

Archives
WORKBOOK

Archives Workbook

This workbook is service material, reflecting A.A. experience shared at the General Service Office. A.A. workbooks are compiled from the practical experience of A.A. members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada).

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“We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian...

“It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion...

“We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come...”

— Bill W., 1957

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Mission

The Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous is the repository of personal collections, manuscripts, publications, photographs and memorabilia related to the origin and the development of the A.A. Fellowship.

Purpose

Consistent with A.A.'s primary purpose of maintaining our sobriety and helping other alcoholics achieve recovery, the Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous will:

- Receive, classify and index all relevant material, such as administrative files and records, correspondence, and literary and artifactual works considered to have historical import to Alcoholics Anonymous,
- Hold and preserve such material,
- Provide access as determined by the archivist in consultation with the trustees' Archives Committee, to members of Alcoholics Anonymous and to those of the public who may have a valid need to review such material with a commitment to preserve the anonymity of our members.

Adopted: November 3, 2003
By the General Service Board
of Alcoholics Anonymous

Introduction

The idea for organizing an historic collection of the Fellowship's records came from co-founder Bill W. in the early 1950s. Bill was becoming increasingly concerned that "the history of Alcoholics Anonymous is still veiled in the deep fog." Knowing that the office correspondence was loosely maintained in the drawers at the General Headquarters, he set out to arrange our historic records. He personally recorded oldtimers' recollections in the Akron/Cleveland area; he sent out boxes of blank tapes to others, encouraging them to record their recollections.

Bill's far-reaching vision outlined an archival message that is still sound today. As he said: "Every one of the new and unexpected developments (in A.A.) has, lying just underneath, an enormous amount of dramatic incident and experience — stories galore.... It isn't hard to prepare a fact sheet of what happened — that is, dates when people came in, groups started and so forth. The hard thing to lay hold of is the atmosphere of the whole proceedings and anecdotal material that will make the early experience alive."

After many decades of tireless organizing and arranging, the G.S.O. Archives room was opened with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony in November 1975.

Since then, the G.S.O. archivists and the trustees serving on the Archives Committee of the General Service Board have encouraged the importance of archival service, which is vital to the survival of the Fellowship. As a result of that work, today almost all areas have set up archival collections, and there is a significant growth at the district level.

Historic records help us to sift through our day-to-day experience in recovery and reach back for the shared experience from the past. As we sort out the myth from the facts we ensure that our original message of recovery, unity and service remains the same in a changing, growing, expanding Fellowship that constantly renews itself.

Archives are frequently associated with the past, but they are also to be linked with true value. We maintain records of permanent value so we can go back and consult the original sources again and again.

In the following sections you will read about various aspects of archival work. As mentioned later, there is a natural growth process in the life of an archival collection. Although sharing is helpful, collections are essentially unique entities existing under unique conditions. It is the responsibility of the archivists and the archives committees to address the needs of their collections and set up policies accommodating local conditions.

Your embarkation on this journey of setting up and maintaining an archival collection will be a truly rewarding experience of service to the benefit of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Like the A.A. program itself, the sections that follow are neither rules nor laws. They are offered as suggestions only and the G.S.O. Guidelines are presented as examples—subject to whatever changes may be necessary to best serve your collection.

A Word About Anonymity

We are often asked by members if, in collecting and writing up their local or area history, full names should be used of group founders, early members or group officers, regardless of whether the manuscripts are to be retained in the area only, or are also intended for sharing with G.S.O. and other area archives. Development of procedures seems to be a matter of local policy

decision by the archives committee, but the necessity for protecting the confidentiality of correspondence and the anonymity of the correspondents is without question an important consideration and a trust that falls upon all A.A. archivists and archives committees.

At G.S.O., the group histories and correspondence files (going back to 1939) contain full names and addresses. It is important to remember that many of these letters were shared as individual opinions and not with the intention of making them public.

When new material arrives from groups and individuals, we continue to protect the anonymity of individuals by placing the incoming material in its category of classification, and monitor carefully each occasion when research permission has been granted a person to review the history files. Also, while adhering to the tradition of first name and last initial may be preferable, confusion can occur where two or even three people have the same first name and last initial.

Role of the Archives Committee

It is a decades-old axiom in our Fellowship that “you can’t keep it unless you give it away.” When we first enter A.A., we learn the soundness of this statement as we stay sober and find our own sobriety strengthened as we try to “pass it on” to a newcomer. Many A.A.s active at the general service or intergroup/central office level, who carry the A.A. message through corrections or public information work, or volunteer for telephone answering service, experience a similar awakening by “giving it away.”

A.A. archivists and committee members, too, describe a heightened and enriched sobriety by participating in their type of Twelfth Step work. Archives provide an opportunity for A.A. members to actively share in our history.

Local needs and practices will guide you regarding whether you

work primarily through the area and district or through the local central office or intergroup.

