



Church History Centers

COLLECTING,
PRESERVING,
AND SHARING
CHURCH HISTORY

CHURCH HISTORY GUIDES

Church History Centers

CHURCH HISTORY GUIDES

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

© 2015 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America. English approval: 9/14. PD10053296

Church History Guides: Church History Centers **Overview**

Purpose and Major Functions

Church history centers are extensions of the Church History Library and the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah. They are open to the public and can be a powerful tool for strengthening faith. Church history centers are best located within or near other Church facilities frequently visited by members. Major functions include:



1. **Collecting and preserving**—providing a place where records and artifacts can be donated and preserved.



2. **Providing access**—helping Church leaders, members, and others access information and records relating to the history of the Church.



3. **Increasing awareness**—sharing Church history through exhibits and public programs.

Organization

Church history centers are operated by volunteer staff called under the direction of the Area Presidency. The center's director reports to the area Church history adviser and typically serves for three or more years. Staff members are typically called for 12 or 18 months, but they may be called to serve multiple times if circumstances warrant. Staff positions may include a public service specialist, a records specialist, exhibit specialists, and a technology specialist, each requiring specific skills described in this guide. The Church History Department in Salt Lake City, Utah, provides guidelines, support, and training for setting up and operating Church history centers. The Area Presidency provides the leadership and resources needed to operate the center.

Layout

The physical layout of a center should include supervised space where the public can access records, space to store and preserve records (see *Church History Guides: Records Preservation Centers*), and a staff work area. Church history centers may also include an exhibit area and an open collections area where the public can browse and access non-unique records.

