

AGENDA 4.7

Committee of Lutheran Archives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND KEY RESULTS AGAINST PLAN

- Provision of access to the collection; Archivists and researchers have continued to tell the stories of the church and provide encounters of the love of Christ through these stories and records.
- We continue to increase knowledge of the collection, provide contextual understanding, and facilitate access to the records through arrangement and description, transcription and translation, cataloguing, indexing and production of finding aids.
- Preservation and digitisation of key at-risk items, and items of high use.
- Provision of digitised visual images to Hope Vale and Bloomfield communities (Qld)
- Discussions with districts and entities for the long-term preservation of permanent records.
- Scoping study and development of a strategic plan for records management within the Churchwide Office.

SUCSESSES

- Proposal to deposit all permanent records of LCNZ district and congregations at Lutheran Archives.
- Establishment of new cross-institution collaborative initiatives and funding opportunities.

LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

- A four-month closure during 2020 (as a result of COVID-19) impacted service delivery, and necessitated remote work upon the collection which was difficult. COVID-19 has also impacted the number of volunteer hours at Lutheran Archives and seen a reduction of our opening times to researchers.
- The facilities and premises are proving a challenge: upgrades to the facilities are required.

MAJOR IDENTIFIED RISKS

- Permanent records are not always being created, captured or adequately managed and preserved by congregations/parishes and other LCA entities.
- Fragility of records (physical and electronic), and lack of ongoing financial and archivist resources to manage, preserve, and give access to records in the collection.

MEMBERS

Paula Heinrich, Rachel Kuchel (Director of Archives, 2018,2019,2021), Janette Lange (Acting Director of Archives 2020), Everard Leske, Greg Lockwood, Larissa Paynter, Peter Schirmer (Chairperson), Lois Zweck, Andrew Waldhuter

BACKGROUND

Lutheran Archives holds a harvest of stories that show God's love coming to life – the stories of the congregations, departments and the people of the church. Lutheran Archives gathers and preserves these stories from all over Australia and the Pacific – wherever the church is involved. We share the stories of the LCA across the church and in the wider public. We enable others to encounter these stories through research, so they can share their stories and experiences of love coming to life.

Lutheran Archives identifies records to be deposited. We make those records accessible through arrangement and description, indexing, translation and digitisation, and we provide contextual understanding for researchers to interpret those records.

We care for the records in our collection so that they will be available for future generations. Through presentations, exhibitions, publications, seminars and events, we disseminate the harvest of stories throughout the Lutheran community and beyond.

ACHIEVEMENTS/RESULTS AGAINST PLAN

MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Access and use of the collection:

Lutheran Archives continues to have a steady stream of researchers (in person research and online requests): national, international, members and entities of the church, and members of the general public. The percentage of church members, congregations and departments wanting to access Lutheran Archives is increasing. Our records and stories have been used in several TV productions, radio-broadcasts, novels, news-stories and films. We continue to provide events, exhibitions and publications that tell the stories of our church (some are on-hold due to COVID-19).

Preservation:

- In late 2018, an overhead cradle-bed scanner was purchased (via a generous grant from the NSW and ACT district) to digitise fragile and large-scale works. The impetus was a series of 50 significant but fragile correspondence books some of which had previously been stabilised by conservators; these have now been digitised. We now use the scanner to digitise registers of pastoral acts and other fragile items.
- Our photograph collection contains 25,000+ catalogued images. We completed digitising the 'context sheets' of this collection (ie whole pages within a box), and are undertaking systematic digitisation of the individual images.
- Glass plate negatives and lantern slides: 5 series, comprising 665 images were conserved (fractures repaired, items cleaned and rehoused) in preparation for digitisation. We received \$23,600 in two government grants for this project and a \$5,000 donation from Friends of Lutheran Archives.
- Commenced digitisation of reel-to-reels, audio-cassettes, and videos, utilising a \$10,000 SA government grant. Developed priorities for digitisation of the entire collection.