The archives committee is responsible for establishing policies, budgets, and procedures. It undertakes and maintains final responsibility and authority for the use of the archives, and exercises its group conscience in regard to matters of general policy. In all of its actions, the archives committee needs to be mindful of and guided by A.A.'s primary purpose. Thus, if non-A.A. friends are asked to serve on the committee, which is possible because of interest and special knowledge and expertise, they ought to be people who are thoroughly familiar with our primary purpose, as well as all of our A.A. Traditions.

One of the most important functions of the archives committee is to establish creative parameters for the selection of material to be collected. These parameters will guide the archivist in gathering material of historical significance and will reduce the time and space of preserving random bits and pieces of dubious value.

It is helpful for the committee to meet on a regular basis to aid the archivist and to become familiar with the additions to the collection.

Rotation is handled in different ways, with some committees rotating at the same time as area officers while other committees have a staggered rotation so that there is continuity of members with background. If the archivist does not rotate every two years, it seems to work best to have some of the committee members rotate.

Role of the Archivist

The archivist is the focal point of the collection, determining on one hand what to include in the collection, and on the other hand working towards making the collected material available to the greatest extent possible to members of our Fellowship and those in the public realm with a valid interest in A.A.

- The archivist collects, organizes and preserves material of historic interest. Typically, the archivist selects a representative sample of the collection and arranges those into a traveling display.
- The archivist is responsible for both the physical and the intellectual integrity of the collection. It is important to ensure the privacy and protect the anonymity of members whose names are included in the collected documents.
- The archivist is also responsible to report regularly to the area committee or, if it exists, the area archives committee, about new material received and give updates about ongoing projects at the archives.

Training

It is helpful and desirable for the archivist to have some familiarity with archival procedures or the willingness to learn the basics of such procedures. Depending on the location of the archives, the local high school, college, major library or historical society might offer basic courses in handling historical records.

Who Should Be Selected as Archivist?

Archivists are selected in different ways throughout the areas. Some are elected by the area assembly, some are appointed by the area committee or the area's archives committee. It is the shared experi-

ence not to rotate frequently since it takes a considerable length of time to get familiar with the material.

Archivists are usually A.A. members, but areas may differ in sobriety requirements, the right to vote in assemblies and the length of time before rotation.

What to Collect?

An archival collection takes form through a natural process that helps to capture the rich texture of our history. We build historic collections that are unique in many ways, through the contributions that the archives receive and through collecting material that is unique to a particular area or district. There are many items that you will find of interest as you develop your collection, and the following is merely a suggested list of items that you might consider.

- Books/pamphlets about A.A.;
- Documents developed locally to support Twelfth Step work;
- Photographs;
- Directories;
- Meeting lists;
- Newsletters (particularly those published by your area/district);
- Tapes;
- News clippings;
- Magazine articles;
- Correspondence;
- Minutes of service committees.

Try to solicit, acquire and accumulate historical material and information about the Fellowship since its inception from early members. Do not forget about nonalcoholics who were helpful in the early years of

your area. Reach out for material from past delegates and past area committee members. Many archivists report that they got started by putting a notice in the local AA newsletter that they were seeking such material. Also, it may be helpful to set up a team of archives assistants or volunteer helpers to record oral histories from oldtimers.

Setting Up a Repository

Experience indicates that the archives should be housed in rented space rather than in a private home. It is particularly advantageous if the space adjoins a central office or intergroup. It seems important that access be available to all A.A. members and researchers during regular hours. This avoids the appearance of being a private collection. Contributors have been shown to be far more generous when the archives are open.

List of Equipment Needed

- One or more good general reference books on the preservation of historical documents (see “Reference Information and Resources” section for titles);
- Repair/restoration material — for example: Mylar, material to repair tears, nondamaging adhesives;
- Acid-free storage boxes for letters, papers, pamphlets and magazine articles and/or archival scrapbooks for newspaper articles (available from archival catalogs);
- Stack frames to hold material;
- Fireproof file cabinets for vertical files;
- Work table, chairs, desk;
- Display cabinets to hold books and/or memorabilia;
- Framed photos (with acid-free backing) of events, places and

nonalcoholic friends who have been helpful to the group (keep our Tradition on Anonymity in mind!);

- Cabinet for audio tapes, a supply of audiocassettes, portable tape recorder.

At the beginning only a few items are necessary, and as your collection grows you might add additional equipment, such as a computer that can handle various media.

Security

One of the most essential steps is to ensure the safety of the material placed in the archives. The archivist is responsible for the physical integrity of the material. You may consider special security locks on the front door or, at a minimum, on the file cabinets. It is important to remember that most of our collections are virtually irreplaceable.

Financing the Archives

The operational budget for equipment, office supplies, duplicating services, taping and other needs should be part of the area/district overall budget. This way the archival service enjoys the support of the full membership and keeps the perspective as a valued part of Twelfth Step activity.

Preservation Work in Archives

As a general rule, any action on a document or item that is not reversible should never be performed.

The main steps in preservation are cleaning, disinfecting and placing the documents in a clean (dust- and mold-free) and acid-free environment.