Contents

Introduction 1

Functions and Services 5

Collecting and preserving 6

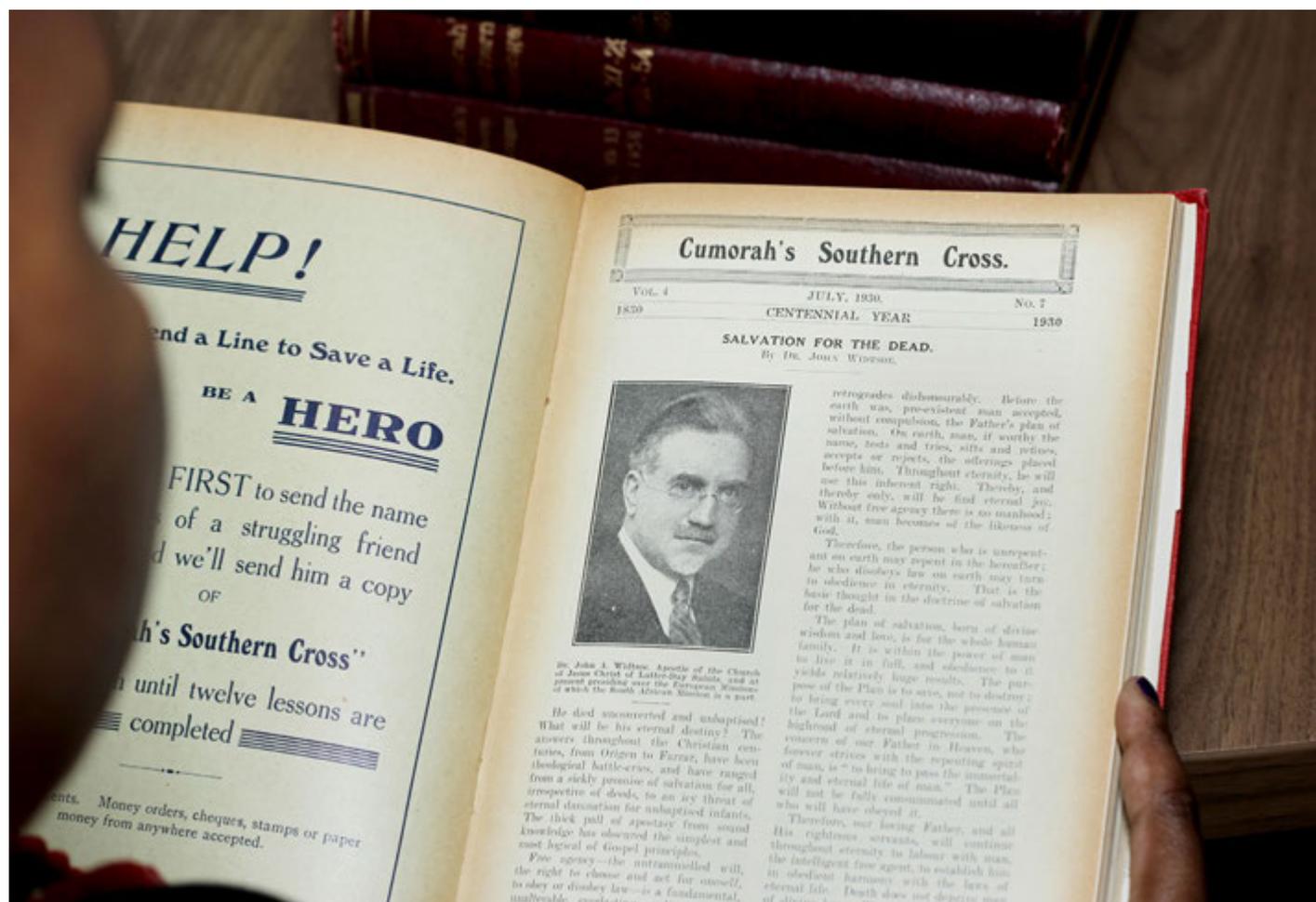
Providing access 7

Increasing awareness 16

Organization and Staffing 17

Physical Space within a Church History Center 21

Equipment, Furnishings, and Supplies 25



Patron studying a periodical in the Church history center in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Introduction



By collecting, preserving, and sharing Church history, we help God's children learn and gain wisdom, which helps them make and keep sacred covenants.

The Lord instructs His children to “seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith” (D&C 109:7). In addition, He commands His Church to keep a “record of all things that transpire in Zion” (D&C 85:1) and to make a “history of all the important things . . . concerning my church” (D&C 69:3; see also D&C 21:1). The Church Historian and Recorder is responsible to keep this history and record. He is assisted by the Church History Department and by those called to serve in Church history positions. By collecting, preserving, and sharing Church history, we help God's children learn and gain wisdom, which helps them make and keep sacred covenants.

Many Church history resources can be viewed online at history.lds.org, and many original records can also be viewed at the Church History Library and Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah. Church history centers are extensions of the library and museum in Salt Lake City and can be a powerful tool for strengthening faith.

The major functions of a Church history center include:



Collecting and preserving—providing a place where records and artifacts can be donated and preserved.



Providing access—helping Church leaders, members, and others access information and records relating to the history of the Church.



Increasing awareness—sharing Church history through exhibits and public programs.



1. COLLECTING
AND
PRESERVING



2. PROVIDING
ACCESS



3. INCREASING
AWARENESS

Church history centers are operated by volunteer staff called under the direction of the Area Presidency. The Church History Department in Salt Lake City, Utah, provides guidelines, support, and training for setting up and operating Church history centers. Area Presidencies provide the leadership and resources needed to operate each center in their area.

It is best to place Church history centers inside or near other Church facilities that are frequently visited by Church members, such as temple patron housing, visitors' centers, institute buildings, family history centers, area offices, or service centers. These Church history centers benefit from existing building amenities and security. These locations also reduce the risk to records stored at the center, since problems (such as water leaks or power failures) will likely be identified and resolved quickly.

The number and size of centers should be determined jointly by the Area Presidency, the Church History Department, the Presiding Bishopric, and the organization that has responsibility for the facility that will house the Church history center. Generally, area personnel should gain experience operating a single center before opening additional centers.

Church History Center in São Paulo, Brazil.



Relationship to Records Preservation Centers

Records preservation centers store Church history records in secure and safe environments (see *Church History Guides: Records Preservation Centers*). Their purpose is to preserve records, not to provide public access to them.

Before providing public access to records, seek permission from the Area Presidency to convert the records preservation center into a Church history center. This process may involve moving to a new location. When original records are stored at a Church history center, it is proper to refer to the space where the records are stored as a “records preservation center.”

Relationship to the Church History Library and Church History Museum

Church history centers act as extensions of the Church History Library and Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah, and should operate under similar policies. The Church History Department provides ongoing training and support for those who work at Church history centers. Training materials are available on the Church history adviser website, history.lds.org/adviser, and through occasional videoconference or face-to-face meetings.



(Right) Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Functions and Services

THE FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES offered at a center can be divided into three basic categories: collecting records, providing access to information and records, and increasing awareness of the Church and its history.



Most donations are welcome as long as they meet the guidelines listed in *Church History Guides: Collecting Records*.

Collecting and Preserving



With the increased awareness created by a Church history center, some Church members may offer to donate their historical records (journals, photographs, correspondence, artifacts, and art). Most donations are welcome as long as they meet the guidelines given in *Church History Guides: Collecting Records*. This guide contains instructions for properly transferring records to the Church. When records do not relate to the history of the Church, you should kindly decline the donation.

