

‘Why can’t I have a copy of that letter?’

Most people would surely never upload an image or video to a Web site, put an unlicensed software program on their computer, publish or distribute photocopies of copyrighted works without appropriate credit or permission from the author. Yet, many people will — without much consideration — make photocopies of unpublished letters and publish these in newsletters, books or on the Web. Though unintentional, photocopying and distributing these unpublished works could constitute a violation of the Copyright Act.

At the General Service Office Archives we are often challenged with requests for photocopies of members’ personal letters or other unpublished materials. For instance, we receive numerous requests for photocopies of early personal correspondence between “A.A. Headquarters” and A.A. members in different cities around the world; letters from a first contact writing to the office for help and then eventually establishing a group in that city; letters between co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob; and letters between Bill W. and A.A. members on various topics.

Those early letters are vital to the collection as they provide historical evidence of the growth of A.A. in many cities. They contain facts, humorous anecdotes and tragic tales that firmly remind us why our Fellowship exists. It is therefore understandable why there would be a need for photocopies of these early letters. Such requests are usually forwarded to the trustees’ Archives Committee for consideration, and each request is thoughtfully deliberated and a final decision made that is supported by the G.S.O. Archives Photocopying Policy. Occasionally, a final decision is met, with frustration by the requestor, either because of misinformation or lack of awareness. Why do we have a policy? Who created this policy? Where might it be found? These are questions we frequently need to address.

The Archives Photocopying Policy was reexamined and rewritten by a subcommittee of the Archives Committee and the revised policy was adopted by the full committee in October 2011. It reads:

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 his-

torical 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. In addition, the policy’s purpose is to protect the anonymity and privacy of our members, nonmembers, and to comply with the U.S. Copyright Law as it affects the collection.

Photocopies of copyright material and certain other materials authorized by the archivist, will be provided at the discretion of A.A.W.S., 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. It is the responsibility of the person requesting copies to obtain use rights from the copyright holder. If a person makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that person may be liable for copyright infringement.

Original correspondence and unpublished manuscripts frequently cannot be reproduced because of:

- 1. Copyright law prohibitions or restrictions;*
- 2. The need to preserve the anonymity of persons in accord with A.A.’s Traditions;*
- 3. The parties’ expectation of privacy; or*
- 4. The physical condition.*

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.

Markings via E-mail

Have *Markings* delivered directly to your e-mail inbox by registering to subscribe at G.S.O.’s A.A. Web site, www.aa.org. *Markings* is also available in Spanish and French.

At the time the Policy was being rewritten, the subcommittee members reviewed a number of similar ones from other archival repositories and libraries around the country. Our Policy addresses copyright concerns, the physical condition of the document, privacy concerns, as well as taking into consideration A.A.'s unique principle of anonymity.

Well then, what does all of this have to do with my seemingly simple request for a photocopy of a letter written by the founder of A.A. in my town? Doesn't this letter belong to my area? The short answer is "no," and let's closely examine that word "belong." The G.S.O. Archives possesses physical or "simple" ownership of these letters; they legally *belong* to the repository. This means that we can use the letters for research purposes; we may use them for display; we may remove or transfer letters to another repository; we may digitize or photocopy for archiving purposes; and/or we can reproduce portions under "fair use" guidelines. However, and this is the case for most of our personal letters, we do not own the copyrights, which is the other and more significant "ownership" a letter possesses. This means that it would be illegal for us to violate any of the rights belonging to the owner of the copyright, regardless to whether the author is alive or is deceased. The chart below should help you determine the copyright status of unpublished works such as letters, diaries, photographs and other nonliterary "works," as well as unpublished manuscripts that may exist in your collection.

Eventually, a copyright will expire and the formerly protected work will fall into the public domain where it can be used without restriction. Most works that have remained unpublished (letters, diaries, etc.) are subject to basic protection of "life plus 70 years." For example, co-founder Bill W.'s personal letters will enter the public domain in January 2041.