Procedures, such as using a deacidifying spray or interfilming acid-free tissue papers between the document sheets, establish the appropriate environment at the document level. The properly preserved documents are then placed into acid-free containers: Mylar sheets and envelopes, acid-free folders and boxes that are easily available from all major archival supply distributors.

Be aware that chemically balanced storage boxes have been developed for all media types besides paper, and special cases are available for audiocassettes, reel-to-reel tapes, CD-ROMs, etc.

It is necessary as well to establish a clean and chemically balanced environment in the storage facility. Under ideal circumstances, the various record types are kept under special climate requirements in terms of storage temperature and humidity. Based on practical experience and the fact that archival collections typically house a great variety of material, a standard measure has been adopted by the profession that is acceptable to all media types: about 70F and 45% humidity. Be aware that exposure to natural light represents a danger to archival documents.

The historic development of storage media used for recorded information has evolved from paper through various magnetic and micro formats to our current era of electronic records. Each of these needs to be specially addressed if included in your collection. Keep in mind, however, that electronic media is the least stable format of all. Floppy discs survive only a few years, and the guaranteed quality of CD-ROMs has repeatedly been questioned by audio preservation specialists. Make sure that the electronic records remain compatible with existing technology. *The chemically unstable wood chip-based modern paper is still considered the most stable media from a preservation point of view.*

Establishing a Preservation Program — or — You Can Make Miracles, But it Takes Time!

There may be limitations on your efforts to preserve your collection based on the availability of finances and personnel, however, it is important to establish an ongoing preservation schedule for your collection. While it may not be possible to take care of all documents in all media types in a single calendar year, you can develop an ongoing program that includes planning for finances, personnel and available work areas for archival processing.

Based on the size of your collection, preservation might seem like an uphill battle, and there is a fundamental conflict between protecting the documents and providing access to them. In some cases, it may be necessary to regulate access to your most precious historic records, recognizing that establishing appropriate research conditions is part of the preservation program!

Does this seem overwhelming? There is plenty of help out there! Join a local historical society or archivist's round table. Functions such as these usually charge a minimal yearly fee (many of them under \$20). You can also get in touch with fellow A.A. archivists. And remember that it is in the Fellowship's collective interest to maintain the historic records of Alcoholics Anonymous to the best of our capabilities. Whatever you do at your local level, you do for all of A.A.

Although preservation is one of the most visible and best known aspects of the archivist's work, it is only one of the many steps we need to perform in maintaining and organizing our historic records.

Research in Archives

While we can assume that most A.A. members will be mindful of the confidentiality of A.A. records, as will most serious nonalcoholic

researchers, the archivist should nonetheless maintain strict rules about accessibility and ensure that researchers adhere to them.

A.A.'s Twelfth Tradition states that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Fellowship — in spirit as well as letter. All archives committees should be protective of the anonymity of living people, and even those who have passed on. Those administering the archives must also be scrupulous about anonymity breaks. This responsibility falls essentially to the archivist. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on permanent housing and a rotating archives committee to grant access requests and to establish overall policies.

Screening of applicants: To relieve the archivist from sole responsibility, the archives committee might consider each request to use the archives individually to determine the seriousness and appropriateness of the inquiry, and to grant or refuse permission. The applicant, if possible, should always be familiar with A.A.'s Tradition of Anonymity and how it is applied to writing A.A. history.

The researcher should fill out an application form listing the date of application, how long he/she intends to spend on the project at the archives and the exact needs of the material being used. This form is available online and may be downloaded, and is also available from G.S.O. archives.

The researcher should also be given all the information needed to clearly understand procedures and policies concerning the use of archives, for example: a statement of policy, information about the categories of classification, and a catalog of archival contents.

The archivist and assistant(s) ought to be familiar with the current interpretations of copyright regulations pertaining to fair use and privacy, and so should members of the archives committee. Perhaps one of the committee members could be a lawyer or a professional person in the academic field (here is an instance where a non-A.A. might be a useful committee member). Since the copyright laws were updated in 1998 it is important to keep abreast with the changes in the law.

Ownership of Material

The trustees' Archives Committee adopted the following suggested guidelines for local archivists regarding archives property on January 27, 1994.

Problem: On occasion, there is confusion as to the ownership of archives materials maintained in local area archives. Such difficulties sometimes arise when an archivist or other service person — who is in possession or has custody of such materials actually belonging to the area — rotates or, even more problematic, is deceased or otherwise incapable of managing his or her affairs. Family members, for example, may not be clear regarding which items were the personal property of the deceased or incapacitated person, but are in actuality, owned by the area committee.

Suggestions: The following are suggestions which might help to avoid such confusion in the future:

1. All archives material that is the property of the area should be recorded in a written inventory.
2. The archivist should prepare and sign a statement, to be appended to the inventory list, which clearly indicates that ownership of the property listed in the annexed inventory resides in the area, and that such property is not the personal property of the archivist.
3. In addition to the property owned by the area, if there is any archival property that is, in fact, owned by the archivist, but which has been made available to or is “on loan” to the local archives, that property should also be listed, together with an attached, signed statement describing who the rightful owner is.

