

Archival Protocols and Standards for Australian Baptist Unions and Other Entities

23 October 2014

1. By definition, Archives are the historical documentary records of a particular organisation. Also, the purpose of archival work is to ensure that the important and relevant historical records of the parent organisation are properly created, preserved and conserved, managed, and published (as appropriate) and made accessible for the lifetime of the records (which is usually in perpetuity unless there are good reasons for earlier disposal), all with due attention to privacy concerns and access policies.
2. The Baptist denominational Archives nationally and in each of the states and territories are the responsibility of the national and state Baptist Unions
3. It is understood that the particular form and nature of the administration of each Archives are appropriate to the organisational structure of its parent body and would therefore vary from state to state. So this document aims to present the key policy issues which would be adapted to each situation as appropriate.
4. Similar Archives of other entities such as Global Interaction, educational bodies, specialised ministries, social welfare agencies, camping organisations etc, are the responsibility of the respective entity. These other bodies are included within the purview of this document.
5. In practice, Baptist Union Archives include not only Baptist Union records (both paper and digital) in the narrowest sense, but also church and personal/family records and other materials, and also some items which would normally be considered part of a library. Some Archives also contain 'museum' artefacts. These materials are also included within the purview of this document.
6. It is understood that a Baptist Union does not need to be physically involved in all of the required archival activities, but that it may arrange for some functions to be carried out by other responsible bodies under contract, such as a university, state library or a Baptist Historical Society. However, the Baptist Union or other entity needs to manage and take responsibility for the overall process to achieve the desired outcomes of proper management, retention and access to its records.
7. Baptist Historical Societies are willing to help the Baptist Unions with practical assistance and advice in their management of their historical records.
8. It is highly desirable for Baptist Unions and other entities to provide professional paid archival staffing, but it is understood that volunteer staffing is possible. However, whatever arrangements are made, staffing needs to be managed appropriately to achieve the desired ends.
9. Historical records being considered in this document include both traditional paper records and digital records (digitised and born digital) (see more below).
10. Baptist historical records (Union, entity, local church etc) being considered in this document typically include the following:

Minutes, reports, financial papers, correspondence, Yearbooks, newspapers, programs, memoirs/biographies, music books, promotional sheets, publications, photographs, maps, charts, plans, audio and video recordings, movies, audio-visuals, slides, negatives, and

digital material such as digital images, sound and video recordings, emails, webpages. Family history records may also be included as well as published books and newspapers, and objects such as plaques, memorials, communion-ware, and Bibles.

11. The historical scope of the records being considered in this document range from the earliest existing documents (of Baptist Unions, churches, and individuals and published material), up to the those which have been moved* to archival storage from current use.

11a (*The age when records are transferred to archival storage from current use should be determined in each case according to practical conditions; appropriate arrangements should be made for the regular transfer of such documents according to the policies established in each case.

For paper records it could be, say, 5 years, but in the case of digital records it can be immediate because, unlike paper records, they remain simultaneously accessible to current users while also archived.

Note that Electronic Document/Record Management Systems – ED/RMS – can handle the processes automatically, including privacy concerns, and can be configured to suit any particular needs.

Also note that the term ‘archiving’ is being used here in the Archives sense, which is different from the computer sense of ‘archiving’ a file)

12. The major steps in the process of the creation and archival management of its records, for which the Baptist Union or other entity takes responsibility include the following:

- Creation of appropriate records during the course of everyday business operations (especially important for digital records)
- Retention policies and practices
- Transfer policies (to cover the transfer of records from current use to archival storage)
- Storage for the length of life of the records (which is in perpetuity unless there are reasons to dispose earlier)
- Management of the stored records (both physical storage requirements including digital/IT support, and in terms of personnel carrying out the work)
- Reasonable and appropriate access policies, procedures and practice in view of the specialised nature of Baptist archival material. (eg usual enquirers will be Baptist Union staff, churches, family historians, students; there is usually less call on marriage/baptism/death information or information about aboriginal or children’s homes)
- In the case of Digital Records, the on-going management and storage, updating of records with changes in technology, obsolescence and other technical matters
- Addressing privacy concerns

13. It is expected that the Baptist Unions and other entities will set up policies, procedures, administration, personnel, training and funding to achieve the above, and that such policies will be disseminated effectively and widely to the relevant personnel.

14. It is recommended that initially and at regular intervals thereafter Baptist Unions and other entities responsible for the creation and archival storage of records carry out a comprehensive audit of all organisational activity in regard to the creation, use, storage and access to records to ensure that all archival needs are met, and that where there is need for action, definite plans are prepared and implemented to address any deficiencies discovered in the process of the audit.

15. The transition by all organisations to the use of digital records calls for special attention. Digital records management is in principle the same as with traditional paper records - to create and preserve appropriate organisational records and to provide access to them over their lifetime. However, because of their nature, digital records need different methods, processes and policies.
16. There are two distinct yet interacting aspects of digital record keeping:
- 16a: Digitising: the scanning of existing paper records (documents, images etc) to produce digital counterparts. Part of the overall archival policy of a Baptist Union or other entity needs to include items which specify whether and to what extent existing paper records will be digitised to become part of a digital archival collection in the interests of overall convenience, preservation of records, conservation of space, and ease of access and distribution of material. Appropriate human, physical, IT, and funding resources need to be allocated.
- Those paper records which have been digitised can be retained under the normal archival regime along with those not selected for digitisation or they may be relegated to ‘deep’ storage because they will not normally be needed again, or they may be destroyed.
- 16b: Digital Archiving – covering records ‘born digital’ and those which have been digitised. As all new records are now born digital, Baptist Unions and other entities need to set up a fully functioning digital archival process to handle the records being created – including correspondence (ie emails), reports, papers, publications, presentations, webpages, spreadsheets etc. In contrast with paper documents, it is especially important that archiving protocols cover the period from the moment of initial creation of a digital document onwards. Appropriate human, physical, IT and funding resources need to be allocated.