Call for papers

56th annual conference of IALHI

The Shared Responsibility of Memory: Maintaining Relations between Heritage Institutions and their Communities

9-12 September 2026, Berlin

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Hiroshimastr. 17, Berlin

Since the 1990s archives and libraries of the labour movement/social history have witnessed enormous changes in their collection practices. Often, the break with long-standing traditions based on the (unspoken) conviction that history had come to an end played an important role in this. Digitisation and generational changes may also have contributed to this development. The archives and libraries have tried to keep up with the development with its differentiation of groups and partially more ephemeral forms of tradition. The constellations in the various countries are very different and also differ between archives.

At the 56th IALHI conference, we will take stock of the relationship, or more precisely, the nature of these relationships. Overall, the question to whom we are talking and how we as archives and libraries perceive these organisations and individuals is a crucial point. One could describe them as archival creators, but also as donators, activists, depositors or partners. We would like to reflect on this perspective in terms of relation management as pivotal point for our self-understanding and our collection strategies/policies. We want to delve deeper into this and ask how the relationship is (actively?) shaped, how approaches and agreements are made, how collections are assembled and managed, and what archives and libraries do to achieve these goals.

Therefore, we would like to get presentations that focus on this relationship, maybe with these questions in mind:

- Do you think of archival creators as creators or rather donators? What kind of relationship do you prefer and advantages does it have?
- How do the relations between donator/creator/activist/depositor and archive look like? How do you interact?
- What methods do you use to approach?
- How do you acquire new collections? To what extent has your collection profile changed or shifted? What role does a digital acquisition play that does not need depositors/donators?
- How does cooperation with other archives work?

- How do you discuss the consequences of digitisation with your depositors?
- Do you help to preserve the traditions of the depositors? If so, how?
- What does your collection policy look like? Are there any particular gaps you'd want to fill?
- What proactive steps are being taken in your collection work? Do you have any historical examples you'd like to share?

This raises many further questions about the shaping of relationships – including those of non-relationships or the dissolution of relationships. We are eager to hear your thoughts on this and look forward to receiving all kinds of suggestions on this topic!

Please send your proposals with a title and an abstract (max. 1,000 characters) by 29 May 2026 to Nélson Pereira Pinto at info@ialhi.org. Please also send any questions to this address!