4. Copies of such statements, with original signatures, should be maintained in the area files, in the archives files and with the archivist's personal papers.
5. If, upon his/her death or incapacitation, the archivist or other custodian wishes to donate to the area those materials which had been on loan to the archives, then such a donation will usually have to be made as a bequest provided for in a valid will, or other document appropriate for effecting a transfer of ownership.

Deed of Gift (Sample)

Thank you for your generous contribution to the Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous. Contributions such as yours have made it possible for us to continue in our efforts to have a comprehensive history of our Fellowship.

We are always in the process of collating and processing materials so it may be some time before your contribution is ready for use by scholars and members.

Please know that we are most grateful for your contribution and we will handle it with loving and professional care. We are sure you understand that this is a permanent contribution and that you are confident we will make the best possible use of it.

We encourage you to visit the Archives anytime. We think you will feel as our thousands of other visitors have that our history is alive and strengthening the Fellowship.

Thank you for your loving generosity.

Please fill out and sign the attached form and return it to the Archives.

Deed of Gift

Item: _____

Description: _____

Physical condition: _____

Statement of any terms or conditions of the conveyance of the gift:

Are you the lawful owner of all rights and title of the property described here. Item: _____

By this instrument a gift of all rights and title of the items listed herein is conveyed to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____ PLACE _____

Guidelines for Collecting Oral Histories

Introduction

In order to assist local efforts in collecting oral histories we have summarized some suggestions that were shared with us, as well as presenting practical aspects of collecting audio recordings. We hope this material will be of help.

Bill W.'s suggestions on collecting oral histories

In a letter dated January 23, 1955, Bill W. gave an excellent description of the purpose and method of collecting such recordings. This letter can and should serve as the basis for oral history collecting, even today:

I would like to have you make a tape recording about your recollections of the old days. There isn't any rush about this as the preparation of a history will have to be done carefully, and gradually over the next two or three years. I have, though, made a couple of trips to Akron and Cleveland and have already interviewed quite a lot of the old folks so as to be sure and get the record straight.

...You can get a good running start at the history by retelling your own personal story, how A.A. came to your attention, what your first impressions were, and how it developed in the first few years in Cleveland. I hope you can dwell at length on the difficulties, as well as the humor of those years, relating as many anecdotes as possible. You can say anything you like, being assured that nothing will be published without your consent.

...The preliminary investigation shows that it isn't hard to prepare a fact sheet of what happened — that is, dates when people came in, groups started and so forth. The hard thing to lay hold of

is the atmosphere of the whole proceedings and anecdotal material that will make the early experience live.

When I first set out to gather material I ran into a little resistance. But I pointed out to them that if the oldtimers in Akron and Cleveland wouldn't go on record as to what happened, how in God's name could I, or anyone else, tell an accurate story for the future record. I lived through the experience here at the New York end and can tell about it at length. But if the western end of the story is going to have the importance it deserves, it simply has to be told by those who lived through the experience.

In summary: Ask the interviewee to focus on events he *directly witnessed or participated in*. Ask them to begin with their own story of recovery and continue with impressions, comments on the atmosphere of events, and any anecdotal material that comes to mind. See also suggested questions listed below.

Technical suggestions

1. Always begin the recording by identifying yourself, the date, and place of recording on the record (tape or electronic form) itself.
2. Allow the interviewee to talk freely on whatever topics he/she wishes to. Use the questionnaire only as a general guide to keep the flow of discussion focused.
3. State whether or not the material will be available for research.

Use of oral histories in research

Access to oral recording is guided by the local collection's research policy, unless the interviewee specifically specifies that he/she does not wish to make the record available for research.

The interviewee might request that the record not be available for research for a particular time period. It is important to note this time period on the audio record.

Oral history release form

Local collections are encouraged to develop an oral history release form. A list of suggested statements to be included on the release form is summarized below.

A local archives committee (area, district) collecting oral histories should obtain a release from the interviewee granting the committee the rights to use the material obtained during the course of the interview and make it available for research. Such release takes many forms, and consultation with legal counsel may prove to be a wise investment in order to protect both the interviewee and the local committee. A form release generally might include:

1. Name of the interviewee.
2. Name of the committee under whose auspice the history is being obtained.
3. Date or other significant notation marking the recording.
4. A brief explanation of the intended uses of the recording.
5. An affirmation that the committee will protect the anonymity of the recording against misuse at the public level.
6. Language of release.
7. A signature block, including date signed.
8. Statement of limitations, if any.

