

**A Report from Teri Gardner, Area 53 Archives Chair**  
**25th National A.A. Archives Workshop on September 22-25th, 2022, Little Rock, Arkansas**  
**“DOES HISTORY CARRY THE MESSAGE? ...You Bet It Does!”**

**Summary:** I want to thank Area 53 for allowing me to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> National AA Archives Workshop in Little Rock, Arkansas. This year’s theme or the 25th National A.A. Archives Workshop was, **“DOES HISTORY CARRY THE MESSAGE? ...YOU BET IT DOES!”** I want to acknowledge the hard work of the planning committee in Arkansas and the members of NAAAWS that put together an amazing event. The experience was very informative and I will do my best to incorporate many of the resources and processes into our Area 53 Archives efforts. I was fortunate to share the experience with Frank G., the Area 53 Archivist and Mark C., the Archivist for Central Ohio Group Fellowship. I found it helpful to be able to share the experience of attending the workshop with fellow members and bounce ideas off each other. I also met AA members from across the country (128 attendees) that graciously shared their experience with me and continue to be valuable resources. The following pages include information regarding the tours and workshop sessions. Recordings of the workshops are available upon request by emailing the Area 53 Archives Chairperson at [archives@area53aa.org](mailto:archives@area53aa.org).

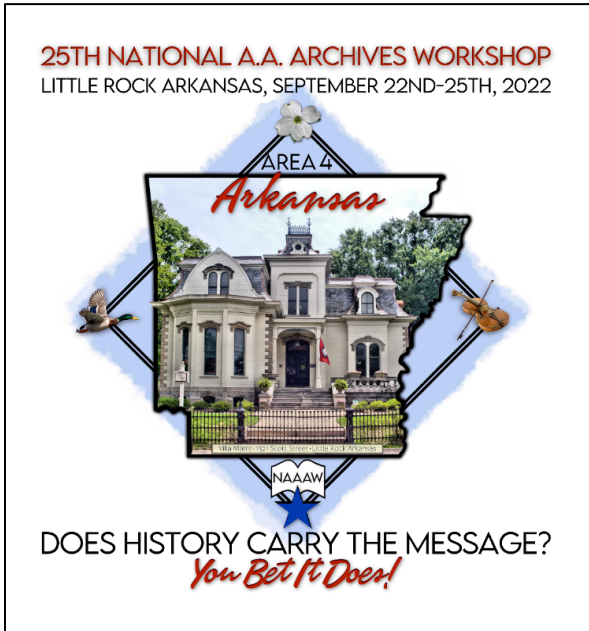
### **Tours**

- The Arkansas State Archives and Area 4 Archives Collection
- The Clinton Presidential Library
- Arkansas State Library

### **Workshop Sessions**

- How Did the National AA Archives Workshop Begin?
- What is an Archivist?
- Mission & Purpose
- What We Collect
- Trouble Shooting Modern Archives
- Preservation and Conservation
- Second Flying Blind Period
- GSO Presentation
- Digital Archives
- “Copywrite”
- Online Sharing for Archivist: Technology in AA Online Community (TIAA) is a forum for Archivist to share experience and ask questions related to AA Archives.
- The Little Rock Approach
- Research and Alternatives
- Online Archives Anonymity

The opportunity to listen to the collective experience of the other attendees was invaluable. The Area 53 Archives Committee is committed to working with our groups and districts to build upon the



archives collection for Area 53. If your group or district is interested in having a presentation or joining us on the Committee please contact us at [Area 53 Archives Chair](#).

**The 25<sup>th</sup> National AA Archives Workshop  
Does History Carry the Message? You Bet It  
Does!  
Little Rock, Arkansas**

**Maryland N., Archivist Western Washington, Area 72  
and Robin S., Archivist in Area 3, Arizona, gave me  
permission to share this summary of the NAAAWS.**

**1. Background / About the Workshop**

The National Alcoholics Anonymous Archives Workshop ("NAAAW") began in 1996 with a Workshop held in Akron, Ohio at the Mayflower Hotel. The Workshop grew out of the desire of a group of Archivists to have a Workshop for the Archivists operating within the General Service, Intergroup, and Institutions structures. These Archivists are found all across North America as well as the rest of the world. We take our inspiration from the first General Service Archivist, Nell Wing (a non-alcoholic), and all of the subsequent General Service Office Archivists. (from NAAAW webpage, <https://www.naaaw.org/> accessed 9/25/22).

