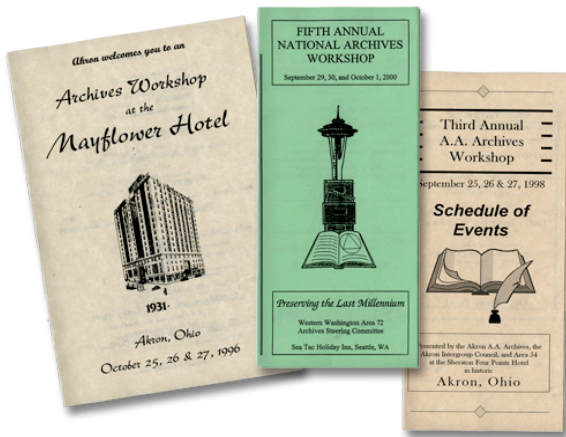


A.A. National Archives Workshop Helped Define Role of Archivists



Programs for the first, third, and fifth Workshops. The first gathering, in 1996, was held in the Mayflower Hotel in the hope that its historic connection to A.A.'s beginnings would attract attendees. And as it happened, the number who registered—93—well surpassed organizers' expectations.

Years ago the term A.A. archivist lacked precision, with the name being applied to those trading A.A. memorabilia, as well as to record keepers. "There was no unity among archivists, and many of those buying and selling A.A. material were calling themselves archivists when they were really collectors," says Gail L., who has been the Akron A.A. Archivist since 1994. ["I was asked by Nell Wing who was visiting Founders Day with Lois in 1983 to start an archives in Akron," says Gail. "So I then spent years serving as an archivist and historian. Then in 1994 I was appointed Akron A.A. Archivist by the Central Office, which asked me to start an archives in the Akron Intergroup Office. That archives opened one year later, in 1995." Gail will be leaving the position of Akron A.A. Archivist this January and rotating into the position of historian.]

"I was an intergroup archivist and like most of us I wasn't very well supported. Archivists would come to Akron on Founders Day and we would talk, compare notes, etc.," says Gail, who helped organize the first Annual A.A. National Archives Workshop in 1996. "We archivists discussed our frustration—we had no validity?"

One development that helped archivists achieve the level of legitimacy they enjoy today was the Annual A.A. National Archives Workshop.

Don B., a past delegate from Chicago who was well known as a collector, was generous in helping archivists and often donated to various archives. Don gave Gail about \$200 to put together a workshop on book conservation, and from that sprung the first A.A. National Archives Workshop. "We sent a flyer out, and we asked David A.—who was a famous Class B trustee—to talk at the workshop about the Traditions. To our surprise he was able to fit it into his schedule and agreed to give a talk," says Gail.

"It was supposed to be a one-shot deal and we hoped for about 20 attendees, which would have covered our costs," she says.

But soon after the small group of organizers sent out a flyer announcing the event, responses had come in from 25 states and Canada. In the end, 93 registered for that first meeting.

"Part of the reason for the big turnout was that the workshop was held in Akron and at the Mayflower Hotel," says Gail.

120 Attend 13th Annual NAAAW in California

The 13th Annual National Alcoholics Anonymous Archives Workshop, held this past September in Woodland Hills, California, attracted 120 attendees from all over the country, plus British Columbia, Canada.

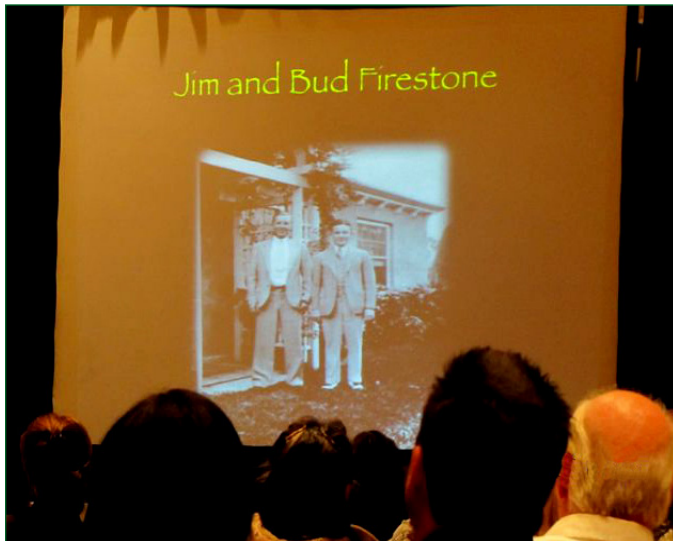
A PowerPoint presentation on the "Varieties of Religious Experience"—on the origins of the beliefs reflected in Alcoholics Anonymous—took place Thursday. The following day was devoted to a "Conservation and Preservation of Documents and Books" workshop. Also offered were talks on "Archivist Code and Ethics," on "NAAAW, Experience, Strength and Hope for the Future," and one by the A.A. G.S.O. Archivist about the office's archives and its structure.

