ARCHIVING PROCEDURES

1. ARCHIVAL RESOURCES OF A PARISH

Archives are not merely the 'old stuff' or the 'historical stuff' that sits in the back of the cupboard or in the boxes on the shelves in the storeroom. The archives are the resources that hold information about the organisation and the business. They are the records that with the passage of time have fallen out of day-to-day administrative use, but importantly are the sources that document the history and the background of the organisation. Without them there would not exist an accurate, reliable or authenticated source for the past activity of the organisation.

It is important to recognise that the material that constitutes the archival resources is, in the main, derived from what were, in their time, the business records of the parish.

1.1 Additional Materials

A parish may have holdings of additional materials, in written as well as other formats, that also provide a record of (or insight into) the past. These will almost certainly include:

- Collections of photographs;
- An historical library of publications about the church (including the diocese and the wider church), the local region, and perhaps significant personalities and events for the parish;
- Materials in a range of audio-visual formats that might include moving film, audio cassettes, videotapes, CDs and DVDs; and
- Collections that include vestments, sacred vessels, and religious objects such as art works, statues, crucifixes and stained glass.

Because parishes are likely to have holdings in these formats it is important to be aware of any special requirements of arrangement, packaging and storage that should be observed to ensure these resources are handled in a way that will be an aid to their preservation.

Older parishes in particular may also have accumulated collections that relate to:

- defunct parish groups;
- parish schools;
- religious orders or communities associated with the parish; or
- material donated by or acquired from long term parishioners or former parish priests.

While these are not strictly the archives resulting from the business of the parish, they have a tangible connection to the community and therefore have some right to a place in the archives collections of a parish. It is not recommended that the parish actively canvas their acquisition, but if there are such collections held by the parish, they should be retained (at least for the present) and handled in a way that will support their longer term preservation.

2.0 CURRENT RECORDS
Current records are the range of records that are created or received by the parish and then used to support the business management and business objectives of the parish.

The current business records of parishes will most likely include:
- Statements of parish policies, procedures and practices;
- Records of financial transactions and practices;
- Property records, maps and building plans;
- Sacramental registers of baptisms, confirmation and marriage;
- Burial registers;
- Incoming and outgoing correspondence;
- Staffing and appointment records;
- Records of parish committees including Pastorals Councils and Finance Committees;
- Master sets of parish publications including parish bulletins, newsletters and magazines, as well as booklets of special and commemorative services and celebrations; and
- The parish website.

Not all records that are created, received or maintained by a parish office are required to be kept permanently. Depending on its nature and content a record may have a short or long term purpose. The process of determining the time period that records need to be kept for is undertaken by *appraisal*, which is guided by a *retention authority* (may also be referred to as a *retention schedule)*. Many organisations have developed a retention authority that can apply to their records. This archdiocese has not issued one to be used in parishes. However a useful guide to the types of records that should be kept permanently (and therefore become parish archives) is located in the *Church Administration Handbook* (see Table 17.1 on pages 336-339).

2.1 Paper files
It is recommended that from the point of creation or accumulation that parish records are placed into a logically ordered and sequenced recordkeeping system. At its most basic this might involve creating a manila file for each subject area known to arise in the parish each year (eg. 'RCIA program, 2012', 'Church maintenance, 2010') and sorting these files alphabetically in a four-drawer cabinet. The system devised needs to be suited to the needs of the parish but it is also important that the system be arranged in a way that it will be obvious to a casual observer where a particular paper might be filed, and where if they were looking to retrieve papers on a certain matter they might be located. Aim to have a separate file for each major subject area (ie if the parish has more than one church, an annual maintenance file for each church should be created). Avoid bag files – with titles such as 'general correspondence', or 'miscellaneous matters'. If for some reason a file on a particular topic is used for a number of years, ensure that the final title includes the range of years for which it was used (eg 'Parish Council 2006–2009').

