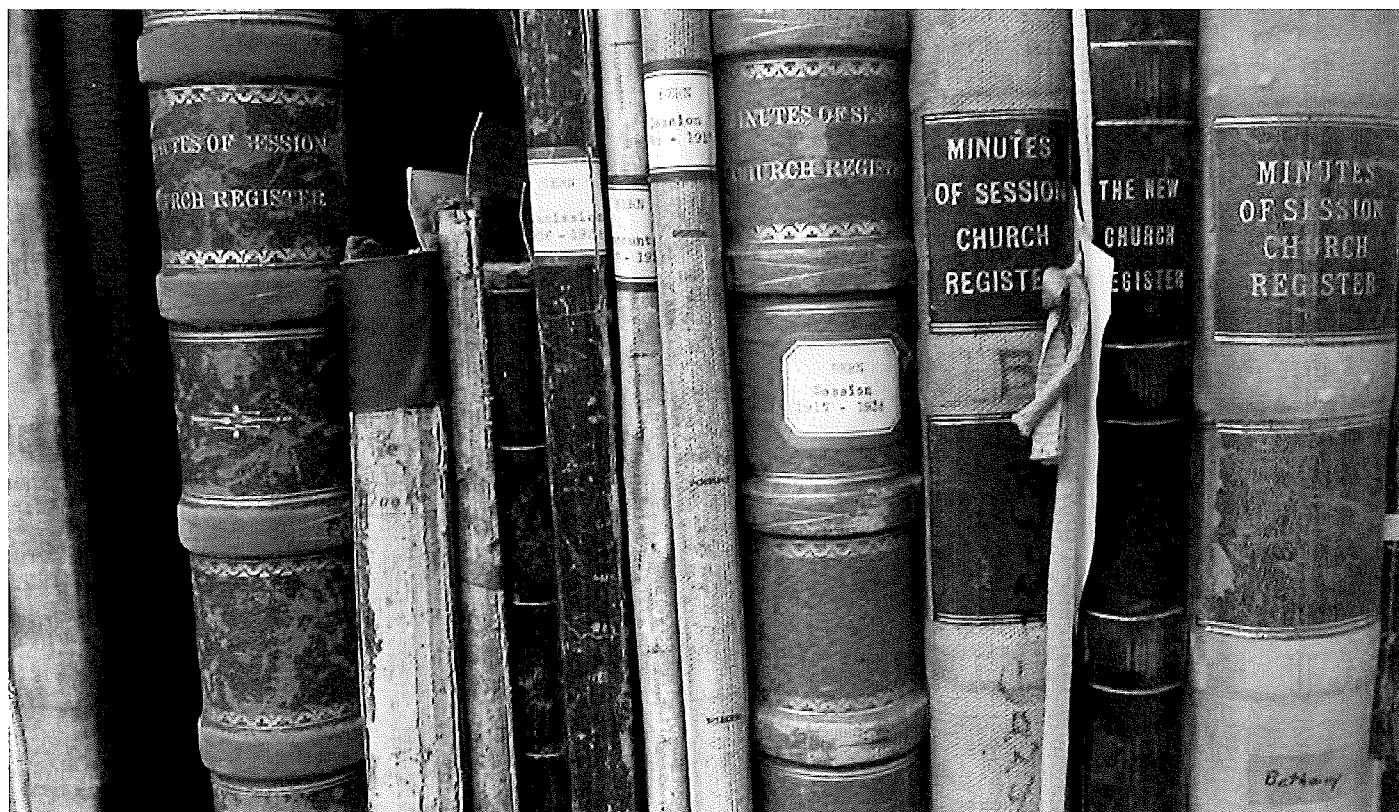




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Records of Congregations

The Presbyterian Historical Society supports the record-keeping activities of all entities of the Church. For congregations, we carry out that mission by digitizing records; storing records of permanent value [1]; and providing advice on records retention, storage, and preservation.



RECORDS DIGITIZATION [2]

We digitize original records and microfilm for PC(USA) congregations at a subsidized rate.

digitization [2]

RECORDS DEPOSIT [3]

We hold original records of permanent value on deposit in an environmentally controlled archival storage area with specialized fire detection and security systems. Congregations can deposit records at no charge. You retain ownership of the records and may request their return at any time with written authorization from the clerk of session.

Records Deposit [1]

ADVICE ON RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Presbyterian Historical Society provides advice to congregations on records management but does not hold congregation records of temporary value. Our general retention schedule for congregations follows below. Retention requirements for financial and administrative records vary from state to state. For further assistance, congregations should consult Records Archivist [David Staniunas](#) [4], an accountant, or legal counsel.