The day ended with the Long Timers panel, made up of local members, some of whom knew Bill W.

Saturday morning's workshops were on "Collecting Histories, Oral and Written," "Sorting, Classifying and Cataloging," "Traveling and Permanent Displays," and "Legal Aspects, Releases, Anonymity." The afternoon workshops were titled "Digital Archives, Preserving Tapes and Cassettes on CD," "What and How to Collect," and "Getting a Repository Started."

Following dinner there was a talk on the beginnings of A.A. in Akron and New York titled "A Tale of Two Cities." According to one of those attending, Dave C., archivist for Area 72, "we were surprised by many new photos of those times and people involved."

Next year's NAAAW will be held in Macon, Georgia.



Participants at this year's Workshop in California view a presentation on the "Varieties of Religious Experience." In the photo are Jim N. and Bud F., early A.A. members. Jim, an Oxford Group member, had introduced Bud to Sam Shoemaker, who helped Bud find a spiritual solution to his drinking problem.

The meeting, which is an opportunity for A.A. archivists from around the country and Canada to share information and learn from their more experienced colleagues, usually attracts about 140 participants, though attendance has reached as high as 236.

Such attendance numbers, not to mention the fact that the Workshop has become an annual event, surprised those who organized the first weekend.

"It was a pretty amazing turnout, and it showed that people in A.A. were waiting for something like this," says Gail. "The workshop got started from the simple idea that archivists need support and training. We figured we would offer tips on conservation and preservation, along with something on the Traditions."

Unveiled in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel during that first Workshop was a 1930s era pay telephone next to a replica of the hotel's 1935 church directory, on which Bill found the name of Reverend Tunks. The Akron Archives provided the photographs used as guides in recreating the church directory.

"We figured that holding the Workshop in Akron made sense because we could attract people interested in seeing the A.A. historical sites in the area," says Gail. "We decided to hold it on the last weekend in September so people could see the leaves changing color."

Gail invited Nell Wing, A.A.'s first archivist, to the event, but she was unable to attend. "At the last minute to fill in a space on the agenda, I organized an old-timers panel and we invited them to talk about what A.A. was like when they first got sober. On that panel was a number of A.A.s who knew Bill W. Now the old-timers panel has become a tradition at the Workshop."

At the end of that first weekend, people were asking if there would be another workshop the following year. According to Gail, "We had no intention of doing another one. I was worn out by that first one."

In fact, the meetings have been held every year since, with the exception of 2005, when the Workshop scheduled for New Orleans was cancelled in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

The workshop evolved into a training session for archivists. As Gail notes, "Someone hands you the job of A.A. archivist—and now what do you do?"

Typical Archives Workshops might include sessions on copyright law, putting together an area history book, or preserving electronic media. There is also information about retrieval methods, about the importance of classifying material so that it is accessible. Meeting and learning from other archivists is another benefit of the weekend. "It's about networking as much as anything else," says Gail. "What's happening in the hospitality suite is as important as what's happening in the workshops."

The children of Dr. Bob and of Henrietta Sieberling were guests at the third Workshop. "We didn't want it to be a dry recitation of facts," says Gail, "we wanted it to be interesting."

After the third year it became a rotating event, moving from city to city. "It was a great day when they started to fight over holding the event in their areas," says Gail.

"Support formerly had been going to the wheelers and dealers—and not those in it for service. We developed boundaries between archivists, historians, and collectors. Now we know the difference," she says.

"It used to be that the archivists were floating out there independently. We now have more of a voice, more validity within the A.A. structure. Archivists have come of age."

(Visit aanationalarchivesworkshop.com for more information about the Archives Workshop.)



A collection of early Hispanic A.A. literature exhibited at this year's 13th Annual NAAAW. Exhibits are supplied by attendees, who use the opportunity of the event to showcase samples of their holdings.



The first issue, shown here far left, was 10 pages long and did not yet have a name. Issue No. three, in the middle, appeared in 1982 and bears the name *Markings*, which was supplied by a reader. The Fall 1985 issue features a new look and an article on the Oxford Group.

