



Introduction to Creating and Maintaining a Parish Archive

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What is an Archive?

- ▶ “An Archive is a place where people go to for information” (Society of American Archivists) <http://files.archivists.org/advocacy/AAM/WhatIsAnArchives.pdf>
- ▶ Archives house primary sources that are organized in a systematic way in accordance with established archival principles.
- ▶ Different types of archives include: government archives, business archives, religious institution archives, university archives, heritage archives, museum archives, Native American archives, library archives, etc.



The Parish Archive

- ▶ Canon 535 discusses the necessity of a storage area, or parish archive, to house sacramental records and important documents.
- ▶ A good archive includes:
 - ▶ Secure area
 - ▶ Appropriate climate controls
 - ▶ Well labeled boxes/shelves
 - ▶ Collection Policy
 - ▶ Access policy
- ▶ Open parishes are responsible for maintaining their own parish archives, as stated in Canon 535.
- ▶ Closed parishes have the option of transferring their records to the Archdiocesan Archives



The Responsibilities of a Parish Archivist

- ▶ Collect archival materials in accordance with a collection development policy
- ▶ Arrange and Describe materials
- ▶ Preserve materials
- ▶ Make available for research records as needed in accordance with an access policy.



The Collection Development Policy

- ▶ Your parish archive has a very specific focus: your parish
- ▶ You should collect documents produced by your parish that tell the story of your parish, such as:
 - ▶ Parish Council meeting minutes
 - ▶ Newspaper articles about the parish
 - ▶ Photographs of the parish/events
- ▶ Types of items that you should not be collecting include:
 - ▶ Great-Aunt Mary's old bible
 - ▶ An old statue someone found in their basement they don't know what to do with
 - ▶ Papal Encyclicals



Archival Appraisal, Part 1

- ▶ Appraisal is the process of determining the “value” of a record in order to know how long to retain it. Each records series should be appraised in terms of five “values.”
 1. Administrative Value: These are records that document the establishment of parish policies and operations. Policy records are usually retained permanently. Operational records are generally short-lived.
 2. Legal Value: These records generally document legal or property rights of individuals or of the entity that created or maintained the records.
 3. Fiscal Value: Obviously these records generally relate to financial transactions and usually have short-term value and retention. Records documenting fiscal policy may have permanent value.



Archival Appraisal, Part 2

4. Historical Value: These are records that document the origins, organization, development, functions, policies, activities, and events of the parish, and/or provide information on associated persons, subjects, and events. These are always retained permanently.
 5. Sacramental Value: Records documenting the administration of sacraments to the Faithful. These are always retained permanently.
- ▶ When records are appraised all five of these factors should be considered. Other factors such as legal and canonical requirements and reference frequency must also be taken into account. Keep in mind that records may have multiple values.
 - ▶ Records that you deem to be of permanent value are “archival,” meaning that those records warrant indefinite retention because of their value/s, not just because “they are old”.



Parish Records Retention Manual

- ▶ We have endeavored to take a lot of the guesswork out of appraisal for you.
- ▶ Parish Records Retention Guidelines can be found online at:
<https://www.archmil.org/offices/archives/Records-Management.htm>



Arrangement

- ▶ Group like records together
 - ▶ Meeting Minutes
 - ▶ Bulletins
 - ▶ Parish rosters
 - ▶ Financial records
 - ▶ Etc.
- ▶ Within record groups items should generally be either chronological or alphabetical, but you should not attempt to put every record you have from 1920 in one folder, everything from 1921 in another folder, etc.



Description

- ▶ Archival description is essentially an index or a list of the records you have and where they are located.
- ▶ The description can be as broad or as narrow as you have time for, but in general a list of the folders in your archive or the types of records is sufficient.
- ▶ Good description ensures that records can be found when needed because the index tells you where to find each type of record.