When processing newly acquired records, be sure to follow the instructions outlined in *Church History Guides: Collecting Records* and in *Church History Guides: Records Preservation Centers*. All records received and preserved at a Church history center belong to the Church History Department.

(Left) An individual studying a loose-leaf document at a Church history center.



During operating hours, at least one staff member should be seated at a central location to greet visitors and make them feel welcome.

Providing Access



Staff at a Church history center can help visitors obtain information about Church history by directing them to online resources, such as history.lds.org, or by providing access to records stored at the center. To help visitors well, staff should be familiar with historical resources offered through area or country websites and with the online resources at history.lds.org, especially how to use the Church History Library catalog.

During operating hours, at least one staff member should be seated at a central location to greet visitors and make them feel welcome. Staff should give visitors their full attention and let them know that they are there to assist. Once they discover why the visitors have come to the center, they should appropriately guide the visitors to the online resources or other aspects of the center that will meet their needs.

Occasionally, a visitor may request more help than the Church history center staff can provide. In this situation, assistance can be obtained from the staff at the Church History Library (go to history.lds.org, click **Church History Library**, and then click **Ask Us**).



Occasionally, a visitor may request more help than the Church history center staff can provide. For instance, a visitor may ask a question that staff members don't feel they can accurately answer, or a visitor may want access to a record that is restricted. In these situations, center staff can get assistance from the staff at the Church History Library by clicking **Ask Us** on the Church History Library page on history.lds.org. This service can also be used by visitors to ask questions or to seek guidance regarding a research project. A Church History Library staff member or other specialist will respond directly to the question in a reasonable amount of time.

Some visitors may be difficult to work with.

Most interactions with visitors are pleasant and professional. However, if a visitor is angry or lacks professional decorum, you should be prepared to handle the situation.

The following suggestions may help:

- Treat the visitor with empathy and charity.
- Listen carefully to the visitor's concerns.
- Acknowledge the situation and the visitor's feelings.
- Respond and attempt to remedy the problem.
- Confirm that you have resolved the problem, and try to end the conversation positively.

Under no circumstances should staff members put themselves at risk. Remember to have two staff members present at all times. A list of emergency numbers should be nearby each phone in the center for ready reference.





Some records in the Church History Department's collection have been digitized, and thousands more are added each year.

Access to Online Resources

Online tools and resources can be accessed at history.lds.org. The Church History Department continually adds new resources to this website, making them available in multiple languages. For example, the website includes:

- The Church History Library catalog. This catalog is the primary method for discovering records held by the Church History Department. Digitized records can be viewed online, and many other records can be requested for digitization.
- Stories and information about Church history topics and events.
- Information about Church history facilities and activities in Salt Lake City, Utah, as well as historic sites in North America.
- Links to additional websites closely related to Church history research.
- Instructions for completing Church history projects such as preserving personal history, preserving records at home, and preparing a stake, district, or mission annual history.

Some of the records in the Church History Department's collection have been digitized, and thousands more are added each year. Patrons can view these records by searching the catalog, and when the desired record is found, following the link within the record's description to the digitized images. Patrons can request a record be digitized from within the catalog's description of the record. If possible, these records will be digitized and made available via the Church History Library catalog. Some records may not be available digitally because of copyright or privacy laws or Church policies or because they are stored at a location that does not yet have digitization capabilities.



There are many ways to arrange the records for browsing in the public area.

Access to Physical Records

Access to original records, including artifacts, must always be under the close supervision of Church history center staff to reduce the risk of theft and damage. (See the “Secured Records Access Area” section in this guide for further details about reducing risk to records.) The procedure for retrieving a record from its storage location is described in the “Process for Accessing Original Records” section of this guide.

Church history centers will sometimes have an area where the public can easily browse records or view them on display without being closely supervised. Only unrestricted records that can be easily replaced, such as published books, should be available for browsing. When records are displayed in an exhibit, center staff should follow the procedures and guidelines in *Church History Guides: Exhibiting Church History* to ensure that the records are secure and protected.

There are many ways to arrange the records for browsing in the public area. For instance, records can be arranged by topic, geography, Church unit, chronology, author, or any other method that provides convenient access to those who will

use the records. If needed, the Church History Department can suggest a method for arranging the records. Whatever method is selected, the collection should be reviewed regularly by the Church history center staff to make sure it remains in proper order.