So, we have looked at ownership, both physical and intellectual. However, the other factors outlined in the policy are heavily weighed, particularly ensuring that our members' privacy and anonymity are maintained. There is an expectation of

privacy when writing to the General Service Office. The authors of the letters would likely never have intended for their works to be made publicly available, as often very personal or sensitive information is shared. Also, we have come across letters where a member has referenced another member in a letter or letters from members who have shared about a member's relapse or confidential medical history. In other instances, a family member has written to the office seeking help for his/her alcoholic relative, describing the pain and agony felt while the alcoholic relative is likely unaware of the letter. These are just some examples of the personal nature of the letters in the repository.

Recently, a member serving on a General Service Board in another country wrote to us requesting a copy of a letter written by that country's founding member. The original letter resides in the G.S.O. Archives repository. After careful deliberation, the trustees' Archives Committee agreed to the request and sent a digitized copy of the letter to the board member. How could such a decision be made? In this particular and likely rare situation, permission from the estate (the member's son) was granted for the copy to be made. For this reason, the committee consented to the duplication of the letter.

Of course, all or part of the rights in a work may be transferred by the owner to another individual or archival repository. However, the transfer of exclusive rights is not valid unless that transfer is done with a certain amount of legal formality.

For More Information:

- U.S. Copyright Office Copyright and Fair Use
- www.copyright.gov Stanford University Libraries
- (202) 707-3000 <http://fairuse.stanford.edu>

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

Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States of Unpublished Works, January 1, 2012

Nature of Work	Copyright Term	Works in the public domain in the U.S. as of January 1, 2012
Unpublished works.	Life of the author + 70 years.	Works from authors who died before 1942.
Unpublished anonymous and pseudonymous works, and works made for hire (corporate authorship).	120 years from date of creation.	Works created before 1892.
Unpublished works when the death date of the author is not known.	120 years from date of creation.	Works created before 1892.

Alcoholics Anonymous — 77 Years



June 10, 2012, marked the 77th Anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous. June 10, 1935, Bill W. handed Dr. Bob a drink to steady his nerves before he had to perform surgery. That was Dr. Bob's last drink. Then there were two sober alcoholics and Alcoholics Anonymous was born.

A.A. members and groups throughout the world celebrate June 10th in a variety of ways. At the General Service Office employees gather together for readings from A.A. literature, and to reflect on the A.A. messages of hope. Then, as at any A.A. Anniversary, there is the traditional cake.

In Akron June 10th is celebrated as Founders Day. The above photo of an exhibit case in G.S.O. Archives contains photos and other memorabilia from Akron. Some of the photos: Dr. Bob and his wife, Anne, and their home; the Gate House; Bill with Sister Ignatia; and the phonebooth and church directory at the Mayflower Hotel. The Founders Day exhibit will be displayed through the summer.

A few words about co-founder Dr. Bob

The Archives staff frequently receives questions about the "Humility" plaque that was supposedly on Dr. Bob's desk at his office in Akron. The statement, which can be found on page 222 of the book, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, reads:

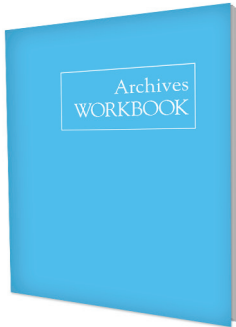
"Perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble."

A plaque bearing the "Humility" quote also hangs on a wall of the Archives of Dr. Bob's house in Akron. However, the location of the original plaque that was in his office is unknown.

The "Humility" quote is attributed to a South African minister named Andrew Murray (1828-1917), who also wrote a book in the 1920s titled, *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness*.

