



The Archival Spirit, July 2001

Newsletter of the Archivists of Religious Collections Section, Society of American Archivists

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From the Chair Mark J. Duffy, 1999-2001

Are you running with me . . . ?

You have to wonder sometimes, but no room for gall and wormwood here. The upcoming ARCS meeting in Washington D.C. will bring in a new set of officers, and we can only hope it will also bring new members, energy and ideas. My four year journey (one of which was an unelected draft year) as vice chair and then chair of the ARCS section comes to an end. Several projects are midway in progress. Worthy endeavors of the Section have a way of getting done if the membership truly needs or wants the product. Many good ideas were floated in these recent years, but it is also true that the same folks have only limited time to give to outside activities. My job as past chair could be to round up all past officers and remind them that the Section still needs their expertise, participation, and leadership.

ARCS is but one of several involvements for most of us. The section serves its members best when it draws from its strength which is to serve as a resource for networking and contact development. A web member directory, a member listserv, an educational resource sharing tool, and some sustained member support of the newsletter would be more than sufficient future goals. I will gladly leave these proffered ideas to the able scrutiny of my good colleague, Dale Patterson, who can count on us to help him set a pace we can all live with. For my part, I want to thank all those who kept running with me in recent years.

ARCS Meeting and Program in D.C.

The usual cast of characters will be available to lead you through our business meeting this year. It should be a short affair as our several Committees have reported scant progress on their assignments. We are looking forward, however, to another excellent opportunity for some of that informal conversation that has become the highlight of our Section's annual gathering. This year, ARCS program session will tackle the topic of **Documenting Faith Communities - Worship, Celebration, and Diversity**. The Steering Committee thought that the several themes were overlooked but ever present in our daily lives in religious organizations. Discussion groups will look at documenting minority voices and human sexuality as well as innovative ways to make anniversaries and other celebrations a time for maximum program exposure.

An Archives Directory on Major Church Sources

One of the related projects that I was happy to see to conclusion was the revision to the Archives section of the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches. The Yearbook, which is prepared by the NCCC, is not only a wonderful resource of statistics, contacts and trends in faith-based organizations, but it probably has the best listing of archival repositories available in print. The chapter entitled "Church Archives and Historical Records Collections provides regular and email addresses, contact persons, brief collection descriptions and websites for 95 repositories of denominational and religious society records. The 2001 directory is just published and can be ordered from Abingdon Press of Nashville.

SAA Meeting – August in Washington D.C. Program Highlights on Archives of Religion

Session on Social Ministry

The 2001 meeting in Washington, D.C. will include a session entitled, "Mercy and Justice for All: Issues and Sources for Documenting Social Mission of American Churches." Anne Yoder, Swarthmore College Peace Collection chairs the session, which includes three speakers: Thom White Wolf Fassett, North Central Conference of the United Methodist Church; Ruth Reko, Dept. of Social Ministry Organizations, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Elisabeth Wittman, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Archives. The session will highlight and bring different perspectives on how social ministry work has changed and what effect this has on records and whether they adequately document the many human stories that often "fall through the cracks." Two church administrators, including one who has done archival research, and a denominational archivist, are the speakers. The date and time for the session, at this writing, is: Thursday, August 30, 1:30-5:00. Check the final SAA program for any changes.

International Connections

ARCS invites you to attend the international panel discussion, Civil and Religious Aspects of Access: an International Perspective, that will be presented at the SAA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC on Friday morning, August 31, 2001. Panelists from the United States and Germany who are archivists and researchers working with religious collections in several countries will discuss access in civil and religious legal terms. They will also consider the practical archival aspects of the issue and will draw on the participation of the audience. Attendance by Section members is encouraged. This panel was organized by ARCS members with the cooperation of the SAA International Roundtable, and the Section of Archives of Churches and Religious Denominations (ICA/SKR).