Please take precautions to protect the records stored at the center. Unlike many public libraries, records, whether original or duplicate, should not be removed from Church history centers. Food and drink should never be allowed in a Church history center.



Limitations to Access

Some records contain sacred, private, or confidential information, so Church leaders have established policies to limit access to or use of these records. These policies are designed to protect the Church and individuals. The Church History Library catalog will indicate if a record has an access or use restriction. Therefore, it is important to consult the catalog prior to making any record available to a visitor. It is also important to explain any use or access limitations to the researcher. Exceptions to these limitations may be requested by clicking **Ask Us** on the Church History Library page on history.lds.org.

The following list defines conditions when limitations apply:

Sacred: This category includes specific information about temple rites and ceremonies or other sacred matters that have not been officially approved for release.

Private: Information in this category is information that would violate applicable privacy laws if it were released (for example, personal contact information, government identification numbers, or personal financial or health information).

Confidential: Confidential information is information about the conduct of Church business that takes place in nonpublic settings. Confidential records are found primarily in official Church records and in privately created papers of General Authorities, Area Seventies, Church employees, local ecclesiastical leaders, clerks, and others holding positions of trust. These records include, but are not limited to, financial records (including tithing and other donations, budgets, and expenditures), records pertaining to planning and policies, records about Church activities in countries where the Church is not legally recognized, and records of confessions and Church disciplinary proceedings.

(Left) Confidential information is information about the conduct of Church business that takes place in nonpublic settings, such as a bishop's interview.



When delivering the item to the researcher, be sure to explain any use limitations or handling instructions.

Process for Accessing Original Records



Visitor Completes Request Form

Anyone desiring access to original records must complete an online registration process (see history.lds.org/section/library). During this process, researchers enter basic information about themselves and watch a short orientation video. They also fill out a written request form (see example) for each item they desire to view. This process helps library staff know who accessed which records, as well as when and why the records were used.

Staff Retrieves Record

Look up the call number in the Church History Library catalog, and make sure you understand and follow any use or access restrictions. Make a photocopy of the request form, and keep it in a location that is visible to staff. Find the location where the desired record is stored in the records preservation center, remove it, and place the original copy of the request form in the vacated space. Check the condition of the requested item before you deliver it so you can accurately evaluate after the item is returned whether its condition has changed.

**Staff
Delivers
Item**

When delivering the item to the researcher, be sure to explain any use limitations or handling instructions. Researchers should be given only one item at a time.

Often, multiple items are stored in the same archival box. Do not deliver the entire box to the researcher, even if all the items have the same call number. Give researchers one item (often a folder) at a time. When they return the item, they may receive the next item. A staff member must always observe a researcher who is accessing records. If the researcher does not follow the rules outlined in the orientation video or the instructions given when the item was delivered, the staff member should immediately resolve the situation.

**Staff
Returns
Record**

After a researcher finishes with an item, inspect it to make sure its condition has not changed. Resolve any concerns immediately while the person is still

present. Return the item to its storage location, pull the original request form from the shelf,

Record Request Form PLEASE PRINT
Your Name
Call Number
Title
Author
Please return items 15 minutes before closing.

Example of a record request form.

and write your name and the time on it. File the original request form, and keep it indefinitely in case there is ever a concern about who accessed the item. Throw away the photocopy. By the end of the day, there should be no photocopied request forms left. If there are, it likely means an item was not returned properly. All items must be returned to their storage locations each night before the center is closed.



All items must be returned to their storage locations each night before the center is closed.



Scanning is the preferred method for duplication and should be used instead of photocopying.

Duplicating Records

Visitors frequently request a copy of the records they are researching. When they do, staff should look up the call number in the Church History Library catalog to see if the record was previously scanned and is already available electronically.

Duplication should be done carefully and in accordance with the laws where the Church history center is operating. The Church strictly follows all copyright laws. Center staff should seek advice from the area's legal counsel regarding copyright and duplication rules and then ensure that all staff members understand and follow these rules. Duplication restrictions can also be placed on a record due to sacred, private, or confidential concerns. Any duplication limitations should be explained to researchers when they receive the records.

Scanning is the preferred method for duplication and should be used instead of photocopying. Photographs should never be photocopied. All duplication increases the risk of damaging a record. Therefore, staff should follow carefully the digitization guidelines and standards found at history.lds.org/adviser. Typically, staff familiar with the duplication guidelines will scan the records. Allowing the researcher to scan a record is discouraged. Center staff should be careful when duplicating records that are delicate or in poor condition. Bound volumes should not be pressed flat when duplicating them. Instead, staff may contact the Church History Department for alternative methods. Once an item is digitized, a copy of the digital files should be transferred to the Church History Department for cataloging, preservation, and posting on history.lds.org.

