CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

"People must know the past to understand the present and to face the future"¹. The self-evident truth is that, what a compass is to a navigator, saving of the past memory is to a society. As the sailor is lost without a compass, an individual, a group, a society which has no memory, wanders aimlessly. Archives are deeds, recorded actions and transactions of the past, authentic and reliable proofs or evidence of things done or planned, of thoughts and emotions experienced and expressed, of debates raging in society². They link facts and people who act and interact in creating the families, the social organisations, institutions, Governments, the churches, the cities and the country. They bear witness to the past which need to be preserved for posterity. Hence, the documents preserved in the archives of the Church represents an immense and precious heritage.

The oldest type of materials making up the archival collection are found in the archives of the Bishops (Diocese) and Parish (individual church) records. The archives of the monasteries of various traditions are in many cases significant because of the age and importance of the documents collected. Besides these, the religious congregations of different nature, which are instituted, have abundant documentation, which is an enrichment to the
archives collections. Apart from these, the archives of the cathedral, seminaries, ecclesiastical universities, study centers, hospitals and educational institutions also have archives which preserve their respective documents. It is truly impossible to describe church archives since, while observing the canonical regulations, they are autonomous in their management and diverse in their organisation because they reflect every institution which has been founded in the course of the bi-millennial history of the Church.

Church archives while preserving the unique and spontaneous documentation produced by persons and events, cultivate the memory of the life of the Church and manifest the sense of Tradition. In fact, the information stored in archive collections enables the reconstruction of the history of the Church.

These archival collections have the history of the activities of the Bishops and other church personnel in their respective institutions and organisations. Parish (individual church) records register the celebration of sacraments (Baptism, Marriage) and make note of the deceased. The papers regarding administration of church goods and the economic activity of institutions provide important source of information. The documents collected in an archive underline the religious, cultural, and charitable activity of the many institutions within the Church. Thus, Church archives deserve attention both for their historical as well as for their spiritual meaning.
Christian institutions have encompassed through their activity the characteristics and ways of diverse cultures and historical realities and, at the same time, they have become an important cultural agency. The historical memory constitutes an integral part of every community. The knowledge of all that which witnesses the succession of generations, their know-how and their actions, creates a sense of continuity between the past and present. Therefore, if the documents are known and communicated, archives can become useful instruments for enlightening present actions because through memory of the facts, tradition becomes more concrete.

An institution which forgets its own past, will hardly be able to design its function among men in any social, cultural, or religious context. In this sense, archives, while preserving the witnesses to historical activities, have their own intrinsic vitality and validity. They contribute efficiently towards the growth of a sense of belonging in every generation.

1.2 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Information Management is the application of management principles to the acquisition, organisation, control, dissemination and use of information relevant to the effective operation of organisation of all kinds. Information here refers to all types of information of value, whether having their origin inside and/or outside the organisation. Information Management deals with values, quality, ownership, use and security of information in the context of organisational performance. Information Management function incorporates a
wide range of disparate activities, including records management (Archives), library management, computer management, printing and reprography, microforms and word processing centres. Whatever it is, Information Management is one of the buzz terms of the present age of librarianship / information science / archives and record management. It is a term that has come to significance as the consequence of the greatly increased interest in Information Technology.

**Components of Information Management:**

i. Information resources including the identification, assessment and use of both internal and external resources.

ii. Technology, covering methods of inputting, storing, retrieving and distributing information on both local and remote basis.

iii. Management, involving strategic and business planning, human resource management, interpersonal communication, accounting, budgeting and marketing.

**Dimensions of Information Management**

i. Managing the information process.

ii. Managing the data (information) resources of the organisation.

It is inferred that Information Management covers the whole spectrum of information handling activities, technology and its role in information handling as well as various management activities practised in institutions.
1.3 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

In information theory, a document consists of a combination of texts representing a message and a medium. In archival theory there is an additional element, which has been labelled 'recordness'. This means that records and archives, besides being documents in the general sense, also have a special character that arises from their context.

