

# Sample Access Policy

## Access Policy of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Halifax Archives

### 1. Purpose:

This document is designed to articulate the access policy for Archdiocesan and private papers of the Archdiocese of Halifax Archives, to outline its principles and criteria of applications, and to define the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the administration of Reference Services.

### 2. Normative and Prescriptive Context:

The Archives operates under Canons 486 to 491 of the Code of Canon Law 1983ed.

### 3. Definition of Terms:

**Access:** An archival term for the authority to obtain information from or to perform research in archival materials.

**Open Access:** Records and/or groups of records are available for any member of the public to view, with no restrictions.

**Restricted Access:** Records and/or groups of records requiring written permission from the Ordinary, Chancellor, Archivist or creator of the records before viewing is permitted.

**Closed Access:** Records and/or groups of records which are not available for viewing.

**Diocesan Administrative Records:** Records created by the Offices of the Chancellor, Vicar General, Finance Dept., Administrator of Catholic Pastoral Centre, Diocesan Pastoral Team Members

**Catholic Institutions and Agencies:** Organizations founded and run by the Archdiocese of Halifax and/or a religious order under the authority of the Archdiocese. This includes organizations begun by the Archdiocese and later given over to government or private authority.

#### **4. Mandate:**

The fundamental mandate of the Archdiocese of Halifax Archives is to constitute and preserve the institutional memory of the Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Halifax for the use of the Bishop, his staff, and the people of the Archdiocese. Part of this mandate includes making archival materials available for use by interested individuals, both those associated with the Archdiocese and those doing independent research on the Church. By providing access to the collective history of the Church in the Archdiocese, the Archdiocesan Archives helps to further the overall mission of the Church to proclaim and spread the Good News of the Gospel.

#### **5. Goal and Principles:**

##### **5.1 Goal**

In order to achieve its mandate, the Archdiocesan Archives has set the following goal:

To provide access in a systematic fashion to the historical documents of the Archdiocese of Halifax for members of the Church and outside researchers while at the same time preserving confidentiality where required.

##### **5.2 Principles**

The following principles derived from the Archives' goal govern its access policies and procedures.

1. **Equal Use Principle:** The Archives has a duty to be as open as possible to all interested persons regardless of race, creed, or professional status.
2. **Right to Know Principle:** With certain exceptions, researchers have a valid right to seek information from the Church. The Archives wishes to avoid an unreasonable, defensive guarding of collections which benefits no one.
3. **Confidentiality Principle:** The Archives recognizes that certain types of records are created under the assumption of privacy and this must be respected.

## **6. General Policies:**

The Archdiocese of Halifax Archives will strive to strike a balance between the researchers' right to know and the records creators' expectation of confidentiality.

In recognition of the various types of records in the Archives, there are three levels of access: a) open, b) restricted, or, c) closed.

Factors affecting the level of access are the age of the record and its contents. Records dated 80 years from the present and older will be considered open; records dated 79 or less years from the present will be considered restricted, unless other factors (such as confidentiality, requests of donors, directives from the Ordinary) require them to be closed.

Records whose contents are of a public nature, that is, the information is available to the public from other sources, will be considered open to the public. Records which concern individuals, diocesan operations/administration, and other sensitive topics will be considered restricted or closed.

Records that were created far enough in the past that their information is only of value to historical researchers will be considered open to the public.

## **7. Specific Record Groups and Their Designated Access Levels:**

### ***7.1 Bishops' Papers***

The Papers of previous Bishops of the Archdiocese who have been deceased, or who have left the Archdiocese, for 80 or more years before the present are to be considered open to the public. For example, in 1996 any Bishops' Papers dated from 1916 or before would be designated open. This would include: +Burke, +Fraser, +Walsh, +Connolly, +Hannan, +O'Brien, and part of +McCarthy.

The Papers of previous Bishops who have been deceased or who have left the Archdiocese in the last 79 years from the present are to be considered restricted. For example, in 1996 the Bishops' Papers dated from 1917 would be designated restricted and would include: part of +McCarthy, +O'Donnell, +McNally, +Leverman, +MacDonald, +Berry, and +Hayes.

The Papers of the current Bishop are closed, except for items already made known to the public.