Charging a fee for duplication is discouraged because of the overhead costs involved with collecting money. Therefore, center leadership may want to establish a limit on the number of items a researcher may request for duplication and require that he or she provide a USB drive or similar device so the copy of the images can be loaded on it.

Increasing Awareness



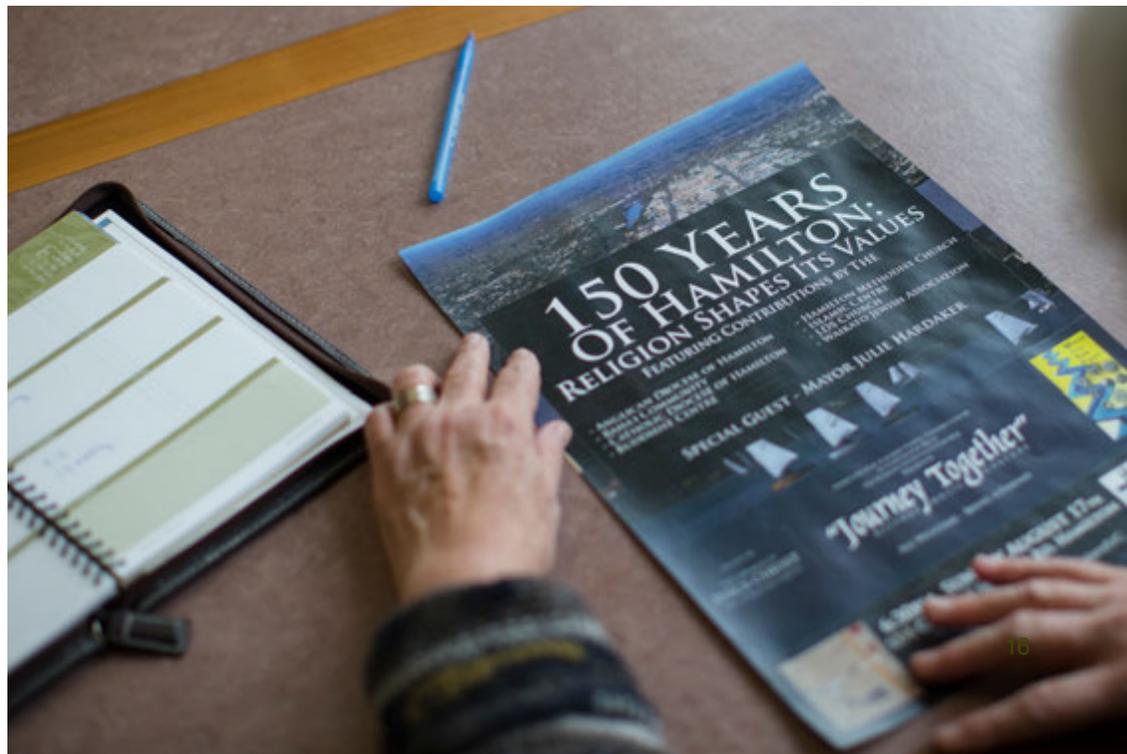
One of the major reasons for opening a Church history center is to increase the public's awareness of the Church and its history. Through Church history exhibits and public programs, the messages of the gospel can be shared to bless both Church members and friends.

Church history centers may be used to display art, artifacts, photographs, or manuscript records of local interest. Large monitors can be an effective method for sharing historic photographs and videos. If space is available, larger exhibits can be developed. Care should be taken to protect and secure any record on display. For more detailed information about exhibiting Church history

materials, including how an exhibit is approved and funded, see *Church History Guide: Exhibiting Church History*.

Through lectures and seminars, Church history centers may be used to educate the public about the history of the Church or related topics. For instance, a local historian could lecture on how the Church was established in the area, or an expert could teach methods for preserving photographs or recording oral histories. The Area Presidency or someone they designate should approve all presenters before they are invited to participate. If a presentation will be recorded so it can be shared with a wider audience, the area's publishing services manager should be involved, and the area legal counsel should be consulted to ensure that all applicable intellectual property laws are followed.

Church history centers may be used to display art, artifacts, photographs, or manuscript records of local interest.



Organization and Staffing

WHEN AN AREA PRESIDENCY chooses to establish a Church history center, they should call a director to oversee the center. Ideally, the director will serve for three or more years. Typically, he or she reports to the area Church history adviser. Church History Department staff will assist the area Church history adviser by providing training and support directly to the Church history center director and staff.





