

subjected. Some articles have also been written by those for whom English is a second language; these may contain irregular style and spelling. As well, every document (save Sacred Writings) should be considered as representing the opinion or scholarship of the author only, and may not reflect either common Bahá'í belief or the opinions of the editors of this Library.

Other than items reposted under "Fair Use" or "Creative Commons" license, every document in this Library has been approved for posting by the author, editor, or publisher. See also notes on copyright.

For a good — though now outdated — discussion of new digital media and limitations of the Bahá'í Library, see Dharlene Valeda's *Organizing Digital Collections: the Case of the Bahá'í Academics Resource Library* (2003). See a newer discussion in *Bahá'í Library Online at 25: Background, Functioning, and Future* (2022).

Contents of this site

The vision statement of Bahá'í Library Online includes the following summaries of our methodology. The four criteria we use in deciding what to include are whether an item is (1) scholastically useful; (2) historically significant; (3) is a primary source, e.g. the Sacred Writings; or (4) has been published by reputable, scholastically-oriented agencies. This is usually regardless of content. That is, materials are neither accepted nor rejected on the basis of the author's belief. However, the four criteria outlined above do tend to exclude basic deepening material, promotional items, simple apologia, and polemical or tendentious material.

This Library is careful to conform to both Bahá'í and academic standards. It only includes material that is informative or historical, is written in a respectful manner, and is not intentionally deceptive. It does not contain any material which is proscribed in Bahá'í practice, e.g. Covenant-breaker materials, personal or confidential documents, or photographs of Bahá'u'lláh. It also does not include any material which does not have a direct scholarly or historical application, such as "Teaching" manuals or contemporary photography.

Statement on AI

Authors must clearly acknowledge within any article or submission the use of any "Artificial intelligence" tools, with a statement including the name of the tool used, how it was used, and the reason for use. This will be disclosed in the Abstract, and the item will be tagged with 'AI.'

Any and all content on this site created in part through chatbots or generative AI is and will be clearly marked (e.g. where used for translations or tagging subjects in the Inventory).

Some notes on style

In no particular order:

File name keywords: Document "file names," which are the URLs, consist of 2-4

keywords separated by underscore, which may contain hyphens. While older documents were not always consistent, the following standards have been in place for a number of years.

Keyword #1 is always the author's last name, where available, or "uhj_" or "us-nsa_". With translations, keyword #1 is the author's last name and keyword #2 is the translator's last name, followed by two keywords. "Abdu'l-Bahá" and "Shoghi Effendi" are treated as last names, with a hyphen. Compilations start with "compilation_".

File name keywords are always in Latin, or ASCII, characters, so Persian or Russian items must use transliterated keywords. Linked files, e.g. PDFs or Word documents, can use any character set for the filename. See for example [kharman_adab_honar](#) (Latin-character URL, with links to Persian-character documents).

While limiting it to four may seem constraining, four is sufficient and it keeps the addresses looking tidy. If four is not sufficient to differentiate a document, a hyphen with the date at the end is allowed.

Examples:

abdul-baha_lawh_aflakiyyih ("Abdu'l-Bahá" with hyphen)

abdul-baha_masumian_twelfth_imam (translation, with author name + translator name)

bahauallah_ali-kuli-khan_macnutt_iqan (translation, with author name + hyphenated translator name)

bahauallah_surih_vash-shams_cole (translation, with author name + hyphens when four keywords were insufficient)

buck_bahais_encyclopedia_quran-2001 vs. buck_bahais_encyclopedia_quran-2016 (hyphenated date at end to differentiate)

compilation_arts_crafts (compilation, multiple authors)

shoghi-effendi_advent_divine_justice ("Shoghi Effendi" with hyphen)

uhj_memoriam_semple (document from the Universal House of Justice)

uhj_turning_point_1996-2006 (date range in file name)

us-nsa_9-year-plan_destiny_america (hyphen in author name "us-nsa", plus hyphens used for "9-year-plan" when four keywords were insufficient)

winters_notes_copyright (author name + two keywords)

Dates are in ISO format YYYY-MM-DD.

Quotation marks: Curly quotes / smart quotes “ ” ‘ ’ are never used, but only their ASCII equivalents " and '.

ayn and hamza are generally both indicated by the straight apostrophe ', but ayn may be indicated by the backtick ` . Example: `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Headings within a document can be H3, H4, or H5. H1 is reserved for the site title on the first page. H2 is reserved for page titles e.g. "About Bahá'í Library Online" above.

