found on the FHL website.

FHL is part of Swarthmore College Special Collections, along with the Swarthmore College Archives and the Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Swarthmore College Archives include records of the college as a corporation, of its board of managers, key administrative offices and academic units, including charters, minutes, correspondence and financial records. The Peace Collection is a research library and archive that focuses solely on non-governmental movements for peace around the world. These three collections overlap in a number of ways, with the College Archives holding records of Quakers involved in founding Swarthmore College and the Peace Collection holding the records of a number of Quaker-led peace movements and organisations.

Family papers are among the other collections in FHL. A sample of collections accessioned since 2019 include the Clendenon Family Papers, made up of correspondence, journals, and other papers of the Robert Clendenon family who served as Quaker missionaries to the Seneca Nation in Tunesassa, Cattaraugus County, New York, in 1812–16.⁴ Another collection is the Fisher-Brinton Family Papers, which contains the papers of an Irish-American and Pennsylvania family

4 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/sfhl-rg5-339>.

dating from the early nineteenth century into the mid twentieth, covering family life in Ireland, rural Argentina and Pennsylvania.⁵ The correspondence of Robert Bryan Michener and Edith Riner Michener, who were Quaker missionaries in Kenya, East Africa, in the 1930s, were donated recently. Lastly, FHL also purchased the papers of Mira Sharpless Townsend, one of the founders of Philadelphia's Rosine Association in 1847, the first organisation founded by women to work with women in the street economies.⁶

Along with QSC, FHL just completed participation in a Philadelphia-wide NEH-funded project, *In Her Own Right*.⁷ Participants in the project sought to digitise collections documenting women's initiatives to expand their rights and opportunities with regard to political participation, education, work, property-holding and cultural activities. The project was just awarded the C. F. W. Coker Award for Description awarded by the Society of American Archivists.

Other FHL projects include Friendly Networks, which works with the digitised and transcribed journals of New Jersey ministers John Hunt and Joshua Evans, using the identities of Quakers in the journals to examine Quaker social networks.⁸ FHL is also working with the Smithsonian's Museum of American History on a small project digitising and describing documents and photographs created by C. Canby Balderston, a Pennsylvania Quaker in France and Belgium during the First World War and its aftermath.⁹ Rosine 2.0 is a project inspired by an FHL collection, the Mira Sharpless Townsend Papers, which engages artists, harm reductionists and other women, trans- and gender non-conforming community members involved in today's street economies.¹⁰

Haverford

The Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections collects, preserves and makes available materials that serve the mission of Haverford College and the Haverford College Libraries. These materials, which are collected in a variety of formats, support teaching, research and scholarship by Haverford students, faculty and staff, as well as researchers from around the world. The QSC staff (5.5 FTE) maintain an open reading room for researchers, work with donors, process materials, supervise four to ten student workers, respond to researcher inquiries, envision and work with digital scholarship staff on digital projects linked with QSC materials, support approximately 40–50 classes each year, and support four to six exhibitions in the Libraries. The staff includes a two-year post-baccalaureate fellow, whose career goals are in the library, digital scholarship, archives or related fields.

5 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/sfhl-rg5-332>.

6 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/sfhl-rg5-320>.

7 <http://inherownright.org/>.

8 <https://ds-pages.swarthmore.edu/friendly-networks>.

9 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/5299bafa>.

10 <https://rosine2.org/>.

As a major repository of materials by and about the Religious Society of Friends, Quaker & Special Collections serves as a resource for scholars engaged in critical work related to Quakers and Quakerism as well as for members of the Quaker community. Through the collections in the College Archives, Quaker & Special Collections supports the business functions and corporate stewardship of the college, contributes to institutional accountability and provides historical documentation on the lives and experiences of Haverford students, faculty and staff. Quaker & Special Collections is committed to collecting materials that document marginalised, undertold or underrepresented narratives; to making sure the collections it holds tell stories of diverse identities and experiences; and to acquiring materials in an ethical manner.¹¹ A fuller list of our collecting goals and foci is available here: <https://www.haverford.edu/sites/default/files/Office/Library/Quaker-Special-Collections-Collection-Goals-and-Policies.pdf>