Sample Interview Questions

Based on Long-timer Interview Questions developed by Area 10, Colorado

Here is a list of questions to guide you in conducting your long-timer interview. Feel free to add questions of your own, allow the interview to take on a life of its own and, most importantly, to have fun! Before you begin taping, explain that our primary interest is in A.A.'s role in the story. The focus is on our A.A. History in Colorado, how we were, what happened, and what we are like now. As always,

the emphasis is on sobriety, rather than drinking. Perhaps the member can begin his/her story with his/her initial contact with the program. Begin the tape by identifying yourself, and providing the date of the taping. Then introduce the member.

- How and when did you get started in A.A.? When and where did you sober up? Where did you go to your first meeting?

- How did you first learn about A.A.?

- Did you have a sponsor when you first came in? What type of sponsorship did you have?

- How many groups or meetings were in existence?

- Can you recall the formats used at some of these early meetings? How were they run?

- When was A.A. started in your town or area? How often were meetings held? Who were some of the people playing important roles in the formation of new groups? What else do you know about the growth of A.A. during that period of time?

- What contributions did you, yourself, make to the growth of the Fellowship? (Don't be unnecessarily modest!)

- We say sometimes that all that's needed to form an A.A. meeting is two drunks, a resentment and a coffeepot. Can you talk at all about the differences that led to new groups being formed in your area?

- In *A.A. Comes of Age* Bill W. writes about numerous issues over which anger and contention arose and threatened the undoing of our Fellowship. The groups nationwide, for example, did not immediately accept spiritual principles we know today as the Twelve Traditions. What controversies over issues addressed in the Traditions can you recall people wrestling with? (How were meeting spaces acquired? Was rent or other funding obtained by gambling sessions? Bingo games? How did the membership resolve these affairs?)

- What individuals were especially prominent in your sobriety?

- How were new members contacted? What kinds of Twelfth Step work were going on? Are there any Twelfth Step anecdotes that stick out in your mind that you'd care to share?

- Today, A.A. is well known to, and supported by, police officers, judges and corrections officials. What kind of relationship did A.A. in your area have with local authorities? How has that changed since you sobered up?

- Treatment facilities nowadays frequently host A.A. and other Twelve Steps meetings. Did any of them use a Twelve Step format or incorporate meetings into their structure?

- Did you seek the cooperation of other local community or professional agencies?

- Today, radio and television public service announcements for A.A., as well as Internet Web sites, are becoming commonplace. When you first got sober, how did A.A.s interact with the media? Have you had any profound experiences sharing your relationship with alcohol with the public? What cautions might you have for young A.A.s today regarding media exposure?

- During the early years of your recovery, how did the community receive Alcoholics Anonymous?

- Do you think your group(s) has had an influence in your community? If so, how?

- What do you remember of early conferences, assemblies, and conventions? Can you recall opening intergroup or central offices?

- Have you had any contact with G.S.O.?

- Today, Conference-approved literature is available to help A.A. members deal with a wide variety of challenging questions. In the early days of the Fellowship all we had was the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, common sense and your compassion. How did early A.A.s treat newcomers? How did your group(s) treat constant slippers? Thirteenth steppers? How were people wishing to talk about multiple addictions during your meetings addressed? How about nonalcoholic drug addicts walking in off the street for their first meeting?

- In what ways has A.A. changed over the years?

Based on Guide Questions submitted by Area 20, Illinois

- When did you first hear of A.A. and from what source?
- Was A.A.'s "reputation" any different from what you encountered through your initial introduction?
- What was your perception of A.A.'s success in the general population when you were first introduced to us? How has that perception changed over time?
- Who made the initial outreach to you, in what manner, and in what year?
- What was actually involved in your application process?
- What were your first impressions of the active A.A. Legacies of Recovery, Service, and Unity?
- What was your first impression of A.A. servants, G.S.O. staff, delegates? Describe your first encounters.
- What were your impressions of your first General Service Conference? What year?
- Describe some of the major decisions and Advisory Actions that involved your direct participation, and your committee activities over your years of service.
- In your memory, what particular Conference agenda items developed into Advisory Actions? Were there any that failed to gain Conference approval?
- What special occasions do you recall during your time of A.A. service?
- How has A.A. changed (if it has) since you first found it?
- Do you see any particular changes in the A.A. Fellowship and its service processes, since your start of service?
- Are there any strong similarities in the A.A. Fellowship and its history of service, from your own service time through today?

Archives Committee Activities

Shared Experiences

Just as each A.A. group is autonomous, so is each area and inter-group or central office. The needs, experiences and conscience of your own area, large or small, urban or rural, will affect your archives committee's initial plans as well as its growth and development. Below, three archives committees share some of their experiences, ranging from generating local interest to maintaining a large and complex collection in trust for all A.A. in the area:

Montana: *Over the winter holidays, a workshop was held of a day-long celebration. A committee member writes:*

Our area archivist gave a brief (one hour) oral history of Alcoholics Anonymous. There were many A.A. books and Grapevines displayed as well as other items of historical value to A.A. The meeting started with the Serenity Prayer followed by the Twelve Traditions. As our archivist was speaking of important events in A.A. history ("markings on the journey," if you will) another member would hold up and display historical items with interest and enthusiasm. Having two A.A.s seen working together (remember: we can do together what we cannot do alone) made for a really good A.A. workshop. It was awesome, and many a newcomer was overwhelmed by all the information.