Microfilming Services at the Presbyterian Historical Society

Preserving church records is a key component of the Presbyterian Historical Society's mission. To that end, PHS provides microfilming services for congregations, presbyteries, and synods wanting to preserve their official records of permanent value. All filming is done on-site at the Philadelphia office, and PHS subsidizes one third of the cost of filming for church entities. Over the last two years, more staff time has been allocated to the microfilming program, and the quality of film has improved. Now, all microfilm is shot to ANSI/AIIM standards and includes targets that make the film much easier for patrons to use. The microfilming program is publicized through brochures, workshops, exhibits, and the PHS website at www.history.pcusa.org

With digital technology so popular, church constituencies often wonder why the Presbyterian Historical Society continues to recommend archival-quality microfilm as the best format for the long-term preservation of church records. PHS staff respond by providing information about the difficulties inherent in preserving digital records including the need to migrate constantly to new technologies and the possibility that information will be lost or become inaccessible in a relatively short period of time. Archival-quality microfilm, on the other hand, will last hundreds of years, and unlike computer disks, the film is always readable with a simple light source and magnifier. Most congregations are receptive to this message since their main concern is preserving the valuable records of their church.

Nancy J. Taylor

Records Archivist

Presbyterian Historical Society

Letter to the Editor: Canadian Residential Schools Litigation

Thank you, Terry Thompson, for your informative and timely article on the Anglican General Synod Archives and Residential Schools Litigation in Canada [Archival Spirit, April 2001]. Readers in the United States should take heed and note that such litigation may not be restricted to the remote North. Rather, they should be aware that a similar scenario may be pending here.

Like Canada, from the late 19th to mid 20th centuries, numerous U.S. Catholic and Protestant religious orders, missionary societies, and dioceses collaborated in operating federally supervised schools for aboriginal American Indian pupils. And, like the Canadian church groups, U.S. groups are vulnerable as well.

Inspired by the Canadian cases, a South Dakota-based group is now soliciting for and compiling testimony from Native American abuse victims in the United States with the goal of initiating similar legal action. While it is too early to determine whether any action will materialize, Marquette University has already received a few preliminary requests from church agencies who would be likely defendants. (Marquette is the primary U.S. source for records on Catholic schools for American Indians.)

Mark Thiel, CA

Marquette University,

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Trinity Church Archives in New York City Celebrates 300th Anniversary of Anglican Missionaries

Beginning June 2001, the Episcopal Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York will hold an exhibition honoring the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). The exhibition is entitled "Trinity Church and the SPG: the First 100 years." The Society was established in 1701 by the Church of England to send missionaries to the American Colonies and today continues its mission worldwide.

All of the material displayed in the exhibit comes from the Trinity Church Archives. It includes a 1715 letter to the Bishop of London requesting that missionaries be sent, a 1749 baptismal registry from the mission to the Mohawks, and an invoice from the SPG on payment due for legal research services. The rich history of Trinity's collaboration with the SPG is more fully preserved in the Society's archive in London, England. Most of Trinity Church's early records were destroyed in the great fire of 1776 that burnt a good portion of lower Manhattan.

Gwynedd Cannan

Archivist

Trinity Church, NYC

Developing Records Management for the Archives: The Life Cycle Approach

by Diane Wells

Archivist & Records Manager, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

Records are the stuff of history. Since it is impossible to predict which records will be sought in years to come, it would be ideal if we could keep everything! However, most of us are laboring under financial and physical constraints that make such preservation impossible. Therefore, we must rely on our professional judgment and the tools at hand to make educated choices about what to keep and what to discard. Records management is such a tool. It helps us to identify and systematically collect those records that have enduring historical value.

The Diocese of Olympia founded its archives in 1976 and has had a records management program since 1979. In 1996, this program was expanded, detailed policies and procedures were written, and a retention schedule was created for each office. In 1998 the retention schedules were updated and a confidential records policy was added. I'm now working on a subsequent revision that includes a vital records protection plan. I'm often contacted about our program, and in light of Mark Duffy's observation on the life cycle management of records in the Spring 2001 issue of *The Archival Spirit*, I thought a brief article on the subject might be timely.

As an archivist and historian at heart, I am sometimes impatient with my records management duties. However, I know from experience, that a good records management program is essential to a good archival program. If I did not have a records management program in place, many important historical records would not make it to the Archives. Alternately, the destruction of non-archival records in compliance with an approved retention schedule, makes much needed space available for archival storage. As it is, I am almost at full capacity for my permanent collections – but that is a topic for another article!

Records management is defined as “the application of systematic control to all the recorded information an organization needs to function.” The goal of a records management program is to ensure that necessary records are kept and that appropriate access is provided; that records with enduring value are identified, preserved, and protected; that records that have served their purpose are disposed of properly; and that all of the above is done in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Whew! What a mouthful - and a very tall order! However, one that's definitely worth the effort. So, here's a brief outline of the steps I follow when I'm developing a records management program. Hope you find it helpful!