## ***7.2 Diocesan Administration Records***

Records generated by the Offices of the Diocese in the day-to-day running of the Archdiocese are generally to be considered restricted. Access to these records will be subject to the age of the record and its contents. Correspondence files will be screened (and perhaps edited) for mention of personal issues; Financial records dated 79 or less years from the present will be restricted; personnel files of deceased Priests will also be restricted.

Records which deal with public matters such as property deeds, parish boundaries, architectural drawings, etc. are open to the public since this information is readily available from other sources.

## ***7.3 Parish Records***

The Parish files in the Archives contain various types of records, some of which must be restricted from access and some which can be open. Records of the history of a parish, its statistics, yearly reports, pulpit announcements, and bulletins are to be considered open to the public.

Financial reports and other items dealing with parish finances, as well as correspondence are restricted. However, account books of the 19th century are open due to their age.

## ***7.4 Sacramental Records***

Parish records of baptisms, marriages, and burials dated 80 or more years before the present are to be considered open to the public. Sacramental records dated 79 or less years before the present are restricted. Baptism records of adopted children are closed. For example, in 1996 records dated prior to 1910 are open; records dated from 1910 to the present are restricted. This means only the individual named in the record can see that record, unless written permission is given by that individual or unless the individual is deceased.

## ***7.5 Catholic Institutions and Agencies Records***

Registers and case files of individuals dated 80 or more years before the present are open. Registers and case files dated 79 or less years before the present are restricted. Records of individuals who were adopted are closed.

Records containing information on the history of the institutions, statistics, general annual reports are open. Correspondence, financial records and administrative files are restricted.

### ***7.6 Diocesan Pastoral Council and its Units***

Minutes of meetings of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and its committees, commissions, etc. are open. Executive Committee minutes dated 40 or less years from the present are restricted. Correspondence, memos, etc. to and from the Diocesan Pastoral Council and its Units are restricted.

### ***7.7 Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Records***

Records of the CCCB issued as public announcements are to be considered open to the public. Records meant for internal dissemination only and dated 80 or more years from the present are to be restricted; records of this nature dated 79 or less years from the present are to be closed.

### ***7.8 Personal Manuscripts***

These consist mainly of religious researchers' notes and complimentary copies of their publications. Unless there are donor restrictions imposed, these will be considered open to the public.

### ***7.9 Photographs***

The photograph collection of the Archives is to be considered open to the public. Because most of the collection does not have backup copy negatives and the print copy is our only copy, borrowing of photographs is generally not allowed except by special permission of the Archivist. Permission may be given to members of the Archdiocese (laity and clergy) provided these conditions are met:

- a) personal contact information is obtained from borrower
- b) borrower is a member of the Archdiocese of Halifax
- c) item cannot be substituted with a photocopy

## **8. Modes and Mechanisms of Access:**

Procedure for Access to Restricted Materials:

1. Patron must fill out form "Request for Permission to Examine Restricted Archival Records" and signify agreement with Conditions of Access by their signature.
2. Archivist will review information on form, and if permission granted, sign and date it. Chancellor's signature is only required if records requested are of a sensitive nature.
3. Requested material will be reviewed by the Archivist in order to remove any items which would violate confidentiality. Records may be edited for this reason.
4. Patron will receive the records and may view them in the Archives Reading Room. They are not to be removed from the Archives Reading Room. Photocopying may be done by the Archivist, for a fee.
5. Completed forms must be kept on file.

Additional forms are available for "Request for Permission to Examine Microfilms of Sacramental Registers" held at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and "Request for Permission to Examine Sacramental Registers" dated after 1910. Follow the same procedure as above.

## **9. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Chancellor:**

The Chancellor, in consultation with the Archbishop and Diocesan Administrator, approves access policies, restrictions, and practices.

### **Archivist:**

The Archivist oversees the development and updating of the access policy and implements it; provides reference service to patrons; monitors patrons viewing materials; and performs photocopying upon request.

## **10. Distribution**

Copies of this access policy will be given to the Chancellor, will be included in the Catholic Pastoral Centre Reference Manual, in the Reference section of the Resource Centre, and will be available to other interested organizations and individuals upon request.

## 11. Review of Policy

This access policy will be reviewed by the Archivist every five years or when changes in circumstances warrant.

## 12. Approval of Policy

The access policy has been recommended by

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Archivist

and approved by

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Chancellor

date 

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