

PARISH RECORDS

GUIDELINES FOR STORAGE, CARE AND HANDLING

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. Remove or separate all inserted modern papers from your older registers or they will transfer brown acid (sulphur) to the clean page. Remove all cellophane tape or rubber adhesives, *if it is possible to do it without harming the paper or removing ink with it.* Remove ALL metal fasteners.

NEVER USE TAPE OR GLUE TO REPAIR BOOKS OR DOCUMENTS.

STORAGE:

Six things should be considered in the storage of Parish Records:

1. **Light (and air)**
2. **Temperature**
3. **Relative humidity**
4. **Natural risks: Pests, fire, flood, hurricane (wind and rain)**
5. **Security**
6. **Access – handling by humans.**

1. **LIGHT:** Exposure to the UV rays in daylight (direct and indirect sunlight) and most fluorescent light will cause the ink to fade and the paper to dry and become brittle (eventually will crumble to dust, starting with the edges). While some “breathing” of the paper and books should be allowed (*never put into air-tight plastic*), 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.***

Records should be kept in a fire proof vault while in use; the next best thing being an enameled steel cabinet. Wood emits gases and attracts pests. Use incandescent light when the records are “out” for use.

When parish registers become inactive or closed, they may be deposited at the Diocesan Archives where they will be enclosed in archivally safe material and kept in a vault.

2. **TEMPERATURE: *Fluctuations*** in temperature are harder on the paper than any steady moderate temperature. The temperature

recommended for paper is 21 degrees Celsius (70 degrees Fahrenheit) or cooler.

Store records in a cool or temperate room, away from doors and windows. Avoid storing against the outside wall of the building. (This is important also for Relative Humidity control and protection against risks of natural source).

3. **RELATIVE HUMIDITY:** High humidity will cause moisture to be absorbed by the paper, allowing mould and fungi to grow in it. It can also attract pests (insects and rodents). Mould stains that obscure information cannot be removed, BUT FURTHER GROWTH CAN BE STOPPED. Moldy (EARTHY SMELL) or fungi infested records (MUSHROOM SMELL) should be brought to the Archives for treatment.

NEVER WRAP ANYTHING IN AIRTIGHT PLASTIC

(causes heat and moisture condensation).

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 mould and fungi.

4. **RISKS:** Dust, dirt, food and drink attract pests. Flammables such as plastic bags, aerosol cans, glues, paints, solvents, fuels, damp rags, even magnetic tapes (video or audio cassettes) and negatives or films, are all things that could increase the speed and heat of a fire. In a severe storm, glass windows may break and let in water. Cabinets and shelves should be **at least 4”** above the floor, especially if leakage or flooding is a known risk.

Keep the vault or cabinet, and the outer room, clean; do not eat or drink in that room. Install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in the room and adjacent rooms and have them tested and maintained regularly.

Do not store any other media with paper-based records; do not store flammable substances near records.

Store records at least 4” above the floor. Do not place on open top shelf.

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! Keep up repairs.

Have a disaster plan for your parish.

5. SECURITY:

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.

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.

Do not store parish records in a place that is isolated for long periods of time or easily broken into.

6. ACCESS TO THE RECORDS:

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. Public researchers may be referred to the microfilm of your records at the Nova Scotia Archives, or a pre-made copy in the Parish.



No manuscript or original record should ever be placed on display.
It should not be handled by the public at any time.

If you have a properly monitored and supervised museum space, a UV-screened LOCKED cabinet in a temperature and RH controlled room would be allowable, but *not necessary* – Instead, use a photocopy or computer copy of the original record for display. These are no longer expensive, and can look like the original.

It is most effective to post handling procedures in the area where the records are used. (See attached sign for example)

PRESERVATION OF PAPER AND OTHER MEDIA:

All of the above practices will preserve PAPER records longer, and are also good for other media, with a few subtle differences:

Photographic prints should not be exposed to direct or indirect light at any time. Store in dark, cool, dry place; protect with "Archival quality" (inert acid-free plastics) polyester or polyethylene sleeves inside acid-free binders or inside acid-free envelopes and photograph boxes (Available at

photo shops, Walmart, Zellers, and Staples and other stationery supply stores.) Handle with cotton-gloved hands. Use copies for display.

Negatives, slides or film images should be kept cool and dry and enclosed as above, except when viewed.

Video, audio, and other magnetic formats, as well as CD's and DVD's, should be kept dust-free, **cold** and dry on metal shelves or in metal cabinets away from paper. They should be handled as little as possible.

All film or magnetic media should be stored *away from paper*, preferably in an enclosed metal cabinet. These substances are more flammable than paper, so Ideally, they should be kept cooler and dryer than paper.

Paintings, drawings, and lithographic, silkscreen or intaglio prints and etchings -- each need special enclosure according to the medium used. Consult an experienced framer (the Archival Assistant is one). Remove acidic matting and backing from framed artwork.

General rules for graphics: Keep in dry cool dark place; the image surface dust-free; keep it from touching other media; lie flat with no weight or pressure on the surface. Wrap in acid-free paper or vegetable paper, tie with cotton tape if necessary, and store in same size box.

Textiles and artifacts: The general practices above apply except that some fabrics have special requirements; The Diocesan Archives does not collect textiles and artifacts, but the Archivist can answer your questions about specific items.

If you feel that any of your records are in an unsafe condition, please ask the Archivist for help:

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