Markings a Success with Readers Right from Its Start in 1981

The General Service Office in New York established the G.S.O. A.A. Archives in 1975, at the old office on Park Avenue South. Nell Wing was manager, and she and the rest of the staff realized that the wealth of material stored in their repository should be shared with the Fellowship, particularly A.A. archivists and historians.

One means they hit upon was a newsletter, which they started in 1981. Written at least in part by Nell, that first issue ran to an impressive 10 pages long. Its fairly broad purpose was spelled out: "Mostly, we'll try to share with you what we're doing here at G.S.O.—new acquisitions, new and on-going projects, questions and answers researched, interesting letters received, excerpts from Bill's letters on various subjects anecdotes from the scrapbooks, humor, etc. And, of course, to continue to excerpt from your letters to us or from your Committee minutes."

The first issue included sections titled "Recent Acquisitions," "Restorations," "Preservations," "Archives Workshop: New Orleans 'International' 1980," "Recent G.S.O. Archives Committee Actions," "Excerpts From Letters and Reports," and "Archival Area Centers." This last entry listed the names and addresses of area archivists throughout the United States and Canada, and a few from overseas.

The newsletter did not yet have a name, and Nell invited readers to submit suggestions, offering nine historical photos to the person who submitted the winning entry. Ninety-six readers responded, and the final title was a combination of two entries. Herb M. from Florida suggested "Markings," and Tom P. from New Zealand suggested "Archives Interchange." Issue No. 2 bore the name that has lasted to the present: *Markings—Your Archives Interchange*. This issue was considerably shorter than the first at only four pages, and contained information about preservation as well as a section for "Frequent Inquiries." It also included sections concerning projects at the archives and archival activity in other areas.

Although a new publication, *Markings* gained readership quickly. The Final Report for the 1982 Conference had a segment titled "Newsletter becomes a worldwide best-seller" which read: "The remarkable proliferation of archival centers within the A.A. world has made our recently fashioned newsletter, *Markings: Your Archives Interchange*, a runaway best-seller; we

now mail over 700 copies per issue. The publication consists of archival center news, historical facts, and tips on preserving items. Three issues a year are planned."

In fact, there would be only one or two issues a year until 2006, when there were three issues, and from 2007 on, we have released four issues a year. The issue from June-July 1982 (Volume 2, Number 2) was the first to include images. That issue noted the addition of two archival staff members and the move to new quarters for the archives.

For a variety of reasons, no issue of *Markings* was released between early 1983 and early 1985. During that time, Nell Wing retired from A.A. after 35 years of service to the Fellowship and 10 years as the G.S.O. archivist, and was replaced by Frank M. In addition, the archives moved from one floor to another, and the amount of information taken in from area archivists declined. Meanwhile, 50,000 A.A. group records were transferred to microfiche, and the original copies were entirely rehoused.

With the completion of these tasks and the addition of two staff members to the archives, *Markings* was back once more. Changes made to the look of the first new issue—in Winter 1985 (Volume 3, Number 1)—brought it closer to what we recognize as the newsletter today. In addition to changing the font, the title was colored in a manner similar to the current newsletter, and the circle and triangle logo was present on the masthead.

The use of four pages in the newsletter became common, though not entirely fixed, with the Fall 1986 (Volume 6, Number 1) issue. Around this time, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the newsletter contained many elements not seen today. For example, *Markings* was occasionally used as a forum for the G.S.O. Archives to ask questions of its readers. An issue from 1988 (Volume 6, Number 2) contained a section with the following text: "Can You Help? We are trying to locate any correspondence to or from Clarence S. from Cleveland, Ohio, and Casselberry, Florida. Any information may be sent to the G.S.O. Archives." Immediately beneath this entry was an inquiry from a member seeking to clarify the source of a quotation.

A short-lived "Swapping Section" was added to *Markings* in 1989 (Volume 8, Number 2). Theoretically, this was to be used by

readers to indicate what they needed for their collections and what they had to provide to others, but after a few issues, the section was discontinued. At this time, there was a considerable amount of sharing from archives and archivists from all over North America, as well as a few from abroad. This greatly widened the focus of *Markings*, enabling it to appeal to a broader readership.

