



Guidelines for Preparing Records for Microfilming

Getting Started and Costs

Selection criteria for which records to film should be based on the physical state of the records, the frequency of use, and the amount of funds available for filming purposes. Records needed often and in poor physical condition would be at the top of the list for filming. Since the costs for preservation microfilming can be high, filming may need to be in stages. Preservation-quality filming means using archival-quality film and ensuring every frame of the film is readable. Some commercial filming is done by machine feeding, set on one lighting level only, so that the images on the film may have unreadable portions. The extra labor needed to adjust each exposure of film to the attributes of the item to be filmed is the main cost of preservation filming.

In selecting materials to be filmed, the reduction ratio for filming is chosen in conjunction with the size of the original records. If the image is large (18-20" wide) and reduced to a very small ratio (1 to 16), it could be too small to read when the completed film is magnified using a reader-printer. By choosing 35 mm microfilm, larger format materials will be reduced to a proper ratio. For example, if the item to be filmed is 20" wide, it would be best to use a lower reduction ratio (1 to 12), which results in 566 images per 100 foot reel. This results in more expensive film since a fewer images fit on each reel, but they will be easy to read when magnified. The following chart is an abbreviated sample+ of the number of images that can fit on a standard 100 feet reel:

Images per 100' Reel of Microfilm

Larger	Reduction Ratios								Smaller
Width (B) *	1:8	1:9	1:10	1:11	1:12	1:13	1:14	1:15	1:16
9"	827	926	1021	1119	1215	1311	1404	1494	1587
12"	627	703	777	852	926	999	1071	1143	1215
15"	---	566	627	687	747	807	866	926	983
18"	---	---	---	576	627	676	727	777	827
20"	---	---	---	---	566	611	657	702	747

*Represents the width of an open volume (both sides) or single page.

+ Adapted from: Nancy Elkington, ed. RLG Preservation Microfilming Handbook. Mountain View, California: Research Libraries Group, Inc., 1992., Appendix 9: Reel Programming, p.132.

Since costs are based on the number of exposures, a count of images to be filmed is necessary. In addition, targets must be added for clarity to indicate what is on the film immediately after their appearance. A target is a image that is "eye visible" when the film is held to the light and viewed without magnification. Each film reel should have the same introductory targets and be identified as reel 1 of 3, 2 of 3, etc. Some opening targets can be smaller and consist of introductory material. Other targets use large type to identify a new item coming up next on the film reel. The total number of pages to be filmed, plus the number of targets to be added, will determine how many reels

of film will be created.

Selection

In selecting which records to film once you have established preservation priorities, the records should be judged as to which contain the most important elements for understanding the history of the congregation and/or are used the most often. Membership records, records of pastoral acts (baptisms, confirmations, etc.) and minutes of congregation meetings are the most often filmed series of records for congregations. Other series

that show evidence of activities, decisions, events, people, or other things central in the life of the congregation should be considered. Examples include newsletters, annual reports, worship bulletins, newspaper clippings, and printed materials. All records filmed should have been created for the congregation by its members, or pertain to the congregation or its members.

Arrangement and Description

Think of microfilm as a publication of the congregation's records, with the potential for copies to be located elsewhere. Therefore, begin the film with a good title page, providing the full name of the congregation, location including address, state and zip code. The county and township names could also be useful. Indicate the date of the microfilming, name of company and the reduction ratio used in filming.

Include a list or table of contents for what will appear on the film. Some additional notes on the contents, describing anything missing, or other peculiarities that would not be evident by just listing the contents, can also be included. Important items to include are dates and names of those who created the records, as well as any other information that makes the film useful and understandable.

The table of contents can vary from a simple list, such as "Membership Record Book #1 [inclusive dates], Membership Record Book #2, [inclusive dates]," to a list with much detail. Things to include might be to list the sections and page numbers in a ledger volume, such as "Baptisms, 1940-1952, p. 3-102," or note the beginning of a new year, such as "Minutes, 1908 p.10-24, Minutes 1909, p. 25-30." The list should also note the end of a reel and beginning of the next if the records require more than one reel. If files are not bound in volumes, you should create a file folder list, including inclusive dates.

Further descriptive information about the records is located at the beginning of the film. If there are full finding aids (i.e., an inventory that includes historical information, description of contents and list of physical items included, such as folders or volumes) for the paper versions of the records, film that same information. The start of the reel is also a place to add some general historical information, such as lists of pastors or other leaders, a list of important dates in the life of the congregation, or a history of the congregation.

Choosing a Filmer

The preservation microfilm industry is relatively small and it is best to find a filmer that has been recommended by staff of an archives, museum or historical society. If you locate a filmer, request a list of their clients to contact. Recommendations for good microfilm companies may be obtained from local historical or archival organizations, libraries or museums who often are the clients for preservation microfilming.

Preparing the Records for Filming

The opening frames of the microfilm are intended to fully identify what is on the entire film reel. As noted, eye-visible targets

are created to signify the beginning of a series, volume, section and possibly the end of same. Each target is counted as one exposure.

Once all opening materials and targets have been determined, targets are placed into the records where they should appear on the microfilm. Since added pages add thickness to bound volumes, do not place them in the volumes until just prior to filming and remove them as soon as filming is completed. Pack the records in the exact sequence to be filmed, indicating the end of reels if necessary. Provide a cover letter with specific instructions to the filmer.

The ideal for preservation microfilm is to create three versions of the microfilm when it is created. The original or camera negative is first and is only used to create other negative copies, usually called a copy negative or inter-negative. The second version is the copy negative, which is then used to make positive copies that are the copies to be viewed on microfilm readers. This third version, the positive copy, is considered expendable or replaceable and could be loaned or taken off the premises for viewing. If a positive copy is ever lost or becomes unreadable due to damage from use, the copy negative is utilized to make a replacement positive copy.

Contracts

The filming of records can be expensive and the parameters of the filming should be in writing, such as providing a quote of the cost per exposure, any additional fees for film reels and boxes and return shipping procedure and costs. Ask if there is a policy on accessing records, if needed, while records are awaiting filming. If access is a major concern, for planning purposes ask for a completion date or an approximate one.

In some cases, the local historical society or some other entity may offer to film your records at no cost to the congregation. The other organization may wish to retain the negative, controlling the distribution of the film to third parties. It is not unusual for a local historical society to sell copies of films in order to recover the costs of filming.

In Conclusion

Whenever records are removed from their primary location, care in shipping must be considered. Shipping should be done by a company that can trace missing packages. A minimal amount of insurance may be purchased for good measure. Hand delivery is safer, but is not always practical.

Upon receipt of the microfilm, it should be inspected for clarity, contrast, complete images, shadows or otherwise missing information. Store the original camera negative off-site under controlled conditions. Your ELCA regional archives or the ELCA churchwide archives may be able to provide this service. Store the copy negative closer to hand, in order to make positive, use copies. Never use the negative film for any other purposes. Consider donation or sale of copies of the positive film to interested historical or genealogical societies, museums, libraries or archives.