

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UTAH AREA ARCHIVES

Presented to the Utah Area 2016 Fall Assembly

Archives Thought Force  
Formed: Spring Assembly 2016

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## FRAMING/CHARGE

At the 2016 Spring Assembly a conversation occurred about how the Area Archives should be handled. This 2016 Area Archives Thought Force was formed as a result. Our charge: How should we handle the Area Archives taking into consideration the past, the present and the future?

## BACKGROUND

*The purpose of an Area Archives is to preserve the experience, history, and memorabilia of the Al-Anon fellowship from the beginning of the family movement in that locale. This history should be preserved so as to be available to the membership and the serious researcher, within the framework of our Traditions, for the good of Al-Anon as a whole. Al-Anon Guidelines, Area Archives (G-30)*

### INTRODUCTION

The Utah Area has a robust, rich, and extensive Area Archive that has been faithfully maintained over the years by some dedicated archivists and other interested members. Our Archives are replete with interesting, valuable, historical, and meaningful items. On the downside, our Archives are not easily accessible and likely not recognized or understood by the majority of our members. The expectations of the Area archivist with regard to educating members about the Archives have been dependent on the enthusiasm of the archivist, as no Area Guidelines per the Archives exist. Likewise, there is no clear Area guideline as to exactly what materials belong in the Archives or how to assure they are collected. Finally, the storage and safety of our Archives is a matter of real concern with the regularly changing physical location, undetermined risk factors, and no safeguards for borrowed items. How to move our Archives into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century offers our Area an exciting, challenging, and potentially difficult opportunity.

### ARCHIVES PAST

The Utah Area Archives consist of a well-organized collection of materials stored in approximately 25 plastic “totes” filled with binders, folders and memorabilia and stored in the home of the current archivist. The materials in the Archives consist of a wide variety of documents and collectables with a comprehensive index. These materials date from 1945 when Utah Al-Anon was an auxiliary of AA, through the development of our Groups, Districts, and the Area to the present day. A complete catalog/index of the Archives in both hard copy and digital form is available.

Individual members kept early documentation of the development of Utah Al-Anon in their homes and continued to do so well into the 1990s. The beginning of an actual Utah Area Archive seems to have begun with the work of Vera J. [REDACTED], the first Secretary of the State

Assembly, Thelma C [REDACTED] who wrote “History of Intergroup”, Anna Marie B [REDACTED], who compiled the “Utah Area History,” and others (Elsie W [REDACTED] Thelma D [REDACTED] Arlita B [REDACTED] Mary E [REDACTED] Edith L [REDACTED] A [REDACTED]) in the 1950s and 1960s.

Through the subsequent decades, our Archives continued to grow through the dedicated work of elected archivists like Glenna C [REDACTED], Connie D [REDACTED] Leeta L [REDACTED] Delores V [REDACTED] Joy M [REDACTED] and Norma D [REDACTED]

Our practice of storing the Archives at the home of the current archivist is consistent with a significant portion of the past. Several years ago an attempt was made to store the totes in a commercial facility, but it was decided that the cost and difficulty accessing the Archives made commercial storage impractical. Storing the totes in the home of the archivist has necessitated the physical relocation of the Archives with each new archivist. It is possible that an archivist could reside in an area of the state far removed from population centers, thus making access to the Archives quite difficult. The physical security of the Archives would likely vary from panel to panel depending on the physical circumstances of the archivist.

Some auditory materials from the Archives have recently been digitalized; no decision has been made as to how best to store this digital material. The Area has no established standards for the storage of the Archives.

It appears that some Districts have collected items that properly belong in the Area Archives.

### **ARCHIVES AT PRESENT**

Currently, there is no clear delineation of items that belong in the Area Archives. The WSO Guideline “Area Archives” (G-30) lists 14 “possible categories...[of] what to keep and what to build on”, but there is no Area policy. Paper and electronic indices of the contents of the Archives are currently stored with the Archives. The contents of the archival totes are also listed elsewhere. An Area Guideline of how the Archives should function and what materials belong would be helpful.

