



# *Diocesan Archives Newsletter*

## **Update on the '90s:**

In the years leading up to the end of 1998 volunteers and students had worked steadily under the Archivist, Dr. Brian Cuthbertson to gain “control of holdings” of the original collection, with the help of federal grants.

In 1995, the Archivist and the Synod Office collaborated with other Dioceses to utilize an Anglican System of Classification for Synod Office files. As a result, in 1996 the office did an extensive “culling” of the Synod Office vaults to make room for more semi-active records.

In 1998 the budget was increased to allow a part-time assistant to arrange the Reference Library. As soon as this was completed, the Synod Office deposited all of the property documents and other records of the Registrar and Synod Office.

Although the Archives had built up comprehensive finding aids, development in computer technology made it timely to begin to use relational databases – the first result was the LANDDOC Database demonstrated at Synod in May of 1999, which has been used steadily since to handle the increasing number of enquiries.

At that point the vaults were full again, and the Archives space crowded to maximum capacity – a new challenge faced us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century...

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## **The Past Five Years:**

Since 2000 the Archives has increased its holdings by another 40 % and with it the demand for access has increased. All new description has been done in databases using compatible current archival standards, which speeds up searching, but there was no room for safe expansion. As a solution, the Cathedral provided a temporary storage area for the overflow of the most modern records acquired.

An opportunity to microfilm, the last one to be offered by NSARM, was eagerly taken, not only as a means of preservation, but also as a way to direct research enquiries toward the microfilm and away from the originals. In the summer and fall of 2000 we prepared 154 registers from our collection for microfilming at the Nova Scotia Archives, funded by a federal preservation grant.

Meanwhile, an anonymous donation to the Diocese of the Special Projects for Archives and Records Management Fund in 2001 enabled us to plan a second major filming of un-filmed registers in the parishes for 2002.

We began a “Parish Records Survey” in 2001 and received a response from 53% of the parishes. This enabled us to locate 78 parish registers that had not been previously filmed. MICROTECH of PEI did the filming in September of 2002, paid for with the Special Projects Fund.

Another result was that more finished registers were permanently deposited into the Archives. This required us to move other manuscript groups out of the Archives vault to make room, because, by Canon law, all parish records must be kept in the vault...

In January of 2002 we had expanded the Archives Policy Statement to include policies for acquisition, access and preservation, which qualified us as members of the Council for Nova Scotia Archives from which we receive guidelines, educational resources, grant reviews, and discounts on supplies to better preserve the collection.

This work has been supported by the Diocesan Synod with a gradual increase in budget to purchase more preservation materials, equipment and supplies to protect its holdings and to ensure that the work is done on a continual basis.

In 2003 we received a grant to engage a conservator to do a Global Preservation Assessment on the two storage environments, the facility and general condition of the collection. This detailed report, with recommendations, is a valuable tool for

implementing a long-term Preservation Strategy. Improvements to the enclosures and environment of the collection will both increase its longevity and facilitate access to the information.

Our application/proposal for a grant to re-house and monitor the environment, based on the Conservator's findings, secured another grant of \$1,500 in 2004. At the same time the Archives Committee collaborated with the Synod Office to implement a Records Management Retention and Classification System that would prevent "buildup" and ensure consistent arrangement before depositing to the Archives.

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## Latest Developments:

The Archives has recently recovered a large number of records from gradual damage caused indirectly by Hurricane Juan and Cathedral restoration. Originally they had been well arranged on clean metal shelving, properly labeled and boxed and therefore fairly resistant to poor conditions.

The records were inspected immediately after the storm in September 2003 and found to be intact and dry, but by January 2004 the boxes had become weakened by gradually absorbed humidity and granular debris generated by repairs to the Cathedral itself that were not anticipated, and the shelving was no longer able to support them.

After some assessment of conditions and solutions, Diocesan Council of June 2004 passed a motion to allocate funds up to \$2,500 for an off-site storage space large enough for these and other records for two years, or until a new diocesan facility is built.

In July and August, we cleaned, dehumidified, re-boxed, and moved the records from the Cathedral area placing them in retrievable order in the off-site space. We installed stronger metal shelving and a data-logger to monitor temperature and relative humidity; 167 file boxes of records were thus preserved and treated successfully.

***It is much less costly to PREVENT a disaster than to have to do a recovery.***

 ***DETAILS On the Diocesan Website at the "Archives" link: [Parish Records - Guidelines for Storage, Care and Handling and Disaster Prevention.](#)***

## Why should Parish Records be preserved?

The records of the parishes, missions and societies of the diocese bear witness to their ministry, life and worship since the beginning of their history in 1749; this is why we say that they have "enduring" value.

The originals must be preserved for another reason – the microfilm eventually wears out! Properly cared for, the originals *will last longer than the microfilm (or disc)*, and may be needed again to be re-filmed. The paper, pencil and ink, unless abused, are stronger than any plastic or metal information storage device we have today, and will always be regarded by archivists and historians as the primary source of information.

*The less handling and exposure the originals endure, the longer the information will be preserved.*

Many parishes still have their original registers of Baptisms, Marriages, Confirmation and Burials in the parish, but we believe that almost all of our Parish Records have now been microfilmed, and there is no longer any need for the handling of archived and filmed originals to obtain information for certificates or family history – copies can be used. The Archives resolves to help by providing the copies when possible and by developing guidelines and procedures to facilitate the request process.

## GUIDELINES – OLD AND NEW:

The former Primate, Archbishop Michael G. Peers circulated his guidelines to the Dioceses in 1995 for the keeping and preserving of parish records. These have been reaffirmed by the General Synod Archives in 2004.

**The Archives Policy Statement** is a work in progress; it is based on our Canons, Conservation Standards, General Synod and the Primate's Guidelines, and the policies of Anglican Archives across Canada.

 ***DETAILS On the Diocesan Website: [Please see the former Primate's message on Parish Records and updated Archives Policy Statement, The Anglican Archivists' Network documents, and more.](#)***

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