RETENTION SCHEDULE FOR CONGREGATIONS

Types	Retention Period
Minutes	permanent
Registers	permanent
Annual reports	permanent
Bylaws/charters	permanent
Incorporation records	permanent
Annual budgets	permanent
Annual audits	permanent
Annual financial statements	permanent
Subject files: correspondence, minutes, or other records surrounding subject matter of continuing administrative or legal value, or comprising information on the mission, vision, and actions of the congregation	permanent
Manuals/handbooks	permanent
Newspapers/newsletters	permanent
Brochures/promotional material (1 copy)	permanent
Photographs	permanent
Architectural drawings, plats, plans, blueprints	permanent
Wills, bequests	permanent
Legal/judicial case records	permanent
Loan agreements	satisfaction + 20 years
Property appraisals, records of sale	20 years after sale
Personnel records/employee records	employment + 7 years

Contracts	active + 6 years
Accounts payable	7 years
Accounts payable invoices	7 years
Accounts receivable records	7 years
Bank statements	7 years
Canceled checks	7 years
Cash receipt records	7 years
Donations (regular, weekly)	7 years
Expense reports	7 years
FICA / W2 records	7 years
Payroll records	7 years
Petty cash records	7 years
Receipts of purchases	7 years
Bank deposit slips	3 years
General/routine correspondence (acknowledgments, requests, travel arrangements, etc.)	3 years
Travel plans/arrangements	3 years
Periodic financial statements	2 years
Data for updating mailing lists	1 year
Invitations	1 year
Meeting notices	1 year
Mailing lists	active
Reference/resource materials	active

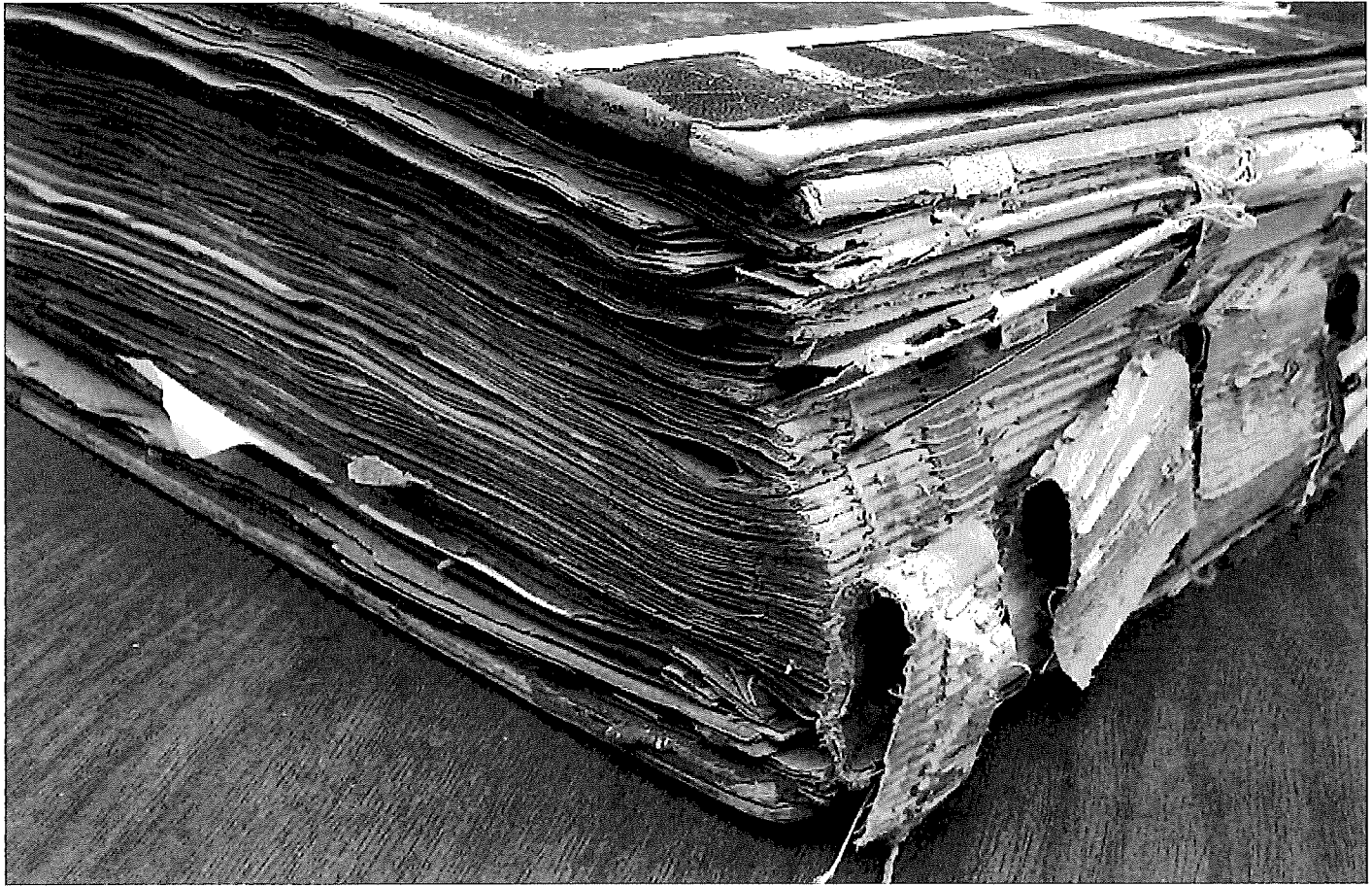
Source URL: <https://www.history.pcusa.org/services/records-management/records-congregations>

Links:

- [1] <https://www.history.pcusa.org/services/records-management/records-congregations/records-deposit>
- [2] <https://www.history.pcusa.org/services/preservation/digitization>
- [3] <https://www.history.pcusa.org/records-deposit>
- [4] <mailto:dstaniunas@history.pcusa.org?subject=Records%20of%20congregations>

Preservation Resources

Learn how to care for your records by understanding the causes of deterioration and what you can do to prevent it.