An additional distinctive feature of archives, different from many other aspects of information management, is that what are referred to generally may be groups, subgroups, series, items or pieces: that is to say, aggregate archival entities have to be treated as units according to context.

Archives has more freedom to establish information-directed goals. The specific programmes and objectives of archives services in the field of acquisition are information directed. Archives organise the representations into finding aids system. These finding aids perform a function similar to that of indexing, cataloguing and classification in library systems. Archival description can be regarded, like cataloguing, as a specialised case of indexing and that archival description can be sorted into an order or orders, dictated by classification. Many archival projects are aimed at discovering and listing materials arising from a defined set of sources, but not at acquiring them. Such surveys can build up a data bank of information about the materials they find, and can perhaps do something to encourage their deposit in appropriate repositories.
1.4 PROPOSED RESEARCH

Church archives are as old as the organisation of the earliest churches, and have produced records that required preservation and storage. In large cities that were seats of metropolitans, as well as in the major cities of the imperial dioceses, ecclesiastical archives were most probably modeled on the parallel archival practices of the Roman Empire. In the Middle ages, Episcopal Sees, collegiate and Cathedral chapters, and Monasteries continued to be important archival centres, preserving not only records of their own land holdings, contracts, and so on, but also important documents that lay officials might want to deposit there.

At the beginning of the modern era, the Council of Trent promulgated brief regulations on the preservation of important documents. Subsequently Popes Sixtus V (who planned a Central Roman Archives and the Notarial Archives for the States of the Church), Clement VIII, and Paul V initiated important archives reforms. Consequently, Pope Benedict XIII issued his constitution on Italian ecclesiastical archives “Maxima Vigilantia”, dated June 14, 1727 entitled: “A constitution on archives to be erected in Italy for the preservation of legal papers and documents pertaining to cathedral churches both collegiate and non-collegiate, to seminaries, monasteries of both men and women, guilds, confraternities, hospitals and to all other pious institutions legally instituted. To this is added, an instruction in Italian concerning the documents which are to be preserved therein”. Maxima Vigilantia consists of 34 chapters in Latin plus 7 chapters of instructions in Italian. To a large extent
it is upon this constitution that the archival regulations of modern Canon Law (CIC cc 486-491) are based. They state that each diocese must have an archive and describe how its inventory must be made. They treat of the recovery of lost archival holdings, of precautions against loss of archival documents through loans, and of the manner in which such materials should be used. Beyond this, every Bishop is to have secret archives or at least a secret safe under double lock. A duplicate of the inventory of each ecclesiastical archive in the diocese is to be deposited in the episcopal archives\textsuperscript{10}.

The responsibility for documentary material is assigned primarily to individual church entities. This makes it necessary to establish suitable criteria \textit{in loco} regarding the set-up and good management of historic archives, the protection and conservation of the secret archives, the correct organisation of archives for current affairs, and adequate computerisation of data, the employment of qualified personnel and the assistance of technical experts, the circulation of information among various archive collections, the participation in national and international Archive Associations, the promotion of the availability of this material for consultation and research\textsuperscript{11}.

Therefore it is important to note that archives are created in the course of discharging duties of the church. The primary concern of the Church Archives is certainly to preserve such precious heritage with care in order that it may be handed down to future generations. The distinction of the material gathered demonstrates the capillary activity of the Church Community.
It appears that while archives are being stored in various dioceses/churches more for preservation of the records rather than for use of the same. In other words, the emphasis seems to be on preservation with little attention being given to the organisation of archives to facilitate retrieval and dissemination to those interested in information stored in the archives.