**Excerpt from Statement of Purpose:** The individual workshops are conducted in an A.A. Forum format, with a specific focus on the open sharing of the experience, strength and hope of Archivists, attendees and members of the National A.A. Archives Workshop Membership Body. Each Workshop intends to renew and energize our efforts and foster enhanced communications between A.A. Archivists and Archives Committee members. We share information, methods, procedures, ethics, and our enthusiasm at each Workshop as we continue to gather, grow, and serve. (from NAAAW webpage <https://www.naaaw.org/> accessed 9/25/22).

**2. Agenda**

An image of the agenda for the workshop is provided to the left.

The formal agenda started at 7 pm on Thursday September 22<sup>nd</sup> and the workshop closed at noon on Sunday September 25<sup>th</sup> with the passing of the gavel to the hosts of the 26th Annual workshop which will be in Sudbury, Ontario Canada, September 7-10<sup>th</sup> 2023.

**Prior to the formal sessions starting there was an optional tour at 12:30 pm – 5:30 pm**

<p>8AM-REGISTRATION BEGINS &amp; CONTINUES THROUGH THE DAY. *HOSPITALITY OPEN</p> <p><b>Thursday</b></p> <p>NOON-TROLLY TOUR: CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY, ARKANSAS STATE ARCHIVES &amp; A.A. AREA FOUR ARKANSAS ARCHIVES</p> <p>5PM-TOUR ENDS AND DINNER O.Y.O.</p> <p>★ 6:30PM-WELCOME COMMITTEE IN HOSPITALITY</p> <p>★ 7PM-"STERLING BALLROOM OPENING GAVEL" DAVID M., NAAAW2022 CHAIR</p> <p>★ 7:30PM-"DOES HISTORY CARRY THE MESSAGE"-FAY W.</p> <p>★ 8PM-"HOW DID WE GET HERE"-GAIL L.</p> <p><b>Friday</b></p> <p>8AM-REGISTRATION CONTINUES *HOSPITALITY OPEN AND BREAKFAST O.Y.O.</p> <p>★ 7:30AM-EARLY BIRD A.A. MEETING</p> <p>★ 9AM-"WHAT IS AN ARCHIVIST"-TAMI S.</p> <p>★ 10AM-"MISSION &amp; PURPOSE"-VICKI-JO B.</p> <p>★ 10AM-"WHAT WE COLLECT"-MIKE Y.</p> <p>★ 11AM-"TROUBLESHOOTING MODERN ARCHIVES"-DANIELLE ASFORDEH-BUTLER CENTER ARCHIVIST</p> <p>NOON-LUNCH O.Y.O.</p> <p>★ 1:30PM-"PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION"-THERON B. AND JIM B.(WORKING SESSION)</p> <p>★ 3:30PM-"SECOND FLYING BLIND PERIOD"-JIMMY D.</p> <p>5PM-DINNER O.Y.O.</p> <p>★ 7:30PM-G.S.O. ARCHIVES PRESENTATION-MICHELLE MIRZA</p> <p>★ 8:30PM-ICE CREAM SOCIAL [TICKETS PLEASE]</p>	<p><b>Saturday</b></p> <p>8AM-REGISTRATION CONTINUES *HOSPITALITY OPEN AND BREAKFAST O.Y.O.</p> <p>★ 7:30AM-EARLY BIRD A.A. MEETING</p> <p>★ 9AM-"DIGITAL ARCHIVES"-MITCHELL B.(WORKING SESSION)</p> <p>★ 11AM-"COPYWRIGHT"-MICHELLE MIRZA</p> <p>★ NOON-"ONLINE SHARING FOR ARCHIVISTS"-CHERI J.</p> <p>12:30-LUNCH O.Y.O.</p> <p>★ 2PM-"LITTLE ROCK APPROACH"-PERRY D.</p> <p>★ 3PM-"RESEARCH AND ALTERNATIVES"-BILL T.</p> <p>★ 3PM-"AN ARCHIVES INTERVIEW"-DAVID M.</p> <p>★ 4PM-"ONLINE ARCHIVES ANONYMITY"-BILLY N.</p> <p>★ 4PM-"WRITING A HISTORY"-TINA C.</p> <p>★ 6:30PM-"BANQUET [TICKETS PLEASE]</p> <p>★ 7:30PM-"SPEAKER"-DON F.</p> <p>7AM-"HOSPITALITY OPEN AND BREAKFAST O.Y.O."</p> <p><b>Sunday</b></p> <p>★ 7:30AM-EARLY BIRD A.A. MEETING</p> <p>★ 9AM-"BUSINESS MEETING"</p> <p>★ 10AM-"ASK AN ARCHIVIST"-PANEL</p> <p>★ 11AM-"PASSING OF THE GAVEL"</p> <p>NAAAW BOARD MEETS AT NOON ON SATURDAY.</p> <p>*HOSPITALITY ROOM CLOSED DURING WORKSHOP EVENTS.</p> <p>**THE BANQUET MENU IS: MEDALLION OF BEEF AND CHICKEN, GREEN GARDEN SALAD, WILD RICE, BACON WRAPPED ASPARAGUS AND NEW YORK CHEESE CAKE WITH STRAWBERRIES.</p> <p>THIS PROGRAM IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.</p>	<p>hosted by the committee of Wolfe Street Center and Arkansas Area 04 Archives which I &amp; Don (D45 Archivist, and Cindy M. (D7&amp;27 Archives Chair) attended.</p>
<p>WORKSHOP LOCATIONS: ★STERLING BALLROOM ★HARLAN ROOM ★BUD ROOM ★OTHER</p>		

