

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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www.aa.org

“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 mission of the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office Archives is to document permanently the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, to make the history of the organization accessible to A.A. members and other researchers, and to provide a context for understanding A.A.'s progression, principles and traditions.

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 works and artifacts works considered to have historical import to Alcoholics Anonymous;
- Hold and preserve such material;
- Provide access to these materials, as determined by the archivist in consultation with the trustees' Archives Committee, to members of Alcoholics Anonymous and to others who may have a valid need to review such material, contingent upon a commitment to preserve the anonymity of our members;
- Serve as a resource and laboratory to stimulate and nourish learning;
- Provide information services to assist the operations of Alcoholics Anonymous;
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the origins, goals and program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Adopted: October 30, 2006
By the General Service Board
of Alcoholics Anonymous

Introduction

The idea for organizing an historical 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 historical 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.

Historical 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 journey of setting up and maintaining an archival collection will be a truly rewarding experience of service to benefit 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 maintenance of 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 historical 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 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 experience 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 receives and through collecting material that is unique to a particular area or district. However, before you begin building a collection, it is recommended that you write an effective collection policy. A collection policy is a plan which explains what material your archives will attempt to collect and how the acquisition and maintenance of the material will be pursued. Typically, a collection policy will include a section on a collection scope, which states the type of material your repository will focus on collecting. This may include the subjects, people, timeframes, and regions of your focus. Other sections will outline how the archives will attempt to acquire, store, and dispose of material, what material will not be collected, and any other information dealing with the administration of collections. These are the common elements outlined for all collection policies but the key to an effective policy is that it takes into account your own area or district's unique purpose and context. Your collection policy may change over time to reflect changes in your organization. It may be helpful to contact other repositories for advice, whether they are within A.A. or are outside institutions. The G.S.O. Archives can provide you with a sample collection policy template to assist you in formulating a plan. There are many items that you will find of interest as you develop your collection, and the following is merely a suggested list 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);
- Audio recordings;
- 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 — This is a basic supply list. For more specific information feel free to contact the G.S.O. Archives.

- One or more good general reference books on the preservation of historical documents (see “Reference Information and Resources” section for titles);
- Supplies for preservation and repair—for example: Mylar sleeves, acid-free tape 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);
- Shelves 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 mattes and backing) of events, places and nonalcoholic friends who have been helpful to the group (keep our Tradition on Anonymity in mind!);
- Cabinet for audio recordings, a supply of audiocassettes or CD-Rs, portable recording device.

At the beginning only a few items are necessary, and as your collection grows you might add additional equipment, such as a computer, printer, and/or scanner 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, repairing (if necessary), disinfecting and placing the documents in a clean (dust- and mold-free) and acid-free environment.

Procedures, such as using a deacidifying spray or interfiling 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 stable 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 70°F and 45% humidity. Be aware that exposure to natural light represents a danger to archival documents.

The historical 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. Hard drives crash, floppy discs survive only a few years, and the quality of DVDs and CD-ROMs has repeatedly been questioned by audio preservation specialists. Make sure that the electronic records remain compatible with existing technology. *Modern paper is still considered the most stable medium 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 historical 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 historical 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. See page 44 for a sample form, which is also available online.

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.

All of A.A.'s archival materials, both published and unpublished, are subject to copyright regulations. The archives may own the physical property, but often the copyright is held by someone else, and this can potentially lead to complications.

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 are constantly being updated it is important to keep abreast with the changes in the law. See the Copyright section (page 19) for more information.

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)

This sample thank you letter and form may be adopted for local use when materials are donated to the archives. The Deed of Gift transfers legal ownership of the physical property to the archives. Please note that some states may have additional legal requirements to complete a valid Deed of Gift. Note also that the Deed of Gift does not transfer copyright. For more information on transferring copyright ownership, please contact the G.S.O. Archives.

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

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 we hope you are confident that 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

I, _____, residing at _____, hereby gift, transfer, convey and assign to the General Service Office Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous (“G.S.O. Archives”) all of my right, title and interest in and to the following property, of which I am the sole owner and which property is free of any liens, claims or encumbrances: _____

This gift is made free of any terms and conditions except _____

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

STATE OF)
) ss.:
COUNTY OF)

On the _____ day of _____, 20____, before me,
the undersigned, personally appeared _____,
_____ personally known to me
or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the individual whose name is
subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she executed the
same in his/her capacity, and that by his/her signature on the instrument, the individ-
ual, or the person upon behalf of which the individual acted, executed the instrument.

Notary Public _____

*Receipt of the property listed above by the G.S.O. Archives is hereby acknowl-
edged and accepted:*

Dated: _____ By: _____

A Note about Copyright

It is important for all archivists to realize that most of the materials in archives collections are protected by copyright, and often the archives do not own those copyrights. You may own the physical property, but this does not mean you own the copyrights as well. Copyright laws can limit the way archivists can legally use the materials in their collections.

Copyright law is complex and difficult to navigate. These sections may serve as a basic introduction to the fundamentals of copyright regulations, but we highly recommend that you do some research to learn more about these issues, and consult an attorney whenever embarking on a project that might involve copyright issues.

Please be aware that copyright laws vary significantly from country to country. The specific regulations referenced in this document generally apply to U.S. federal law only. We recommend consulting your country's specific laws where applicable.

What is Copyright?

Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of federal, state, and local governments to the authors of any “original works of authorship”—so, these laws generally apply to works such as books, pamphlets, letters and e-mails, memos, newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, sound recordings, web pages, artwork, and more—even doodles and scribbles are protected by copyright. This protection is available to both published and unpublished works.