Additions to the Archives appear to be haphazard with no clear understanding of what materials belong, how materials should be collected, and what potential, but inappropriate, material should be discarded. It is unclear what the best method would be to update the Archive indices as new materials are added. The current process appears to be simply adding more binders/totes and expanding the index.

Currently, members wishing items from the Archives must consult directly with the archivist to request materials. The index to the Archives is not readily available to members; again the archivist must be directly consulted. Presumably items requested by members from the Archives are freely given; there are no guidelines for a process of borrowing and returning. Although an electronic index exists, there are no guidelines as to where the index is stored or how members could access it.

There is a sense that the Archives are very under-utilized and that the exposure of the Archives to the membership is directly related to the enthusiasm of the archivist. A display of portions of the Archives at Area Assemblies has at times been a common practice, but has always been a function of the interest of the archivist.

### **THE FUTURE OF THE ARCHIVES**

Going forward, it seems reasonable to think that a digital Archive of some sort should be created and maintained. It could be helpful to make past events, flyers, minutes and records of assemblies readily available for new leaders to access quickly and see how things were done in the past. We could then build on the past and not doom ourselves to repeat old mistakes. However, it is also important to think that a paper Archive of some sort should be kept. Some documents have intrinsic value because of who created them or how and why they were created. (The original letter from Anne B. and the actual letters written to Lois have value beyond a digital copy.) There may also be value in preserving important documents in two places, for safety reasons. What is unclear is exactly how much of a paper Archive to retain, exactly how a digital Archive would work or how each could be more easily accessible to members and researchers. In studying the work of professional historians, we find there is still a lot of reliance on the actual pieces of paper, because, for a variety of reasons, an actual document is what seems to hold our emotion.

What sorts of items should be kept in the Archives in the future? This is a point we don't know. We have some good agreement that it is great to have a living, breathing, useful physical history beyond a collection of storage bins, but we don't know exactly how we determine what things should be kept. The AI-Anon general Guideline (G-30) provides some help, but we still need to determine whether our Archives should be paper, digital or both. It is hoped that the Knowledge-Based Decision Making (KBDM) process and a continuing conversation at the Group, District, and Area levels will really help us in addressing this matter, i.e. what do we know about the needs of the Area and our resources, vision and mission in relation to the Archives? What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our world/fellowship concerning our history? We seem to agree in general that our Archive is mostly effective in addressing the identified purpose of having an Archive, with the notable exception that we would all like to see the Archives more accessible in the future.

The KBDM questions are also very critical when we consider member accessibility. While having a digital Archive may facilitate accessibility, creating such an Archive is not a simple process. Questions of anonymity, item selection, standardized file format, and access control are among the first that must be addressed, and our recommendations for initial action consider these. The work required to convert our current Archive to even partial digitalization would be monumental, given the demands of sorting, redacting (censoring for anonymity), and imaging. This is where the KBDM question on ethical implications is really important and what do we wish we know but don't? We need to clearly decide what to keep in the Archive and what not to, and how to determine this, and if the Archive should be fully duplicated paper and digital or not. And if we move to a fully digitalized Archive what do we do with the first edition AI-Anon

books and other non-paper memorabilia? Do we have the commitment and energy to undertake such a task?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We have sought to make the most flexible and inclusive recommendations possible. These include developing an Area Archives Guideline while at the same time moving forward with digitalizing the Archives. We suggest that the digital Archives maintain the most limited access which mirrors that of the physical Archive. We also suggest making a detailed catalog publicly available. We hope that these suggestions will allow us to move forward in the most thoughtful manner while making conservative immediate changes to make the Archives more readily available.