2.2 Records in electronic formats
Most parishes will create, receive, accumulate and maintain at least some of their current records in electronic formats – such as emails, spread sheets, databases, templates etc, and they will be held on computers and servers maintained in the parish. The principles for managing and maintaining these records follow the same principles as traditional paper format records, but applied in a way that recognises the electronic environment. Some issues to keep in mind are:

- **Metadata** – Metadata is the information about an electronic record that attaches to it and which allows it to be individually identified and retrieved. Much of this information is applied to the document automatically by the system it is written in (this includes the type of software and version, the dates of creation and editing, its size and author). The document title is one important metadata element that is usually applied individually by the author. In giving titles to documents you create ensure that the title provides as clear an indication of the purpose and content of the document as you can (eg. you might title a Microsoft Word document that sets out the school masses for the year 'Schoolmass2013'). Remember that it may be someone other than you who has to locate and retrieve it when the document is needed.
- **Back-ups** – Ensure there is an ongoing system of backing-up up your electronically held material. This should be done as a safeguard against the loss of information should your hard-drive or server fail. You should run your back-ups regularly (at least weekly).
  In addition to backing-up your drives and servers you are strongly advised to ensure that a copy of the back-up is kept at a site remote from your office. In many parishes it may be appropriate to use the office at the parish school as the off-site location where the back-up may be securely held. If this is not an option, perhaps you can make a back-up storage arrangement with a neighbouring parish. You should ensure that wherever your back-up is held that it is both safe and secure.
- **Migration** – If low reference or inactive material is being held in electronic formats on support servers or disks, they should be migrated (upgraded) to any new software or hardware platforms (such as new versions of software or upgrades to operating systems) that are introduced to the main system. If this is not done then the information stored on these devices is likely to be rendered inaccessible.

2.3   Sacramental registers

Canon 535 provides that each parish is to maintain a range of registers including those of the conferring of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and marriage. It is the responsibility of the parish priest to ensure that registers are maintained, though in the modern parish the work in doing this is usually undertaken by staff of the parish office.

Over time most parishes will accumulate sets of full registers which must also be kept. Many parishes in the NSW regions of the Archdiocese are likely to have registers dating back more than 100 years.

The Archdiocese approved Parish Administration and Communications System (PACS) has the facility to record details of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and marriage, as well as deaths, that have traditionally have been recorded in physical registers, in an electronic format. Note that electronic recording is not recognised by Canon Law as a permanent method of recording this information. Using the PACS facility is encouraged because of the features of ease of reference and ease of retrieval that it offers for this information, but it is to be used along with, and not as a substitute for the maintenance of the physical registers of the parish.

2.4 Parish Publications

It is recommended that a master copy be kept of publications produced in the parish including:
- The weekly parish bulletin;
- Parish magazines;
- Reports to parishioners (eg financial summary); and

- Booklets for special, sacramental or commemorative services or liturgies conducted in the parish.

Leaflets produced about parish activities, parish initiatives, parish groups etc are likely to be included in the records maintained about the particular matter in question. This would be sufficient.

3.0 RECORDS OF PARISH GROUPS

Every parish has a range of groups, including councils, clubs, societies and movements that perform functions and carry out activities within the parish, and as a consequence are likely to generate records. The list of names of these groups is likely to include the parish pastoral council and finance committee, St Vincent de Paul conference, youth group, prayer group, social justice group or sporting club. Usually these records (such as minutes of meetings, papers relating to activities) are maintained by an office bearer of the group (the convener or secretary) who will retain those needed and cull any that no longer have a use. There will be occasions where these groups will want to forward records no longer in regular use to the parish office for safe keeping or storage.

It is recommended that these collections be accepted, which in any individual case are likely to be relatively small quantities.
- Request that the records are sorted (eg. into topics/subjects or date order) and neatly presented (in labelled Manilla folders if possible).
- Maintain the records as separate parish archives collections.
- Do not attempt to integrate them into the administrative records of the parish.

4.0 DONATED OR DEPOSITED RECORDS

Donated or deposited records are records that do not directly relate to the business administration of the parish. They are collections that are likely to have some loose connection with the parish and might come the way of the parish for any number of reasons that could include:
- Papers of a former (and possibly deceased) parish priest,
- Papers forwarded by a long-term parishioner or a member of a long-term parish family that contain information that is of interest to the parish.