Today, one does not have to register a work's copyright, nor print a © symbol on the work, to receive copyright protection. Protection automatically extends to any qualifying work, whether published or not, and whether created in the U.S. or in almost any country of the world. Generally, you should always assume that a work is copyrighted.

Rights of Copyright Owners

Copyright laws generally give the copyright owner the exclusive right to do (or to authorize others to do) the following:

- Copy or scan;
- Prepare derivative works (for example, translate into another language, create a musical version of the work, create an abridged version, etc.);
- Distribute copies of the work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership;
- Public performance (for example, showing a movie at a public event, performing a play or song, etc.);
- Public display.

It is illegal for anyone to violate any of the rights belonging to the owner of copyright. Some possible violations include photocopying/scanning; uploading to Web sites; copying software; sharing or selling audio/video files; putting on public film exhibitions; etc. In most of these cases you must have the written permission of the copyright owner before you can legally do these kinds of activities.

Who Owns Copyrights?

Ordinarily, the author or creator of a work is the copyright owner. Sometimes it is easy to determine who owns the copyright—for example, if you have a letter in your collection, the author of the letter owns the copyright. In the case of a photograph, the photographer is the copyright owner.

Sometimes it is more complex. In the case of a taped talk, many people may be considered “authors” and all of them would have some right to the work: the speechwriter, the speaker, and the person taping the event.

There are exceptions to this, however. For example, if an employee creates something in the course of his/her employment, generally the employer is then the copyright owner of that work.

Also, an author can transfer copyright ownership to your archives, but this requires a signed, written document, and a certain amount of legal formality.

Copyright Protection Lasts Many Years

Most copyrights today last through the life of the author, plus 70 years. When a copyright owner dies, the copyright continues as part of his/her estate.

Most works that have remained unpublished (manuscripts, letters, etc.) are subject to the basic protection of “life plus 70 years.” Works published before 1978 can have copyright protection for a maximum term of 95 years, though some have shorter copyright periods, and, for some, copyright restrictions that existed earlier may have already expired.

Eventually, a copyright will expire and the formerly protected work will fall into the “public domain,” where it can be used without restriction. But for materials relating to Alcoholics Anonymous, in many cases, works will remain copyrighted for many years.

Can You Use Copyrighted Works without Infringement?

The rights given to copyright owners are not unlimited. The laws include numerous exceptions to the rights of copyright owners, and many allow certain uses for education and research.

The best known exception is the doctrine of “fair use,” which permits works to be copied for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research. Fair use may be described as the privilege to use copyrighted material in a reasonable manner without the owner’s consent. Examples of activities that may be excused as fair use include: distributing copies of a section of an article in class for educational purposes; using an excerpt of a film in a film review; or creating a parody of a song. However, there are no hard and fast rules about which kinds of use are “fair” and which uses may be “infringing,” so relying on fair use as a justification for copyright infringement can be risky.

Other exemptions permit libraries and archives to copy some works for their customers on a limited basis, and for the purpose of preservation. There are many other exceptions as well.

For More Information

NOTE: *These sites have been listed for reference only. It does not imply endorsement nor approval of the A.A. General Service Office Archives.*

For further information about copyright, consult the U.S. Copyright Office:

U.S. Copyright Office

101 Independence Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20559-6000
(202) 707-3000
www.copyright.gov

Other helpful resources:

Copyright Information Center
Cornell University
E-mail: copyright@cornell.edu
<http://www.copyright.cornell.edu>

Copyright and Fair Use

Stanford University Libraries
<http://fairuse.stanford.edu>

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. If you need more information, the G.S.O. Archives can send you a complete *Oral Histories Kit*, which provides more tips, technical information, forms and questionnaires, and a source list for more information. See page 48 for our contact information.

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 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.

Getting started

In making the initial contact with a prospective interviewee, be certain to make a clear presentation of the purpose and nature of the interview. One need not give lengthy explanations but should inform the interviewee of the time investment involved, of the

general areas to be covered, how the interview will be conducted, what will be done with the tape/transcript, and how it will be used and for what purposes. Being explicit and direct with the prospective interviewee inspires confidence in the oral history endeavor.

The interviewer may wish to do background reading and research before the interview, consulting The Grapevine Digital Archive, old Conference and assembly reports, area or district newsletters, directories, etc. Without any background the interviewer cannot ask the types of questions that will elicit the most pertinent information possessed by the interviewee.

Before the interview, you may wish to give the interviewee a list of topics you might cover, in addition to a biographical sketch for the interviewee to fill out. These materials, given a week or so in advance of the actual interview will stimulate an interviewee's memories.

Oral history release form

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. While G.S.O. can provide a sample release form, consultation with legal counsel in your area may prove to be a wise investment in order to protect both the interviewee and the local committee. A release form might include:

1. Name of the interviewee.
2. Name of the committee under whose auspices the history is being obtained.
3. Date or other significant information about 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 interviewee (and any other A.A. members mentioned on the recording) against misuse at the public level.
6. Transfer of rights to the committee.
7. Statement of limitations, if any.
8. Signature of interviewee, including date signed.

Tips for interviewing

- You will want to use a tape recorder, mini-disc recorder, or portable CD recorder to record an oral history interview. There are a number of recorders available, and each has its benefits and drawbacks. The G.S.O. Archives can provide guidance as to which recorder to purchase. A local library or historical society may loan this kind of equipment.
- Run a test on the equipment before you begin the actual interview and make sure it is working properly.
- Always begin the recording by identifying yourself, the interviewee, and note the date and place of recording.
- Ask evocative questions, rather than questions with easy yes or no answers.
- Ask the interviewee to focus on events he/she *directly witnessed or participated*

in. Ask the interviewee to begin with his/her own story of recovery and continue with impressions about A.A., comments on the recovery process and the way things were, and any anecdotal memories that come to mind.