There have been several new acquisitions and processing projects in the past three years. One new collection is of Thomas Evans, a nineteenth-century Philadelphia Quaker, druggist and correspondent with major players within both the Hicksite/Orthodox and Wilburite schisms. A highlight in this collection is letters sent between Anna Braithwaite, an Orthodox minister, and Elias Hicks.¹² Another acquisition is of Conrad Wilson, a conscientious objector during the Second World War. He corresponded with his family, particularly his mother, throughout the time of his conscientious objector service, both sides of which is the majority of this collection.¹³ The Emma Lapsansky-Werner collection contains the materials of Lapsansky, an African-American Quaker and historian, along with materials from her matrilineage from the 1840s to today.¹⁴ The Haverford College Relief and Reconstruction programme records were just processed.¹⁵ This programme provided training to students interested in relief and rehabilitation work in Europe during the Second World War. A major reprocessing and rehousing occurred of the William Penn Charter School archives. The school was founded in 1689. The collection contains the financial, historical, business and social records of the school, dating back as far as 1611.¹⁶

Several underresearched topics include: World War I relief work materials,¹⁷ mental health¹⁸ and Quaker book history.¹⁹ The Quaker collections at Haverford

11 <https://www.haverford.edu/sites/default/files/Office/Library/Quaker-Special-Collections-Collection-Goals-and-Policies.pdf>.

12 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/hcmc1324>.

13 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/hcmc-1328>.

14 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/hcmc-1325>.

15 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/hce-003-003-001>.

16 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/hcmc-1115>.

17 <https://guides.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/c.php?g=285712&p=1902476>.

18 <https://guides.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/c.php?g=285594&p=1901873>.

19 Including Quaker printers, publishers and more.

are complemented by non-Quaker collections, in particular those that support coursework, including materials related to relief work and mental health.

The QSC has undertaken several recent projects. One project was incorporating the Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia Anti-Racist Description Resources into our processing manual, which is used by staff, student workers and volunteers who are working with our collections, to understand and mitigate our biases.²⁰ Another project is a harmful language remediation project. This project assesses the Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections manuscript collection, finding aids to identify and remediate descriptions that employ harmful, outdated, racist or otherwise inappropriate language, and remediate these problematic descriptions. The Haverford College Documenting Student Life Project launched in September 2020 to ‘better preserve student experiences at Haverford within the College Archives, with a particular focus on preserving the experiences of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) students’.²¹ Haverford Libraries have partnered with various committees on campus to engage in this work. One major element of this project includes oral history interviews with BIPOC Haverford alumni conducted by current Haverford College students; these interviews all include transcriptions.²²

Two major digital scholarship projects include: ‘Manumitted: The People Enslaved by Quakers’, which seeks to highlight and center the stories and lives of enslaved people primarily through transcribed manumissions; and ‘Quakers & Mental Health’, which combines archival research and writing with digital scholarship to create and support scholarship on the history of mental health, and at the same time destigmatise mental health.^{23,24}

Quaker Meeting Records

Haverford and Swarthmore maintain the records for several yearly meetings, and share an online finding aid repository for them. See the finding aid links in footnotes for more information about these yearly meetings. Haverford and Swarthmore are the co-depositories for both Baltimore²⁵ and Philadelphia²⁶ Yearly Meetings, while also collecting serials from uncollected yearly meetings. For both these meetings, Haverford maintains the pre-separation and Orthodox records, along with post-reunification meeting records of meetings that were

20 <https://archivesforblacklives.wordpress.com/resources/>.

21 Liz Jones-Minsinger, *Connections*, November 2021, no. 18, <http://hdl.handle.net/10066/24070>.

22 <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/collections/haverford-alumni-color-oral-history-collection>.

23 <https://manumissions.haverford.edu/>.

24 <https://qmh.haverford.edu>.

25 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/classifications/qmb>.

26 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/classifications/qmph>.

Orthodox. Swarthmore maintains the Hicksite and post-reunification meeting records.

