

Introduction to the ASTR Accreditation Program

Goal

Accreditation is a quality assurance process through which a recordkeeping facility of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can demonstrate that it meets the minimum recordkeeping standards and guidelines recommended by the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR). ASTR is committed to improving the quality of records management in Adventist Church organizations worldwide. Implementing and supporting an effective recordkeeping accreditation program within these organizations will provide a vital tool for quality on-site records management. Furthermore, once accredited, with its proficiency certified, records centers, archives, or libraries will be better placed to ensure the deposit of current records from all entities within an organization, and the transfer of historic records from administrative headquarters for long-term preservation.

Background

The General Conference Archives, part of ASTR, serves as archives and records center for the General Conference headquarters. In addition, it supports the world of recordkeeping in the 13 world divisions of the General Conference and has been mandated by the world Church to coordinate, supervise, and provide quality control to denominational archives, records centers, and research centers around the world. Deriving its authority from General Conference Working Policy (BA 70 – Retention & Safeguarding of Records) and Executive Committee actions, ASTR has a track record of visiting division headquarters, providing counsel, training seminars, and records-management consultancy to support division efforts in establishing and maintaining records-management programs. In a desire to develop this support further, and to provide benchmarks for records-management at all levels, ASTR has developed this Accreditation Program.

Why Have an Accreditation Program

The task of accreditation is based on the philosophy that each denominational entity, operated in the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, assumes the dual responsibility of fulfilling the expectations of its constituency and of supporting the Church's mission. Accreditation of an institution by ASTR signifies that the institution has a purpose appropriate to service the recordkeeping needs of those in its constituency and has the resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish the institution's goals.

Accreditation plays a significant role in fostering confidence in the recordkeeping of the Church and its various entities. Accreditation serves to maintain minimum standards, enhance institutional effectiveness, and provide inter-institutional recognition.

Benefits of an Accreditation Program

- 1) ***Accreditation optimizes record content, record quality and record accessibility.*** The foremost benefit is that your record holdings are now systematically maintained in a manner consistent not just with ASTR's holdings and recommendations, but in a manner that best facilitates your staff and external records researchers accessing those records. Your records are now kept in a systematic manner that best ensures that these records are accessible each and every time they are needed.
- 2) ***Accreditation improves recordkeeping processes while enhancing the skills and knowledge of your staff.*** With your records maintained in accordance with ASTR recommendations, all of your records staff members are now trained to perform the same activities each and every time. This unanimity in performance ensures that your department's record keeping is professionally organized and operated.

- 3) ***Accreditation reflects achievement and facilitates the best way to ensure maintaining the unique history and heritage that those records comprise.*** Organizing and maintaining your holdings in a manner consistent with accreditation standards evidences that you have strived to reach a level of achievement commensurate with only the best recordkeeping centers within the world church. It evidences that you were committed to, and achieved, a measure of excellence.
- 4) ***Accreditation demonstrates your desire for excellence in the recordkeeping profession.*** Your attainment of accreditation reflects the fact that you are committed to a recordkeeping performance that is globally recognized by ASTR. It signifies that you want the very best in your recordkeeping and practices and have done what is necessary to earn that hallmark.
- 5) ***Accreditation ensures greater professional recognition from peer facilities while promoting peer efforts to also gain accreditation.*** Your path to accreditation encourages a cycle towards recordkeeping excellence. As Church recordkeeping facilities around the world become aware of the accreditation process, they will recognize the professional achievement involved in attaining accreditation. As recordkeeping facilities gain accreditation, the more that other recordkeeping facilities become aware of the process. The more that other recordkeeping facilities become aware of the process and peer recognition of that achievement, the more that recordkeeping facilities will want to gain accreditation.

Standards

The Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) holds to the principle that denominational accreditation is not dependent upon regional, state, or national requirements. Nevertheless, many of the criteria established by ASTR coincide with international archives and records management standards.

The accrediting standards used by the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research comprise the criteria for accreditation. These criteria are subject to periodic evaluation and provide consistent guidelines for the evaluation of archives and records centers.

Levels of Accreditation

ASTR currently recognizes four (4) levels of accreditation:

- 1) **Emerging** – The entry level for records-management accreditation, this is for records centers and archives that still have some way to go towards achieving officially approved status, but that have made steps towards the higher standards. Accreditation allows progress to be recognized, while the accreditation process will help “Emerging” archives and records centers in identifying areas for improvement. It is intended to be transitional, an intermediate step between no accreditation and “Recognized”.
- 2) **Recognized** – The next level of recordkeeping accreditation, it reflects implementation of the basic foundations of ASTR’s recommended protocols for quality recordkeeping. We encourage efforts to subsequently strive towards the second level of accreditation wherever appropriate and possible.
- 3) **Approved** – The highest level of recordkeeping accreditation, it signifies the record keeping entity’s desire to maintain and operate records in the best possible manner.
- 4) **Center of Excellence** – The gold standard for those entities privileged to operate both a records center and an archives. It signifies that they have achieved ASTR’s highest accreditation standard. It is a hallmark of quality recordkeeping reflecting the most committed and the very best recordkeeping entities.