Credits

Numerous people have contributed to making this website as broad and comprehensive as it is. Some of the earliest supporters and contributors of content (1997-1999) in chronological order were Sen McGlenn, Ahang Rabbani, Robert Stauffer, Denis MacEoin, Will van den Hoonaard, Robert Stockman, Thellie Lovejoy, Guilda Mickelson, Alison Marshall, Alan Doug Couper, Duane Troxel, Anthony Lee, John Cornell, Dianne Bradford, Ralph Wagner, Shirley Macias, Seena Fazel, Mehdi Wolf, Alex Christian, and Joyce Raines. After 2000, many others contributed certain other items or collections, including Don Calkins, Bobbi Lyons, Mike W. Thomas, and many others.

Since 2014, Glenn Cameron has done a tremendous amount of work for his Chronology of the Bahá'í Faith. From 2001-2015 the chief assistant editor was Brett Zamir. Since 2017 A. Bolhuis has been single-handedly expanding the tagging system, along with editing, contributing to the Chronology, and adding documents. Peter Smith helps write abstracts. The Version 4 logo was by Ramin Marghi, and the Version 5 logo by Violetta Zein. See also an earlier list of contributors and assistants and some of their personal pages. Special thanks to the valuable contributions of Marcel Schwarz.

Most of all, we thank the authors of items in the Library. The work of 150 years and thousands of people is reflected in this site which, no matter how large, is still and always will be the tip of the Bahá'í scholarship iceberg.

History

A few times in 1996 friends asked me [Winters] to email them copies of some of my grad school papers. When I was asked for copies of one paper twice in one week in January 1997 I decided to figure out how to publish for the web. That being done I thought, "well, now I might as well post my other papers!" It then occurred to me that, since I had been collecting all the documents posted on Talisman 1 and other early internet groups, I must have one of the larger collections of articles, translations, and letters from the Universal House of Justice in digital format. Spring break was coming up and I had a week free, and before I knew it or could stop (!) the Bahá'í Library had sprung. From spring 1997-2002 I sometimes worked on it as a full-time job, alternating with mentoring for the Wilmette Institute and web-hosting/design.

In 2003 I converted the website from a manually-created, HTML-based site (Version 1; see Software versioning) to a dynamic database-driven site, custom programmed in PHP with a MySQL backend (Version 2). Brett Zamir then completely rewrote and improved the backend in 2005-06 (Version 3), overhauling and streamlining the code, adding security features and language packs, and creating a template/cache function. I took a vacation from the library through 2009 while my second child was at home, while Brett grew it and improved the

programming. I returned to the project in 2010 to add new content and interface tweaks. I then reprogrammed the backend in 2012 to make numerous updates to the site's appearance and functioning (Version 4).

Planning for the next complete overhaul started in 2013, but with little progress until 2022 and the development of Version 5. I withdrew ownership in 2022, and the Library is now collectively owned by a small team of volunteers, overseen by an advisory board, and owned by a registered charitable foundation.

See an expanded history of the site at Bahá'í Library Online at 25: Background, Functioning, and Future (2022), or the now-outdated Vision statement prepared for the International Conference on Bahá'í Libraries and Archives (2003) and my presentation What Is a Content Management System? prepared for the 2003 ABS conference.

This site is older than Slashdot (1997), Google (1998), and Wikipedia (2001)! See a Wiki page at bahaikipedia.org/Bahai-library.com.

History: previous versions

The evolution of the Library can be seen from snapshots of previous front pages:

1997-02: Beta version 0.8: housed at thestudent account utoronto.ca/~jwinters and called "Bahá'í Academics Resource Page"

1997-07: Beta 0.4: moved to commercial hosting at interlog.com/~winters and called "Bahá'í Academics Resource Area". Here is its oldest snapshot: archive.org/...interlog.com~winters.

1998: Version 1.0: moved to independent hosting as bahai-library.org and renamed "Bahá'í Academics Resource Library"

1999: 1.1: organization and layout improvements

2000: major content expansion

2001: 1.2: many tweaks to HTML and CSS code

2002: 1.3: content expansion

2003: Version 2.0: transformed into a dynamic database site using MySQL/PHP, moved to a dedicated server as bahai-library.com, and renamed "Bahá'í Library Online"

2004: 2.1: many tweaks to code

2005: Version 3.0: reprogrammed by Brett Zamir to use Smarty templating function — the backend was completely rewritten, but the frontend remained the same

2006: 3.1: some tweaks to code

2007: minor updates only

2008: minor updates only

2009: 3.2: last version of Brett's Smarty system before being re-modified by Jonah; Brett's system is still in use at bahai-academic.hk.

2010: 3.3: edited/formatted 1/3 of the 17,000 individual files posted 1997-2002 and completed the programming initiated in 2003

2011: 3.4: refined output; security tweaks; slogged through migrating another 1/3 of the thousands of files posted 1997-2002 [in the pre-database days many items were posted as multiple files, e.g. books which had a different file for each page]

2012: Version 4.0: start-from-scratch rewrite of all backend code; many small but cumulative changes to interface and design; (almost) completed importing & editing of all prior items; huge amount of new content; see What's New in Version 4.0.

