



Frequently Asked Questions

Submitting an Annual History

1. Why are we asked to submit an annual history?

In 1831 John Whitmer, the first Church Historian, was commanded to make “a history of all the important things” concerning the Church. As part of that history, the Lord’s “servants who are abroad in the earth . . . send forth the accounts of their stewardships” (D&C 69:3, 5). Annual histories help the Church Historian fulfill that responsibility today. In addition, creating and compiling an annual history brings members closer to Christ by preserving and sharing experiences of how God is working in members’ lives and in His kingdom.

2. Who is responsible for the annual history?

The annual history is the responsibility of the stake or district president, although he may delegate the task of completing a meaningful and accurate history to a stake or district clerk. Bishops and branch presidents have a responsibility to see that a ward or branch history is compiled and submitted to the stake president for inclusion in the stake annual history.

3. Do we need a submission folder for the annual history?

Wards and branches submit their unit annual histories to the stake, district, or mission and are not required to use any specific folder or form. Stakes, districts, and missions submit their annual histories using an annual history submission folder.

4. How do we obtain a submission folder?

Submission folders can be printed from <http://www.lds.org/AnnualHistory>. Folders can also be ordered from Church Distribution Services (item number 32299 for stakes and districts and item number 32304 for missions).

5. Where do we send the annual history?

Wards and branches submit their histories to their stake, district, or mission. Outside the United States and Canada, stake, district, and mission annual histories should be sent to the area administrative office. Stakes, districts, and missions inside the United States and Canada should send their annual histories to the archives of the Family and Church History Department.

Church Archives
Annual History
50 E North Temple St. Rm. 227E
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3420

6. When is the submission deadline? Is it acceptable to submit the annual history late?

Wards and branches should have their portion of the annual history submitted to the stake or district by January 15. Stakes and districts should compile the ward and branch histories and submit the final product to the Church Archives by January 31 (see page 5).

Late submissions will be accepted; however, because the compilation of the annual history should occur throughout the year, it is best to finalize an annual history for a past year as early as possible in order to concentrate on the current year.

7. Should we submit the original or a photocopy of the annual history? Should we keep a copy of the report in our stake?

Submit the original annual history to the Church Archives. A copy of the report may be kept in the wards, branches, stakes, or districts if the bishopric or presidency feels that it is necessary.

8. What should I do with old annual histories in the clerk's office? How long should we keep old histories before throwing them away?

If you find old annual histories, you may contact the Family and Church History Department at churchhistorylibrary@ldschurch.org or 1-801-240-2272 or 1-800-453-3860 ext. 2-2272 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) to make sure reports from those years have been received. Extra copies of the annual history may be kept in wards and stakes for as long as bishoprics or presidencies feel the histories are useful.

Compiling an Annual History

9. What type of information should be included in an annual history?

An annual history includes a narrative summary of the work of the Church, accounts of the faith of the members in a stake or district, and the Officer Sustained forms from each ward and stake conference held during the year.

The narrative portion should include an accurate and meaningful account of the challenges, achievements, important events, and meetings in each ward or branch and stake or district during a given year. It might include goals, activities, special programs or recognitions, service projects, faith-promoting experiences, missionary efforts, home teaching and visiting teaching experiences, activation efforts, family history work, temple work, or members' responses to natural disasters or other community challenges.

Those compiling the annual history may draw from notes, reports, or minutes from meetings, interviews with leaders and Church members, reports from quorums and auxiliaries, personal journals, correspondence, photographs, and newspaper articles.

An annual history should not include minutes from presidency or bishopric meetings, mentions of Church discipline, financial information, names of members receiving welfare assistance, or ward directories and newsletters that include private information about members, such as birth years, street addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

For more information see the Quick Help on page 6. (See also www.lds.org/AnnualHistory.)