### **1) Create an Area Archives Guideline.**

Given our findings, we think that it would be helpful to the archivist and the Area membership to have an Archives guideline created. The purpose of the Archives is being fulfilled well, in general, with the exception of access to the Archives. Our Thought Force has raised many questions in regard to the Archives, including what material should be kept in the Archives vs. discarded, should a digital Archive be primarily a copy of the physical Archive, or should it be used to reduce the size of the physical Archive and how can we provide access to the Archives to our members while retaining anonymity? To help answer these questions, we believe that the guideline should cover the following topics:

- a) What material should be maintained in the Archives and what should not be? How should an index of these materials be kept and updated?
- b) How do we determine if we want to discard items from the physical Archives after they have been digitized? We would not want to discard anything without serious thought (especially items with intrinsic value such as Delegate-related materials). Substantial safeguards must be identified before any items are excluded from the Archives. For example, we feel that after digitizing district meeting minutes there would be no problem in discarding these. However, unique items like delegate-related materials should never be discarded. How should material that is being discarded from the Archives be disposed of? One suggestion from the Thought Force was to bring such materials to an assembly and have members take it if they would like.
- c) How should the physical Archive be stored? The current situation is that the archivist keeps them in their home, if they have that ability. One problem we thought of with this is if the archivist is not located near the bulk of our members, access is reduced. We also see the need to keep the Archives safe from physical dangers and degradation. Is it sufficient to let the archivist determine where the physical Archive is kept, or does that need to be determined by another body?
- d) What should the digital Archive look like?

- i. Should it be a complete copy of the physical Archive, or should certain things be disposed of from the physical Archive once they become digital? Or should only a select few things be digitally Archived? Or should there only be a digital index of the Archives?
  - ii. How should it be stored? The Thought Force went into some depth in looking at the security and safety of data in “cloud” environments. This looks to be generally secure and potentially affordable with a variety of options for setting up access.
  - iii. Who would be responsible for it? The archivist? The web coordinator? A combination of people?
- e) How should the Archives be accessed by members? As a Thought Force, one of the major points of agreement is that we would like to see the Archives be more accessible and useful to the members. There are, however, many security and ethical concerns.
- i. Can what is in the digital Archives be freely and fully accessible, or will part or all of it have limited access (e.g. password protection)? What would such access look like? Could each group be given credentials for access and these credentials reset/updated as needed or on a regular schedule?
  - ii. The level of access that is provided to the Archives will have implications on what can go in the digital Archive. For example, if the digital Archive is fully, publicly accessible without password, then we must limit what is in the Archive to protect the anonymity of our members.
  - iii. How should the physical Archives be accessed? How do we ensure that items borrowed from the Archives are returned?
  - iv. How should the groups and districts interact with the archivist about how they would provide potential material to the Archives?
- f) What should happen when there is a new archivist? Currently, there is a situation where there are some materials left with a previous archivist, who does not know what to do with it.
- g) Should the responsibility of the Archives be handled by a committee instead of a single individual?

We would like to see such a guideline to provide direction to the archivist and the fellowship, but we also know from Concept 3 that the right of decision makes effective leadership possible, so we also believe that the guideline should not be overly restrictive. It is important that the archivist should be left with enough autonomy over the Archives to be effective in their position.

The KBDM questions are important to us as a Thought Force. Two of them are especially pertinent to the guideline we propose. First, the points listed above are basically what we as a Thought Force came to find that we did not know about the Archives, but wished we did know. Second, there are many ethical questions raised in making a digital Archive and making it accessible to members. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our fellowship, and we feel that is critical in creating a guideline addressing these topics. The three remaining KBDM questions are also important to consider, as the needs, resources and realities of our fellowship and the Area specifically provide guidance to us, as well as limitations on what we can do. We hope that

we have provided information in this report that will answer the KBDM questions fully and enable the Area and its members to have the information they need to act.