The first step I take is to interview the people who create and use the records. I find out what they do, what records they create, what records they have, what records they use and how they use them, and, also, what they anticipate their future records needs will be. This process allows me to tailor the records management program to the specific requirements of my organization.

My next step is to inventory the records. I “search the church” and make a list of all the categories of records I find. I list the category or type of record – and not the individual record. For instance, correspondence is a type of record; contracts are a type of record; parish registers are a type of record. In records management parlance, these types or categories of records are known as record series.

I've designed a simple inventory form where I note the office of record (usually the office that created the record), the record series, date(s), format (paper, film, electronic, etc.), volume, and physical condition. If I know that a record is confidential or vital (essential to the functioning of the organization), I indicate that in the inventory. If there is anything unique or special about a record, I indicate that as well.

Once I've gathered all the data, I create the retention schedule. The retention schedule details how long to keep the various record series and is the heart of any records management program. On the schedule, I describe the record series and make a note when the series is confidential or vital. I also indicate the office of record and, the retention period, and the final disposition of the record series. “Review for archival value” is a common disposition instruction on my schedules! Retention guidelines – such as the one provided by the Archives of the Episcopal Church - exist, but each situation is unique, and once legal requirements are met, the retention schedule should reflect the needs of the particular organization.

Next, I do my best to implement the retention schedule. This is the most important – but also the most difficult – step in a records management program. To do this successfully, procedures for using the retention schedule; for reviewing records; for storing inactive records; for transferring permanent records to archives; and for record destruction all need to be in place. I also find that instituting a filing system that corresponds to the retention schedule – such as using record series titles as file headings – is very helpful. Most important, however, is administrative support and staff cooperation. Finally, since both records and organizations change over time, I review and update the program on a regular basis. And that's it – records management in a nutshell!

It's not easy – but for now it's the best tool we have to actively manage our records and ensure that the history of our religious institutions is preserved.

A Look at the Midwest Capuchin Province of St. Joseph and Its Archives

James C. Wolf, Capuchin, Archivist

Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order

The Capuchin Order, a branch of the Franciscan Order founded by St. Francis of Assisi was founded in Italy in 1528 as a reform movement within the Franciscan Order. The word 'Capuchin' derives from the large cowl of the habit adopted by the early Capuchins. Though Capuchins ministered in Nova Scotia as early as the 17th Century and ministered incognito to the English colonies and as chaplains during the Revolutionary War, the Order was not established permanently in the United States until 1857. Two German-speaking Swiss priests, Gregory Haas and John Frey, committed themselves to introduce the Capuchin Order into the United States. They arrived in New York in July 1856 traveling to Milwaukee to present themselves to the Swiss born Bishop, John Martin Henri. He suggested a place for them, and they built a monastery, sixty miles north of Milwaukee where they opened a school, known today as St. Lawrence Seminary, a boarding high school with 240 students.

The monastery was destroyed by fire in 1868, but the friars managed to carry the archives to safety. These documents of the early years are the nucleus of the current archives of the province and are divided into three records groups: The Beginnings, 1856-56; Custody and Commissariate, 1864-82; and Personnel and Papers of Fathers Frey and Haas. When the two founders had passed through Detroit on a begging tour in Canada in 1858, they realized that Detroit was an ideal location to establish a monastery. The German population was growing rapidly and the city gave every indication of being a source of vocations and financial support. Years later, after four trips to Detroit, in 1883 Father Frey decided to purchase a piece of land located on what was known as "Russell's Grove" in a wooded area in the township of Hamtramck. St. Bonaventure Monastery was completed in 1885, and the archives were moved there and housed in a walk-in safe for the next 100 years. The agreement between the Bishop and the Capuchins was explicit. They would not have a parish church. The friars conducted burial rites, were available to people who requested counseling, or needed food, and assisted diocesan priests in parish ministry.

In 1896, Bernard Casey arrived at the Monastery. Invested in 1887 and given the name Solanus, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1904. He served in New York until 1924 when he returned to Detroit. Fr. Solanus had special gifts for obtaining favors and foretelling events. At the request of the Minister Provincial, Fr. Solanus began keeping a notebook, Notes about Special Favors. The collection of seven volumes are held by the archives and have been published by the office of the Vice-Postulator of the Cause of Father Solanus' Sainthood. Fr. Solanus served as porter in Detroit. So many people came to see him, the front office of the Monastery had to be expanded.