- Allow the interviewee to talk freely on whatever topics he/she wishes to. Use the questions listed on the following page only as a general guideline to keep the flow of discussion focused. The interviewee might touch on subjects of interest that you never thought to ask about.
- In some cases it is also advisable to interview a group of long-timers together—a sponsor and sponsee, a group of men who started a group together or got sober together, friends who have been in the same group for decades, etc. These kinds of interviews can be fun and very informative.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the interviewee. Schedule your sessions at a convenient time. Older people may tire easily—cut the interview off at the first sign of fatigue. Each interview should be a pleasant and rewarding experience for all parties involved.
- If possible, prepare some sort of written report for the group, district, or area as a tangible result of their participation. Remember to save all of your tapes, notes and any other documentation that you have accumulated. *Label everything with names, dates and places.* Ideally, all tapes should be indexed and transcribed. You will be more conscientious about documentation if you place yourself in the position of the A.A. member who, many decades in the future, will be using your project as a source of inspiration and recovery.

Sample Interview Questions

This list of questions is based on sample questions shared generously by Area 10, Colorado, and Area 20, Illinois. It is intended 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, have fun! If you would like a more complete list of questions, contact the G.S.O. Archives and request the Oral Histories Kit.

Before A.A.

- Please tell me a little about your life before you found A.A.
- How and when did you start drinking?
- When and how did your drinking get out of control?
- When did you know you had hit bottom?

Recovery

- When did you first hear of A.A., and from what source?
- 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? What did you think of it?
- Can you tell me about your early sobriety, your Step work, and problems you had in those first days of learning the A.A. way?
- What was A.A.'s "reputation" in the community? How was it 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?
- 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?
- Which 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 you'd care to share?
- Would you tell me about your experiences sponsoring others? Who are some of your favorite sponsees?

Unity—Group issues and community perception of A.A.

- Today, Conference-approved literature is available to help A.A. members deal with a wide variety of challenging questions. Back in the early days all you had was the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, common sense and your compassion. What did you think of the Big Book, and how often did you use it? 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?
- 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—or similarities—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 the 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?)
- 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 in this millennium frequently host A.A. and other Twelve Step meetings. Did treatment centers exist in your area when you sobered up? 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?

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

Service

- How and why did you get into service work?
- What contributions did you, yourself, make to the growth of the Fellowship?
- What do you remember of early conferences, assemblies, and conventions? Can you recall opening intergroup or central offices?
- What were your first impressions of A.A.'s Three Legacies: Recovery, Unity, and Service?
- What was your first impression of A.A. servants, G.S.O. staff, delegates? Describe your first encounters.
- Describe your committee activities over your years of service.
- Is there anything you regret? Any mistakes you believe you made? Any plans that failed that you wish had been successful?
- Do you see any particular changes in the A.A. Fellowship and its service processes, since your start in service?
- Are there any strong similarities in the A.A. Fellowship and its history of service, from your own service time through today?

Providing access to oral histories

The policies for accessing oral history recordings are guided by the local archives' research and access policies. Through the Oral History Release form, the interviewee should describe what limitations, if any, he or she places on the recording and its accessibility. For example, he or she may request that the recording not be made available for a certain period of time, or until after his/her death. The wishes of the interviewee should always be respected.

Preserving oral histories

Audio recordings in archives collection are often extremely fragile. Tapes on cassette, reel-to-reel recordings, and all other magnetic tapes degrade quickly. It is essential to develop a plan for preserving these significant recordings. Generally, you should identify the most at-risk recordings in your collection and devise a long-term plan for transferring the recordings to a digital format. Usually, it is best to have a professional digitization company perform the transfer, although there are pieces of equipment you can buy, fairly inexpensively, if you wish to do it yourself. Be sure to label and identify each digital file accurately and completely.

Finally, it is important to save your digital recordings on redundant systems. Don't just leave them on your hard drive, but burn them to CDs (or DVDs), and/or use a USB flash drive or another storage device. When burning to CD, be sure to use archival-quality CDs, which are made with much more stable components than regular CD-ROMs. Archival-quality CDs and DVDs are not that much more expensive, and are estimated to survive at least twice as long as the average office-supply store CD.

Archives Committee Activities

Shared Experiences

Just as each A.A. group is autonomous, so is each area and intergroup 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, several 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.s in the area.

This section will be updated from time to time, to reflect new sharing and experience from different areas and districts. If your area or district has a wonderful story to share, please send it to the G.S.O. Archives anytime.

Northern Illinois (Area 20): Serving a delegate area with 16 to 24 districts, while also maintaining an archives collection, provides an unmatched opportunity to develop interest in our A.A. heritage. One success story of cooperation between area and district committees continues today in Northern Illinois with its Group History Project.

Area 20 Archives released its set of survey questions in 1998, expanded from an original set in the 1982 Handbook from the A.A. Archives at G.S.O., but with an added relevance: the project records group activities in present-day A.A. The search for early details on meeting dates, sites, members, meeting styles, self-support, community in and around the group, and general service activity to "A.A. as a whole" is balanced with the reports on what groups do today. A comparison between yesterday and today creates a type of benchmark, too. Slowly-received responses proved worth the wait, and a new chapter "Our Groups' Lives," was blended into the area's published history book, as only one result of the project.