Causes of deterioration

All deterioration is caused by the inherent nature of particular materials as well as by external factors.

Deterioration caused by the nature of materials is known as Inherent Vice (/inherent-vice), while deterioration caused by external forces is known as the Ten Agents of Deterioration (/ten-agents-deterioration).

Preservation solutions

The following are some basic steps you can take immediately to reduce threats and extend the life of your records.

Use acid-free paper: When creating important permanent documents such as minutes or reports, use acid-free, lignin-free paper with a minimum pH of 8.5 and a buffer of calcium carbonate of about 3% to supply alkaline reserves. Paper that is at least 25% cotton or rag will supply additional durability. See below for a list of vendors that sell archival-quality supplies.

Minimize light exposure: Store records in an area without windows or skylights. If this is not possible, cover windows with dark shades or ultraviolet-filtering plastic films. Keep lights off when the area is not in use. Ultraviolet-filtering sleeves can be placed over florescent light tubes or special low-UV tubes can be used.

Maintain environmental control: In general, keeping temperature and relative humidity low and stable will benefit all materials. High temperatures increase the rate of chemical reactions which cause deterioration. High humidity, generally over 60%, will cause mold to grow, metals to corrode, and encourage pest infestations, while very low humidity, under 20%, will cause materials to become brittle. Pollutants also interact with materials to encourage deterioration and infestations. However, not all formats require the same environmental conditions. Color photographs and films require very cold to freezing storage to prevent deterioration, while paper-based records generally benefit from temperatures below 70°F. It is much easier to maintain these conditions in storage areas that are not occupied by people. While the ideal is difficult to reach, the use of de-humidifiers, humidifiers, and air-conditioning can help maintain a good environment.

Improve storage practices: Archival, buffered, acid-free storage enclosures are a great way to provide extra protection against damaging fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity. See below for a list of vendors who sell archival-quality storage supplies.

Handle permanent records with care: Do not curl, fold, or bend books and papers when placing them in storage. Metal fasteners (staples, metal paper clips, etc.) will rust and damage paper over time. Post-it™ notes and tape will leave an acidic residue on records.

Note that PC(USA) congregations, mid councils, and national agencies can [deposit \(/services/records-management/records-congregations/records-deposit\)](/services/records-management/records-congregations/records-deposit) their permanent records in the society's secure, climate-controlled archives for free and have their records [digitized \(/services/preservation/digitization\)](/services/preservation/digitization) at a subsidized rate.

Free preservation resources

The [Northeast Document Conservation Center \(http://www.nedcc.org/\)](http://www.nedcc.org/) (NEDCC) provides free resources on preservation, including [Preservation Leaflets \(http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview\)](http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview), articles, [curricula \(http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-education-curriculum\)](http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-education-curriculum), disaster planning templates, and more.

[view nedcc resources \(http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/overview\)](http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/overview).

The [National Park Service \(http://www.nps.gov/index.htm\)](http://www.nps.gov/index.htm) (NPS) provides free [Conserv-O-Grams \(http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservogram/cons_toc.html\)](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservogram/cons_toc.html), a [Museum Handbook \(http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/publications/handbook.html\)](http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/publications/handbook.html), and other publications on preservation topics.

[view nps resources \(http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/index.html\)](http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/index.html).

The [Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts \(http://www.ccaha.org/\)](http://www.ccaha.org/) (CCAHA) provides technical bulletins on preservation topics.

[view ccaha resources \(http://www.ccaha.org/publications/technical-bulletins\)](http://www.ccaha.org/publications/technical-bulletins).

[Heritage Preservation \(https://www.heritagepreservation.org/\)](https://www.heritagepreservation.org/) provides free downloadable resources as well as a [store \(https://www.heritagepreservation.org/catalog/\)](https://www.heritagepreservation.org/catalog/) where you can purchase books and other collection care resources.

[view Heritage Preservation resources \(https://www.heritagepreservation.org/free/Index.html\)](https://www.heritagepreservation.org/free/Index.html).

The [Institute of Museum and Library Services \(http://www.imls.gov/about/connecting_to_collections.aspx\)](http://www.imls.gov/about/connecting_to_collections.aspx) (IMLS) has created *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action*, a multi-year, multi-faceted national initiative to raise public awareness and inspire action. IMLS provides free resources, a discussion board, and access to webinars through the [Connecting to Collections online community \(http://www.connectingtocollections.org/\)](http://www.connectingtocollections.org/).