

Summary of NCCA Technical Assistance Report: Assessment and Recommendations

In April 2018, a member of the National Committee on Archives of the NCCA travelled to San Jose to conduct an assessment and evaluate the condition of the ecclesiastical books of records. The full Technical Assistance Report can be found [here](#).

The findings from the assessment of the books are summarized as follows:

- The majority of the materials are in an advanced state of deterioration, and books from the latter part of the 1800s are in even worse condition.
- The ecclesiastical books are kept in varnished wooden cabinets inside the parish office. Because the parish office has no air conditioner or dehumidifier, the books are exposed to, and have been damaged by, fluctuations in temperature and humidity
- The books have high levels of acidity, resulting in brownish pages, ink-corrosion, and mold.
- Some books are covered in plastic and some texts were overwritten with ballpoint pen ink. Although these appear to be earlier efforts to preserve the books, they actually are furthering deterioration.
- No digital copies of the centuries-old records exist.

The subject matter expert from the NCCA recommended the following:

- Relocate the books to a secure storage unit in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment, i.e., temperature between 18 to 24 degrees Celsius and humidity level between 40 to 55 percent.
- Give immediate and special intervention to books from the latter part of the 1800s. In particular:
 - Restore books with cracked / torn pages and ink corrosion.
 - Fabricate enclosures (i.e., archival boxes or non-acidic customized boxes) for these books in order to contain loose parts.
- Digitize 18th and 19th century books that are still in good condition. Create photocopy replicas of each volume to serve as access copies in order to preserve the originals from mishandling, (*N.B.: Digitization is not within the scope of this Project inasmuch as other institutions have already done that. Instead, we will arrange for the Parish to have online access to those digitized records and also restrict physical access to the records once the archive is established.*)
- Replace wood cabinets with steel shelves for book storage as wood is acidic.
- Buffer, or use non-acidic papers to interleave between pages, to reduce/extract acid from manuscripts. However, care must be taken not to make the volumes too thick as the same may cause some damage (e.g., warping).
- Train staff who will be tasked with the preservation of the materials.