

SOP: External Requests for Access to Archives

Most WHO records are accessible to external researchers when the records reach 20 years of age. Exceptions apply to certain records (those containing personal information, for instance) as outlined in the e-Manual.

In order for external researchers to consult WHO archival records, they should:

1) Apply for access by filling out and submitting the online research request form indicating the topic of research and a specific description of the request for information:

[Electronic research/information request form](#)

To obtain the best results, it is important to carefully define the subject of the research and the type of documents required. Specific details, such as dates, names or places, will help the Archives team to understand the request.

2) When requests for access to the WHO Archives are received, Archives staff identify which records are available according to the 20-year access rule, and which records are not available because they are either fewer than 20 years of age or subject to a specific access restriction.

3) The archives and the library frequently collaborate in order better to advise researchers. When request for access are received, Archives and Library staff identify which records are considered publications and can therefore be accessed immediately through the Library. The Archives and the Library also organize a round-table meeting with each new researcher.

4) Appointments must be made in advance in order to enable Archives staff to provide the most efficient service. Access to certain records by external researchers may be delayed to allow for conservation or other archival work necessary to prepare files for consultation.

5) Make requests to Head, Records and Archives for special access (e.g. exemptions to 20-year rule or access to confidential records). Such requests are handled on a case-by-case basis, with no assurance that they will be granted.

6) Permission from Head, Records and Archives or from the Archivist must be obtained before reproducing WHO Archives materials in publications. WHO records quoted or reproduced in publications must be cited appropriately, and external researchers who use WHO records in publications are asked if possible to provide two complimentary copies of the publications to the WHO Archives.