The center director recommends staff members, who are then called under the direction of the Area Presidency, who may delegate the task to an Area Seventy, mission president, or stake president. Previous experience with libraries, archives, and museums can be helpful but is not necessary.

The center's director recommends staff members, who are then called under the direction of the Area Presidency. The Area Presidency may delegate this task to an Area Seventy, mission president, or stake president. Previous experience with libraries, archives, and museums can be helpful but is not necessary. The number of staff members and the hours they work depend on the amount of activity at the center. However, a sufficient number should be called to provide good public service and to ensure the safety and security of the records and staff. At least two people should be present whenever the center is open. All staff members must sign the Church History Specialist Volunteer Disclosure Agreement form, which explains the expected standards of conduct. The agreement can be found at history.lds.org/adviser.

Staff members should be called in 12- or 18-month increments so the center director can more easily adapt to changing needs and circumstances. Some staff members may be called to serve multiple times if circumstances warrant. Care should be given to avoid losing all experienced staff at the same time. Although training will be provided, having staff members work a regular schedule is an important part of helping them gain and maintain skills and knowledge.

Various staff roles are recommended for a Church history center. Staff members will likely fulfill multiple roles.

(Left) Church history center staff, Temple View, New Zealand.

Public Service Specialist

Public service specialists greet and assist visitors at the center. Church members who are good with people, have computer skills, and have an understanding of local Church history are ideal for assisting visitors. Professional staff at the Church History Library are available to provide assistance with difficult questions when needed. Center staff can contact them by clicking **Ask Us** on the Church History Library page at history.lds.org.

Records Specialist

Records specialists process newly received records, digitize new and existing records, and care for the records being stored at the center. Church members who are organized and good with computers make good records specialists. See *Church History Guides: Records Preservation Centers* for more information.

Exhibit Specialist

Exhibit specialists oversee the designing, building, and sharing of any exhibits that are displayed in a Church history center. Church members who have experience with developing exhibits may be called to serve. See *Church History Guides: Exhibiting Church History* for more information.

Technology Specialist

Technology specialists provide support for the computers in the Church history center. Ideally, Church employees or volunteers who are already assigned to support the facility where a center is located will provide technical support. This support will ensure that policies and procedures governing Church equipment are followed. In some circumstances, Church history center staff may need to provide additional support.

Public service specialists greet and assist visitors at the center.





Records specialists process newly received records, digitize new and existing records, and care for the records being stored at the center.

Physical Space within a Church History Center

OFTEN A CHURCH HISTORY center will have five areas, as described in this section. These areas may be combined when space is limited. An enclosed room that can be used for recording oral histories or for meeting privately with people may also be desirable.

Public Area

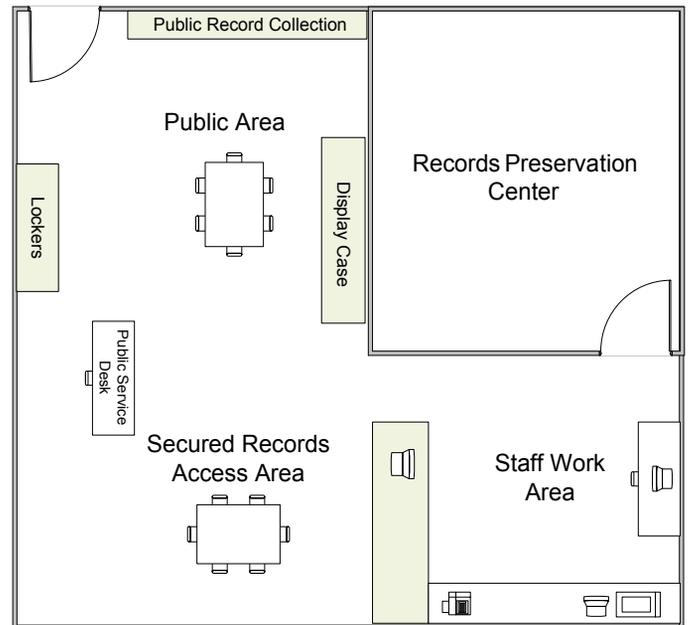
This area should include a desk or counter, called a public service desk, where staff can greet the public and offer assistance. The public area might also include one or more computers with Internet access, a collection of non-unique records for browsing, a secure display case for exhibiting records of interest, a place for visitors to store personal items, and comfortable seating.