### 3. Summary / Key Points from Sessions Attended

Day / Session Title and Presenter	Summary
Thursday 22 Sept / Optional Tour / David M. (Area 4 State Archivist) Tour leader	<p>The tour visited three locations, each of which featured archives. The first site visited was the <b>Wolfe Street Center</b> where the Wolfe Street Foundation was established to provide meeting spaces for the recovery community. The <b>Area 4 Archives</b> are housed in that building as well. We were shown the museum room where copies of many historic AA books and literature are on display as well as extensive group history books. Throughout the building, Wolfe Street's history is on display - from artwork and photos on the walls to memorial pews from the old facility from which the foundation moved in 2011. Beside the building, a Serenity Garden pays homage to our origins in a nod to Joe McQuany (of Joe and Charlie) and his Serenity House. (Source: <a href="https://www.wolfestreet.org/history">https://www.wolfestreet.org/history</a> accessed by Robin S on 25 Sept 2022)</p> <p>The second stop was the <b>Arkansas State Archives</b> where we were given a presentation on the scope of the collection, the approach to preserving and conserving the records and some of the methodologies employed. We learned that microfilm is the most secure means of preserving information – the microfilm stays stable for 500 years. In fact, the archives are transferring some of their digital media to microfilm. We were shown the main vault where over 10,000 artifacts are held; we also were shown how they are capturing historic newspapers. Their scanner costs \$140,000!</p> <p>The last stop was the <b>William J. Clinton Presidential Library &amp; Museum</b> where we were told that it physically houses over 78 million pages of documents, 20 million emails, 2 million photographs, and 12,500 videotapes. Approximately 5% of the collection (3 million pages etc.) have been digitized and are publicly available. We had a guided tour of the museum and could see archival boxes containing some of the 78 million pages incorporated into the design of the museum. (Source: <a href="https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/about">https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/about</a> accessed by Robin S. on 25 Sept 2022)</p>
Thursday 22 Sept / 7:30 pm "Does History Carry the Message", David	<p>David read an essay Fay W (former Area 4 Archivist) wrote about history being the language of the heart because it was captured. History is formed not by the events themselves, but the recording of the events. The twelve traditions are the distilled experience of our A.A. past. Without archives the information gets lost or deteriorates in some box or basement. A.A. in Arkansas was started with a copy of the Big Book, the first to start solely from literature,</p>