The workshop was followed by a potluck monthly A.A. birthday meeting, several Alcoholics Anonymous movies, and marathon meetings. We made a night of it; what a great time we all had.

Being part of A.A.'s archives is such a blessing for me and the others that help. We all work together.

Northern Indiana: *The area archives committee offers a four-hour workshop to all districts. The committee chairperson reports on a recent workshop:*

Considerable information was transmitted, with members of the

committee taking various portions of the program. A complete history was given, including the commencement of temperance; The Washingtonians; various movements and studies; causes and cures by society in general and the medical world; and the Oxford Group. Also covered was the effect of A.A. members in Indiana upon A.A. as a whole, including how the individual is currently involved and each individual's responsibility to the future of A.A.

Most information given was gleaned from various sources and was not necessarily material offered by current A.A. publications. The "wrap up" included where we are today and where we are headed. Also pointed out was the importance of the individual, the G.S.R., and D.C.M. and the delegate and how the lines of communication should be kept open. The function and importance of archives was also explained as to its value to the individual as well as to A.A. as a whole, giving the individual the entire picture that each of us serves in all capacities and that we are each a part of all A.A. activities.

The program as presented was well received by those in attendance. The area archives committee has been offering this program to all districts for some time and this was its second presentation. They are anxiously awaiting future invitations to carry their message of importance of archives — not only for the preservation of our history but in carrying the message of A.A. into the future — in its purest and undiluted form for those who are yet to come.

B.C./Yukon: *Growing from a subcommittee to a collection in "a room without windows," this area archives committee now has a permanent repository and is part of the general service area structure:*

Twenty years ago the area determined that the archives subcommittee had come of age and it was time to locate a permanent repository for the material gathered and, further, that the responsibility for covering expenses would be an area function.

Two years later, the area rented space from the Vancouver Intergroup Office to house archives. In 1990, we moved a few blocks east on Kingsway, to the location we continue to occupy. A room without windows, but with storage and display space, houses the pictures, documents and stories of the history of A.A. in Area 79, British Columbia/Yukon.

The current structure of the area's committee is comprised of a committee chair who is chosen by the area to serve in an appointed position for two years. An archivist is appointed to a five-year term. The chair is responsible to attend area meetings, at which appointed D.C.M.s meet with him/her to review the progress of projects, etc. Travel kits are put together by either the archivist or the chair to be taken to rallies, roundups and workshops throughout the area. The chair is responsible for informing the members of A.A. throughout the area about the function and need for archives. The area registrar informs archives whenever a new group requests registration at the area level.

A budget is allotted annually to cover travel and supplies. Furthermore, the area chair requests that financial assistance be provided for travel or accommodations to attend the local functions throughout our vast geographic area. A few years ago the area purchased computer equipment with a scanner for the archive to use.

In addition to the ideas above, in order to generate interest in archives, many areas give the archivist a regular time to report on his/her activities at all area meetings. Area newsletters are another source for spreading information about archives, and some newsletters print excerpts from archival material in order to promote interest and increase awareness of the value of archives. Some areas have even prepared special bookmarks and stickers saying, "Don't throw me away; I belong to A.A. Archives," which can be distributed throughout the Fellowship and can help target material which might be contributed to the local archives.

Archives of the General Service Office, New York, NY

The G.S.O. Archives are concerned with three classes of material: that which is literary, that which is historical, and that which is archival in the literal sense — i.e., administrative, legal and financial. The Archives also contain memorabilia or artifactual items, which include material having a display value, but not necessarily historical value, as well as items significant to the development of A.A. (photographs, awards, citations, displays, art works, sculpture, maps, etc.).

Scope and Purpose

The scope of the G.S.O. Archives is to provide a sense of its own past to the Fellowship and to create a context for understanding and valuing A.A.'s historical milestones and Traditions. The Archives will continue to serve the interested communities among sociologists, historians and other professionals interested in exploring A.A.'s roots and growth throughout the world.

The main purpose of the Archives, consistent with A.A.'s primary purpose, is to keep the record straight so that myth does not predominate over fact as to the history of the Fellowship.

The purpose of the trustees' Archives Committee is to make recommendations to the General Service Board regarding what should be done and what limitations, if any, should be set regarding access and accommodation of material to space available.

Policy Concerning Access to Materials in the A.A. Archives

The materials in the A.A. Archives are available to A.A. members and non-A.A.s who have a legitimate interest, such as historians, social scientists, etc. However, as befits an anonymous organization, access is controlled. The trustees' Archives Committee of the

General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous has established the policies and rules. Each application for access to the archival holdings must be approved. This committee has complete responsibility for the archival material and has the sole jurisdiction over its use.

