



concordia historical institute

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RETRIEVE + RECORD + REFLECT + RECALL

“WHY SHOULD WE MICROFILM OUR CHURCH DOCUMENTS?”

I. A number of factors need to be considered when deciding whether or not to microfilm archival materials.

A. Microfilming may be done either as a means of preserving deteriorating or damaged materials or to conserve space in the archives—or both.

B. Many people consider it much easier to use hard copy than microfilm, since it is often clearer to read and easier to skim through the material.

C. The filming must be done according to careful and exacting archival standards so that it will not deteriorate, especially if the original materials are to be destroyed after filming.

D. The use of microfilm requires the purchase and maintenance of special equipment for reading and making hard copies of the film.

II. There are two basic forms in which microfilmed material can be stored and used—two basic “microforms.”

A. Roll microfilm—or what is usually meant when the term “microfilm” is used by itself—places the images of each page of material consecutively on a long strip of 35mm film rolled around a spool called a reel. This film can be up to 100 feet long. The only way to find and read a particular page is to run the film through a reader until the desired page is found.

B. Microfiche is film in which strips of images are placed in rows on a sheet (usually about 4” by 6”). A standard arrangement puts about 96 pages on each sheet, but different reduction ratios can be used to get many more pages on a single sheet. A sheet usually has an index that allows a user to move directly to a particular page in the reader much more easily than with reel film.

III. The cost of producing microfilm will vary with the company or agency that does the work, but one can generally figure the cost of filming at around \$0.03 per page or image. This will produce a negative master film. Positive copies of the film—the form that will actually be used in a reader—cost about \$30.00 per roll. Costs of duplicating a sheet of microfiche from the master sheets may run from 25 to 50 cents per sheet (96 pages). Costs may change, so check for current rates.

IV. In order to read microforms, special readers must be available.

A. A reader for both microfilm reels and microfiche that will also print paper copies much like a photocopy machine can cost as much as \$3,500—\$6,000+ and involves on-going costs for paper, toner, and other supplies just like a copier. Such machines take up table space of about 20” by 32.”

B. A universal microform reader for both film and fiche but without the printing capability will cost approximately \$500-\$1,500. They take up less table space—about 16” by 18.”

C. Readers that will handle microfiche sheet alone may be obtained for \$300-\$500 and occupy the same space as the universal readers. Readers of this type are often found in libraries or archives that have microfiche holdings.

D. Filming of records may be done by service companies located in most major cities. Large public or educational libraries often have microfilming equipment, and a small district of local church archives might be able to make arrangements to have records filmed at a lower cost through such agencies. Additionally you may contact Concordia Historical Institute to arrange filming. Again, whatever the arrangements, the most important thing is to be sure that the filming is done according to archival standards and specifications. (*See CHI Information Sheet #19A*)