Many groups have round-table discussions to develop their replies to the survey. They take their time and present insightful tales of past and present life in the Fellowship. The details of struggles and successes in a group's early growth involve its members in shared detective work, tracking down past members, and gathering its records and memorabilia. The research effort also leads to discoveries of archival records in district, area, and G.S.O. files. The survey's closing thank you states "Your response to this Group History Project will make a difference to the still-suffering alcoholic who finds recovery and fellowship with an A.A. group, who might also find this record years from now."

We continue to distribute the surveys to district archivists for their outreach, and many districts now maintain the responses that add to their own, smaller archives collections. The interest in and the appreciation for our A.A. past seems to wane and grow at different times with A.A.'s membership, but the capture of the details and facts in our group histories prevents a sometimes elusive heritage from fading into myths and half-truths. Archives Workbook readers can find the survey on the Area 20 Web site: www.aa-nia.org. If you find it helpful, please pass it on.

Kentucky (Area 26): *Because we have a limited budget and no paid archivist in Area 26, we have relied on three sources of information: G.S.O. Archivist and staff, University of Kentucky Special Collections and the A.A. National Archives Workshop, currently more than ten years old. It would be almost impossible to operate the Area 26 Archives Repository without this help.*

The area's archival material was held at the University's Special Collections from about 1982 to 1992. It was stored in boxes and was very difficult to access. A university staff archivist was responsible for most of the care and upkeep. Area 26 later paid \$300 per year for an upgrade to acid-free supplies for our material.

The archival material moved from the university in about 1993, and was stored in Bardstown, KY, but there were some other archival materials floating around Lexington, KY, in the hands of individuals. In 2001, space was rented in our current building to house the collection in an official Archives Repository. Over many years more material was collected, as several people realized that they held material that belonged to Area 26. In January 2003, a large collection of records that had been held in private hands was finally delivered. Everything was under one roof for the first time in ten years.

Unfortunately, some items didn't make it, having been lost to mildew and rot, thrown away, or in some other way deteriorated beyond repair. In August 2004, the Area Archives chair opened the Repository to the Fellowship, on an as-needed basis, on weekends primarily. We have had as many as 100 people visit on a weekend when area activities/meetings were in Lexington.

We have made many mistakes in our 25 years of existence and continue to fly blind in some ways. Are we perfect? No. It is important to remember that the history of the Fellowship is perhaps our greatest asset; it is our "spiritual property." It is still possible to explain to a newcomer exactly where we came from.

Western New York (Area 50): *Our archives has moved from the trunks of cars, suitcases, and cardboard boxes, to basements of members' homes, then to a 5' x 12' storage unit, and today, finally, a repository in a 12' x 18' space we rent from our central office. We have two three-drawer fireproof filing cabinets, and we built a 12-ft. workbench that pretty much fills one wall. We also have room for a desk and computer.*

Although we are part of the area's general service structure, we recently became self-supporting. Our committee consists of an archivist (nonrotating, appointed), and chairperson (two-year commitment, elected), and we have the privilege of having two past delegates on the committee: one serves as treasurer, and the other serves wherever she is needed.

We recently purchased a new computer and are in the process of cataloging and inventorying our holdings. Also, we held an Open House, to give the Area a chance to see our repository, and had a past delegate with 56 years sobriety speak at the event. We also offer a traveling display for group anniversaries and service events. We have an Archives Committee meeting once a month. We attend general service assembly meetings seven times per year, and we also give courtesy reports to our central committee meetings once a month.

Tennessee (Area 64): The Area 64 Archives is housed in a free-standing building, approximately 1500 square feet, located at 810 B North Maney Avenue, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 37130. Our web address is <http://area64tnarchives.org>, and our phone number is 615-895-5225. We are open Saturdays between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to our Fellowship. We are also open by appointment anytime.

Approximately five years ago, Districts 20-26 (Memphis) formed an archives committee and a repository, located on Alexander Street at the Memphis Center. They have a room approximately 15' x 20' full of A.A. history, mostly from the Memphis area. This committee still sends valuable memories to Area 64.

The next committee to come on board was formed of Districts 80-84 (Chattanooga, Tennessee). They house their archives in their central office.

District 9 on the Cumberland Plateau also formed a committee. They house their Archives at the Fourth Dimension Club in Crossville, TN. They have a 7' x 5' glass display box and a 6-ft. wooden cabinet that is secure in a corner. They're a very active committee and they are having their third Archives Workshop for Area 64.

District 1 (Kingsport, TN) is the latest to come together. They have a repository at the Kingsport Serenity Group in Kingsport, Tennessee. The room is approximately 10' x 12' with several display cases and lots of shelf display space.

That's four towns with many of our districts represented. We are now working with Districts 40-42 in South Central Tennessee, Districts 50-52 in Knoxville, and Districts 30-35 in Nashville. The Archives Committee in Area 64 is alive and well and growing.

Southern Wisconsin (Area 75): As early as 1982, Area 75 appointed an archives chairperson to seek and preserve its history. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s several dedicated archives chairpersons actively collected group histories, tapes of oldtimers in the area, old A.A. literature and memorabilia, and more. In the mid-1990s, Area 75 began to take a traveling Archive to conferences.

My name is Nancy S. I was asked by Area 75's chairperson in 1999 to undertake the position of Archives chairperson. I accepted the responsibility, commitment, and necessary dedication even though I experienced the anxiety and fear of the unknown. I began with various materials of Area 75, which were stored at the Milwaukee Central Office, and six boxes of assorted papers, including Area 75 records, district records, group histories, and a variety of other items.

