

ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION FOR CONGREGATIONS HANDOUT

By John D Beatty

1. Why a Congregational Archives?

- Place for preserving memory of organization
- Place for keeping valuable records safe for the future
- Place for providing documentation for objects of art for insurance purposes
- Opportunity for bringing order from disorder

2. Getting Started – What to Do

- Create a mission or collection statement/ a statement of purpose
- Finding a suitable location
- Getting support from the governing authority of the congregation

3. Archives vs. libraries, Differences

- Libraries collect from many entities, archives from a single entity
- Libraries have call number arrangements, archives have custom arrangements
- Libraries have wide access, archives typically have limited access

4. Congregational records required to keep

- Parish registers of baptisms, marriages, confirmations, and burials
- Meeting minutes
- Canons, rules of governance
- Financial statements (with some limitations)
- Annual reports
- Legal records (specially deeds, employment records)
- Blueprints and other facility records

5. Congregational records that should be kept

- Directories of members
- Pastoral correspondence
- Photographs
- Bulletins and newsletters
- Recordings
- Memorabilia
- Digital records and files

6. What to keep beyond the above

- Miscellaneous legal papers such as wills, bequests
- Information valuable to writing a history
- Statistical information, such as attendance records
- Information about organizations and their formation
- Building and grounds information (including art objects, stained glass)

7. What to dispose

- Corrosive items
- Materials not related to congregation
- Duplicate items
- Records of routine administration (may include some interim financial reports)
- Records that have function for short period of time

8. Where to locate archives

- Avoid basements and attics
- Cool, dry place free of mold and possible water damage
- Direct sunlight should be restricted
- Unused classroom or office above ground is ideal
- Maintain constant temperature and humidity
- Plan enough space for shelving and metal file cabinets

9. Developing Policies for Archives

- Collection Development: What will be collected and from what sources
- Retention policy: What records will be kept only a short time or not kept.
- Digitization policy: Prioritizes what to be digitized, where kept, development of website
- How are files named, Cloud Storage as backup

10. Access and use

- Who has access? Sensitive files such as personnel files require limited access
- Are some files closed officially to historical research but still preserved (ie. Files of living people)

11. Record preservation basics

- Archival quality folders
- Mylar photo sleeves
- Removal of staples and paper clips
- Store in metal file cabinets with stable temperatures and humidity

12. Digitizing

- TIF files at 300 dpi or more in full color or archival storage
- JPEG files for posting online
- Photographs, parish registers, newsletters/newspapers, selected documents
- Digitizing platforms for Internet: Scalar and Omeka
- Digitizing recordings, both archival and current interviews
- Professional document scanning Internet Archive and Familysearch

13. Preservation of artifacts

14. Creating a finding aid or guide to the Collection

- File-level inventory

- Group records into sub-collections by creator or type
- Provenance and original order

Bibliography

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