

# **The Principles of Archiving**

*A „How to...“ Booklet for the Group, Intergroup and Regional Archivist*

## **Introduction.**

This booklet is meant for the Archivist who is new to this Service position or to anyone in the Fellowship with an interest in Archiving.

Please remember that we are not professionals and cannot hope to offer the same quality of archiving as for example the Borthwick Institute or York University. If we remember a few simple rules, however, we can offer a decent and proficient Archive for our Fellowship..

Just a few principles are;

Cataloging, Storing, Repairing, Collecting and Displaying.

So, we imagine that you have just taken up the position of Archivist and have “inherited” a number of boxes.

Ok, where do we start....?

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A good display says a thousand words and attracts more Archivists and enthusiasts

## Chapter 1. Cataloging

Keep an Inventory or Catalogue of Archive material.

The Catalogue will show all the items in the Archive and where they are stored. It can also show where the items came from and the category to which they belong

On becoming Intergroup Archivist you may have been handed Archive material and a Catalogue of its contents.

Make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the Catalogue and the Archive

If no Catalogue accompanied the material, your first job will be to set one up. This Catalogue will need to be updated with every new deposit.

When you collect material, or a member or Group hands in material for the Archive, list the contents of this particular deposit and give it a name and date of deposit.

For example: "Box of papers given by John D 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014"

- 1) OurTown Where to Find from 1960
  - 2) Letter regarding Group opening March 1961
  - 3) Big Book with Thursday night 1961 written on inside of cover.
- (The member who donates the material may wish to be "Anonymous")

Example of a Catalogue entry

- 1) Name and description of item: e.g. "OurTown Where to Find from 1960"
- 2) Where it came from: "Box of paper given by John D 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014"
- 3) Where it is stored: "Ourtown Intergroup Archive"
- 4) Precise locality Box named "Where to finds and Meeting lists"

This Catalogue can be set out in columns in a Computer Spread Sheet or Book. Additional columns could be added such as the Name of the Group and the Date to which the item refers and perhaps a Key Word column. This can be helpful when retrieving an item on a particular subject from the Archive

## Chapter 2. Storing

Protect your records from heat, damp, dust and sunlight (or any ultra violet light).

Store all papers flat and unfolded in folders and boxes of appropriate size.

Remove all plastic; this degrades and emits harmful gases.

Keep papers in their original order.

For long term storage, carefully remove metal paper clips, staples and pins, and elastic bands where this can be done without damage. Brass staples are fine but expensive.

Don't try to repair damaged documents.

Sellotape is highly damaging as it causes chemical reactions to paper.

Where you can, use acid-free folders and boxes and this is why:

If an acidic product comes into contact with your paper, photos, textiles or other

similar items, the acid can migrate, causing permanent damage and decay. Modern paper reacts with water and the atmosphere to produce self-destructive acidic compounds. These acids act on the paper, shortening the fibres and causing them to become brittle, discolour and crumble into dust.

Storage in archival folders and boxes will slow the ageing process.

### **Digitalising**

One of our main objectives is to preserve our spiritual heritage as well as sharing the message of archives to our fellows in displays, group histories or any other form.

In digitalising items such as photos, documents, tapes and so on we have a “safe copy” and can also store the originals for our future. Any important documents we recommend to send to GSO Archives for possible microfilming and storing at the Borthwick Institute, the keeper of our Archives.

Remember when digitalising tapes and records and indeed any document that we need to be wary of possible updates to our pc and software. Maybe even re-digitalising every couple of years.

### **Chapter 3. Repairing**

Be careful, always remembering: **do not do what you cannot undo.**

### **Chapter 4. Collecting and Researching**

Ask Oldtimers for their stories. Tape them if possible. A list of questions follows.

Ask ALL members of your Group, Intergroup or Region to contribute to help.

Does anyone have anything that is important to the growth of AA in your area.

Take a simple Group History form to meetings with an “Archives Pamphlet” Free from GSO.

Contact GSO Archives to research your Groups. [emma.wilson@gsogb.org.uk](mailto:emma.wilson@gsogb.org.uk) at GSO York. We have Pink Forms, Where to finds, Newsletters, Share Magazine and Closed Group files.

Is GSO New York Archives an option?

Grapevine Digital

**Group History Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Founded: \_\_\_\_\_ - Founder/Founders \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ -

Early Members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Place of first Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Meetings: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Membership Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the Group move: \_\_\_\_\_

Where: \_\_\_\_\_ When: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

—  
Group History: (anniversaries, potlucks, outside speakers, Pl. 12<sup>th</sup> step work. workshops, notes about founders ) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Questions

Here is a list of questions to guide you in conducting your interview. Allow the interview to take on a life of its own and, most importantly, to have fun! Before you begin taping, explain that our primary interest is in AA's role in the story. The focus is on our AA History, how we were, what happened, and what we are like now. As always, the emphasis is on sobriety, rather than drinking. Perhaps the member can begin his/her story with his/her initial contact with the programme.

Begin the tape by identifying yourself, and providing the date of the taping. Then introduce the member.

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

How did you first learn about AA?

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 AA 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 AA during that period of time?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Today, radio and television public service announcements for AA, as well as Internet Web sites, are becoming commonplace. When you first got sober, how did AA'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 AA's today regarding media exposure?

What do you remember of early conferences, assemblies, and conventions?

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

Today, Conference approved literature is available to help AA members deal with a wide variety of challenging questions. In the early days of the Fellowship all we had was the book Alcoholics Anonymous, common sense and your compassion. How did your Group treat the Newcomer? AA'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?

In what ways has AA changed over the years? (Has AA changed since you came in?)

## **Chapter 5 Displaying**

Priorities with displaying are Anonymity, Copyright. Again here the key words are:

**'when in doubt, don't.'**

See Archives Policy and Procedures for more details.

**List of Suppliers:**

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Adderley  
Market Drayton  
Shropshire TF9 3TH

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Tel: 01234 846300  
[www.conservation-by-design.co.uk](http://www.conservation-by-design.co.uk)

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Germany

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[www.archiv-box.de](http://www.archiv-box.de)

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Mill One  
Pleasley Vale Business Park  
Mansfield  
Nottinghamshire NG19 8RL

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