**2) Continue creating a digital copy of the Archives.**

- a) Continue digitizing the physical Archives for access solely by the Archivist in order to more easily share documents with inquiring members upon request, and to have backup images of hard copy documents in case of damage to or loss of the physical Archive.
- b) Begin collecting new Archives submissions in digital format when available in addition to the physical format.
- c) Create the digital Archive using consistent file formats that may be used without licensing concerns (for example .pdf for documents, etc.).

**3) A detailed catalog should be made publicly available so members can access it.** This could reasonably be accomplished through the website as the catalog is less than 1 MB in size. And at 64 pages with minimal text on each, it can be easily redacted to avoid breaking anonymity. This would at least immediately allow members to peruse the general contents of the Archives and make document requests from the Archivist.



## APPENDIX I

### **The Knowledge-Based Decision Making Questions**

These were the discussions of this Thought Force. We have included them here to aid in the discussions of future committees on this topic. This is not an exhaustive list.

What do we know about the needs of the Area that is relevant to this discussion?

- Our robust Archives provide much information about the history of our Area and the growth of Al-Anon in Utah.
- Many of our members are unfamiliar with the Archives in general, the contents of the Archives, and how to examine or obtain materials from the Archives.
- Because of the large geographical area that Utah encompasses, a centrally stored paper Archive is not easily accessible to all our members.
- The safe storage of our Archives is of vital importance.
- As we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of our members rely on electronic devices to obtain information, and would like to see our Archives digitally based.
- Other members remain hesitant in the usage of electronically stored information and are reluctant to embrace developing technology.

What do we know or need to know about our resources, our vision and mission for the Area and our strategic plan or goals that could be relevant to this discussion?

- Since the earliest days of Al-Anon, interested and enthusiastic members have committed large amounts of loving volunteer time to the preservation of our history.
- As an Area we are committed to safely maintaining and growing our Archives.
- We seek ways to assure that our Archives are secure from fire, flood, insects, time, or other potential harm.
- We want the contents of the Utah Area Archives to be easily available to interested members and researchers.

- Despite these admirable goals, there is no Area Guideline pertaining to the collection, storage, use, or display of our Archives.
- Some of the auditory materials (tapes) in our Archives have already been converted to a digital format. These materials are now available in either analog format (the original tape still physically stored in the Archive “tub,” or in digital format (on a flash drive) in the possession of the current archivist.
- As with most issues in our Area, constraints of money and member involvement must be taken into account.
- In order to better utilize the existing Archives, ways to more clearly identify collectable material, efficiently organize and store materials, and educate the membership about potentially interesting materials could be developed.

What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of the world and our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion? What are the Pros and Cons of the suggestions we are making?

- Worldwide, and within our Fellowship, there is currently a strong movement towards the digitalization and electronic storage of all things paper.
- In the world of historical archiving, some paper-based materials have intrinsic value and must be maintained, even if digital copies are created and stored.
- Our Fellowship resists “either/or” thinking and is receptive to changes and solutions that incorporate ideas that are creative, inclusive, and flexible.

Pros:

- Digitalization and electronic storage of archived material safeguards our historical documents against physical loss from fire, flood, insects, and the effects of time. A vendor can automatically back up such documents; thus insuring that documents will never be lost.
- Cloud storage is inexpensive, safe, and reliable.
- An electronically based Archive could be easily accessible to members and researchers regardless of the person’s location.

- Ongoing contributions to the Archives can be made easier through email and other methods of electronic transfer and cloud storage.

Cons:

- Not all materials in the Archives can be digitalized, i.e. books, mugs, other “collectables.”
- Some paper documents have intrinsic value and, while having a back up copy is recommended, items with emotional value need to be made available for possible historic display.
- Therefore, a physical Archive must endure even if a part of the Archives are digitalized.
- Issues that currently exist surrounding the maintenance of a physical Archive will continue.
- There is a monetary cost associated with electronic storage methods.
- The transfer of even a portion of the current physical Archive to an electronic format will be a formidable task requiring hundreds of man-hours likely spanning many years.
- Many documents in the Archives contain information that clearly identifies past and current Al-Anon members. Those documents, if made generally available electronically (such as on a website), would need to be physically redacted before being digitalized to preserve anonymity.