Records Preservation Center

This area should be physically separate from the other areas and be able to be locked independently from the rest of the Church history center. Details regarding physical layout, environmental conditions, security, record care, and other topics can be found in *Church History Guide: Records Preservation Centers*.

Secured Records Access Area

This area should be differentiated from the public area so staff can easily monitor visitors who are viewing original records from the records preservation center. Large tables in an open area work best because desks or dividers limit work space and make it difficult for staff to observe visitors. When accessing original records, visitors should be allowed only loose papers for taking notes, a pencil, and a laptop. All other items, such as cell phones, bags, purses, and coats, should be kept in a separate space. Visitors should never be left unattended.



Possible layout for a Church history center.

Displays or Exhibits Area

Displays and exhibits can help people connect with Church history because many people learn best by seeing or hearing. This area can be large or small but should be well designed, engaging, and theme based. A simple, straightforward display or exhibit can be a very effective way of sharing Church history. See *Church History Guide: Exhibiting Church History* for further instructions.

Staff Work Area

This area is for staff members who are processing newly acquired records, digitizing records, or working on other projects. Instructions for performing these tasks can be found in other Church history guides. Ideally, the staff work area will be located in an area that allows staff members to watch visitors who are accessing original records. It should have adequate work space, computers, and other furnishings and equipment (see "Equipment, Furnishings, and Supplies," pages 25–26). This area should also have storage space for supplies. To safeguard the records that are being processed, the public should not enter this area.

(Left) Staff members should monitor visitors who are viewing original records.

External and internal signs should be used to identify the Church history center (for examples, see history.lds.org/adviser). The website has more information and signage downloads.

Food and drink are not allowed in any part of a Church history center because they can damage records and attract rodents and insects. Live plants can also attract insects and are not permitted. Under no circumstances should staff or visitors eat or drink while inside a Church history center. When possible, space should be provided outside of the Church history center where staff and visitors can eat and drink.

The Church history center director should work closely with the appropriate Church facilities manager to ensure that there is a safe and secure environment for visitors, staff, and the records and equipment stored at the center. Topics that should be discussed with facilities managers include responses to different emergency situations (medical, fire, earthquake, and so on), the safety and lighting of the parking lot and the facility's exterior, prevention of theft, adherence to local regulations for public buildings, and minimizing disruption to other Church business that takes place in the building. Keys to the center should be carefully controlled and monitored by the director. Records from the records preservation center should not be left unattended outside the storage area.

