

# Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives Conference, 2018

The following is the original conference website text with some obsolete or less relevant information removed.

## Overview

“Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives” was a conference sponsored by and held at Boston College from July 11-13, 2018. It was designed to bring leaders of religious communities, archivists, and historians together to seek and identify solutions to the issues that communities, including those coming to completion, are facing in preserving and providing access to their archival legacies.

## Program Committee Members

“Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives” was organized under the auspices of Boston College by an advisory committee comprised of religious leaders, archivists, and historians.

### Co-Chairs:

- Malachy McCarthy, Province Archivist, Claretian Missionaries Archives USA-Canada
- Christian Dupont, Burns Librarian and Associate University Librarian for Special Collections, John J. Burns Library, Boston College

### Administrative Assistant:

- Kate Edrington, Administrative Assistant, John J. Burns Library, Boston College

### Advisory Committee Members:

- Marian Barber, Independent Historian
- Michael J. Burns, Archives Special Assistant for Jesuit and Catholic Collections, John J. Burns Library, Boston College
- Carol Coburn, Professor and Director of the CSJ Heritage Center, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Avila University
- Ginger Downey, OLVM, General Secretary, Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
- Jennifer (Jen) Halloran, Director, Maryknoll Mission Archives
- David Horn, Retired archivist, John J. Burns Library, Boston College
- Pat Lawton, Digital Project Librarian, Catholic Research Resources Alliance, University of Notre Dame
- Emilie (Lee) Leumas, Archivist, Archdiocese of New Orleans
- Margaret (Maggie) McGuinness, Professor, Department of Religion, LaSalle University
- Ellen Pierce, Religious Archives Consultant
- Emily Reed, Digital Records Archivist, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

- Jane Ann Slater, CDP, Chancellor, Archdiocese of San Antonio

## Content

### **Video Recordings of the Conference**

Video recordings of the four main sessions are now available as a [YouTube Playlist](#) on the Boston College Libraries' YouTube channel. See the [Program](#) page for additional details. Additional post-conference updates and resources will be posted.

### ***Preserving the Past, Building for the Future Working Paper***

The working committee charged with gathering, reflecting upon, and synthesizing the presentations and input from the Boston College Conference “Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives” released a working paper titled, *Preserving the Past, Building for the Future*.

The paper provides a broad outline of the major areas of concern for Catholic religious leaders, scholars, and archivists who are invested in the long-term preservation and use of these valuable collections as well as suggestions on ways we can move forward together in this important work. The committee recommends that this paper be used as a framework for considering possible solutions to specific challenges faced by each religious community and as a tool to encourage cooperation and collaboration among the three constituencies.

- [Preserving the Past, Building for the Future Working Paper](#) (letter version)
- [Preserving the Past, Building for the Future](#) (booklet version)

## Original Program

In September 2017, the conference planning committee surveyed religious community leaders, archivists, and historians to learn about their thoughts and concerns for the future of Catholic religious archives. Survey results help to shape the conference program.

The goal of the conference was to articulate common needs and to develop strategies and resources for meeting them. The strategy for achieving that goal involved sharing the combined expertise of participants through dialogue aimed at developing a clearer understanding of where we are now and what lies ahead.

It was designed to be a “working” conference. Participants actively engaged with each other, thinking broadly and deeply about issues and practical solutions that communities of various sizes and types can employ going forward.

The conference began with an opening Mass on Wednesday afternoon, July 11, and concluded with lunch on Friday, July 13.

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**Wednesday, July 11**

Arrival & Registration (12:00pm – 3:00pm)

Location: Stayer Hall

Opening Mass (4:00pm – 5:00pm)

Celebrant: Charles R. Gallagher, SJ

Location: St. Ignatius Church, upper church

**Session 1: Why Are We Here?** (7:00pm – 8:30pm)

Location: Robsham Theater [[videorecording](#)]

In this kick-off session, a religious leader, an archivist, and a historian spoke about the concerns, motivations, expectations, and goals that each group held for this conference. This session provided a general introduction to what is common and what is different among their perspectives on archives and outlined the key issues to consider.

