

## **PREFACE**

by Ruth Forchhammer

**T**he Bessie Head Papers (BHP) comprise more than 50 boxes of original papers and books and more than 30 boxes of copies of originals. The collection is sorted into 465 folders, which together hold some 6500 items.



The Catalogue covers more or less the span of time between 1967 and 1986, the year of Bessie Head's death.

Most of the papers were left by Bessie in neatly arranged covers with the contents and dates written on the outside. Manuscripts were stored in plastic bags or in envelopes with strings tied around them.

While sorting the papers it was attempted to maintain more or less the same folder assignments that Bessie herself had established, even if this did not always fit into the overall cataloguing system. Thus in many cases it was decided to allow papers to remain in the folder covers where they were found. It was also important not to confuse researchers with a new sorting system, as some of them began reading the BHPs as early as July 1986.

Therefore, within each box the folders are arranged according to their file number. Within each folder the individual items are arranged chronologically.

The archive is also in possession of part of Bessie Head's private library of books and references, about 100 photos, and such personal effects as her writing table and typewriter.

From the very beginning researchers showed an immense interest in the Bessie Head Papers. They read and photocopied extensively in the archive even as the cataloguing itself was being carried out.

In the hope that the Catalogue will become a useful tool for researchers, I wish to express my gratitude for having been given the opportunity to carry out the intriguing task of compiling the following full, true and complete Catalogue.