

NETnews

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NETWORK

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

The Network will be having a mending workshop on Tuesday Nov. 6th in the morning at the Kirkwood Public Library. This will be a hands on repair session on repairing materials that suffer from frequent usage. This will not be for the preservation of archival materials. Complete information and registration materials will be included in the next Netnews.

The LSTA training workshops we are co-sponsoring will feature **New Immigrants** in September 2001 and **Youth Services** in October 2001.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

WELCOME

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Special Collections Creates Guide to Archdiocesan Records

By Christine Human Hughes & Ruth Ann Abels Hager

Hold the presses! Two years of work by the Special Collections Department will culminate in the publishing of the 348-page tome, *Guide to St. Louis Catholic Archdiocesan Parish Records*, by the Friends of St. Louis County Library. Delivery of the finished book is anticipated by May 30th.

The book started as a basic finding aid to help patrons use the 242 microfilms that comprise *St. Louis Archdiocesan Parish Records*, a set that was purchased in 1996. Historically, the St. Louis area has had a proportionately large Catholic population, so a high percentage of Special Collections patrons need these records. Microfilms from this set have been used 12,700 times in 1999 and 2000, making it one of the department's most heavily used film sets. The finding aid evolved as staff added charts to further help patrons. It was later expanded to include books, fiche, and other microfilm sets. Because of its constant use, permission was received to publish the finding aid as a book. The Friends of St. Louis County Library paid the publishing costs, which are expected to be regained from sale of the book.

Catholic research can be very difficult because the records that can be the mother lode for genealogists and family historians were kept at the parish level. Therefore, the researcher must determine the parish their ancestor attended-not always an easy task. With the help of this *Guide*, the Catholic parish records are now realistically accessible to researchers who have only limited information about their Catholic ancestors in the St. Louis area.

The *Guide* lists St. Louis Archdiocesan parish records and related Catholic sources that Special Collections has available in microfilm, microfiche, and printed format. It is arranged in alphabetical order by parish name, followed by several useful appendices listing parishes geographically by county and city, by nationality, and by date of origin. It also includes information gleaned from other sources about the founding of the parishes, the ethnic origin of the early parishioners, and availability of parish histories in the department.

The St. Louis area has a rich Catholic history, stemming back to its French heritage in the 1700s. St. Louis was often described as "the Rome of the West" because of its heavy Catholic population. Geographically, the Archdiocese of St. Louis covers the

city and county of St. Louis and all or parts of the following nine surrounding Missouri counties: Franklin, Lincoln, Jefferson, Perry, St. Charles, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, Warren, and Washington.

Of all the sources included in the *Guide*, the most extensive is the *St. Louis Archdiocesan Parish Records*. The microfilms in this set contain images of almost 2,500 volumes of original handwritten church records for approximately 300 parishes and missions. The contents of these films vary immensely by individual parish. This set covers 217 years of St. Louis area history as the earliest noted records are from 1766 and some records are as recent as 1993. It is interesting that few of the older records are in English. Most are in Latin but can be fairly easily translated and other records vary according to nationality, for example: German, French, Czech, Polish, Italian, Slovak, or Croatian.

The most common Catholic Church records usually are baptism and marriage, which provide birth and wedding dates. The Catholic Church records may also contain first communion, confirmation, and with less consistency, death. Special Collections does have interment records for the major Catholic cemeteries in the St. Louis area on microfiche.

Producing the *Guide* also involved the unflagging cooperation and assistance of the St. Louis Archdiocesan Archives, specifically Assistant Archivist Sr. Teresa Maria Eagan, C.S.J., Mrs. Elaine Snyder, and Archivist Mr. Robert Fahey, without whose help the project would have been much more difficult. Mr. John Waide, Archivist at St. Louis University Pius XII Memorial Library Rare Book Room, also offered his knowledge and assistance in adding to this collection.

With the publication of *Guide to St. Louis Catholic Archdiocesan Parish Records*, St. Louis County Library has simplified and clarified information needed to carry out research regarding Catholic ancestors in the St. Louis area. Hopefully, it will enable more researchers to discover the wealth of genealogical information to be found in these church records.

Note: Special Collections is continually expanding its collection of microfilmed historical church records and is developing finding aids for its Lutheran set and for its Evangelical and United Church of Christ set. Some finding aids are available on the SC web site at www.slcl.lib.mo.us/slcl/sc/sc-findaid.htm#church.]

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REMINDER...

...remember to pay your dues

...remember to complete your changes for the 2001 Directory of Libraries in the St. Louis Area

...remember to order a directory if you wish to purchase a copy

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NETnews is published eight times a year by the St. Louis Regional Library Network to report on Network activities, meetings, and items of interest to the membership and the wider library community.

News, reviews and comments are welcome. Send information to B. Christiansen, 9425 Big Bend, St. Louis, Mo 63119.

A copy of Netnews is sent to each member. Nonmember subscriptions are \$30/year.