B 19 F 1 Sick Call Register, 1953-1987

Financial Records

- B 20 Cashbook, 1 of 2, 1939-1949
- B 20 Cashbook, 2 of 2, 1939-1949
- B 3 F 1-7 Financial Reports, Published, 1934-1992
- B 7 F 11 Insurance Policies, Personal, 1979-1991
- B 8 F 1 Insurance Policies, Title and Auto, 1994
- B 8 F 2 Invoice, Church Repair, 1990-1994
- B 8 F 3 Invoices, Renovation, 1974-1976
- B 8 F 4 Invoices, Renovation, 1976-1978
- B 20 Ledger, 1945-1948 (Restricted)
- B 20 Ledger, 1950-1961 (Restricted)

- B 21 Ledger, 1962-1966 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1967-1971 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1972-1973 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1974-1980 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1981-1983 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1984 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1985 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1986 (Restricted)
- B 21 Ledger, 1987 (Restricted)

Marriage Records

- B 23-25 Marriage records, 1940-1994 (Restricted)

Parish Organization Records

- B 1 F 1 Advancement Association, Ledger, 1970-1979
- B 1 F 2 Advancement Association, Ledger, 1980-1986
- B 1 F 4 Annual Parish Meetings, Minutes, ca 1927-1951 (Polish and English)
- B 1 F 9 Building and Grounds Committee, 1987-1993
- B 1 F 10 Christian Formation Committee, Minutes, 1989-1990
- B 2 F 1 Christian Formation Committee, Minutes, 1991-1993
- B 7 Christian Mothers Society, Medal
- B 22 Christian Mothers Society, Member List, 1972-1994
- B 2 F 2 Christian Women's Society, Constitution and Member Lists, 1972-1984
- B 2 F 3 Christian Women's Society, Minutes, 1986-1994
- B 2 Christian Youth Organization, Journal, 1945-1952
- B 3 F 8 Full Finance Committee Report to Parish Council, 1988-1992
- B 4 F 1-4 Full Finance Committee, Minutes, 1987-1994
- B 6 F 5 Holy Name Society, Bylaws, 1989
- B 6 F 6 Holy Name Society, Correspondence, 1972-1995
- B 6 F 7 Holy Name Society, Member Lists, 1973-1991
- B 6 F 8-11 Holy Name Society, Minutes, 1971-1994
- B 7 F 1 Holy Rosary Society, Minutes, 1956-1966
- B 7 F 2 Holy Rosary Society, Minutes, 1967-1971
- B 7 F 3 Holy Rosary and Christian Mothers Society, Minutes, 1972-1988
- B 12 F 2 Parish Council, Constitution and Bylaws, 1984-[1994]
- B 12 Parish Council, Minutes, 1980-1983 (5 Spiral bound notebooks)
- B 13 F 1-3 Parish Council, Minutes, 1983-1994
- B 18 F 7 Personnel Board, Minutes, 1992-1993
- B 18 F 8 Personnel Committee, 1989-1993



Preservation: Archive Housing

- ▶ Store in a secure location.
 - ▶ An archive should be protected from any dangers including: theft, fire, flood, tornadoes, etc.
 - ▶ Archival documents should NEVER leave the building. No one should ever take records with them to work from home.
- ▶ Store in an area that will maintain a relatively stable temperature and humidity (NOT in a basement or attic)
- ▶ Light can cause damage
- ▶ Restrict Access
 - ▶ Only select individuals at the parish should have access to the archives.
 - ▶ Anyone outside the parish doing research in your parish archives should be monitored.



Preservation: Record Housing

- ▶ The environment you store records in is crucial for their long-term preservation.
 - ▶ Acid-free boxes and folders are the most cost-effective materials.
 - ▶ Archivists should *always* use pencils in the archive, so folder titles should be handwritten directly into the folder in pencil.
 - ▶ In general, plastic boxes are less than desirable because they can trap heat and moisture.
 - ▶ My favorite suppliers:
 - ▶ University Products: <https://www.universityproducts.com/>
 - ▶ Gaylord: <http://www.gaylord.com/>
 - ▶ Hollinger-Metal Edge: <https://www.hollingermetaledge.com/>



Access

- ▶ Type of Researchers
 - ▶ Parish Staff members
 - ▶ Parishioners
 - ▶ Others with an interest in your parish's history
- ▶ Type of Records
 - ▶ Right to know versus confidentiality
- ▶ Always defer to the pastor/parish director



Bibliography

Archive Fundamental Series II published by the Society of American Archivists

- ▶ *Understanding Archives & Manuscripts* by James M. O'Toole
- ▶ *Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts* by Kathleen Roe
- ▶ *Preserving Archives and Manuscripts* by Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler

Conserv-O-Grams, published by the National Parks Service. Section 19 talks about archives.

https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/cons_toc.html



Conclusion

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