Since 1999 we have actively compiled district meeting minutes and Area 75 assembly records. Most districts have sent minutes, flyers, programs, newspaper clippings, and anything else they wanted included in Area 75 Archives. We also added central office publications, our area conference flyers and programs, an abundance of group histories, maps, and information regarding the general history of A.A. We have arranged the materials, placed them in acid-free sleeves, and created a full and complete inventory.

After a great deal of research with other archivists in Canada and the United States, I was elected as the first Area 75 Archivist in 2004. This position is non-rotating. The archivist has no voting rights at any Area 75 assemblies. The assembly may terminate the archivist's position and elect a new archivist accord-

ing to the Third Legacy Procedure, if certain conditions regarding regular attendance and cooperation are not met. The Area 75 Archivist regularly reports at Area 75 assemblies.

The Area 75 Archivist presents the traveling Archives display at group, district, and area functions and is responsible for maintaining and preserving display items, as well as confidential material. It is the responsibility of the Archivist to uphold our anonymity that is so precious to us in all displayed materials, and to maintain open communication and keep an open mind while guided by suggestions from the Area 75 Archives chairperson, as well as district Archives chairs, who make up the Archives Committee, about what to keep, display, and matters relating to the Archives of Area 75 as a whole.

District Archives chairs collect district meeting minutes, flyers, and group histories. They are encouraged to display their material alongside the Area 75 displays at conferences.

After many years of being stored in the Milwaukee central office and in the basement of the area archivist, the proposal to rehouse Area 75's Archives was passed in September 2005, and is now housed in a rented room that is more than adequate and provides a comfortable atmosphere in the lower level of a church school building. Since the Area 75 Archives budget is limited, a request went out to the Fellowship to provide some of the needed items to furnish the space. Almost immediately we received generous contributions of furniture, audiovisual equipment, and even a computer with a new scanner.

The grand opening of Area 75 Archives was Sunday, November 13, 2005. At noon, the ribbon was cut by Area 75 Archivist and the area delegate and the doors were opened. Over 100 people attended; it was a dream come true.

During 2006 the Archives room was open every Sunday between 12:00 and 4:00. Arrangements could be made to research materials at another time if necessary. In 2006, the Archives Committee also succeeded with its goal of developing our mission statement and purpose statement.

There are times when working with the Archives is overwhelming and a person just can't understand why they do it any longer. Then they pack the material, load it into their vehicle, and off to a conference they go. All is renewed when the newcomer, with a tear in their eye says, "Wow, thanks, this is great! I never knew my Dad because he died when I was young, but I knew he was the D.C.M. in District 32. After reading that entire binder I feel like I know him now." That is a true story. True, the Archives are a history of facts, but that day I understood just how spiritual the Archives also are.

Western Washington, Whatcom County, Bellingham (Area 72, District 11):
In 2006, we began creating a photographic record of the halls in Whatcom County where A.A. groups have met or are now meeting. Although we still have a way to go on this project, we mounted the photos and used them as part of our display for the annual Gratitude Banquet, held every November by District 11. We made our display into a contest with entry forms for people to list the halls they could identify. The winner received a copy of our published Area History: Our Stories Disclose... A History of the Western

Washington Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. People had a lot of fun looking at the photos and talking about the halls.

We requested that all groups update their history, and distributed Group History Forms at G.S.R. meetings and via e-mail to G.S.R.s. We also created an Oral History informed consent form, using G.S.O.'s guidelines. We are making sure we submit articles for our monthly district newsletters to keep the district aware of our needs and activities.

We moved the district archives collections from a storage facility in the county to one inside the Bellingham city limits. This storage facility allows us to keep our collections all in one building. It feels like a safer place to work, has better climate control, is on a bus line, and is far less of a commute for most of the volunteers who help us with the archives. The management, when told that Alcoholics Anonymous would be their new renter, responded with "You folks have done a lot of good in the world."

As mentioned 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 and district archivists often create traveling displays showcasing some of their treasures to exhibit at A.A. events. Many areas hold workshops and other high-profile events specifically focused on A.A.'s archives and history.

Area and district newsletters are another resource for spreading information about archives. Some newsletters print excerpts from archival material in order to increase awareness of the value of archives. Some areas have prepared special bookmarks with the plea: "Don't throw me away; I belong to A.A. Archives," which 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 A.A.'s 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.

The Archives of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous is a repository for official and unofficial records that document A.A.'s history in the U.S. and Canada. These include personal collections, manuscripts, correspondence, publications, photographs and memorabilia related to the origin and development of the A.A. Fellowship.

Many local A.A. groups, districts, and areas have vibrant archives collections of their own; for this reason the Archives of the General Service Office generally does not seek to acquire collections with a focus on local groups, districts, or areas, as these may be more significant to archives in those areas.

The Archives' acquisition priorities include, but are not limited to:

- Publications released by A.A.W.S., including books, directories, annual reports, Conference Reports, surveys, booklets, pamphlets, magazines, newsletters, service pieces, public service announcements, press releases and other media relations material, and more.
- The Grapevine magazine, and other material produced by The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.
- Material published outside A.A.W.S. that describe the program of A.A., the problem of alcoholism generally, or that otherwise have significance to the organization, such as books, articles, speeches, reviews, television and media programming, and more.
- Audiovisual collections including: photographs, videos, and sound recordings significant to A.A.; recordings of General Service Conferences, International Conventions, and World Service Meetings as well as other significant events; speeches and talks by early A.A. pioneers, A.A.W.S. trustees and directors, and

other individuals; and more.