It is not recommended that parishes actively canvas for these sorts of collections – though it is recognised that it can often be difficult to refuse to take such collections when offered. If the parish decides to accept a donated/deposited collection, it would be wise to ensure all contents are well arranged and listed at the time of acceptance. Prepare a list of the contents that is endorsed with the signatures of both parties (the donor/depositor and the parish) and the date of deposit. It should be specified whether the collection is being donated to the parish (ie ownership is being transferred to the parish). Such actions should safeguard against possible future disputes as to exact contents or terms of the deposit.

5.0 RECORDS STORAGE ARRANGEMENTS
5.1 Security

A parish's records (and archives) are important assets of the parish. It may not be possible to put a monetary value on them, but, realistically, it would be impossible (or next to impossible) for the parish to effectively conduct its business without them. As a general rule parish records should be kept in a secure lockable storage area – a safe, cabinet or lockable shelving (or compactus storage) unit. If a dedicated room is used, it should be

lockable. Regardless of the type of storage used, it should be locked at times access to it is not required.

Access to record storage areas should be restricted to those who in the course of their work require access to them. On no account should holdings of parish archives be allowed out of the custody of the parish without the express approval of the parish priest.

5.2 Climatic Conditions

Recommended climatic conditions for archives storage specify a temperature range of 18-20 degrees Celsius and a humidity level of 50%. While it is probably not possible to guarantee these conditions for the parish archives, it is best if they can be kept in an area where the temperature level is as stable as possible while avoiding any extreme variations in temperature levels.

- Circulation of air, even if this means no more than placing a fan in the area at the times it is being accessed is important.
- Do not store records in areas subject to high moisture levels, rising damp, or leaky roofs, drains or pipes. [Keep light levels to a minimum, and extinguish all lights when not needed.]

5.3 Protection from the Elements

Regardless of format, most records are vulnerable to many of the forms of risk posed by the elements. The storage arrangements for parish archives resources should be capable of offering protection against:

- Extremes of weather conditions, including heat and cold, dust and rain, flooding and dampness; and
- Insect and rodent infestation

In general this means avoid using areas such as garden sheds, garages, the ceiling cavity or beneath the building for storage of records.

5.4 Fire Safety

Include parish archives storage arrangement within the parish fire safety plan. The best measures that can be undertaken here are to ensure the regular maintenance of electrical and gas connections, avoid the build-up of flammable rubbish in or nearby to storage areas, and, where possible, install smoke detectors in storage areas.

5.5 Storage Units

If shelving is being used ensure it is clean, stable and in good condition. It is suitable to store volumes directly on shelving, but files are best stored in boxes unless file storage racks are available. Do not store records or volumes by stacking one on top of another.

If metal storage cabinets or filing cabinets are used, ensure they are clean and in good condition and show no signs of rust.

Do not store archives, boxed or unboxed, directly on the floor. This will often result in moisture being drawn up into the box and its contents, which makes them susceptible to mould. As a minimum use palettes or similar, to ensure there is a gap between the stored material and the floor. This also assists the circulation of air.

Use boxes designed for the purpose. Boxes available from stationery suppliers (often called 'archive storage boxes') are usually adequate for short and medium term storage.

They are usually not robust enough to be a recommended long term storage option. Purpose-designed archives boxes in a range of sizes are available from archives products suppliers (such as Archival Survival – see www.archivalsurvival.com.au). They may be more expensive, but do provide a more adequate longer-term solution.

5.6 Control

Maintain a register or catalogue of all material held in the parish archives. This could be held in either of a range of formats including a typed list, book entry, index card catalogue, or electronic spread sheet. It does not have to be overly elaborate or detailed. Remember that the aim of a register is to encourage the orderly organisation and arrangement of the archives and to facilitate the location and retrieval of material.

6.0 CARE OF RECORDS

6.1 Volumes

The traditional registers in most parishes will be large (and often heavy) hard-covered volumes. As the volumes age the binding, in particular, will become dry and fragile, the paper will tend to dry out and become more brittle and the ink used to make entries will fade. Proper care of registers will not prevent these effects occurring, but may slow it down and reduce the incidence of them being damaged by handling.

