

**PURPOSE**  
History & Memory  
Knowledge

We recognize the urgency for Franciscan congregations to find permanent repositories for their archives that will safeguard the community's charism and legacy for future generations.

**Services and Initiatives**

- ◆ Guidance and resources concerning archives
- ◆ Assist leadership with hiring or contracting archivists
- ◆ Needs assessment and strategic planning for members and FCA
- ◆ Assist members to prepare their archives for transfer
- ◆ Seek grants and donations to assist members and reduce costs
- ◆ Enable donor development and gift campaign to support efforts
- ◆ Initiate agreements for members
- ◆ Facilitate move of members' archives to the FCA
- ◆ Promote and increase accessibility to FCA collections, bringing forth the shared Franciscan spirit

The FCA plans to open by or before 2030. If a community has a more immediate need to transition, interim storage options are available with on-site archivist support.

**Mission:** The Franciscan Central Archive (FCA) preserves, protects, and provides access to the records of its Franciscan entities for the purposes of research and knowledge through a collaborative repository that will carry the Franciscan charism and legacy into the future.



**THE REALITY**

*The time to plan is now!*

**CARA's National Women Religious Archive Survey Report 2022:**

**Respondents that anticipate transitioning their archive to a repository most favored a charism-based archive by 42%.**

**Average Age of Individuals:**

Under 70 = 20%  
70 to 79 = 27%  
80 or older = 50%

**Size of Community:**

More than 100 = 20%  
51 to 100 = 30%  
50 or fewer = 43%

**When Communities Anticipate Transitioning Their Archive to a Permanent Repository:**

Within the year = 3%  
3-5 years = 15%  
5-10 years = 21%  
+10 years = 20%  
Unknown = 41%

In the United States, the Franciscan Federation has 48 member congregations of the Third Order Regular brothers and sisters. There are three First Order congregations (OFMs, Conventuals, and Capuchins) and multiple Second Order Poor Clare communities.

**CONNECT WITH US**

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[FranciscanCentralArchive.franciscanway.org/](https://FranciscanCentralArchive.franciscanway.org/)

*A sustainable, charism-based collaborative repository for the combined archival collections of Franciscan entities across the United States.*



**Participation** is open to Franciscan communities and organizations.

## The **Franciscan Central Archive**

will be a physical center, following national archival standards, with a reading room, exhibition space, lecture hall, and robust virtual presence. Researchers will be able to study congregational ministries, shared vocations, and Franciscan charism across the collections. The FCA will be supported by charism-based educational programs and social engagement to ensure its members' legacies are carried into the future.

The FCA recognizes the value of processing and describing collections within their communities to document the provenance and intent, thus preserving integrity prior to moving the collections. This enables efficient access to collections so that the FCA can be responsive to its members.

## **Timeline**

- 2017 ▪ Call to action
- 2018 ▪ Initiated the working group
- 2022 ▪ First Academy of American Franciscan History grant awarded
- 2023 ▪ Needs assessment and strategic planning
  - Filed for incorporation in Illinois as a religious nonprofit
- 2025 ▪ Board of Directors expands to 7 members
  - Site selected in Frankfort, IL
- 2026 ▪ Architect, owner's rep, civil engineer, and construction manager hired for design and construction
  - Capital Campaign initiated

**GOALS**  
Preserve  
Inform & Connect  
Foster Collaboration  
Engage & Inspire

**Our Story:** In 2017, Franciscan Federation President, Kathie Uhler, OSF, sent a letter to Third Order Regular USA leadership asking for discussion. This brought together a working group of archivists and leaders from interested communities to discern how best to ensure the future care of the congregations' archival collections and the Franciscan legacy they document through a charism-based collaborative. Those meetings led to the Franciscan Central Archive Initiative (FCA).

In 2023, the FCA hired archival consultant, Veronica Buchanan, with grant funding support from the Academy of American Franciscan History to perform onsite archival assessments and assist with strategic planning.

The FCA will continue to seek grant assistance. This will help provide support to prepare archival collections, project management, communications, development, and fundraising. New communities will have an opportunity to have their archive collections assessed.

The FCA will be an archive center that offers economy of scale, shared resources, professional interaction, and will be a central repository for Franciscan collections. The facility will meet professional standards for environmental control and have exhibition, meeting, and lecture spaces. It will be within reach of multiple universities and the two major airports.

The Board is pleased to announce that the FCA is purchasing land in Frankfort, Illinois, from the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart for its future archival center! 2026 will be a year of planning and start of the capital campaign. The goal will be to break ground as early as spring of 2027.

Any remaining Franciscan entities considering joining the FCA for this phase of construction need to reach out and begin conversations as soon as possible as **plans for common space and storage space will be finalized this June**. We plan to open our archival center **by or before 2030**.

### **Franciscan Central Archive Members:**

- ◆ Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity:
  - ◇ Holy Name Province, Stella Niagara, NY
  - ◇ St. Francis Province, Redwood City, CA
  - ◇ Sacred Heart Province, Denver, CO
- ◆ Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY
- ◆ Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, MN
- ◆ Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, WI
- ◆ Wheaton Franciscan Sisters, Wheaton, IL
- ◆ Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, IL
- ◆ Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, WI
- ◆ Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, Lemont, IL
- ◆ School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King, Lemont, IL
- ◆ Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, Cincinnati, OH
- ◆ Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, Hamburg, NY
- ◆ Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, Springfield, IL

## **Next Steps**

- ◆ Provide individual communities archival support defined by the needs assessment and with assistance from grant funding:
  - ◇ Collection preservation and supplies
  - ◇ Special projects
  - ◇ Contract archivist(s) or intern(s)
  - ◇ Storage needs
- ◆ Assess new members' archives
- ◆ Prepare members' archives to move their archival collections
- ◆ Meet members' needs and schedules for moving their archives
- ◆ Development and capital campaign with unified communications strategy
- ◆ Legacy planning to include an endowment fund such as a trust

**Funding** is dependent upon grants, donations, participating members, and fundraising. We need your help to see the FCA through the next steps.

## **How to support:**

- ◆ **Volunteer:** We are seeking assistance with grant writing, development, and fundraising.
- ◆ **Donations and Planned Giving:** We welcome support for the legacy of our communities and Franciscan charism through the preservation of our archival collections.

## **Partnerships and Affiliations**

- ◆ Academy of American Franciscan History
- ◆ Franciscan Federation
- ◆ Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition
- ◆ Preservation Chicago
- ◆ Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious

- May 27, 2026-

**VALUES**  
Responsible Stewardship  
Integrity & Accountability  
Professional Service  
Sustainability