- Minutes and other documentation of A.A.W.S. Board meetings, committee meetings, Conferences and Conventions;
- Workpapers, subject files, correspondence, reports, and speeches of General Service Office staff and general managers.
- Personal papers of A.A.W.S. trustees, directors, and other significant figures, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, including early A.A. pioneers—these may include correspondence, journals, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, manuscripts, speeches, obituaries, awards and artifacts.
- Oral histories and stories of figures significant to the national and international operations of A.A.
- Group and area histories, and selected reports and newsletters of groups and areas.

G.S.O. Archives Ownership of Material

Materials donated to the G.S.O. Archives become part of its repository. Most items are subject to the access and reproduction policies of the G.S.O. Archives. These policies are reviewed regularly by the trustees' Archives Committee. Generally, donated items are free of access restrictions unless the contributor stipulates limited access to certain sensitive materials. It is the G.S.O. Archives' policy to protect the personal privacy of the contributor.

Typically, the G.S.O. Archives does not accept items on loan. Also, we generally do not loan any original records. It is the G.S.O. Archives' policy to verify, where appropriate and necessary, rightful ownership of materials being offered to the collection, and to seek title to the donated property. The G.S.O. Archives conforms to professional ethics established by professional archives associations.

For the full Collection Policy of the G.S.O. Archives, please see our Web site: www.aa.org, or contact us.

Access Policies at the General Service Office Archives

Adopted by the trustees' Archives Committee
October 29, 2006

Materials Use Policy

The materials in the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office Archives are available to all A.A. members and other serious researchers who have an interest in the legacy of Alcoholics Anonymous. However, access is controlled, which is necessary to ensure the anonymity of all persons mentioned in archival materials, in accordance with A.A. traditions. Access also must be controlled in order to protect the materials themselves from loss or physical damage.

The following policies and rules have been established by the trustees' Archives Committee of the General Service Board of A.A. in cooperation with the G.S.O. Archivist. These policies attempt to balance the needs of users, the exclusive rights of copyright holders, and the Archives' own responsibilities toward its collections.

Getting Answers

Visitors and all interested parties are invited to make requests for information about any aspect of A.A. history. Normally the Archives staff will conduct the research, find the answers you seek, and deliver them via mail or e-mail. We get thousands of requests from members and friends of A.A. each year.

Typical requests involve:

- Information about the events that led to the founding of A.A.;
- Biographical information of A.A.'s co-founders and early pioneers;
- Statements and opinions of Bill W. and Dr. Bob;
- The origins and growth of the A.A. Steps, Traditions, and guiding principles;
- Information about various editions and/or statements in the Big Book and other works;
- The uses of A.A. prayers, slogans and logos, as well as chips, tokens, and medallions;
- Historical group practices and meeting formats;
- Group and area histories, including international;
- Information about the history of A.A. among special populations, minorities, and women;
- Old issues of newsletters;
- Old versions of A.A. pamphlets and literature;
- Published photographs of A.A. founders, pioneers, and events;
- The growth of the service structure;
- Actions of boards, recorded in meeting minutes;
- Various actions of the General Service Conference since 1951.

We always welcome your questions! Please contact the archives anytime you are curious about an element of A.A.'s legacy.

Access

All visitors are welcomed 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 be able to take advantage of the G.S.O. Archives.

If a researcher would like to physically handle, read, and review a large quantity of archival material, he or she should contact the Archives staff ahead of time to make arrangements. In most cases the Archives staff can provide access to published information, such as books, newsletters, magazines, pamphlets, service pieces, and reports, in some cases dating to the earliest days of A.A.

However, if a researcher wishes to use any unpublished materials in the Archives (correspondence, meeting minutes, financial information, manuscripts, etc.), a written request for access must be made to the trustees' Archives Committee. The user must give full information about the subject, scope, and purpose of the research being undertaken. Our application for on-site access is included in this workbook on page 45. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. As the committee meets three times each year, on the last weekends in January, July and October, research requests are considered three times a year. In special cases, consideration can be obtained at other times.

Trustees, directors and staff members may access archival materials (with the exception of restricted files) without having to make such requests, only if the requested material is to be used solely in the furtherance of their duties in their assigned roles. In the case of requests made out of personal interest, trustees, directors and staff must follow the above procedure and file a written request prior to being granted access.

Protecting Anonymity

Because of the special nature of the materials in our collection, all researchers must learn and respect all A.A. traditions that may bear on their research—in particular the preservation of anonymity of all A.A. members.

The permission to conduct research is granted conditional on your agreement to strictly maintain the anonymity of all A.A. members, alive and deceased, including A.A.'s co-founders. You are respectfully asked, if citing these materials, to quote only the first name and last initial, thus preserving A.A.'s Eleventh Tradition: the anonymity of its members at the level of the public media. No researcher is ever given permission to publish full names of individuals. Anyone who does so will be denied further access to the A.A. Archives.

Photoduplication (Scanning and Photocopying)

Photocopies or scans of published materials, such as pamphlets, articles, and newsletters, will be made available if the physical condition of the materials will allow for duplication. Original correspondence, unpublished manuscripts, and some other confidential materials will not be duplicated.

All photoduplication will be done by Archives staff. On-site researchers will not be permitted to use scanners, cameras, photocopiers, or other devices to make copies. Researchers may designate a limited number of pages (of published items only) to be photocopied or scanned by the archives staff. Depending on the quantity requested and the workload of the archives staff, the copies may have to be mailed or e-mailed to the researcher at a later date.

Please see the Archives' full Photocopying Policy (page 38) for more information.

