

## Public Records Office

The Public Records Office (PRO) of the Government Records Service (GRS) serves as the designated archives of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. Archival records are held at the Hong Kong Public Records Building, which is located at 13 Tsui Ping Road, Kwun Tong, Kowloon. The Building is designed, constructed and equipped throughout according to international standards specified for the preservation of archival records.

**Major Functions:** The PRO mainly performs the following functions: records appraisal, accessioning and description, as well as public programmes and reference services.

**Records Appraisal:** The PRO developed its appraisal guidelines based on the best practice and experience of other jurisdictions and international standards. Government records appraised as having archival value will be transferred to the PRO for permanent retention.

**Records Accessioning and Description:** The PRO then arranges and describes those archival records according to international standards, and prepares inventories and finding aids to help users identify materials relevant to their research interests.

**Public Programmes and Reference Services:** The PRO provides reference services in the Hong Kong Public Records Building. It also provides information of its holdings through the online catalogue @PRO and different kinds of online resources available on the GRS website. To inform the wider public more about its holdings and services, the PRO organises a range of exhibitions, seminars, workshops, visits and other educational activities. To promote the use of archival records in studying and learning, the PRO has developed an "Educational Resources Portal" to provide educational resources for teaching and learning history and other subjects. Members of the public can access and download these reference materials via the GRS website ([www.grs.gov.hk](http://www.grs.gov.hk)). The PRO has also launched a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice>) to introduce its holdings and events to visitors, facilitating interactions with the wider community.

**PRO Holdings:** The PRO houses over 1.8 million holdings in various media and formats, from both government bureaux/departments (B/Ds) and private sources. Most of them are transferred from government B/Ds and subsequently accessioned and arranged in the Hong Kong Record Series. The Hong Kong Manuscript Series comprises personal papers of individuals and records of private institutions. In addition, the PRO acquires from other archival institutions digital copies of records relating to Hong Kong to enrich its archival holdings.

Some notable archival holdings are as follows-

**Land Records** are very popular among researchers. They contain rates collection books from 1858 to 1983, Crown rent rolls from 1843 to 1960, village rent rolls from 1856 to 1960 and surrendered title deeds dating from the mid-1840s. In addition, the PRO also holds the correspondence of the Colonial Secretary's Office relating to land matters covering the period from 1866 to 1940.

**Wartime Records** include Japanese title deeds and memorials, house registration books, house mortgage records and miscellaneous records relating to the organisation and administration of the House Registration Office. Important non-Japanese records of this period are provisional lists of British and foreign casualties, prisoners of war and internees compiled in the month following the surrender of the British Forces to the Japanese, medical records of the internment camp in Stanley, various unpublished war diaries, etc.

**Carl Smith Collection** comprises data cards which contain information on individuals, land matters and organisations, etc. in Hong Kong, Macau and other coastal cities in China. These cards are digitised for public access via the PRO's online catalogue.

**Photographs** held in the PRO date from as early as the 1840s. Most of them were taken in Hong Kong and they provide a valuable record of the territory's physical and sociological development. The collection covers a wide range of subjects including the early history of Hong Kong, local culture, traditions and festivals, housing development, education, industries, commerce, urban and rural development, etc. Among those which draw most public attention are the feature article dossiers documenting Hong Kong's development in various aspects between 1950s and 1970s, photographs of Airport Core Programme in connection with Chek Lap Kok International Airport, and photograph albums relating to the construction works of Mass Transit Railway.

**Posters Collection** features some of the most typical government posters produced between the early 1950s and 2000s. They reflect not only the changes in the styles and designs of government posters over the years, but also the different facets of people's life, such as health and hygiene, Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign, Road Safety Campaign, industrial safety, family planning, crime fighting, anti-drug publicity campaigns, etc. in various periods of important social and economic development in Hong Kong.

**Audio-visual Collection** includes materials acquired from different sources, including documentary TV programmes such as In Perspective, Tuesday Briefing, Weekly Magazine and Common Sense from Radio Television Hong Kong, and Announcements in the Public Interest from the Information Services Department, etc.

The collection touches on various aspects of the social and economic development of Hong Kong. Interesting subjects and events include the Festival of Hong Kong, Cheung Chau Bun Festival, Dragon Boat races, the Agriculture Show, and career paths for youth. Previous work of the Government on fighting corruption, preventing diseases, keeping Hong Kong clean, developing new towns and building multi-storey housing estates are also documented.

**Maps and Plans Collection** comprises ordnance survey maps, public works project plans, architectural drawings of government buildings, outline zoning plans for town planning, etc. Specifically, it includes maps drawn by Lieutenant T.B. Collinson who conducted the first full survey of Hong Kong in 1845, plans of the Government House and the Whitfield Barracks and Camp as well as a collection of standard sheets published by the Survey and Mapping Office of the Lands Department.

**Central Preservation Library for Government Publications** acquires, preserves and selects valuable publications and printed materials of the HKSAR Government and makes them available for use. It also holds extensive collection of Hong Kong official publications from the 1840s to the present. These include an almost complete run of the Hong Kong Government Gazette, Blue Books, Sessional Papers, annual departmental reports for both the pre-war and post-war periods, ordinances and regulations, the Hong Kong Hansard, etc. The Library holds an abundance of general reference works, many of which have been published as a result of the research conducted in the PRO.

The Library keeps a number of local English-language newspapers: copies of one of Hong Kong's first newspapers, *the Friend of China*, are held as well as runs of *the China Mail*, *Hong Kong Daily Press*, *Hong Kong Telegraph*, *Hong Kong Weekly Press*, *Hong Kong Observer*, *Hong Kong News* (the newspaper published by the Japanese during the occupation), *the South China Morning Post*, etc. It also keeps several local Chinese-language newspapers: *the Hsun Huan Jih Pao*, *the Yau Sho Wai Po*, *the Kung Shang Jih Pao*, *the Wah Kiu Yat Po*, *the Wah Kiu Man Po*, *the Hwa Shiang Pao*, *the Hwa Shiang Pao (Evening Edition)*.

**Online resources** are accessible for both local and overseas users through the GRS website. They include:

- PRO's online catalogue @PRO at:  
<https://search.grs.gov.hk/en/index.xhtml>

- Online exhibitions at:  
[https://www.grs.gov.hk/en/online\\_exhibition.html](https://www.grs.gov.hk/en/online_exhibition.html)

- Images of selected holdings (such as History in Pictures, Recording Hong Kong, digital photo albums, etc.) at:  
[https://www.grs.gov.hk/en/online\\_holdings.html](https://www.grs.gov.hk/en/online_holdings.html)

- Educational Resources Portal (including topical guides) at:  
<http://www.grs.gov.hk/ws/erp/en/home/index.html>

**Services** are offered by the PRO to serve people from all walks of life with a variety of interests and needs. In particular, reference services are provided for journalists, government officials, lawyers, teachers, students and visitors for activities such as writing newspapers articles, searching for deeds or documentary proof, researching judicial and administrative issues, tracing family and organisation history and collecting information for school projects and term papers.

Members of the public are welcome to visit the PRO Search Room on the first floor of the Hong Kong Public Records Building. PRO staff will introduce the online catalogue and other finding aids to assist them in identifying archival records kept in the PRO. Public requests for access to archival records in the PRO are handled in accordance with the Public Records (Access) Rules 1996. Reprographic and records certification services are also available.

Public enquiries can be made to the PRO in the following ways:

Telephone: 2195 7700  
Fax: 2804 6413  
E-mail: [proinfo@grs.gov.hk](mailto:proinfo@grs.gov.hk)