10. What do I do if I have been called to produce the annual history at the end of the year?

Do the best you can. If no records have been kept by your predecessor or priesthood leaders, you may want to conduct interviews with those who can give you information relating to your unit's history. You may also want to ask auxiliary leaders or secretaries to provide you with short summaries from their memories. As you compile and submit this kind of history, you may want to include a note to the future users of your history that you did your work as best you could at the last minute. Learn from this experience and begin to compile the next year's history in January.

11. What if some people do not respond to my requests for information that I would like to include in the annual history?

You will have to settle for an incomplete history if you cannot get people to provide you with information. Do the best you can. You may want to conduct short interviews and transcribe your notes. Don't give up. It may take a few years to get people accustomed to submitting historical narratives.

12. What if my Church unit has not submitted an annual history for a long time?

There is not much you can do about the lack of submission in the past. We suggest that you start from the time when you were called and keep the history current. As you gather information, you may come across items that would be useful for a previous year's history. If you wish, you may compile them into an annual history for a previous year and submit it to the Church Archives or you may include the information in your current history with a cover note to indicate that it is included. However, you should make this year's history your priority.

13. Is there any training available to help us know how to compile an annual history?

A training presentation, "Preparing Stake and Ward Histories," is available at <http://www.lds.org/AnnualHistory>.

14. Should I ask for financial support to produce an annual history?

There may be some expenses incurred in producing an annual history, but costs should be kept at a minimum. Good quality paper, a few photographs (clearly labeled), and photocopying or printing costs should be your only expenses. Consult your priesthood leader if you need a small budget to help you fulfill your assignment.

15. What formats are acceptable?

Annual histories should be submitted on paper. An additional electronic copy may be included, but it should not be the only format submitted. Electronic files included in the annual history should be in nonproprietary formats, such as PDF, TIF, JPEG, MP3, and so on.

Annual histories should not include crafts, trophies, or other objects that will not fit in a file folder. Annual histories should not be put into binders or page protectors or have pages stapled together. It is best to submit loose pages gathered into the submission folder.

16. How should photographs be handled?

Photographs should be well identified with the names of those included, a description of the event, dates, and locations. Write on the back of the photograph with a soft pencil. Do not use a ballpoint pen. Photographs should not be mounted or have any plastic covering. Simply place them in an envelope and place the envelope in the folder with the history.

Each photograph should be accompanied by a signed release form. Photographic release forms can be obtained from the Intellectual Property Office:

E-mail

cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org

Telephone

1-801-240-3959 or 1-800-453-3860 ext. 2-3959 (toll-free in the United States and Canada)

and pressing 0 to talk to a live representative

17. How should newspaper clippings be handled?

Newspaper clippings deteriorate quickly. It is best to photocopy the article onto acid-free paper and submit the copy with the annual history. Be sure to include with the photocopy the name and date of the newspaper and the page number of the page on which the article appears.

18. Should we include ward newsletters and directories?

Ward or branch directories should not be included with the annual history. Ward or branch newsletters should not be included if they include personal information about members, such as birth years, addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses. Otherwise, newsletters should be included if they contain historical information.

19. How long should the annual history be?

An annual history should be a meaningful record of the challenges, achievements, events, and meetings of wards, branches, stakes, and districts for a given year, so it may be as long as needed to make the history meaningful and inclusive. If the finished annual history does not fit in the submission folder, use the folder as a cover sheet.

Accessing an Annual History

20. What happens after my annual history is submitted to the Church Archives?

Upon arriving at the Church Archives, annual histories are logged into a tracking system. The histories are placed in folders and housed with all previously received histories from your stake, district, or mission.

21. How will my annual history be used?

Annual histories are a good source of information for people doing personal research, family history, or local Church history. Church leaders and headquarters personnel also use the annual histories.

22. How can I have access to the annual histories from my Church unit?

Unit annual histories are available for research in the Church History Library, which is located in the east wing of the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City, Utah. The library is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We welcome unit history specialists to look at past submissions. Furthermore, we welcome Church members to use these histories as they write their personal or unit histories. You may contact the Church History Library by e-mail at churchhistorylibrary@ldschurch.org or by telephone at 1-801-240-2272 or 1-800-453-3860 ext. 2-2272 (toll-free in the United States and Canada).

