

1. Physical Custody of the Collection

- Church bodies are legal entities that have a continuing historical identity in the wider community. The archives are the evidence of legal standing. The archives should always be available and accessible to every generation of the corporation and the community.
- The normal expectation of any business operation is that the records and archives be maintained at the place of business whenever possible.
- If the parish or diocese decides it cannot maintain its archives on-site, it should consult with the diocese or The Archives of the Episcopal Church for guidance when seeking other storage alternatives, especially external, non-Church repositories.
- Under no conditions should a parish or diocese give away its records to an outside agency or external, unrelated secular body. A deposit agreement should always cover a relationship with a third party archival repository.
- Regardless of the terms of any deposit agreement, the parish or diocese should maintain legal title to its archives even if they are housed under the care of a third party entity.

2. Electronic Records: Basic Steps for Retention and Storage of Electronic Data.

- Locate important documents on computers or computer networks. Identify documents and sets of files that have long-term administrative and historical importance (e.g., minutes, annual reports, newsletters, official acts, and membership records). Make these records your priority to achieve early results rather than become bogged down in too much data.
- Be sure to identify the most comprehensive, complete, and updated version of the data.
- Work with your administrative and technology staff to create a separate “Archives Directory” – a logically separate space on your computer network. Your computer administrator can set this space up as a read-only environment with access permissions that act as a security layer to protect individual privacy and internal communication.
- Use the Archives Directory to deposit records which will separate them from everyday operational records on the main data server, workstation drive, or in the cloud.
- Create at least two copies of the Archives Directory on durable, redundant storage devices or environments that combine hard drive space, RAID file server systems, external drives (e.g. solid state drives, DVDs or Blu-ray discs), and/or cloud storage.
- Ask the parish or diocesan staff to record data in industry accepted and generally supported data formats (e.g., doc, xsl, pdf, wpd, odt, wav, tiff, avi).
- A work group of the staff should agree to a common folder structure within the Archives Directory that reflects the important functions/activities you have identified as your priorities (see first bullet). For example, create a Vestry Folder for vestry minutes and vestry annual reports; create a Publications Folder for parish newsletters and parish bulletins; create a General Folder for occasional documents that do not fit neatly in an obvious category.

- The work group needs to agree on a procedure for depositing records identified for long term retention, either directly by the records creator or by transfer to a coordinator.
- Identify a coordinator who will act as the records custodian. This person will oversee compliance by encouraging awareness in the work group, remind record creators to make regular deposits into the Archives Directory, and conduct an occasional review of the contents to be sure they are readable and have not been corrupted.

3. Digitization of Records

- Records can be digitized for at least two purposes: for quick retrieval of information, and/or for preservation of the record. Digitization for simple retrieval of information usually does not take into consideration long term archival retention.
- Digitization for both access *and* preservation is costly because it requires careful preparation of the source material, high data conversion standards, quality control checking, electronic storage protocols, and multiple storage options. Digitization for use and preservation is the best long term investment, but it adds a layer of management to monitor access and data integrity.
- Digitization is a preservation strategy and not a replacement for important original records such as vestry minutes, sacramental records, or photo images. Do not throw away important original records after digitization.

4. Retention of Records: Minimum Standards for Keeping and Disposing of Records

- Safe and legal destruction of obsolete records should always take place according to a parish or diocesan approved retention schedule.
- A parish or diocese that does not have a customized retention schedule can download one from the website of the Archives of the Episcopal Church and adapt it to local need.
- Retention schedules also identify the records that have long-term or permanent value to the parish or diocese. These records should be set aside for keeping in the archives.
- When destroying records identified as obsolete on a parish retention schedule, a log should be kept to demonstrate due diligence and a normal destruction practice rather than an arbitrary house cleaning. Keep the log in the archives.
- Never destroy records that are the subject of any pending or existing litigation.
- When in doubt, ask for advice before destroying records that are not clearly identified on the retention schedule.

5. Storing Paper Archives

- Identify a clean, dry and relatively stable space in your building complex. Basements that are historically dry and above the flood plain may be a good choice for keeping materials cool, but overhead, pressurized water pipes and rooms that are traditionally damp should be avoided. Unfinished attics are not a good choice because of the radical seasonal temperature change.

- Converting a general purpose room, closet, office space, or a basement room may require that the area be reinforced with gypsum board, use of fire proof safes, secured and covered windows, and a metal access door. A concrete or stone building is highly preferable to a wood-frame Church building.
- The ideal temperature environment is one that sits within the range of 50-65° F and varies little ($\pm 5-7^{\circ}$ F) throughout the year. It is most important to avoid radical seasonal swings in temperature and humidity, which especially affects audio and visual materials.
- The storage room will require metal shelving, a handling/staging table, and adequate lighting.

6. Security and Access

- An archives implies limited access to the original materials in order to prevent unauthorized access to information, damage or loss. Some protocols and oversight are essential but these can be low impact in terms of cost and time.
- A staff person (e.g. the records coordinator) officially designated by the Vestry, should be assigned responsibility for giving access to the archives, monitoring temporary borrowing for duplication, and ensuring accurate, timely return of borrowed items.
- Personnel and confidential records should be marked as "closed" or "confidential". Whole series of such records should be stored in locked file cabinets or kept in a visibly distinct place in the archives room to help the coordinator monitor their restricted access.
- An archives room should normally be locked. An archives space for electronic records should be password protected with a read-only status applied to the files. The records coordinator must be a trusted employee or agent and should have access along with designated parish or diocesan leadership.
- Create approved policies on who gives access to which records, and how the policy applies to internal information needs and to public requests.
- Consider that some records contain information that is private and should only be made available on a need to know basis, (e.g.: sacramental records, pledge records, biographical data, membership records, payroll, etc.)

7. Protective Care of Archival Records

- Non-acidic boxes and file folders are preferred for storing permanent paper records. In lieu of these costly supplies, use metal file cabinets.
- Keep papers covered and away from light and dust.
- Use standard archival supplies to store magnetic media, film, and photo images. Consult existing standards to match the different formats (try a Web search).
- Particularly rare and historically valuable images and recordings should be considered for digitization projects.

8. Organization of Archival Records

- Observe the internal order of the records and do not engage in elaborate re-organization of files that already make pretty good sense.
- Consult the arrangement scheme that is available on The Archives of the Episcopal Church website.
- If possible, keep a high-level master index or inventory to the boxes and directories stored in the archives room and/or the archives data storage space. An index or inventory can be a simple list giving the title, date ranges, and location of the material in the archives.
- The best arrangement of electronic records is by using directories and folders that represent major structures, functions or activities of the parish or diocese.

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