What are the ethical implications of our choices? In other words: Will our suggestions/decisions be consistent with our spiritual principles?

- Al-Anon is a worldwide movement, it’s history both at the international and local level deserves to be captured and maintained. “*The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.*” We need to know how our groups formed, how they have contributed, and how they have changed. *Concept One.*

- “The Principle of Participation has been built into our whole service structure.” How members contribute to Al-Anon is captured in our history. *“Participation is the key to harmony.” Concept Four.*
- “No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating result of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who serve and make it work.” Our history provides a picture of Al-Anon service in Utah and helps us to improve. *“Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity...” Concept Nine.*
- In our Fellowship we learn *“that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, by unanimity.”* Our Archives are our record of discussions, votes, agreements and disagreements. *General Warranties of the Conference, # 3*
- Particularly with regard to creating digital access to the Area Archives or it’s catalog, the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, anonymity, must be the top priority. Even within the Al-Anon fellowship, when the audience is large and broad (as with The Forum, for example) personal anonymity is strictly maintained.
- “Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority.” This aspect of concept 10 provides a basis for why we suggest that Area Archives Guidelines be written.

## What do we wish we knew, but don’t?

- What portion of our Archives would readily lend itself to digitalization?
- How long would it take to convert that portion of the Archives to a digital base, considering time to redact, organize, scan, upload, etc.
- How can we assure member anonymity and still make the Archives electronically accessible?
- How much cloud space would we need? What would be the cost?
- How much use would the membership make of an electronic Archive?
- How can we best preserve and utilize the physical portion of the Archives even if we digitalize?

- Will the members of the Utah Area support a long-term project involving the future of the Archives?

## APPENDIX II

# AL-ANON guidelines

The Shared Experiences Of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

## Area Archives

G-30

*One of the best ways to protect the future of the Al-Anon fellowship in an area is to look to the past. Of course, our primary purpose remains—to carry the message of hope to the families and friends of alcoholics. We can, however, renew our own sense of purpose by continuing to collect and preserve the rich and meaningful heritage of our past within the whole range of Al-Anon services.*

### PURPOSE

The purpose of an area archives is to preserve the experience, history and memorabilia of the Al-Anon fellowship from the beginning of the family movement in that locale. This history should be preserved so as to be available to the membership and the serious researcher, within the framework of our Traditions, for the good of Al-Anon as a whole.

### ARCHIVES COMMITTEE AND ARCHIVIST

In some areas, an archives committee is appointed first; it then chooses an archivist to coordinate archival activities. In other areas, an archivist is selected as a coordinator at the assembly for a three-year term. The archives committee is usually responsible to the area world service committee (AWSC). It would be advantageous for this committee to be composed of longtime members of Al-Anon, knowledgeable about the history in the area and sources for obtaining historical material. Familiarity with library or archival procedure would also be helpful.

This committee would be responsible for establishing policies, budget requirements and procedures approved by the area world service committee for that particular area. The archives committee maintains final responsibility and authority for the use of the archives and exercises its group conscience in regard to all matters of general policy.

It would be wise for an archivist and archives committee to become familiar with the current interpretations of copyright regulations pertaining to fair use and privacy.

### LOCATION

An area archives might start in the home of the person interested in assuming the responsibility of collecting the material. Some areas house the archives at a location such as an Al-Anon information service (AIS) or literature distribution center (LDC) nearest the archives coordinator. Later, the archives might be placed in a centrally located Al-Anon office.