A 1994 issue of *Markings* (Volume 17, Number 1) saw its appearance change yet again. The circle and triangle logo disappeared from the title, as did the address for the G.S.O. It was not until the March-April 2004 (Volume 24, Number 1) issue that *Markings* assumed its present form. With vivid colors and a neat appearance, an introductory paragraph reaffirmed the purpose of the newsletter. Although it was not published six times a year as suggested, it openly welcomed the contributions of local archivists. (*The American Archivist*, the journal of the society of American Archivists, references this very point in its Spring/Summer 2009 issue: “Institutional

archivists can offer to write columns for their institutions’ newsletters, which has been done successfully by organizations as varied as Carleton College and Alcoholics Anonymous.”) Each new issue was to have a theme, the first being predecessor movements to A.A. and theories concerning alcoholism prior to A.A.’s founding. Since then, *Markings* has been produced and distributed regularly. The summer of 2009 saw *Markings* move exclusively to the Internet.

With our collection constantly increasing—and numerous historical figures, events, and subjects to explore—*Markings* has a bright future as *Your Archives Interchange*. In this respect, it can help fulfill the promise made by Bill W. in a letter to a member: “You needn’t worry, the story won’t be lost.”

Previous editions of *Markings* are available on the main A.A. website (www.aa.org) under the tab “Archives and History.” Select “Alcoholics Anonymous Archives,” and then click on “Markings—Your Archives Interchange (Newsletter)” to view past issues.

Differences Between Related Professions¹

Some believe there is little difference between an archives, library, museum, records center, or a repository. In fact, of course, their objectives and functions vary, though they share the mission of maintaining recorded information. As archivists, it is important to examine what makes our work unique among these professions, so as better to understand our overall role. We hope this chart helps delineate the often easy to confuse functions of these closely related occupations

Information Unit	Archives	Library	Museum	Records Center / Repository	Scholar
Specialist	<i>Archivist</i>	<i>Librarian</i>	<i>Curator</i>	<i>Records Manager</i>	<i>Historian²</i>
Material Maintained	Inactive records that have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation. Typically, the material is unpublished, comes in a variety of formats, and is unique.	Published material, including books, journals, audiovisual material, microfilm, newspapers, magazines and more. These items are not typically unique.	An assortment of objects, artifacts, and memorabilia which may or may not be unique, but which are being preserved and often displayed for the public for cultural or educational purposes.	Current and active records of an existing organization, which must be effectively organized and controlled to be used by that organization.	
Arrangement of Material	Original order: the order determined or utilized by the creators.	Standardized, pre-determined classification systems, such as the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal.	Arrangement is not as significant as control over each individual item.	Varies depending on the need of the organization and the choices made or devised by the Records Manager.	
Access to Material	Varies depending on the archive, and can range from the entire public to individuals within the organization. Also, restrictions made by the depositors/donors may alter access.	Any member of the community serviced by the library.	Any member of the public.	Employees of the organization who require the records for their work.	
Locating Material	Guides, inventories, and finding aids are formulated for collections to help researchers locate what they need.	Name and subject categories, call numbers, and browsing the shelves to locate the correct material.	Only the material that is currently on display can be viewed.	Indexes and registers are maintained to enable access to material.	
Use of Material	Items are used in a room or area provided for researchers, which is supervised.	One can use the material on the premises, or borrow the material for use elsewhere.	In display cases, galleries, or other exhibition areas. Often, visitors are not allowed to handle the collections.	Once assigned to an individual, the material can be removed from the repository and given to that person.	
Objective	The preservation of the archive and the informational and evidential value of the material within it, and to provide access to said material.	To collect materials, catalogue them appropriately, and utilize and distribute them effectively.	Collect and display individual items for viewing by the public.	Efficiently, economically, and systematically maintain and distribute essential business records.	
Purpose for Visitors	Proof of past activities and undertakings, educational or scholarly pursuits, and personal satisfaction.	Education and recreation.	Education and recreation, as well as aesthetic reasons.	For organizational employees to undertake their duties.	
Professional Organizations	Society of American Archivists, Academy of Certified Archivists, Council of State Archivists	American Library Association, Library and Information Technology Association	Association of Art Museum Curators, American Association of Museums	Association of Records Managers and Administrators, Association for Information and Image Management	

1 Much of the information on this chart is gleaned from outside sources.

2 Historians, in the process of studying and writing about history, utilize the resources held by archives, libraries, museums, and other repositories.

Although they do not typically maintain historical materials while performing academic or scholarly work, they often seek these materials and the services of those who keep them.

The task of the historian is to gather, organize, analyze, interpret, and describe information about the past. To fulfill these goals, historians draw on a wide variety of historical resources.