In 1974, an oldtimer from Akron described Dr. Bob: "...Dr. Bob was quiet, unassuming, not a great talker in private conversation, but what he said did carry a lot of weight. One time when his health had gotten pretty bad, I heard someone ask him 'Do you have to go to all these meetings? Why don't you stay home and conserve your strength?' And Dr. Bob pondered and gave a three-fold answer as to why he wanted to continue to go to the meetings as long as God gave him the strength. He said, 'The first reason is that this way is working so well, why should I take a chance on any other way? The second reason is that I don't want to deprive myself of the privilege of meeting, greeting and visiting with fellow alcoholics, it's a pleasure to me. And the third reason is the most important. I belong at that meeting for the sake of that new man or woman who might walk through that door. Because I am living proof that A.A. will work as long as I work A.A. And I owe it to that person to be there. I'm the living example.'"

Archives Workbook Revisions



The newest edition of the Archives Workbook is now available. It features six new Shared Experiences; Tools and Suggested Activities for Archives Committees; and a revised Photocopying Policy. It is available in English, French and Spanish. The workbook can be found online at A.A.'s Web site www.aa.org, or through the Order Entry Department:

1-212-870-3400 or orders@aa.org. M-44I; \$2.50.

Utah A.A. Finds Uranium Mine

Bill W. mentions on page 26 of *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, "...the Utah alkies who dried up in A.A. and struck uranium in the process."

Later, Bill W. wrote to Clyde D., who was the executive director of the Utah State Board on Alcoholism, in Salt Lake City, Utah, in April 1954 with more of the story. In his letter, Bill wrote that he was in Syracuse, New York, preparing to give a talk and trying to think of an interesting anecdote. According to Bill, a drunk wrote to the Alcoholic Foundation for a Big Book. After he got sober, he went to Moab to try and help his friend who was the town drunk. He succeeded in sobering him, and a few others, up. The now former town drunk took some pictures of the canyons and scenery of the town in order to entice a railroad company to run through Moab, which had once been a prosperous mining town.

When the film was developed, the former drunk noticed white flecks and markings on the canyon walls and obtained a Geiger counter. The result was uranium, which was the largest and richest uranium strike in the world at that time. The town once again prospered and so did the alcoholics. In his reply to Bill, Clyde wrote, "These facts I do know are true. One of two of the ex-drunks, or A.A.s, did play a major role in the finding of uranium at Moab. The first drunk to get well through the A.A. program has been mayor of the town for the past six years, and is still mayor. Another owns the newspaper, and two or three own uranium mines. In fact, the positions held in that community by A.A. members are such that it would appear if you wanted to be in a high position you must first qualify and then become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Bill recounts his version of the story to which Clyde replies, "In attempting to recount the actual story as given me by some of the Moab boys, I find some of the points to be a little hazy in my mind. However, I do believe that either one of us is too far off on the story."

Annual A.A. Archives Workshop

The National A.A. Archives Workshop affords area and local A.A. archivists an opportunity to share information with each other so as to better fulfill their service commitment. Often boxes were passed down from the previous archivist to the newly appointed or elected archivist. Sometimes these boxes had been in the trunks of cars or stashed in homes. The advice was to take classes or work with a conservator in a museum.

This annual workshop covers, among other subjects, instruction or archival techniques such as: restoration, preservation and deacidification. There are hands-on workshops, historical presentations, long-timer panels and keynote speakers who share their experiences on not only our history, but history in general, and offers insights into all areas of archives service. With the development of new technology, new methods of record keeping, cataloging and preserving are explored.



16th Annual

National AA Archives Workshop

www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com

PASSING IT ON

October 4-7, 2012

Speakers, Presentations, Workshops and Panels

We are responsible for the history and preservation of A.A. Featuring G.S.O. Archivist and Akron Archivist

Workshop contact:

Dave W. — 1-386-214-5446 email: naw2012@yahoo.com

Standard Room Rate of \$89.00 1-4 persons
(Oceanview, Suites and Villas Available)

Hotel Information:

International Palms Resort & Conference Center
1300 N. Atlantic Avenue, Cocoa Beach, FL 32931

www.internationalpalms.com

1-800-206-2747 or 321-783-2271 — Group Code – NAW

Room reservations cut-off date is September 2nd, 2012

Shuttle services are available from Orlando Airport (MCO)