Haverford also maintains the records of Intermountain Yearly Meeting.²⁷

Swarthmore maintains records for: New York Yearly Meeting²⁸ and Genesee Yearly Meeting,²⁹ along with these meeting records:

- Illinois Yearly Meeting³⁰ Hicksite through 1972;
- Lake Erie Yearly Meeting³¹ – current;
- North Pacific Yearly Meeting³² – current;
- Ohio and Indiana Yearly Meetings³³ Hicksite/Wilburite and predecessors;
- Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends 1851–1951;³⁴
- Pacific Yearly Meeting³⁵ – current;
- South Central Yearly Meeting³⁶ – current;
- Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association³⁷ – current;
- Unaffiliated monthly meetings.³⁸

Materials within these meeting records include varying records, at the Yearly and Constituent Meeting levels. Yearly Meeting records typically include: minutes, epistles and other materials related to annual business meetings, materials of the general secretary and materials from various committees. Constituent meetings—Quarterly, Monthly, Preparative Meetings—usually contain vital records (births, death, marriage, membership), minutes, property records, committee minutes and related records.

Accessing Collections

Readers may discover collections in FHL and QSC in a number of different ways. For example, FHL and QSC websites are most likely accessed through direct internet searches the majority of the time, rather than through the colleges'

27 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/qm-imym>.

28 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/classifications/qmny>.

29 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/ny-genesym>.

30 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/illym>.

31 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/ley>.

32 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/northpacificym>.

33 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/ohioym>.

34 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/qm-papr>.

35 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/pacificym>.

36 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/scym>.

37 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/sayma>.

38 <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/resources/indiemm>.

or libraries' sites. Beyond their websites, catalogues and project websites guide readers to the repositories. This section provides guidance of the various ways to contact the libraries, as well as locate finding aids and digital content. While the libraries' contact details and websites are separate, catalogues and platforms are shared across Haverford, Swarthmore and Bryn Mawr Colleges, known as the Tricollege Consortium, or TriCo.

Contact Information

- Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College
 - <https://www.swarthmore.edu/friends-historical-library>
 - Housed in McCabe Library, Swarthmore College, 500 College Ave, Swarthmore PA 19081 USA
 - friends@swarthmore.edu
 - Phone: 610-328-8496
 - Social media: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsHistoricalLibrary/> on Facebook
- Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections
 - <https://www.haverford.edu/library/quaker-special-collections>
 - Housed in Lutnick Library, Haverford College, 370 Lancaster Ave, Haverford, Pennsylvania, 19041, USA
 - Preferred: hc-special@haverford.edu
 - Phone: 610-896-1161
 - Social media: [@hclibraries](#) on Twitter and Instagram

Online Resources

- TriCollege Archives & Manuscripts Finding Aids website includes collection guides for manuscript collections held in Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore special collections. This includes Quaker meeting records; personal, family and organisational papers; and records documenting the history of each college.
 - <https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/>
- TriCollege Digital Collections site includes a variety of materials digitised from manuscript and archival collections. For Haverford, these include Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians

by Pacific Measures materials, the Cope–Evans family papers, historic photographs of Haverford College, Quaker broadsides, Quaker journals and diaries, images of Quaker meeting houses and materials related to Quakers and slavery. Born-digital materials in this collection include Bi-Co News photographs, alumni oral histories and Haverford student group materials. Some material can also be found in digital exhibits. For Swarthmore, this includes materials by and/or about Lucretia Mott, Abby Hopper Gibbons, John Hunt and Joshua Evans, and African-American education materials.

- <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/>
- Archive-It: Using Archive-It software, TriCo libraries capture web content. FHL and QSC regularly preserve online content produced by Quaker organisations, which are saved on the Internet Archive. During the pandemic, however, FHL started curating webpages and social media posts through Archive-It to preserve the news and ideas.³⁹
 - <https://archive-it.org/collections/223?fc=websiteGroup:Quaker>
- Over 11.5 million Quaker meeting records are digitised and available on Ancestry.com, which is available to Haverford and Swarthmore researchers on-site, and often available through your local public or academic library. See our guide to using Ancestry.com for more information.
 - https://guides.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/Acom_Genealogy

Fellowships

- Haverford College offers the Gest Fellowship for researchers to use our materials.⁴⁰ Usually a call for applications is put out in December each year, selections in March or April, for use that July–June. We encourage applications to be interdisciplinary and engage with our collections in creative ways. Fellowships are open to those at any stage in their careers.
- The Margaret W. Moore and John M. Moore Research Fellowship supports researchers using the resources of the Friends Historical Library and/or the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, providing a \$1,200 stipend per week, for a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of six weeks.⁴¹ Fellows are required to give a brief, informal presentation about their research to library staff during the last week of their research trip.