Access:

- Following a scoping visit in November 2017 from members of the Wujal Wujal community, in 2019 we digitised to preservation standards, slides and photographs pertaining to Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal (Bloomfield) Qld so that these digital images could be accessible within these communities. This was enabled by a grant provided by the State Library Queensland to Hope Vale community.
- Continuation of production of finding aids, indexing of records (including identifying records to be indexed for care leavers and persons of Aboriginal heritage), targeted transcription and translated projects. An access policy is being developed.

Deposits of permanent records:

- exploration of the possibility of depositing all LCNZ district and congregation records at Lutheran Archives.
- Scoping and assessment of current records management practices within the Churchwide Office with development of a plan to appropriately manage these records and deposit permanent records at the Lutheran Archives.

- We have worked with many congregations, auxiliaries, departments and church members to deposit permanent records at Lutheran Archives. We have also provided education and awareness of our facilities and activities and records management advice through events such as SA/NT Office Secretaries day, and sessions with graduate pastors.

PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN/OBJECTIVES

- One component of our strategic plan is to ensure all permanent records of the LKANZ are appropriately managed (including creation of records and access to records) and preserved into the future. Actions such as the LCNZ proposal, and the records consultation at Churchwide Office are a step in this direction.
- Another facet of our plan is to seek new funding or collaborative opportunities: ventures such as digitisation of Qld mission images, joining the SA Museums and Collections program, and taking on university archival students for projects and placements works towards this.

SUCSESSES

- In mid-2019, the NZ Council of Synod and Lutheran Archives successfully put forward a proposal to transfer LCNZ records held on long-term loan at the Alexander Turnbull Library Wellington, with the intent to deposit the records at Lutheran Archives, Adelaide. Approval needed to be obtained from the NZ government for this intercountry deposit: at this stage, it is unfortunately unlikely that permission will be granted, and yet it is an incredible success that the LCNZ district has supported this proposal and is considering the most appropriate way to manage its permanent records into the future.
- New collaborations, networks and funding opportunities: In late 2019, we joined a South Australian based Museums and Collections program. This gives us access to several grant rounds each year, of \$10,000 each round.
- At the impetus of Lutheran Archives, in 2019 Churchwide Office engaged a records consultant to assess current records management practices within departments, and provide a plan for improving those practices. Whilst the implementation of the plan (hinging on employment of a records manager) has been halted due to restricted funds as a result of COVID-19, the recognition of the need for adequate records management across the church is a success.

LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

- The Archives was closed, due to COVID-19 for four months in 2020, and for this duration the three archivists predominantly worked from home. This was a challenging time to work on the collection, maintain service to researchers and respond to enquiries. Remote access to our databases was not available for most of this period.
- We rely on significant numbers of volunteers to assist with archival tasks: prior to COVID-19, we were averaging 130+ volunteer hours per week; we are unfortunately now at approximately 75 hours per week.
- The physical space of the Archives is always a challenge: ensuring there is enough room to physically house and grow the collection and manage the backlog of unaccessioned but deposited records. The premises are now 20 years old and some facilities are showing need of replacement or upgrades (eg one of the repository air-conditioning units has failed, necessitating replacement). We have outgrown the initial design of the office, exhibition and

research-room spaces and our requirements have changed: we require more flexible workspaces for volunteers, and we also have more large-scale equipment, eg scanners, to accommodate.