The 1920s were, financially, a difficult time in Detroit. The Capuchins traditionally gave food to the needy from their kitchen. Toward the end of the 20s, the poor requesting food increased daily. The Third Order Rule of St. Francis, founded in 1916, opened a soup kitchen in November 1930 at the request of the monastery superior. Fr. Solanus would accompany volunteers to collect food and clothing, and helped serve meals. The monastery took over the soup kitchen in 1934 and in 1942, the Capuchin Charity Guild was established. Records concerning the soup kitchen and these organizations are in the archives.

Fr. Solanus died in 1957. His name remains synonymous with the soup kitchen and the monastery in Detroit. Today, Capuchin Ministries serve daily meals, provide food, clothing and furniture to families, and offer pastoral and social services to all who request them. In 1995, Pope John Paul II signed a decree naming Solanus "Venerable". Information on the promotion of Fr. Solanus' sainthood can be found at www.solanuscasey.org.

The Capuchin archival collections also include material from Central America where friars from the province have served since 1938; the St. Benedict the Moor and other ministries to African-Americans in Milwaukee, ca. 1909-74; the St. Labre mission work among the Northern Cheyenne near Ashland, Montana, ca. 1883-1966 including records of other orders' earlier work; and papers from friars who ministered in China and India in the first half of the 19th Century. [Originally published in the Michigan Historical Review, 2001. Edited and reprinted by permission of the author.]

The Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library

by Cres Olmstead, Archivist

Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library

California libraries began quite humbly. Each of the [21 Franciscan] missions had a small library to assist the padres in their two-fold duties. As servants of the church, they were obliged to teach all that pertained to developing a full Christian life. And, as agents of the King of Spain, they were obliged to instruct its new subjects in the laws, customs, and culture of the realm, and to train them in the crafts and trades. Each mission was responsible for maintaining the required registers, invoices and annual reports, and official communications as well as many individual letters between the padres, government officials, the military, and private individuals.

After secularization [in the early 19th Century] the president of the missions, Padre Narciso Duran, transferred the missions' headquarters to Mission Santa Barbara [in Santa Barbara, California]. In this way the Mission became the ultimate repository of the 3,000 original documents that had been scattered through the California missions.

The Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library is the oldest library in the State of California that still remains in the hands of its founders, the Franciscans. It is the only mission in which they have maintained an uninterrupted presence until the present. The archive and library have been centers for historical study for over one hundred years.

The archival collection was originally housed within the private confines of the monastery at the Santa Barbara Old Mission. The monastery walls were constructed of sandstone blocks and adobe. Even though a large concrete drainage

ditch had been constructed to remove excess water from the Mission's inner Sacred Garden, these materials acted as a wick: they drew water from the building's foundation up through its walls. Thus, the rooms tended to be cold, damp, and hospitable to molds, mildew, and vermin. So fresh bags of salt had to be brought in constantly to absorb the moisture in order to protect the archival materials. This was neither easy nor did it make for a stable environment.

A modern building specifically designed to properly house the many historical documents, manuscripts, tax-deductible corporation, Santa Barbara Mission and library texts was a constant dream of the late Fr. Maynard Geiger, O.F.M. To that end, Archive-Library, Inc., was founded and duly chartered under federal and state laws. As a non-sectarian institution, its primary purpose is preservation and acquisition of historic materials and the promotion of historical research, education, and public service.

[In 1968] the construction of a new earthquake-resistant building at the western end of the front portion of the Mission was completed. It contains a state-of-the-art air conditioning and dust-filtering mechanism to protect the archival materials. All of the archive's irreplaceable, original documents, manuscripts, and rare texts are protected in a large fireproof vault. Its top floor houses the friars' library, the Franciscan Resources Library, the Provincial Archives of the Franciscan Province of the Saint Barbara of the western United States, and a work office for the mission's museum. The middle floor is the main section of the Archive-Library and is also used by the parish for its administrative offices. The basement serves multiple purposes for the Archive-Library, the parish, the museum, and the monastery.