23. Can you tell me what annual histories have been received in the past from my unit?

The Church History Library can report which annual histories have been received from stakes and districts. The Customer Service call center can be reached at 1-801-240-2272 or 1-800-453-3860 ext. 2-2272 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) or churchhistorylibrary@ldschurch.org.

Instructions for Preparing the Annual History

The word *stake* also refers to district, *ward* also refers to branch, and *bishop* also refers to branch president.

Purpose

The annual history, comprised of stake and ward histories, helps fulfill the Lord's charge to "continue in writing and making a history of all the important things . . . concerning my church. . . . And also, my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships" (D&C 69:3, 5).

Responsibility

The stake president is responsible to see that a meaningful and accurate annual history is submitted each year.

Preparing the Annual History

Each stake and ward history has two parts:

1. A narrative summary of the work of the Church and faith of the members in the geographical area of the stake or ward. This summary includes challenges, achievements, and important events and meetings. Lists of ordinances performed and changes in officers may also be included. Stake

and ward clerks should include faith-promoting events taking place in the lives of members and in Church units. They may draw from the following sources to create the narrative and, where appropriate, may include excerpts from or photocopies of the following:

- Notes, reports, or reminiscences.
 - Extracts from minutes and so forth. (These require the clearance of the stake president or bishop and should not contain sacred or confidential material.)
 - Stake, ward, quorum, and auxiliary organization reports.
 - Correspondence.
 - Photographs (preferably black and white, with place, name, and date identification).
 - Newspaper clippings (preferably photocopies, with newspaper name, date, and page identified).
2. Officers Sustained forms from stake and ward conferences held during the year.
- Officers Sustained—Stake (32300)
 - Officers Sustained—District (32301)
 - Officers Sustained—Ward or Branch in Stake (32302)
 - Officers Sustained—Branch in Mission (32303)

Submitting the Annual History

Ward clerks should submit the history to the stake clerk no later than January 15 each year. Stake specialists should use the submission folder to submit the stake and ward histories no later than January 31 each year. Please do not submit the annual history in ring binders or sheet protectors.

Stake clerks in the United States and Canada should send the Annual History folder to:

Church Archives
Annual History
50 E North Temple St. Rm. 227E
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3420

Stake clerks outside the United States and Canada should send the Annual History folder to the area administrative office.

ANNUAL HISTORY TRAINING

Quick Help

The purpose of the annual history program is to bring members closer to Christ and to collect the contemporary history of the Church by gathering, remembering, preserving, and sharing experiences of how God is working in members' lives and in His kingdom.

As you create your unit's annual history, consider some of the ideas listed below. Ward and stake leaders can be an excellent source for this information.

- What were the significant accomplishments of your ward or stake during the last year?
- What were the significant challenges facing members of your ward or stake during the past year? How did people meet these challenges?
- How has the gospel made a difference in the lives of ward or stake members? Share some specific experiences without including information that is too private or sacred.
- What experiences of the past year have manifested love, guidance, and direction from our Heavenly Father in the lives of ward or stake members?
- What events, activities, or happenings of the past year demonstrate the blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon the people of your ward or stake?
- How have members put their testimonies in action to witness to the truth of the restored gospel?
- What ward or stake programs have helped members make and keep sacred covenants during the past year?
- What local, national, and international events affected your ward or stake?

There is no prescribed length for the annual history narrative, but if your history is only a few pages you may want to consider adding more detail to give a clear understanding of the significance of events and experiences.

PLEASE NOTE: The above suggestions supplement the instructions in the Annual History folder and the Internet training module available at www.lds.org/AnnualHistory.

May the Lord bless you for your important participation in keeping a record of the great things of God (see D&C 69:3, 5).