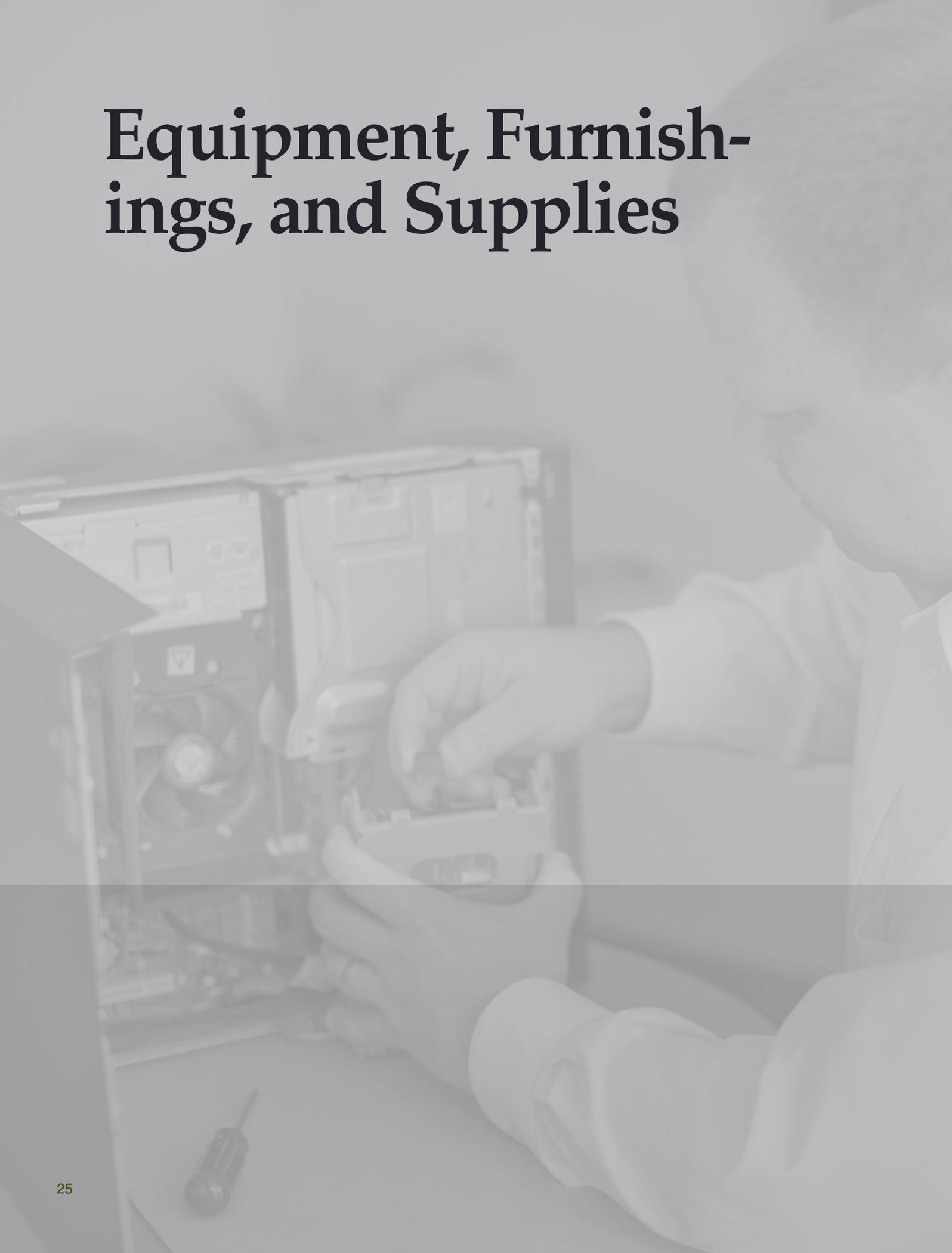


(Right) Church history center in Temple View, New Zealand.



THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
VOL. 1
VOL. 2
VOL. 3
VOL. 4
VOL. 5
VOL. 6
VOL. 7
VOL. 8
VOL. 9
VOL. 10
VOL. 11
VOL. 12
VOL. 13
VOL. 14
VOL. 15
VOL. 16
VOL. 17
VOL. 18
VOL. 19
VOL. 20
VOL. 21
VOL. 22
VOL. 23
VOL. 24
VOL. 25
VOL. 26
VOL. 27
VOL. 28
VOL. 29
VOL. 30
VOL. 31
VOL. 32
VOL. 33
VOL. 34
VOL. 35
VOL. 36
VOL. 37
VOL. 38
VOL. 39
VOL. 40
VOL. 41
VOL. 42
VOL. 43
VOL. 44
VOL. 45
VOL. 46
VOL. 47
VOL. 48
VOL. 49
VOL. 50
VOL. 51
VOL. 52
VOL. 53
VOL. 54
VOL. 55
VOL. 56
VOL. 57
VOL. 58
VOL. 59
VOL. 60
VOL. 61
VOL. 62
VOL. 63
VOL. 64
VOL. 65
VOL. 66
VOL. 67
VOL. 68
VOL. 69
VOL. 70
VOL. 71
VOL. 72
VOL. 73
VOL. 74
VOL. 75
VOL. 76
VOL. 77
VOL. 78
VOL. 79
VOL. 80
VOL. 81
VOL. 82
VOL. 83
VOL. 84
VOL. 85
VOL. 86
VOL. 87
VOL. 88
VOL. 89
VOL. 90
VOL. 91
VOL. 92
VOL. 93
VOL. 94
VOL. 95
VOL. 96
VOL. 97
VOL. 98
VOL. 99
VOL. 100

Equipment, Furnishings, and Supplies





Church history center computers are owned and operated in accordance with Church guidelines.

Equipment

Equipment needs depend on the number of visitors and the work being done at the center. Typical needs include one or more computers with Internet access and one or more digital scanners. Before purchasing any equipment, consult with your representative at the Church History Department and your area's purchasing staff.

Computers: Church history computers are owned and operated in accordance with Church guidelines. The center's technology specialist should work closely with the area's information technology staff to ensure that all Church history center computers have:

- Church-authorized virus protection installed and regularly updated.
- A safe connection to the Internet, including an approved firewall.
- Properly licensed software only.

Furnishings

Center furnishings should be similar to those found in other public Church buildings in the area. Care should be given to provide a clean, organized, and inviting environment.

Donations of Equipment or Furnishings

Anyone wishing to make a voluntary, unsolicited donation of money, equipment, or furnishings should be directed to the area controller. Do not accept these kinds of donations directly. Always work through the area controller.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS