Records Management and Archives in the Parish
Part I

Records Management
You encounter many types of records in a parish office, ranging from routine office files to documents that date back to the parish’s founding.
Records Management

The records you deal with come in many formats, including written documents, photographs, and electronic files, to name just a few.
Records Management

How to care for all of these records has become a real challenge in many parishes, especially the volume for which you are responsible.
Despite the number and variety of records you are responsible for, however, the underlying question remains the same: How do you know what records to keep and what to throw out?
Records Management

For too many, the answer is either to throw out everything or to keep everything.

Both answers are problematic and I’m here to tell you why.
Records Management

To help institutions and organizations answer these questions, the field of records management has emerged.
Records Management

One of the most important contributions they have made is to establish that every record has a life span, from its creation and use to its storage.
Records Management

Identifying the lifespan of a record will help you to determine what records you can safely throw out and what you need to keep.
Records Management

A Records Management program will:

• Establish control over the records
Records Management

A Records Management program will:

- Establish control over the records
- Improve efficiency
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• Ensure compliance with legal requirements (civil and canon)
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- Save storage space
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements (civil and canon)
- Ensure preservation of historic records
General misconceptions about Records Management:

• can wait until desk is cluttered...
• can wait until filing cabinets and storage closets are full...
• can wait until there is an emergency...
Records Management

5 Steps to establishing a program:

1) Perform an inventory of all the records.
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2) Appraise the records based on their value, i.e. limited or permanent, and classification, i.e. legal, administrative, fiscal, historical, or sacramental.
Records Management

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3) Draw up retention schedules that identify how long these records should be kept.
Records Management

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4) Store inactive records in a secure area, separating those of limited value from those that are permanent. Clearly identify all boxes, noting dates of retention.
Records Management

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4) Store inactive records in a secure area, separating those of limited value from those that are permanent. Clearly identify all boxes, noting dates of retention.

5) Dispose of all records that have out-lived their assigned value.
Records Management

What is the significance of the records you have identified as “permanent” while conducting your inventory?
Records Management

What is the significance of the records you have identified as “permanent” while conducting your inventory?

They are the records that will comprise your parish archives.
# Sample Records Retention Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Records Series &amp; Title</th>
<th>Retention Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sacramental Records Series</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Register</td>
<td>Permanent. Canon 1121.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacramental. Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Case File</td>
<td>Limited. Retain 70 years, then destroy. Administrative value ceases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annulment Case Files</td>
<td>Limited. Retain 40 years, then destroy. Administrative value ceases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records Series &amp; Title</td>
<td>Retention Recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Records Series</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement Book (daily or weekly records of parish activities)</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative. Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Report of the Parish</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative. Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence – Official (concerning parish policy, diocesan directives, etc.)</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative. Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence – Routine</td>
<td>Limited. Administrative. Annual Review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel Records Series</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Contracts (office and pastoral staff)</td>
<td>Limited. Administrative. Retain 5 years after termination of employee, then destroy. Value ceases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Records Series</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Statements</td>
<td>Limited. Retain 7 years, then destroy. Fiscal value ceases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Fund Account Book</td>
<td>Permanent. Historical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canceled Checks and Check Stubs</td>
<td>Limited. Fiscal. Retain 7 years, then destroy. Value ceases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust Fund/Estate Contribution/</td>
<td>Permanent. Canon 1306.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pious Foundations Records</td>
<td>Fiscal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sample Records Retention Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Records Series</th>
<th>Retention Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architectural Drawings</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Files</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment File (catalogs,</td>
<td>Limited. Administrative. Retain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructions, warranties,</td>
<td>until superseded. Value ceases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inspection certificates,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cemetery Records Series</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account Card (record of lot ownership and payments)</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Statements</td>
<td>Limited. Fiscal. Retain 7 years, then destroy. Value ceases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial Card (interment records, including name, date of burial, name of funeral director, lot number and place of death)</td>
<td>Permanent. Administrative. Historical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits of a retention schedule:

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- **Identify and Protect** records of permanent value
- **Purge** regularly any records of limited value
- **Ensure** compliance with legal requirements
- **Simplify** office procedures
- **Save** space, time, and money
Electronic Records
What Electronic Records?

- word-processed documents
- e-mail
- spreadsheets; databases
- web pages
- digital images
- online newsletters
Software for Parishes

- Rosters of members
- Contributions
- Bulletins
- School information
- Cash accounts
- Burial plot maps
Electronic Records

What are your preservation goals?

- Preserve content
- Ensure access
Electronic Records

Preservation Strategies:

• Perform backups
• Print to hardcopies
• Migration
• Store offsite
Part II

Archives
“...archives are places of memory of the Christian community and storehouses of culture for the new evangelization.”

- Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, “The Pastoral Function of Church Archives”

St. Lawrence
Patron Saint of Archives
Once you’ve identified the records that are of permanent value to the parish, you have the foundation of your archives program.
Archives

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This is because an archives is the repository for an institution’s most treasured records and serves as the collective memory of that institution.
Archives

What does canon law have to say about parish archives?

Each parish is to have a registry or archive in which the parish books are kept along with episcopal letters and other documents which ought to be preserved due to necessity or usefulness; ... (Canon 535/4)
Archives

How does one set up an archives in the parish?
Archives

• **Controlled environment**
  – Consistent temperature and humidity
  – No direct, prolonged exposure to light
  – Secure space and restricted access
Archives

• **Controlled environment**
  – Consistent temperature and humidity
  – Secure space and restricted access
  – Identify potential problems and address

• **Proper storage and handling**
  – Store records in archival boxes or cabinets
  – Organize records in a safe and accessible manner
  – Handle records with care
Archives

What are the benefits of having a parish archives program?

- Ensure preservation of permanent records
- Create an invaluable resource for your faith community