The overall goal of the Archives is to remain as open as possible so that A.A. members may have ready access to the historical legacy of their organization and program. In addition, serious researchers should be allowed access to the holdings. Controls are necessary, however, to ensure the anonymity of all persons mentioned in archival material, in line with their own wishes and with the A.A. Tradition, and in order to protect the materials themselves from loss, from physical damage and from deterioration due to handling, aging or environmental conditions. All A.A. members are welcome as visitors to the Archives Center. There they can see selected materials and speak with the archivist about our holdings, about archival activities in their areas and about how they might use the central resources of the G.S.O. Archives.

However, if A.A. members or non-A.A. scholars wish to make use of specific material in the Archives, a written request for access should be made to the trustees' Archives Committee specifying what material is desired, and the use to which it will be put. Each request will be considered on an ad hoc basis. Trustees, directors and staff members have access to archival material (with the exception of restricted files) without having to make such requests. However, they may not remove material from the physical Archives area.

The trustees' Archives Committee has set up restrictions, some dealing with access and some dealing with the uses of materials. Most of the holdings are not restricted as to their accessibility once permission has been granted. Some are not restricted at all—e.g., A.A. members may view the originals of any material that has been printed or published. Yet some of our holdings, for various legitimate reasons, are totally inaccessible at this time. If anyone has any questions about access to the Archives, their questions should be referred to the trustees' Archives Committee.

Photocopying Policy at the General Service Office Archives

Adopted by the trustees' Archives Committee
November 3, 2002

The General Service Office Archives has been entrusted to safeguard the collection of historic, administrative and organizational records of the Fellowship, as well as other historic material that has been compiled since the early existence of the office.

The Archives' photocopying policy has been established to protect the physical and the intellectual integrity of the collection, and to protect the anonymity and privacy of our members, as well as non-members, when material of a personal nature is involved, as well as to comply with U.S. Copyright Laws as they affect the collection.

Original correspondence and unpublished manuscripts, as well as the confidential group directories, may not be duplicated. Photocopies of early pamphlets and other miscellaneous publications will be made available only when the physical condition of the material allows for photocopying. The physical condition, the fragility of the item or the brittleness of the paper may prevent us from photocopying some of these items.

Photocopies of copyrighted material will be provided within the minimum standards for fair use, for purposes of private study, scholarship or research and not for further reproduction. Understandably, we would have to decline any request for photocopying that, we believe, would result in a violation of U.S. Copyright Law.

The trustees' Archives Committee appreciates that one of the main uses which A.A. members may wish to make of the Archives is the assembling of data for group or area histories. It is strongly suggested though, by the trustees' Archives Committee, that before a group makes such a request, they check with their members to make sure that the group does not already have such material as a result of an earlier request.

Policy on Permission to Quote from A.A. Material

Permission to quote from all G.S.O. copyrighted books and pamphlets will be directed to the Secretary of the Board of Directors of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Policy on Budget

An operational budget for equipment, office supplies, duplicating services, scanning, taping, and other needs will be drawn up each year by the archivist, in consultation with the trustees' Archives Committee and the controller, and presented for approval at the January quarterly meeting. Final approval of the budget rests with the General Service Board.

Classification of Archival Material at the Archives of the General Service Office

- A. Open to all
- B. Open to A.A. members
- C. Open with approval
- D. Closed (at this time)

A. Open to all

1. Material published outside A.A.
 - On A.A. specifically
 - Magazine articles on A.A.
 - Newspaper articles, TV/video recordings
 - Material on alcoholism in general (reprints, talks, newsletters, etc.)

2. Published within the Fellowship (available to the public)
 - A.A. books and pamphlets
 - Annual reports to the public
 - Surveys
 - International Conventions and publicity
 - Obit material
 - Awards
 - Pictures of nonalcoholics, friends of the Fellowship, background
 - Access to scrapbook and obit books
 - Co-founders' biographical information
 - Historical material, background data on A.A.

B. Open to A.A. members

G.S.O. published material (besides items in #A above)

- Bulletins, newsletters
- World Directories or listings from them
- Conference reports
- Group history records
- Photos: A.A. events
- Selected tapes or cassettes

C. Open with approval — access requires review and approval of the trustees' Archives Committee

- Financial matters pertaining to G.S.O.
- Financial matters pertaining to the co-founders
- Correspondence between members and G.S.O.
- Correspondence of co-founders, members, groups, friends of A.A.
- G.S.O. administrative papers; minutes, General Service Board matters, discussions
- Oral history tapes, transcripts
- General Service Conference tapes, transcripts, correspondence
- International Convention tapes
- World Service Meeting records

D. Closed at this time — not available to anyone because of sensitivity or contributor's request.

Research Forms

***A.A. ARCHIVES: G.S.O.
RESEARCH RECORD***

Date Received _____ Date Answered _____

Name _____ Inquiry Received:
Inquiry Answered:

Address _____ Letter _____

_____ Visit _____

_____ Call _____

Telephone _____

Subject:

Research Record:

A.A. ARCHIVES: G.S.O. RESEARCHER'S CARD

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

(Indicate whether home or business)

Telephone _____

Candidate for Degree? _____ Institution _____

SUBJECT OF RESEARCH: _____

CONTEXT IN WHICH RESEARCH DATA WILL APPEAR:

___Book ___Magazine ___Doctoral ___Other

(If "OTHER" please describe: _____)

IF PUBLICATION IS INTENDED, MAY A.A. WORLD SERVICES,
INC. REVIEW YOUR FINAL DRAFT? _____

DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

**Calendar of Holdings
Archives of the
A.A. General Service Office**

Bill W. (1895-1971) — personal correspondence; writings, talks, articles; photographs; audio material; Lois W. material.