2013: 4.1: completed organizing and sorting (a selected portion of) 15 years' worth of collected files (audio, pdf, doc, images, html, etc) and completed cleaning up the database to the point that (a selected portion of) the complete dataset can be shared by BitTorrent.

2014: 4.2: created Chronology database; more HTML files from the pre-2003 website ported to the database; adopted the listservers Tarikh and Tarjuman

2015: 4.3: imported more data for the Chronology and integrated it with the new Date search, Tags, and Places; began a tag cloud; uploaded/published another 350 items; moderated the Facebook Bahá'í Studies group

2016-2017: 4.4: created Chronology and integrated it with the new Date search, Tags, and Places

2018-2019: incremental updates only

2020: 4.5: added Glossaries & dictionaries; incremental updates; code updates to migrate to PHP 7; added listservers Hikmat, Issues, Kalimat, and Tech.

2021: added Facebook Work Group; added collections Songs & sheet music, Compilations by National Spiritual Assemblies, and Scripts & screenplays; sorting my offline archive of about 20,000 documents-to-be-posted and put many online; migrating the 1997-2002 files to the database; Version 5 programming begun, by I.V. and B.Z.

2022: 4.6: to-do list; sorting my offline archive; still migrating the 1997-2002 files to the database; going through all 6100 database entries one-by-one to improve formatting or update code; starting work on Version 5

2023: See updates in Version 5.

2024-04: 5.0 beta: Last incarnation of Version 4.6 of the Library archived at bahai-library.com and in Wayback Machine. A brand new codebase is in place at bahai-library.org, pending future development of what has now become Version 6; added collection Transcripts; greatly expanded and completely overhauled the Tags system.

2024-08: 5.0: Migration of mature-but-basic dev site to production site; both domains again merged to bahai-library.com

2024-12: 5.09: bugs and patches

2025-03: 5.1: New features include author database, metadata/export, integration of Partial Inventory, integration of bahadata.org properties, 80+ languages to browse, and a downloadable, portable offline archive; see all details at Version 5

2025-07: 5.2: development has continued at an unprecedented pace compared previous versions, including: expanded Languages sort/query options; integration of complete Partial Inventory database, jumping from 560 items to 29,230 and adding all fields, with links; integration of complete Inventory Subjects and correlated to our Tags cloud; redid Baha'i Library Offline with the 41,000 new pages produced from the two new datasets

2025-10: 5.2.1: see recent updates listed in Donor letter #8

2026-02: 5.2.2: added Abbreviations database; added SPARQL functions — see also help and examples

2026-04: 5.3: more Persian material; integrating Collins' Bibliography; large amount of new material posted from old to-do folders; expansion of Tags; new Offline archive, plus updated folders in "winters_archive_to-do_backlog" at archive.org; expansion of Website Archives; last sub-version before 6.0

2026-10, projected: Version 6.0

See also archived versions of the entire website at archive.org:

archives 1999-2003 for bahai-library.org

archives starting 2003 for bahai-library.com

History in logos

1997

1999

2003

2010

2012

2024 and Version 5

2026 cache pages

Ownership, preservation, and donations

The Library is registered as a non-profit in the state of New York, under the umbrella of Twenty-seven Letters Foundation, Inc.; see 27-letters.org. It is collectively "advised" by a group of 18 advisors who have voting power over a

smaller 3-member "board," who have equal say in the website's function and content. Multiple people in this group have the relevant passwords (for the server and the domain registrar), so the site is not under any one person's control. The managing editor is Jonah Winters.

Two Facebook groups are in place, for collaboration or in case of technical issues with the Library (or other websites hosted on the same server): Bahá'í Library Work Group and Winters Web Works Support Group.

See more in the presentation Bahá'í Library Online at 25: Background, Functioning, and Future (2022).

Donation information (tax deductible) is at 27-letters.org.

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies

Compilations

Compilations-NSA

Compilations-personal

Documents

East-asia

Encyclopedia

Essays

Etc

Excerpts

Fiction

Glossaries

Guardian

Histories

Introductory

Letters

Maps

Music

Newspapers

NSA-documents

NSA-letters

Personal

Pilgrims

Poetry

Presentations

Resources

Reviews
Scripts
Software
Statistics
Study
Talks
Theses
Transcripts
Translations
UHJ-documents
UHJ-letters
Video
Visual
Writings

home

sitemap

series

chronology

search:

author

title

date

tags

adv. search

languages

inventory

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abbreviations

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RSS

new