Observe the following in the care of registers:
- Do not handle any more than is absolutely necessary. If moving volumes by hand, carry only one at a time. Ensure your hands are clean and dry;
- Store upright in supported shelving. If storing flat on shelving, do not stack registers on top of one another;
- If stored on open shelving wrap registers in plain wrapping paper (to prevent settling of dust etc);
- Lay volume on a low bookstand or cushion to open (this supports the binding);
- When turning pages ensure hands are clean (or preferably wear conservation gloves);
- Do not attempt repairs to damaged binding or pages using adhesive tape; and
- Never attempt to copy or image a page from a register volume by flattening it on a photocopy or flat-bed scanner screen. This can seriously damage the binding. Copy only with an overhead digital camera (supported in a stand if one is available).

If there is a high call on reference to fragile volumes (for local or family history purposes) it may be possible to create an index as an electronic format, which will speed up the process of determining if an entry exists and the page of the register on which it will be found, and take a digital copy of the register and use this as the reference copy. But you should not allow a reference copy to move out of the custody of the parish.

6.2 Photographs

There are two important **Do Nots** in the handling and care of photographs:
- Do not store photographs in a way that allows adhesive products to touch against the photographic image (ie do not store in albums that place the photograph beneath a clear adhesive cover),
- Do not write anywhere on a photograph with ink.

There are a range of bags/envelopes or albums with sleeves made of polypropylene (or similar inert products) that can be used for the storage of photographs.

It is important that each photograph is identified. Ensure each photograph has a caption that identifies places, buildings, and people shown in the photograph, and, if known, the name and date of the event or occasion on which the photograph was taken. Ideally the caption should be written on an accompanying slip that is stored with the photograph.

Any writing on the reverse of a photograph should be done only in soft pencil, and should be regarded only as an interim captioning measure.

Store photographic prints and negatives away from the light and if possible in low temperature and low humidity conditions.

6.3 Files

The most prolific administrative record of most organisations is a collection of papers kept in a foolscap-size manila file. The contents are usually attached by a file pin in the top left corner, but equally may be held using another method, or loose within the file. Ensure that papers within the file cover are sorted into an appropriate order (chronological, alphabetical, numerical, or possibly into topics or subjects) and are laid flat and straight within the file. This is easier done (and maintained) if there is a method of securing the papers available. Ensure the cover is clean and undamaged. It will often be possible to replace a damaged cover with a new folder. If the cover being replaced contains written information on it that is essential to the history and provenance of the file, it should be retained and a new cover placed around the outside.

Secure files with loose papers, or a file to which you have placed an outside cover with cloth tying tape. If you have none available, use a good quality twine or string.

6.4 Parish Publications

A master copy of all publications produced by the parish should be retained. Store the weekly parish bulletins in chronological order using a separate manila folder for each year. Other parish publications that are less regularly produced (including booklets for special, sacramental or commemorative services) should also be kept in manila folders, sorted in a way that best suits parish arrangements (by year, or by subject, etc)

6.5 Large Paper Formats

Larger format paper documents, including maps, plans, certificates, posters or banners are often rolled up and stored in cylindrical canisters. This is not preferred for longer termed storage and poses a preservation risk for fragile documents. It is preferable if documents can be laid flat and interleaved with tissue paper. The best storage container is a map/plan storage cabinet, but the vestment storage drawers often located in church sacristies are equally as suitable.

6.6 Audio-visual and Electronic Formats

This includes several categories of records, including moving film, magnetic media (audio and video tapes) and electronic media such CDs, DVDs and related electronic storage devices. In each case the preferred way of safeguarding the information stored on these types of devices is to transfer it to a digital storage medium, and constantly renew (or re-copy) it to cater for hardware and software upgrades. For short and medium term storage observe the following:

- Moving film – store in clean non-metallic and acid-free cans

- Magnetic media – store in cases made of nonmagnetic material (such as polypropylene and/or polycarbonate)
- Electronic formats – store in the rigid plastic cases in which the products were originally supplied. If these are not available use packages (sleeves, envelopes etc) made of polypropylene, polyethylene or tyvek.

These forms of media **are not noted** for their long-lasting capacities and are likely to have deteriorated to the point of the information stored on them becoming inaccessible or unreadable before the need for the information stored on them has ceased.