Goal: Setting the stage

Ginger Downey, OLVM

Jennifer Halloran, Maryknoll Mission Archives

Margaret McGuinness, LaSalle University

Carol Coburn, Avila University, moderator

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**Thursday, July 12**

**Session 2: What Do We Know?** (8:30am-10:00am)

Location: Robsham Theater [[videorecording](#)]

Lecture presentation interpreting the results of surveys of religious leaders, archivists, and historians conducted by the conference planning committee in October 2017. What does the data tell us? What are the core values revealed?

Goal: Preview areas of focus.

Patricia Wittberg, SC, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)

**Session 3: What Is the Ideal?** (10:30am-12:00pm)

Location: Corcoran Commons, Heights Room

Facilitated small group discussions prompting participants to consider their own archival situation in the context of the larger crises affecting Catholic religious communities and their archives and encouraging perspective-sharing and interaction among leaders, archivists and historians.

Goal: Networking, collegiality, team building.

**Session 4: How Do We Transmit Charism to the Future?** (1:30pm-3:00pm)

Location: Robsham Theater [[videorecording](#)]

Panel exploring how a community's charism can be expressed through archival sources and the roles that historians, leaders, and archivists can play. How do we determine and preserve what is of enduring value?

Goal: Community needs assessment.

Jean Bartunek, RSCJ, Boston College

Mary Katherine Hamm, SC, Sisters of Charity of Halifax, respondent

James O'Toole, Boston College, respondent

**Session 5: How Do I Envision the Future?** (3:30pm-5:00pm)

Location: Participants may use conference meeting rooms or return to residence hall rooms

Individual, two-person or small group options for reflection. Participants were provided with prompts and scenarios to guide their thoughts through selected aspects of the religious archives dilemma with the goal of surfacing practical action steps toward making a positive difference.

Goal: Community plan formation.

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**Friday, July 13**

Continental Breakfast (7:00am-8:20am)

Location: Corcoran Commons, Heights Room

**Session 6: What Are the Options?** (8:30am-9:30am)

Location: Robsham Theater [[videorecording](#)]

Presentations covered three different choices to manage or transfer religious community archives. The first option, creating a charism-based or collaborative archives, serves as a model for those congregations desiring to continue to manage their archival program. The second and third option are designed for those communities facing completion. Representatives from a diocesan archives and university-related repository will share expertise on the process that can be developed to transfer a collection to another archive.

Emilie Gagnet Leumas, Archdiocese of New Orleans

Kathryn Oosterhuis, Mercy Heritage Center

David E. Horn, Boston College, retired

**Session 7: Lightning Rounds** (10:00am-12:00pm)

Location: Corcoran Commons, Heights Room

Brief, informal presentations by practitioners who shared their expertise on various strategies for improving management of archival collections. Participants were able to attend three different presentations during this session from among the topics listed below.

Goal: To give attendees opportunities to meet experts and ask questions specific to their situation

Creation of collaborative or charism-based archives:

- Mary Kenney, National Archives of the Marianist Province of the United States
- Lisa Gibbon, Congregation of Saint Joseph Archives, Cleveland
- Michael Pera, Society of Sacred Heart, US-Canada Province Archives

Transfer of materials to a diocesan archives:

- Kate Feighery, Archdiocese of New York
- Chris Doan, Archdiocese of San Francisco
- Eric Fair, Archdiocese of Saint Louis

Transfer of materials to a university archives:

- Amy Cooper Cary, Marquette University
- Erin Louthen, Santa Clara University
- Kevin Cawley, University of Notre Dame

Hiring an archival consultant:

- Jane Kenamore, Chicago

Interim archives, or engaging a project archivist:

- Malachy McCarthy, Claretian Missionaries Archives USA-Canada

Hiring a professional archivist:

- Ellen Pierce, religious archives consultant

Interns and volunteers:

- Doris Cardenas, Claretian Missionaries Archives, USA-Canada
- Eric Reisberg, McGreal Center, Dominican University

Writing a congregational or community history:

- Ellen Skerrett, independent historian
- Margaret McGuinness, LaSalle University
- Carol Coburn, Avila University