



*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 (FCA)** will be a physical and virtual center supported by educational programs and social engagement.

**Professional Archivists** will maintain physical and intellectual control, ensure integrity, and make records accessible following national standards, defined by the Society of American Archivists.

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.

#### **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 seven members  
Site selected in Frankfort, IL
- 2026: Architect, owner's rep, civil engineer, construction manager, and structural engine hired for design and construction  
Capital Campaign Initiated

#### **Services and Initiatives**

- ◆ Guidance and resources concerning archives
- ◆ Assist leadership with hiring or contracting archivists
- ◆ Needs assessment and strategic planning

#### **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 communications strategy
- ◆ Legacy planning to include an endowment fund such as a trust

**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.

**PURPOSE**  
History & Memory  
Knowledge

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

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

**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% "very" desirable.

**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%

**Our Story:** 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. In 2017, Franciscan Federation President, Kathie Uhler, OSF, sent a letter to Third Order Regular USA leadership asking for discussion. Those meetings led to the Franciscan Central Archive Initiative.

In 2023, the FCA hired an archival consultant, Veronica Buchanan, with grant funding support from the Academy of American Franciscan History. She has performed onsite archival assessments and assisted with strategic planning. The organizational structure continues to expand with seven board of directors, council of partners, and five committees. The FCA has fourteen communities:

- ◆ 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

The FCA is seeking additional grants to help carry out recommendations. This will include providing communities support to prepare their archival collections to move including physical processing, archival housing, and intellectual control through inventories and basic collection summaries. We will be seeking grants to assist project management, communications, development, and fundraising.

The FCA will be an archive center that offers economy of scale and shared resources so that it can serve as central repository to advocate for its Franciscan collections. The facility will meet professional standards for environmental control and have exhibition, meeting, and lecture spaces. Researchers will be able to study ministries, shared vocations, and the charism across collections. Educational and social programs will ensure its members' legacy are carried into the future and celebrate the Franciscan charism.

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! It is within reach of multiple universities and the two major airports. 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 June 2026**. We plan to open our archival center **by or before 2030**.

### 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
- ◆ Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious

- May 27, 2026 -

### CONNECT WITH US

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