

ArchivEra.

SUCCESS STORY

Catholic Archdiocese of Perth

Cultivating a Community of Archival Practice

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH'S GOALS

- Web-based platform to link geographically diverse archives collections
- Security and permissions management
- Intellectual and physical control over collections
- Off-the-shelf but flexible and configurable

The Archdiocese of Perth has one of the largest private archival collections in Western Australia, and the purpose of its Archives and Information Governance Office (The Archives Office) is to act as custodian of that collection. The archives materials include sacramental and historical records from 1845, cultural heritage objects, and a Central Database of Baptisms. The Archives Office is responsible for the management of organisational records and information.

We sat down with Odhran O'Brien, Archdiocesan Archivist, and Director, Archives and Information Governance Office, to discuss the selection and implementation of ArchivEra as their archival collections management system.

To demonstrate ArchivEra's relevance to the Archdiocesan archives, we can turn to their Vision Statement, which includes the goals of capturing, preserving, and providing access to the documentary heritage and organisational memory of the Archdiocese.

To support that vision, they strive to:

- Preserve and make available the sacramental records and cultural heritage objects of the Archdiocese
- Capture the records that document the mission, programmes and service delivery of the Archdiocese
- Promote a consistent approach to the management of information and records to facilitate accountability, transparency and collaboration
- Serve the Church by using digital technologies to provide access to reliable and quality information and records
- Develop programmes which are a holistic collaboration and coordination of people, processes, and technology

"We need a dynamic system that supports a consistent approach to managing the Perth diocesan collections across Western Australia ... ArchivEra is already providing this with Catholic dioceses in Bendigo, Hobart, and Ballarat."

Odhran O'Brien,

ARCHDIOCESAN ARCHIVIST, AND DIRECTOR, ARCHIVES AND INFORMATION GOVERNANCE OFFICE

After developing an internal Request for Proposal that outlined the requirements for an archival collections management system, they selected ArchivEra, partly because of the positive experiences of diocesan archivists in Bendigo, Hobart, and Ballarat who were already using it, and largely because ArchivEra supports every one of those important goals.

Diverse and Precious Artifacts

The Archdiocese holds documents and photographs (many digitised), along with maps, plans, and drawings, and art and object collections. These include church plate relics, personal objects such as dinner sets used by earlier bishops, vestments made in India in the 1850s from gold thread (along with many other textiles), and a reliquary made in the 1930s out of gold and semiprecious gems from donated engagement rings. These artifacts date from the 1840s right through to the current day. Five archives staff members including Odhran manage the collections.

A Smooth Implementation

Odhran told us that a major benefit of ArchivEra is its flexibility in terms of how metadata can be configured. As they drew data in from several different systems throughout the Archdiocese of Perth, they really had to customise the metadata, which they did with assistance from Lucidea's Client Services team. Odhran described those team members as taking a "relational approach, focusing on the people involved, while being committed and persevering." He has worked with a number of software providers and has learnt the importance of collaboration when it comes to both people and technology. He mentioned the creativity and outside the box thinking of the ArchivEra team. "Our

legacy systems and methodologies have meant that some of the data has been more difficult to extract. The ArchivEra implementation specialist approached this challenge with creative and measured problem solving." Odhran also emphasized the value of having access to archives sector knowledge and direct human interaction throughout the process.

Intellectual Control, a Holistic View, and Improved Oversight

During our conversation, Odhran said, "ArchivEra has enabled an entire view of the Archdiocesan collections and records, providing us with true intellectual control".

The collection evolved over time and was grounded in the physical boxes. There will soon be a major refurbishment of the archives, which means the boxed materials will move into offsite storage. Happily, plans for expanded use of ArchivEra include a barcoding project. Per Odhran "If we use barcoding for location tracking this will give us a level of oversight that improves our operational efficiency and service support."

From Physical to Digital, with Security in Mind

Now, as part of a strategy to respond to changes in the organisation and the way research is done, they have digitised a large portion of the 19th century collection. Researchers will be able to come in and access the components of that collection, each for a limited time; this demonstrates why data security and role-based permissions are so important. Confidentiality is crucial, and ensuring there are appropriate safeguards in place for records, particularly those of individuals, is a must.

The archives team in Perth has chosen ArchivEra as software-as-a-service (SaaS) rather than on-premise in order to support record security. This decision was in part based upon the positive experience reported by the Ballarat Diocesan Historical Commission. Vendor delivered timely updates will also ensure that there is no extra burden on local IT.

Benefits Extend to Multiple Departments

While there will not be a public expression of their archives' collections, various departments within the Archdiocese

such as Property and Finance will be able to use ArchivEra as an "intranet" rather than emailing the archivists to request research. Odhran mentioned that "maintaining documented and easily accessible information about Archdiocesan real estate holdings across the state means the Property department can leverage information about those. We look forward to experiencing the potential efficiency and time savings that we envision can be derived from finding information faster and more easily." He and his team feel ArchivEra's value definitely outweighs the cost, with a return on investment that goes beyond the original thinking about how to leverage it.

Web-based ArchivEra handily supports the goal of linking the archives of diverse diocesan locations across Australia. For example, the intranet will likely be extended to the Archdiocese of Perth parishes, who will benefit from access to the content, and those parishes with significant objects will be able to catalogue and share their own collections in ArchivEra.

The Diocese of Geraldton has adopted ArchivEra in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Perth, and archivists in Bendigo and Hobart as well as Ballarat are already using it.

An Archival Community of Practice

Odhran and his colleagues acknowledge the possibilities of having a collections management system (CMS) that allows for easier cataloguing and sharing of archival materials across the state and nation. This would cultivate an archival community of practice that is in line with archival standards, as well as delivering operational and financial benefits across the country.

This potential outcome embodies the fifth element of their mandate to support the Archives and Information Governance Office vision: "To develop programmes which are a holistic collaboration and coordination of people, processes, and technology." ArchivEra is more than a collection of features; per Odhran, "The system itself acts as a secure, comprehensive finding aid". We are proud to offer an archival CMS that will help cultivate an archival community of practice across diocesan archives in Australia.

About Lucidea

Lucidea provides unrivaled archival collections management software, with innovative tools based on observing archives of all sizes for 25 years. Lucidea's powerful web-based CMS, ArchivEra, is purpose-built, enabling archives large, small, or middling to describe and provide access to historical materials, save time and resources, and adhere to archival standards.

To learn more about ArchivEra and how it can help solve your archival collections management challenges, visit lucidea.com/archivera

Contact Lucidea

For further information about ArchivEra, including services, pricing or references, contact us at:

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