RISKS

Major risks

- The greatest risk is church entities not depositing permanent records with Lutheran Archives, not managing them appropriately in-situ, nor even creating records in the first instance. This results in a lack of accountability for the church, and a lack of understanding of the Church's direction, activities and decision-making processes.
- Risks to records in the collection include physical disaster (fire, flood, damage to digital network/servers) and the inability to access records through 1) deterioration of records on fragile media – eg brittle paper, audio-visual records, records on electronic media carriers: USBs, hard-drives, floppy disks; 2) through the language of the records: most records were written in German until the 1930s, and increasingly fewer people are able to read the gothic script. There is also an increasing expectation that all records will be digitised and available online, however this is neither feasible nor practical.
- Preserving the records of the church, and ensuring they are accessible into the future, is exceptionally resource and labour intensive, and there is a real risk that the Archives will not be able to continue to fund the archival quality resources, and archivist knowledge/personnel required to adequately preserve the records and make them accessible. At the end of 2021 our staffing levels will drop from three trained archivists to two as our funds cannot sustain three archivists.
- Lutheran Archives has always borne the cost of providing archival quality enclosures, because of the risk of an entity not depositing records if they are asked to provide a donation towards management/preservation of their records. However, our budget cannot continue to sustain and wear this cost for the entire church.

Likelihood of identified risks occurring and potential impact

- Unfortunately, without appropriate investment in Records Management and education across the whole LCA NZ, it is highly likely that permanent records will not be created, captured and managed into the future. It requires a whole-church approach to address this issue.
- There is a date set by National Film and Sound Archive of 2025 to complete digitisation of magnetic media (reel-to-reels, audio-cassettes, videos, floppy disks, films, etc); we will meet this target for digitising films, and have started seeking government funds for the other media types: however, it is prohibitively expensive and it is likely that we will not be able to digitise all the records in our collection.

Summary of action taken to mitigate risk

- Lutheran Archives is developing educational resources to encourage entities to create, keep, and manage records and deposit permanent records at Lutheran Archives. However, significant resources need to be invested even before records come to Lutheran Archives. In 2019 a records consultation was undertaken at Church Wide Office to develop a strategy and plan for ensuring departments were adequately managing records. A records manager was to be employed to implement this plan, however the impact of COVID-19 has meant no resources have been available for this project.

- We strategically target the most fragile, at risk, or high use records for conservation treatment, digitisation, and transcription and translation. We are involved in several government grant projects which gives us access to funds for specific projects. In addition, where it is appropriate, we utilise volunteers as much as possible to carry out certain digitisation, indexing, transcription/translation and rehousing projects.

ALIGNMENT TO 'OUR DIRECTION 2018-2024'

Grow as God's People:

1.4 Raise the awareness in our communities of issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and grow their meaningful participation in the life and mission of the church.

1.5 Protect and uphold the dignity of people, especially children and the vulnerable, to lead lives in peace and safety.

Go as God's People:

2.5 Support existing communities to be active in mission.

Enable us to Grow and Go:

3.1.1 Strengthen governance at all levels, clarify accountabilities and ensure appropriate support.

3.2.3 Encourage local communities so that they feel valued, united and hopeful within their wider church family.

Assets and Resources: 3.3.2 Improve the use of our assets and resources that released support to mission and ministry. 3.3.4 Encourage greater support for the work of the church using innovative approaches.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

- **Congregations:** providing records management advice and managing deposited permanent records.
- **Australian Lutheran College (ALC):** Fritzsche Oration; support of pastoral and theological students in research projects, and records management advice to graduate pastors.
- **Districts and auxiliaries:** LCNZ exploration of a proposal to deposit all LCNZ records at Lutheran Archives; Lutheran Women and Men: speaking engagements at conventions and rallies, financial support from Lutheran Women for a digitisation project. Management of deposited permanent district and auxiliary records. Education and advice at SA/NT Office Secretaries Day.
- **Churchwide Office national departments:** records management consultation, managing department permanent records, providing access to records. Scoping records for redress scheme applications. Involvement in the LCA Reconciliation Action Plan.

FINANCE/BUDGET

LUTHERAN ARCHIVES

FINANCE REPORT

	2020	2019	2018
Income	156,465	194,731	381,836
Expenditure	(390,218)	(319,935)	(311,072)
Non cash transfers	150,390	155,554	159,685
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Net result for year	(83,363)	30,350	230,449
Total Available at beginning of year	686,157	655,807	425,358
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Reserves available for the future	602,794	686,157	655,807
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