Copyright and Ownership

The A.A. Archives have a large variety of materials, which may or may not be in the public domain. In some cases A.A. World Services (A.A.W.S.) does not hold copyright for the materials in its collections. The permission to access and research does not include or imply permission for the use of intellectual property or any right to intellectual property in the Archives' holdings. It is solely the responsibility of the researcher to obtain the permission of the copyright owner before publishing, reprinting, or making extensive use of any copyrighted material. Any agreement as to intellectual property—such as *publishing, reprinting, or quoting from any archives material*—must be separately requested in writing.

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose than private study, scholarship or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement and/or subject to criminal prosecution.

Permission to Publish

As stated above, permission to access our materials and have copies made *does not* signify that a researcher has been given permission to publish, distribute, or further copy the material. Researchers who wish to use the Archives' materials in a publication, performance, or broadcast must complete and submit a separate application.

Researchers who plan eventual publication of their work are urged to make early inquiries concerning publication rights as they begin their research.

We request that two free copies of all publications which rely on the Archives' holdings be donated to the Archives as soon as the work is published. In giving permission to publish a manuscript, the Archives does not surrender its own right thereafter to publish the manuscript or to grant permission to others to publish it; nor does the Archives assume any responsibility for infringement of copyright or of publication rights in the manuscript held by others.

Policies For On-Site Research

The following procedures are designed to make the researcher's visit as useful as possible while preserving the archival materials for future generations.

PLEASE NOTE: If you wish to review any *unpublished* materials in the Archives (correspondence, meeting minutes, financial information, manuscripts, etc.), a written request for access must be made to the trustees' Archives Committee, and must receive Committee approval before access will be granted. Our application for on-site access is included in this workbook on page 45.

1. All researchers should notify staff of the day(s) they plan to visit. Planning the visit ahead of time will help ensure that the researcher's time is used efficiently. Researchers and archives staff should work together before the visit to identify all relevant materials, so that staff can locate and retrieve them. Some materials are stored off-site and these require advance notice to be retrieved. If we do not receive advance notice of a visit, we will be limited as to how we can assist with research.
2. Researchers must register upon arrival to the Archives. Our staff is available between the hours of 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
3. Researchers must deposit coats, bags and backpacks, and other personal property not essential to their work with the archival staff.
4. Researchers are not admitted to the archives vault. All materials will be obtained from and returned to the archives vault by staff members.
5. Materials may only be used in the Archives offices, at the tables provided.
6. Researchers may use laptop computers to take notes, or use pencils only. To avoid possible permanent marks on materials, pens are prohibited. Post-It notes, paper clips, and other potentially damaging flags are also not permitted.
7. All photoduplication is carried out by Archives staff. Cameras and scanners are not permitted, and researchers are not permitted to make their own photocopies.
8. All material must be handled with extreme care to ensure its preservation for future generations. Always preserve the existing order and arrangement of all materials. Turn pages carefully, make no marks on the materials, and do not rest books or other objects on the surface of items. When handling certain items staff may request that researchers wear cotton gloves
9. Eating and drinking are not permitted in the Archives.
10. Please return all materials to archives staff at least 15 minutes before the Archives closes.

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 historical, administrative and organizational records of the Fellowship, as well as other historical 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 nonmembers, 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 *at the discretion of A.A. World Services, Inc.*,* 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 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.

Policy on Permission to Quote from A.A. Material

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

* The italicized phrase was added by the trustees' Archives Committee, February 2, 2009.

Sound and Video Access Policies at the General Service Office Archives

Adopted by the trustees' Archives Committee
January 28, 2007

The G.S.O. Archives collection's sound and video recordings include productions by the G.S.O., individual A.A. members, and friends of A.A. The recordings include tapes of conferences, meetings, and other special events; speeches by Bill W. and other early A.A. pioneers; oral history interviews; and more. These recordings have great significance to the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, and help carry the message of the Fellowship of A.A. For any serious researcher, we will endeavor to provide the highest level of access to these historical materials.

However, we are bound by several factors that may limit our ability to duplicate or provide access to our recordings. In most cases the General Service Office does not hold copyright for the recordings. Many of the items are unique and in some cases the Archives retains the only known copy. In addition, many recordings reveal A.A. members' identities or contain other sensitive content. Because of the one-of-a-kind nature of these items and the Archives Department's commitment to A.A.'s guiding principles, the following policies and restrictions apply to their duplication and use.

Procedures for Use

Researchers wishing to learn about our holdings, or wishing to listen to specific sound recordings or view archival video recordings should first contact the archives by mail, phone, or e-mail. Each request will be considered individually. Depending on the needs of the researcher and the types of materials requested, a researcher may have to establish approval with the trustees' Archives Committee before being given access to the materials. The trustees' Archives Committee meets to decide on these requests three times each year. If the request requires this approval, the archivists will direct the user through the application process.

If visiting the Archives, researchers also must make prior arrangements with the Archives so that proper playback and listening equipment can be made available.

Archives staff may have to view and/or listen to recordings to determine subject content and/or suitability for outside distribution and duplication, paying particular attention to issues of anonymity. This service will be provided for a fee, to be determined by the length of the recording, and may be limited by staff availability and other office priorities. Note that this service is simply a preliminary listening/viewing to determine content, and no transcription will result. If the user requires a transcription, this will be done by a professional transcription service and additional charges may apply.