Dr. Bob S. (1879-1950) — personal correspondence; writings, talks, articles; photographs; audio material; Anne S. material.

Alcoholics Anonymous — correspondence; industry; institutions; court programs; medical profession; religion.

Alcoholic Foundation — correspondence; reports.

Early Groups — correspondence (historic only); U.S. groups by areas; Canadian groups; foreign groups (historic only).

General Service Board — reports; minutes.

General Service Conferences — reports; manuals.

General Service Headquarters (1945-1968) — correspondence.

Grapevine, The A.A. — correspondence (historic); magazine issues, 1944 to present.

International Conventions — programs; clippings.

Nonalcoholic friends of the Fellowship — correspondence; photographs; Alexander, Jack; Dowling, Rev. Edward S.J.; Ford, Rev. John C., S.J.; Ignatia, Sister Mary; Jung, Carl, M.D.; Maxwell, Milton,

Ph.D.; Norris, John, M.D.; Rockefeller, John D., Jr.; Shoemaker, Rev. Samuel; Silkworth, William D., M.D.; Sinclair, Upton; Smith, Bernard B.; Tiebout, Harry, M.D.

Oral history — co-founders; early members; Conferences; Conventions.

Oxford Group — historic material.

Publications — books; drafts; booklets; pamphlets; directories; other.

Regional Forums — reports.

Scrapbooks — 1939–1961.

Trustees (Class A and B) — correspondence; reports; talks.

Washingtonians — historic material.

Works Publishing — correspondence; memos.

World Service Meetings — correspondence; reports.

Reference Information and Resources

You are encouraged to consult archival resources regularly. They are readily available both at the national level and at your local level, and you can greatly benefit from both.

For additional information contact the A.A. General Service Office Archives, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115, (212) 870-3400, fax (212) 870-3003, e-mail: archives@aa.org.

Some archivists benefit from attendance at the National Archives Workshop focusing on A.A. Archives. Date and location of this event are determined on an annual basis.

The Society of American Archivists maintains a very informative and comprehensive website. National and local archivist organizations and professional resources are listed and regularly updated. Workshops and training seminars are regularly offered both by the national and local organizations. Take advantage of them!

The Society of American Archivists, 527 S. Wells St., 5th Floor, Chicago, IL 60607, 312-922-0140, fax 312-347-1452, www.archivists.org.

The following list of selected reading can only introduce you to archival work. You might need to explore other material to answer a particular question of your own. Most importantly, always reach out to the experience of other A.A. archivists.

Archival Fundamentals Series:

Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts. Fredric M. Miller. SAA (1990) 131 pp.

A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers. Lewis Bellardo and Lynn Lady Bellardo. SAA (1992) 46 pp.

Managing Archival and Manuscript Repositories. Thomas Wilsted and William Nolte. SAA (1991) 106 pp.

Preserving Archives and Manuscripts. Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler. SAA (1993) 225 pp.

Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts. Mary Jo Pugh. SAA (1992) 124 pp.

Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts. F. Gerald Ham. SAA (1992) 106 pp.

Understanding Archives and Manuscripts. James M. O'Toole. SAA (1990) 79 pp.

Other works:

Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques. Theodore R. Schellenberg. SAA Archival Classics Reprint, 1996 (University of Chicago Press, 1956) 248 pp.

Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries (2nd ed.). Compiled by Steven Hensen. SAA (1989) 196 pp.

Environmental Guidelines for the Storage of Paper Records. Edited by William K. Wilson. NISO Press (1995) 40 pp.

A Code of Ethics for Archivists. SAA (1992) 1 pp.

Historic A.A. reading:

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers

*“Pass It On” The Story of Bill Wilson and How
the A.A. Message Reached the World*

Experience, Strength and Hope

Archives Scrapbooks — 1939-1942; 1943; 1949

The Language of the Heart

Closing

We hope this handbook will help you in your daily efforts of collecting and organizing historic documents, and will assist A.A. members who would like to learn more about the history of our Fellowship.

The archival discipline is a growing field, and this brief guide cannot replace the need for continuous reading and updates.

We would like to invite you to get in touch with the General Service Office Archives if you have any questions regarding any aspects of the material at hand.

Keep in mind:

“Whenever a society or civilization perishes
there is always one condition present;
they forgot where they came from.”

— Carl Sandburg