6.7 Recommended Handling and Storage Products

Products that will assist in the safe handling and storage of archival collections include items such as:
- Cloth gloves;
- Storage boxes, bags and other containers;
- Wrapping materials including brown paper, tissue paper and bubble wrap;
- Cloth binding tape; and
- Adhesives (including tapes and glues)

Products approved for use in caring for archives collections are tailored to afford the best protection and to reduce the risk of deterioration. They are usually made of pure, inert and non-acidic substances, such as natural cloth, paper and card, and developed plastic products including polypropylene, polyethylene and tyvek.

Such products may be available from large stationers, but a number of dedicated archival products suppliers do exist, and most can be contacted through the internet.

The Archival Survival website (www.archivalsurvival.com.au) includes a catalogue of available products.

7.0 CARE OF OBJECTS AND NON-PAPER FORMATS

7.1 Textiles

Parishes may have collections of religious habits, vestments, altar cloths and other religious garments. These should be stored flat and interleaved with sheets of tissue paper. Folds in garments should be supported by wads of tissue paper shapes to offer protection. Do not lay heavier garments, such as chasubles on top of lighter materials. The practice of hanging garments vertically on coat hangers is not recommended as a longer term storage strategy.

7.2 Sacred Vessels and Metal Objects

Some of these objects will have come in their own protective cases. Continue to use these if they are in good condition. For other objects, wrap individually in tissue paper, and then place in acid-free boxes. Additional protection can be provided by using archival foams or bubble-pack. Ensure each item is labelled, and attach using cotton tying tape or twine.

7.3 Artworks

Artworks should be wrapped in tissue paper for storage. Larger works, such as statues or large framed artworks may be stored by covering with clean drop-sheets.

8.0 GLOSSARY OF ARCHIVAL TERMS

Term	Explanation
Active Records	Records still required for current business or still in regular use within an organisation
Appraisal	The process of determining which records, after they have fallen out of active use, need to be retained for an extended period of time.
Archives	Records of an organisation that having fallen out of active use are, following appraisal, determined to be required for retention for the longer term.
Archives Box	The name applied to the cardboard container suitable for storing archival material in for the long term. Boxes are made in a variety of shapes and sizes and are available through archives products suppliers. Not to be confused with storage boxes available from office/stationery suppliers
Back-ups	Used in the electronic records environment to refer to the practice of regularly copying the data held in the system to a remote source as insurance against the system failing or being destroyed.
Conservation	The restorative action taken to treat damaged or at risk records. One aspect of *Preservation*.
Custody	Refers to the physical location and physical possession of records. It normally implies the responsibility for care and management of archives, but may not imply legal ownership or the right to control access
Inactive Records	Records no longer required for the current business of an organisation. Such records should undergo appraisal to determine if they are required as archives or if they are of no further use and may be destroyed
Manila File	A light cardboard folder, usually available in A4 or foolscap size, used as a container for papers on like subjects by many organisations or business offices.
Metadata	Data describing the context, content and structure of records and the way they are managed through time. Commonly used in relation to records in electronic format, but in reality can be applied to data about all records regardless of format.
Migration	Used in the electronic systems environment to refer to the practice of successfully transferring already held data within a system so that it remains accessible and usable following upgrades to hardware, software or operating systems.
Preservation	The actions taken to prolong the life of archives material that will both retard deterioration and prevent damage. It includes controlling the environment in which material is held as well as the treatments applied to maintain it in as near as possible to an unchanging state.
Provenance	The circumstances significant to the creation, accumulation or maintenance of records by an organisation.

Record	The term applied to recorded information regardless of appearance or the physical format it is in that is created, accumulated or maintained by an organisation as evidence of or information about activity. Records that have fallen out of active use and are assessed as being worthy of longer term retention are referred to as archives.
Recordkeeping	The process of making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transaction of an organisation in the form of recorded information.
Recordkeeping System	An information system specifically designed to capture, protect, store and manage data or documents as reliable records for as long as they are needed to satisfy a business purpose for an organisation.
Retention Authority	An approved statement by an organisation providing the authority to determine the retention or disposal of records and other information sources. May also be referred to as a 'Retention Schedule'.
Secure Storage	Any form of storage that offers conditions not harmful to the preservation of records, archives or objects and is capable of being locked to prevent loss or theft. May include a safe, lockable cabinet, compactus or store room.
Sentencing	The process of applying the advice contained in a retention authority to the records resources of an organisation.