³⁹ <https://archive-it.org/organizations/74>. Specifically, FHL/SCPC: <https://archive-it.org/collections/223>.

⁴⁰ <https://www.haverford.edu/libraries/quaker-special-collections/fellowships>.

⁴¹ <https://www.swarthmore.edu/friends-historical-library/moore-research-fellowship>.

Ecosystem of Quaker Libraries

There are Quaker archives and libraries around the world, both formal and informal. Formal ones include those such as the Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain (British Quakers), and the new Africa Quaker Archives (African Quakers)—Quaker materials held in formal institutions with the understanding that these materials will be held in perpetuity. Informal ones include meeting houses and organisations around the world, known to people who worship or work in those locations, but are not connected with formal archives.

Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College and Haverford College's Quaker & Special Collection are both formal archives. Our sibling formal repositories in the USA include archives at Earlham College, Guilford College, Whittier College, George Fox University and Wilmington College. More information about these institutions can be found in the upcoming *The Quaker World* chapter 'Quaker archival collections in the United States'.⁴²

While these two collections cover many elements of Quakerism, both broadly and deeply, there are things that one cannot find. Andrew Flinn wrote in 2007 about how formal archives do not preserve 'the voices of the non-elites, the grassroots, the marginalised', and, if they do, 'the archive rarely allows them to speak with their voice, through their own records'.⁴³ The voices in Quaker archives are of Quakers, as one would expect. Before the twentieth century, these voices have been largely white. While many Friends have worked for social and racial justice, their archived voices are louder than non-Quakers with whom they worked, meaning that, for example, many Black voices are either not heard or are mediated by white Quakers in pre-twentieth-century archival materials.

Anglo-American Quakers as recordkeepers left a huge record to be researched, but in the twenty-first century the majority of Friends are no longer Anglo-American. In the words of Susan Douglas: 'We know that all archives are incomplete, have their own biases on the basis of inclusion, omissions, and point of view, and the ones we make are no exception. However, the ones we create can be, and should be, a counterbalance to the ones created by institutions and political and corporate elites.'⁴⁴ Understanding the incompleteness, biases and points of views of Anglo-American Quakers and taking Andrew Flinn's advice, FHL and QSC are considering post-custodial and fair models of archiving, working to create equitable collaborations with different parts of Quaker communities all over the world.

42 Mary Crauderueff, 'Quaker Archival Collections in the United States', in *The Quaker World*, Oxford: Routledge, 2023.

43 Andrew Flinn, 'Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28(2) (2007), pp. 151–76, DOI: 10.1080/00379810701611936.

44 Susan J. Douglas, 'Writing From the Archive: creating your own', *The Communication Review* 13(1) (2010), pp. 5–14, DOI: 10.1080/10714420903558613.

Since the 1970s, the role of the archivist has been examined and re-examined. Historian Howard Zinn wrote about neutrality in archives as early as 1977, when he described archivists who saw their jobs as 'free from the nasty world of political interest'.⁴⁵ Gradually these ideas of neutrality have been chipped at, from Zinn to sociologist Stuart Hall writing in 2001 that archivists 'cannot bring to [archives] principles from some abstract and disinterested aesthetic out there'.⁴⁶

Quaker archives are not neutral spaces and those of us who work in them are not disinterested. Just as Friends have been politically active and, indeed, have been and are political, archives of Quaker materials are not free of politics. With these acknowledgements, we can find ways of keeping up traditions of collecting but with renewed awareness of what we hold and what the absences and silences are. In our awareness and in full transparency, we aspire to be active participants in supporting spaces that fill these absences and speak openly to allow silenced voices to be heard.

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45 Howard Zinn, 'Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest', *Midwestern Archivist* 2(2) (1977), p. 20.

46 Stuart Hall, 'Constituting an Archive', *Third Text* 15(54) (2001), pp. 89–92.