Wherever you choose to keep the material, remember the following:

- material should be kept in acid-free folders, boxes and photo sleeves
- material should be kept in a cool, dry place
- material should be stored so as to protect the anonymity of all members

### WHAT TO KEEP AND WHAT TO BUILD ON

Possible categories are:

- various editions of Conference Approved Literature (perhaps autographed)
- local public information literature
- Longtimers' Questionnaires and Group History Forms
- photographs of important events
- directories—world, area and local
- minutes of district and assembly meetings (motions could be indexed separately for quick reference)
- editions of area and local newsletters
- as members serve in various capacities, ask them to save their papers, notes, etc.
- WSO newsletters (*The Forum*, *Inside Al-Anon*, *Inside Al-Anon Xtra*, *Area Highlights*, etc.)
- *World Service Conference Summaries*
- Conference Brochures of previous delegates (including handouts and correspondence)
- relevant correspondence
- scrapbooks of newspaper clippings
- memorabilia, souvenirs, programs of past conventions, conferences, etc.



*This Guideline may be photocopied.*

The importance of clearly identifying all material: people, places, events, dates, etc. cannot be stressed enough. Many items will be identified with the date of origin. (Minutes, etc.) However, photographs should have the name(s) of subject(s) and the date written on the back. **Undated material can add hours of time to the work of future researchers and may sometimes make the document less valuable. SO BE SURE TO DATE EVERYTHING!!**

A taped history might be considered. This could be accomplished by requesting longtime members to send in an audio cassette. The archivist or another committee member may arrange for an interview. The recording should focus on early recollections of how the group started and grew, sharing members' personal stories as well. These tapes, cassettes or even written accounts from longtime members would be a valuable and interesting section of any archives.

The extent of archival holdings depends largely on space. Common sense is a key factor in determining what is history; what will be history in the future, and what can be discarded.

*FINDING THE DOCUMENTS*

After an archives is organized, a card catalog or other finding aid is necessary to locate material in the collection. Contacting a local library might be useful in establishing a system.

Al-Anon's tradition of anonymity regarding members, regardless of whether they are living or deceased, should always be kept in mind when making material available.

*SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT (as needed and as feasible)*

- acid-free storage boxes and file folders
- shelves for storage boxes
- scrapbooks for photos, newspaper clippings, etc. (acid free scrapbooks, photo sleeves)
- card catalog, index in binder or other kind of finding aid
- display cabinet for memorabilia
- framed photos of places and events for wall hangings
- cabinet for tape storage
- tape recorder (cassette)
- supply of blank tapes
- archival plastic paper clips (to be used instead of staples)
- white cotton gloves (for handling photos, slides and negatives)

A good source for supplies are catalogs from archival supply houses. Check your local stationery store, library or the yellow pages in your telephone directory.

*SUGGESTED USES FOR ARCHIVAL MATERIAL*

Archival material can be used for workshops at assemblies, anniversary meetings, public information displays, and anywhere that you would like to share your Al-Anon history.

Remember, anonymity is to be stressed when displaying photographs within the fellowship. At events open to the public, avoid displaying photographs or other material that might reveal the identity of individual members.

*EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES*

Check local libraries, colleges and/or universities for applicable courses, workshops, seminars, etc.



## APPENDIX III

### Archives Contents

BOX 1 WSO & WSC  
BOX 2 Past Delegates  
BOX 3 Love Gifts  
BOX 4 Memorabilia  
BOX 5 District (except District 3)  
BOX 6 Forum 1955-1997  
BOX 7 Forum 1998-2013  
BOX 8 CAL  
BOX 9 CAL  
BOX 10 PO and Institutions  
BOX 11 SWRDM-RSS-PRAASA  
BOX 12 District 3  
BOX 13 Tapes & Cassettes  
BOX 14 Tapes & Cassettes  
BOX 15 Pamphlets  
BOX 16 50th & TEAM  
BOX 17 International  
BOX 18 Area Newsletter-Alanews  
BOX 19 Alateen  
BOX 20 AWSC Beg-1999  
BOX 21 AWSC Minutes & Guidelines  
BOX 22 Skits-Songs  
BOX 23 Area Al-Anon Information Service  
BOX 24 Archive Supplies  
BOX 25 Working Box