The arrangement of archives is an essential operation in the process of managing the information contained in them. Arrangement is an important step in the conservation of the materials, governing their disposition, housing in the repository and eventually exploitation of the archival reference and research. Information Management aims to improve the effectiveness of organisation by managing the information as a resource providing access to relevant information in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Hence, it was decided to undertake a study on “Information Management of Church Archives in India” to determine the present state of archival organisation and measures to be taken to ensure their fruitful use. A study of this magnitude has not been attempted so far in India.

1.5 OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to study Information Management of Church Archives in India.

The specific objectives include:

i. To prepare the State-of-the-Art report on Information Management of Church Archives

ii. To trace the history of Church Archives in India
iii. To survey and analyse the present state of Church Archives in India

iv. To undertake a detailed study of an ancient Archives in South India viz., Archives of Archdiocese of Madras – Mylapore

v. To design and develop a database for Church Archival Materials

vi. To suggest ways and means to improve the quality of Church Archives and its services

1.6 HYPOTHESES

The following are the hypotheses formulated for the study:

i. The post-independence era in India has seen the establishment of more number of Archdioceses / Dioceses.

ii. The present state of Church Archives with regard to the Information Management is far from satisfactory

iii. There exists difficulties in the maintenance of Church Archives in India due to lack of trained man power and financial resources

iv. The traditional methods of preservation and conservation are adopted in the management of Church Archives

v. There exists Bibliographic Records for archival materials in Church Archives

vi. There is an ample scope for the application of Information Technology (IT) for the design and development of databases for Church Archival Materials
1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Following are the limitations of the study:

i. The study was confined to Catholic Archdioceses / Dioceses in India only

ii. The study excludes the archives of Catholic Religious Congregations and individual Churches (Parishes) in India

iii. The documents in the Archives of Archdiocese of Madras - Mylapore selected for the case study were mostly in foreign languages, namely French, Latin and Portuguese, and this limited the access to the detailed contents of the documents for the compilation of the list of 18th and 19th century archival materials

1.8 METHODOLOGY

The steps adopted in methodology includes:

- Data Collection
- Data Analysis

1.8.1 Data Collection

Conducting a survey is the primary task in any research work. As a prelude to the conducting a survey for this study, the investigator visited National Archives of India, National Archives of Sri Lanka, various State Archives in India, Church Archives and Historical Research Centres in India and collected primary data.
Personal interviews were held with the officials of National Archives of India and Sri Lanka; the various State archives in India; Indian Council of Historical Research. Xavier Centre of Historical Research; Bishops, Priests and Persons in-charge of Church Archives on various aspects of the management of Archives.

Data was also collected from selected Church archives in England, France, Germany, USA and Vatican city through e-mail. The investigator also visited a number of relevant websites on Internet.

In order to collect data on the current status of the Church Archives in India a Questionnaire (APPENDIX C) was prepared. The Catholic Church in India comprises of one hundred and thirty nine Archdioceses / Dioceses. Each of these is required by Canon Law to maintain Archives. The Church Archives are situated in the headquarters of each Archdiocese / Diocese. Questionnaire was administered to all the one hundred and thirty nine Archdioceses / Dioceses listed in the Catholic Directory of India 1998.

The questionnaire consisted of seven sections detailed here under:

Section I : General information of the Archives
Section II : Details of Archival holdings
Section III : Catalogue / List of records
Section IV : Treatment of materials - Preservation Techniques
Section V : Equipments
Section VI : Computers and Automation
Section VII : Barriers and Suggestions
The responses were received from seventy four Archdioceses / Dioceses; which represents fifty three per cent, which is relatively good for a study of this nature. Further, it was also thought to pursue a case study on an ancient Archives of Archdiocese of Madras – Mylapore in the state of Tamil Nadu, a premier State in South India.

1.8.2 Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaire and interview schedule has been analysed. For this purpose, SPSS software package has been used for the statistical analysis such as, Frequency distribution, Percentage analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Cluster Analysis depending on the nature of data collected from the respondents. Further, the analysis of data has been presented in the form of tables, supplemented by Bar diagrams, Pie diagrams and Dendrograms.