The Archive-Library has two main parts. The Archive contains documents, manuscripts, texts, various collections, periodicals and publications and photocopies of these for general use. Collections have grown to include donated materials, research papers, and other works from scholars, photographs, maps, historical paintings and sketches, and religious objects. The Library is supplementary to the Archives. It contains about 4,000 of the original books which the California missionaries purchased in Spain and Mexico and include books from the Colleges of San Fernando in Mexico City and Guadalupe in Zacatecas. They include books on agriculture, biography, civil and canon law, ethics, hagiography, history, literature, mathematics, music, religion, and scripture. They are bound in leather and vellum and date from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Supplementary to the original material are some 14,000 bound books and periodicals concerning Hispanic America and the Spanish borderlands in general and by country.

The Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library is primarily a research facility. While much of the material is available to the general public, many of the actual historic materials are available only to scholars, historians, and students under certain controlled conditions. As the number of researchers using the facility has increased, the Archive-Library has become one of California's outstanding research institutions.

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Section Nominees Presented for Annual Meeting Election in Washington, D.C.

The Nominations and Elections Committee has placed into nomination the following individuals to be considered for the offices of Vice Chair/Chair Elect, At-Large Member of the Steering Committee and Secretary in 2001-2004. The candidates were asked to tell the ARCS members what they expect from themselves as future officers of the ARCS, and what kinds of projects they would like the members to participate in.

For Vice Chair/Chair Elect

Diane Wells, Archivist/Records Manager, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Archivists of Religious Collections Section of SAA offers, first and foremost, a forum for its members to network, to share and to learn. To be effective, the Section leadership must provide a strategy for fostering these activities successfully and for encouraging the creative involvement of the membership. We have been fortunate in having strong leadership to date and I would hope to carry on that tradition.

After a review of our literature it is clear that there are certain issues that are of on-going concern to us as archivists and specifically to us as archivists of religious collections: access, confidentiality, and research policies; funding, staffing and the allocation of limited resources; collection management including the management of those elusive electronic records; building organizational support given the priorities of our parent institutions; the encroachment of non-religious institutions into our collection areas; continuing education including the training of paraprofessionals and volunteers; as well as databases, web sites, and the internet.

I would like to see follow-up on all of these issues – some of which have been explored more than others. One issue that I think deserves more attention is that of funding. I think that ARCS might be able to function as a clearinghouse for grant information relative to our community. We already have the structure in place for such a service in the Models and Resource Committee. I would also like to see ARCS members collaborate as much as possible in the development of policies and the networking of data resources. In addition, I would encourage our membership to look at the ways, in which we do – or do not – promote our valuable and unique collections to the larger archival and historical communities. The more we cooperate among ourselves and the more visible we become within SAA and our associated professional communities, the better able we'll be to meet our individual goals, protect our collective resources, and promote their understanding and use.

For At-Large Member of the Steering Committee

Wesley W. Wilson, Coordinator of Archives and Special Collections, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana
If elected to the steering committee, I would work with other members to find ways to serve the SAA membership who associate with the Archivists of Religious Collections Section. One of the recurring themes in the section is that of continuing education. Our member archives are often charged with training non-professionals in handling and preservation of historical records. As a member of the steering committee, I would continue to investigate ways that ARCS can help SAA members to reach their constituents. This will benefit the profession and the larger goal of preserving America's religious archives and manuscript collections.

For Secretary

Gwynedd Cannan, Archivist, Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York Archives, New York, NY
I have been the archivist for the Parish of Trinity Church at Wall Street in New York City since January 2001. Trinity Church has been a leader in the development of the Episcopal Church as well as an important player in the history of New York City from its beginnings in 1697 to the present day.
Trinity Church Archives is my first experience with a religious collection and I am eager to meet and trade ideas with other religious collections' archivists. I believe the position of secretary to the Religious Collections Section would give me an opportunity to learn about other collections as well as to give greater visibility to my own. It would also give me an exciting opportunity to take an active part in the Section's future plans.

2000-2001 Section Offices and Steering Committee

Section Chair: Mark J. Duffy
Vice Chair/Chair-elect: L. Dale Patterson
Secretary: Diane T. Wells
Past Section Chair: Kinga Perzynska,
At-large Member: Robert Johnson-Lally
At-large Member: Mary Serbacki, OSF
Models and Resources Chair: Christine Taylor
Communications Chair: Lucinda Glenn Rand
Web Coordinator: Tim Driscoll

DIRECTORY MAGIC

Do you issue guidelines for para-professionals assigned to the care of archives of religion? Please send an email or contact Christine Taylor. Chris is the Chair of the Models and Resources Committee and she is compiling a resource directory for the Section on educational programs. You can reach her at christinet@seattlearch.org.