

Policy 12: Parish Records

Guidelines for Storage, Care and Handling

- 12.1. **Paper:** The acidic wood pulp process for making paper began around 1838. Fortunately, the Church kept using its cotton-rag paper registers for about another forty years – these are naturally acid free.
- 12.2. Remove or separate all inserted modern papers from your older registers or they will transfer brown acid (sulfur) to the clean page.
- 12.3. Remove all cellophane tape or rubber adhesives, *if it is possible to do it without harming the paper or removing ink with it.*
- 12.4. Remove ALL metal fasteners.
- 12.5. Never use tape or glue to repair books or documents.
- 12.6. The following should be considered in the storage of records:
 - a. Light
 - i. Exposure to the UV rays in daylight (direct and indirect sunlight) and most fluorescent light will cause ink to fade and paper to dry and become brittle (acidic paper eventually will crumble to dust, starting with the edges).
 - ii. While some “breathing” of the paper and books should be allowed, continuous exposure to oxygen and other gases in the open air can cause a reaction with acids in the paper. These processes are not reversible.
 - iii. Use incandescent light when the records are “out” for use.
 - b. Temperature
 - i. The temperature recommended for paper is 21 degrees Celsius (70 degrees Fahrenheit) or cooler.
 - ii. Store records in a cool or temperate room, away from doors and windows. Avoid storing against the outside wall of the building.
 - c. Relative humidity
 - i. A relative humidity of 40 to 50% RH is allowable for paper, cardboard and leather binding. Below 40% makes paper dry and brittle – easily torn; anything above 50% is a “garden” for mold and fungi.
 - ii. Never wrap anything in airtight plastic.
 - iii. Moldy (earthy smell) or fungi infested records (mushroom smell) should be brought to the archives for treatment
 - d. Natural risks: pests, fire, natural disasters
 - i. Do not store boxes on the floor, especially if leakage or flooding is a known risk.
 - ii. Place record storage units away from windows and outer walls of the building.
 - iii. Keep the vault or cabinet and the outer room clean; do not eat or drink in that room.
 - iv. Install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in the room and adjacent rooms and have them tested and maintained regularly.
 - v. Do not store any other media with paper-based records; do not store flammable substances near records.

- vi. Use enameled metal shelving – not wood – bottom shelf 3-4” above the floor.
- vii. Do not place records on an open top shelf.
- viii. If possible, do not store in a room or building that is known to have leaked in a previous storm; preferably not one with large glass windows either.
- ix. Keep up repairs.
- e. Security
 - i. Parish records should be kept in a fire-proof vault, the next best thing being an enameled steel cabinet. Wood emits gases and attracts pests.
 - ii. When parish registers become inactive or closed, they may be deposited at the Diocesan Archives where they will be enclosed in safe archival material and kept in a vault.
 - iii. Wherever your records are kept, keep the vault, the room, the building locked; restrict the number of keys to that area; supervise access to the records.
 - iv. Make a note of (time and place, specific item moved, who moved it) any movement of a document or register to another location, and when it is returned.
 - v. Do not store parish records in a place that is isolated for long periods of time or easily broken into.
- f. Access – handling by humans.
 - i. Access to your parish registers, minute books, service records, documents and ledgers should be restricted to the Rector’s use, and those members of the Parish Corporation authorized to use them.
 - ii. Public researchers may be referred to the microfilm of your records at the Nova Scotia Archives (NSARM).
 - iii. No manuscript or original record should ever be placed on display (use a copy).
 - iv. Originals should not be handled by the public at any time.

12.7. Photographic prints

- a. should not be exposed to direct or indirect light at any time.
- b. Store in dark, cool, dry places; protect with “archival quality” (inert acid-free plastics) polyester or polyethylene sleeves inside acid-free binders or inside acid-free envelopes and photograph boxes.
- c. Handle with cotton-gloved hands.
- d. Use copies for display.

12.8. Negatives, slides or film images:

- a. Should be kept cool and dry and enclosed as above when not being viewed.

12.9. Video, audio, and other magnetic formats, as well as CDs and DVDs:

- a. Should be kept dust-free, cold and dry on metal shelves or in metal cabinets away from paper.
- b. They should be handled as little as possible.

12.10. All film or magnetic media:

- a. Should be stored away from paper; preferably in an enclosed metal cabinet.
- b. These substances are more flammable than paper, so ideally, they should be kept cooler and drier than paper.

- 12.11. **Paintings, drawings, and lithographic, silkscreen or intaglio prints and etchings:**
- a. Each need special enclosure according to the medium used
 - b. Remove acidic matting and backing from framed artwork;
 - c. remove artwork from wooden or metal frames.
 - d. Oil paintings can stay framed if the frame is in good shape and kept at a cold steady temperature away from light.
 - e. If varnish on the frame has changed texture, remove artwork and store separately.
- 12.12. **General rules for graphics:**
- a. Keep in a dry cool dark place
 - b. Keep the image surface dust-free
 - c. Keep it from touching other media;
 - d. Lie flat with no weight or pressure on the surface.
 - e. Wrap in acid-free paper or vegetable paper, tie with cotton tape if necessary, and store in the same size box.