Duplication requests will be filled in a timely manner based on staff responsibilities. There will be a duplication charge, which includes preparation time and actual copying time. Researchers will also be expected to pay for the cost of materials, such as CDs and DVDs. If a separate vendor must be engaged to make a copy, the charge will be passed on to the researcher at cost. The Archives staff will provide the requester with an estimate of the approximate total cost for examining, preparing, duplicating, and shipping the recording(s) before any work is begun. Note that certain formats cannot be duplicated because of a lack of compatible duplication equipment.

Finally, given our limited staff resources, we ask researchers to restrict their requests for duplication to a reasonable quantity of material. The Archives Department reserves the right to impose limits on the amount of material that can be requested at any given time and by any one individual. In most cases, due to staff resources and copyright restrictions, a limit of one copy per item per request will be imposed.

Duplication Restrictions

The Archives Department reserves the right to restrict duplication due to concerns of copyright, anonymity, condition, or donor requirements.

- *Copyright:* If the Archives staff has any reason to believe that duplicating a videotape or sound recording will violate U.S. Copyright Law, they will refuse the request. The person requesting the reproduction assumes all responsibility for infringement of copyright, or any use that exceeds fair use provisions. Any commercial application of copyrighted materials is not fair use and always requires the consent of the copyright holder. Permission to reproduce does not constitute permission to publish—see below for publication restrictions.
- *Anonymity:* Users are restricted by A.A.'s Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions on anonymity from revealing the name of any A.A. member(s), living or deceased. At the level of the public media, such individuals, including the co-founders and other A.A. pioneers, must remain anonymous under all circumstances. If applicable the Archives will require users to commit in writing to preserving A.A. members' identities.
- *Condition:* Sound and video recording media (VHS tapes, cassettes, etc.) are typically fragile, and degrade quickly. Frequent use quickens this deterioration. The Archives Department will always act to ensure the survival of its audio recordings, and may deny any request that could not be made without damaging the original recording. In some cases, if a duplicate recording is to be made for a researcher, the Archives will require another duplicate copy to be made for its collection to facilitate ongoing use and preservation, at the researcher's expense.
- *Donor Requirements:* Some donors of audio or video material may have imposed restrictions on access as a condition of the donation. These will always be respected.

Distribution and Publication Restrictions

Permission to access our materials and have copies made does not signify that a researcher has been given permission to publish or further copy the material. Users will not be permitted to make additional copies of sound recordings or videos for sale or widespread distribution.

The Archives Department restricts use of its recordings in television, video, motion picture, and all other media productions, including posting on the Internet. For use in these media, separate permission must be obtained from A.A.W.S.

It is solely the responsibility of the researcher to obtain the permission of the copyright owner before publishing any previously unpublished material. In many cases A.A.W.S. does not hold copyright for the audiovisual materials in its collections. Permission to publish is required from both the owner of copyright and the G.S.O. Archives as owner of the physical property.

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose than private study, scholarship or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement and/or subject to criminal prosecution.

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
- Obituaries
- 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 (in addition to 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 — INFORMATION REQUEST LOG

This form is a handy way to keep track of the requests for information you receive in your archives. By keeping a log of past information requests, an archivist can more easily respond to questions already received and researched before.

Date received: _____

Date answered: _____

Name of requester: _____

Contact Information

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Request received via:

Telephone E-mail Mail In-Person

Question or subject: _____

Note information found and source used: _____

Researched by: _____

A.A. Archives — G.S.O RESEARCHER APPLICATION

This application can be adopted for local use. The application applies only to researchers working with original, unpublished archival materials on-site in the G.S.O. Archives. It does not apply to those who simply call or write because they are seeking an answer to a certain question. Prior approval of the trustees' Archives Committee must be obtained before a researcher will be given access to unpublished archival material for on-site research.

I hereby apply for permission to consult the following archival material, for the following stated purpose(s).

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Affiliation (if any): _____

Items requested: _____

Subject of research: _____

Purpose or expected product of research (book, article, thesis, dissertation, film, area/local archives use, personal/family research, other):

AGREEMENT

By signing below, I signify that I have read and understood the “Materials Use Policy” and the “Policies for On-Site Research.” I understand that if I do not adhere to these policies, my privileges as a researcher may be revoked.

I acknowledge and agree that an essential condition of the permission granted to me is that I will abide by the anonymity policy. I will not identify any member of A.A., including its co-founders, other than by the first name and first initial of the last name. I agree that any publication of full names at the level of press and media is a breach of this agreement.

THE RESEARCHER WILL DEFEND, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS THE G.S.O. ARCHIVES, THE A.A. GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE, A.A. WORLD SERVICES, INC., AND ITS OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES, AND AGENTS AGAINST ALL CLAIMS, DEMANDS, COSTS, AND EXPENSES INCLUDING ATTORNEYS’ FEES INCURRED BY ANY COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT OR ANY OTHER LEGAL OR REGULATORY CAUSE OF ACTION ARISING FROM THE USE OF G.S.O. ARCHIVES MATERIALS.

Name: _____ (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**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 (historical 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 (historical); 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 — historical material.

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

Regional Forums — reports.

Scrapbooks — 1939 – 1961.

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

Washingtonians — historical 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, www.aa.org, 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, 17 N. State St., Suite 1425, Chicago, IL 60602-3315, 312-606-0722, toll-free 866-722-7858, fax 312-606-0728, 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:

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

Managing Archival and Manuscript Repositories. Michael Kurtz. SAA (2004) 206 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.

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.

A Code of Ethics for Archivists. SAA (2005) 1 pp.

Historical 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 — 1943; 1949

The Language of the Heart

Closing

We hope this handbook will help you in your daily efforts of collecting and organizing historical 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