1.9 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1.9.1 Findings

The following are the major findings:

1. While specific studies have been taken up in areas such as Management, Preservation and Automation of Archives, no study in the field of Church Archives in India has been undertaken.

2. 72 (97.2%) Dioceses are not providing funds to maintain the Archives.
3. There exist poor infrastructure facilities in the areas of Man power, Building, Furniture and Equipments, Preservation and Financial resources in the Archdiocese of Madras – Mylapore.

4. Different types of Sources of Information are maintained. A major portion of the collection is of Primary nature, such as, Baptism and Marriage Registers, Burial records, Correspondence, Account Books, Property Deeds etc.

5. While a major portion of the collection is reported to be in good condition, it has been observed that in most of the cases proper care and maintenance activities are not undertaken regularly.

6. General public do not have access to the Church archival materials.

7. It is observed that none of the Archives use latest methods of preservation and conservation. Further, there is an evidence of following traditional methods of preservation. In other words, there is lack of minimum preservation techniques being adopted in the Archives under study.

8. There exists a significant positive correlation between the size of the Archives, condition of records and maintenance of the Archives.

9. While the size of the Archives and maintenance of Archives do differ significantly in relation to the year of establishment of the Diocese, the
condition of Archives do not differ significantly by the year of establishment of the Diocese.

10. Eleven barriers have been identified in the maintenance of Church Archives. Lack of Information Technology (IT) applications, lack of Guidelines and lack of Coordination among the Church Archives are the prominent barriers.

1.9.2 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of this study:

1. There is an urgent need to draft a National Church Archival Policy on the lines of NAPLIS (National Policy on Library and Information System) to augment the Church Archival Resources.

2. Considering the significance of Archival Management, it is recommended that an Archival Mission Statement be formulated by the individual Diocesan Archives.

3. Realising that the present Archives do not have proper infrastructural facilities, it is recommended to have better Building and other Physical Facilities, Man Power, Finance and Processing Facilities.

4. In order to preserve the archival materials, it is recommended that the criteria established by the best archival tradition and applied technology be followed (Computerised catalogue programmes, microfilming, digitisation, etc.).
5. Realising the importance of standards and maintenance of uniformity, in bibliographic records, it is recommended that efforts to be undertaken to design and develop an appropriate software package for the creation of machine readable bibliographic databases.

6. Realising and recognising that Church Archives do not have adequate information and financial resources, it is recommended that a Networking Mechanism be established among all Church Archives in India.

1.10 CONSPECTUS

The thesis has been presented in seven chapters.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

It highlights the importance of Information Management and Archives, proposed research, objectives, hypotheses, limitations and methodology and major findings and recommendations.

Chapter 2: ARCHIVES IN INDIA – HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It deals with the historical perspective of the Church Archives in India.

Chapter 3: ARCHIVES – A STATE-OF-THE-ART REPORT

It presents a review of literature on Information Management of Church Archives, Preservation techniques and IT applications.
Chapter 4: SURVEY, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

It discusses the results of the analysis of the data collected through questionnaire from various Church Archives in India. In addition to simple statistical tools, advanced techniques such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Cluster Analysis have also been employed to analyse the data.

Chapter 5: CASE STUDY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARCHIVES OF MADRAS – MYLAPORE

It deals with a case study of the Church Archives of Archdiocese of Madras – Mylapore. Further, an attempt has been made to microfilm the Genealogical records followed by listing the archival materials belonging to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries available in this archives.

Chapter 6: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF DATABASE FOR CHURCH ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

It deals with the Design and Development of Database for Church Archival Materials.

Chapter 7: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It gives the findings, byproducts and recommendations based on the study and identifies the areas for further research.

The thesis includes a list of bibliographic references and appendices.
REFERENCES


2. ibid. p. 4.


6. ibid. pp. 4-7.


8. ibid. p. 183.


