User Regulations
United Nations Archives at Geneva Reading Room
Last revision: 20 November 2017

Access to the archival materials

The Archives of the League of Nations are entirely accessible.

United Nations records over 20 years old are generally open for public research, unless the classification level “Strictly Confidential” (or related) applies. Records under 20 years old which are not classified may occasionally be accessed on a case-by-case basis, subject to the written consent of the originating office.

For restricted records, the public can submit an Application for Clearance to Access Restricted Records. This application will be forwarded to the record originating office for approval. The applicant will be informed of the decision. Archives staff can provide additional information about these requests. Researchers are advised to begin this process well in advance of their expected visit. Users should use information gained from their research only to analyse the general development. They should not report on any specific situation which could lead to the identification of an individual, and they should not disclose any information which could place anyone in danger or compromise the necessary confidentiality of the internal decision-making processes of the United Nations.

Original material can only be consulted in the Reading Room. Digitized material is accessible at our website: http://libraryresources.unog.ch/leagueofnationsarchives.

Access to the Reading Room

The Reading Room is accessible to external researchers (historians, lawyers, university lecturers and students, and the general public) by appointment made via our online form, email (archives@unog.ch), or in the Reading Room. Researchers need to state their research topic and interest succinctly and if possible indicate in advance the materials they may require. Users are encouraged to consult our online catalogue and finding aids in advance. Online catalogue and finding aids are not exhaustive and users are advised to consult an archivist.

The Reading Room is also accessible to internal users (UN Secretariat staff, delegations to the United Nations, members of Permanent Missions, and other internal users).

The Reading Room is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 17:30, except on official UNOG holidays and during a special closing time around the end-of-year holidays (announced on our website and social media).
Registration and arrival

Prior to arrival, users must register via our online form. On arrival, users must read these User Regulations and will be asked to present valid identification to the archivist, sign their names, and confirm that they have read and accept the User Regulations. Users will also receive a feedback form, and we kindly ask them to complete it towards the end of their visit and help us improve our services.

Researchers are typically assigned one desk for the entire duration of their visit.

What you can and cannot use in the Reading Room

Food and drinks cannot be consumed in the Reading Room and must be kept away from the materials.

The use of pens that leave permanent marks (ballpoint, fountain pens, etc.), markers, adhesives, or any other stationery that might damage the archival materials cannot be used in their vicinity. Only pencils should be used. No markings of any kind are allowed on the archival materials.

Personal electronic equipment, such as laptops and tablets, is allowed and the Reading Room offers wireless Internet access. Mobile phones and cameras are allowed for photographing the materials, but the use of flash is prohibited.

The use of scanners and other semi-professional and professional equipment is not allowed.

Requesting and returning archival materials

Users can request up to five boxes at a time by filling in a Box Request Form provided by the archivist. Boxes are retrieved from the stacks at the following times: 9:00, 11:45, 14:00, and 16:00. All requests should be made in advance of these times. Requests for delivery of materials outside these time-slots is subject to the workload constraints of the archivist.

Users should inform the archivist whenever they are finished with a box and return it to the assigned place to be shown to them by the archivist. Papers should be returned neatly within the files and the files placed in order within the box. Users are not allowed to transfer the files to another researcher.

Users should return the finding aids available in the Reading Room to their place after use.

Handling the archival materials

Archival materials are unique and fragile. For this reason, users are urged to take utmost care in handling them and to seek archivist’s help if needed. We draw particular attention to the following:

- Please turn pages carefully one at a time, ideally from the top right hand corner, without making creases or folds in them, and avoid placing any objects or leaning on the materials.
- Please do not make any markings on the materials (including writing, highlighting, underlining), do not put markers, post-it notes, or any objects to mark places.
- Do not change the original order of the materials or remove any materials from their place under any circumstances. If you deem an error has been made in the arrangement, or if you notice damage to materials, please alert the archivist.
- Please ensure that your hands are clean and dry.
- Please only use pencils for writing near the materials and if you need to use other writing utensils please request to use another table which will be free of archival materials.

Copyright and usage

Users are warned that the United Nations is not in a position to release them from any obligations in respect to copyright held by persons whose works may be found in the archives.

Reproduction of archival materials is allowed by means of a digital camera or mobile device for non-commercial, personal, or research use only. Any other use, including but not limited to commercial or scholarly reproductions, redistribution, publication, or transmission, in any format, without prior authorisation from the United Nations Library and Archives Geneva is strictly prohibited. Requests can be submitted in writing at the Reading Room or via e-mail to archives@unog.ch.

United Nations Library and Archives Geneva can provide some reproduction, subject to the workload constraints of the archivists. The United Nations shall not be obliged to carry out the work of reproduction, even against payment. Any requests and subsequent agreement for bulk reproduction of materials, however, shall be subject to a Memorandum of Understanding established between the researcher/institution and the UN Library and Archives Geneva.

When citing, authors should credit United Nations Archives at Geneva. Ask the archivist for help with citations if necessary.

The United Nations Library and Archives Geneva is not responsible for the content of the articles, books, or other content produced by the researchers.