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M for Fay W.	“when one sober alcoholic with the AA book contacted one sick alcoholic with a message of hope.” (quote from “How AA Got Started in Arkansas”)
Thursday 22 Sept / 8:00 pm “How Did We Get Here”, Gail L	Gail provided a PowerPoint presentation on the history of archives function in A.A. from the 1930s when Bill and Lois recognized the need to preserve records, the role his secretary Nell Wing played who was ultimately the first archivist through to the modern era. Gail is an A.A. Archivist Extraordinaire, who was part of NAAAW inception. She stayed at Nell Wing’s house in the 1980s to learn A.A. archives and was responsible for starting the formal A.A. Archives that opened at GSO in 1975. At one point in the presentation, there was an audio recording of Nell Wing talking about her experience as an early archivist. It was a very interesting and informative presentation.
Friday 23 Sept / 9 am “What is an Archivist”, Tami S	Tami’s presentation started out with the question: “You made me an archivist, now what?” She then explained the wide variety of collective memory that an archive can encompass from factual materials, audio recordings of story tellers, different media such as floppy disks, cassette tapes and papers. Archivists are information professionals. We save items to prove that something happened. If it isn’t written down, it didn’t happen. The archivist also needs to be concerned with provenance – where did these records come from? What is the difference between an Archivist and a Collector? Tami provided the following three definitions: A <i>Curator</i> acquires, cares for and develops a collection. A <i>Collector</i> collects things of a specific type and a <i>Librarian</i> manages a library. It is important to establish a scope for your archive to ensure it meets the need to carry the message, to inform, educate and inspire.
Friday 23 Sept / 10 am “What we Collect”, Mike Y	Mike talked about the various things that are in A.A. archives. We collect experience, strength and hope, and we are preserving the past to assure our future. Some of the items he talked about were group histories, meeting place photos, biographies of long-timers, recordings of area assemblies (observing anonymity), pin and button collections from past delegates. He emphasized the need to have a Collection Scope so we can focus on being archivists vs. collectors.
Friday 23 Sept / 11 am “Troubleshooting Modern Archives”, Danielle Asfordeh – Butler Center Archivist	Danielle is a professional archivist, and she provided a wealth of information and resources to be accessed. She provided a link to a site she calls “Resources for the Lone ArRanger” which is a Google Drive Folder that contains many items from the SAA’s Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) Study Guide. Topics include Manuals, Books, Periodicals, and Links to connect to Other Practitioners, Oral History, and Archival Management Software / Digital Collections. The methodology for A.A. includes preserving Anonymity, collect/appraisal (see what is there) Organize / Arrange materials, Preserve and Provide access. She made the distinction between organizing and describing emphasizing the need to provide a summary of what is in a box, the donor and provenance (where did we get the item, what’s the back story) for quick reference until all materials can be cataloged. Archives Fundamentals are very helpful to learn the language, and then additional information is only a Google search away. Comments from the attendees stressed that <b>Google for Nonprofits.org</b> (.org sites usually) have appropriate security standards and that it’s a low to no cost solution for digital cloud storage.
Friday 23 Sept / 1:30 pm “Preservation, Conservation (and more)” Theron B and Jim B. (working	This session was a demonstration of some of the techniques in preservation and conservation. The top level steps when material is received in an archive facility is to unpack the box, classify contents, categorize (catalog), and prepare for storage (stabilize). A part of the process is triage—determining if immediate action needs to be taken to preserve some portion of the contents, or if it can be just described and deferred. There are some good detailed videos on <b>NAAAW-online 2020 YouTube</b> channel including how to create a clamshell

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session) with guest appearance from Maryland N.	case for a book, stitching a pamphlet and mylar encapsulation. The learning tab of the <b>NAAAW.org</b> site has a multitude of training items from past workshops on it, and <b>Technology In AA (TIAA-forum) ‘turned on’ a specific channel for Archives.</b> They talked about acidification of old papers and suggested that it is wise to make photocopies of newspaper clippings because that paper is very acid and prone to deterioration. They discussed dealing with folded corners of papers, repairing holes and other damage, useful weights to flatten pages, etc. Maryland then demonstrated the use of the narrate function in MS Word to create a list and turn it into a table without having to type everything into a spreadsheet. Many of the techniques are used by WWA72 Archives.
Friday 23 Sept / 3:30 pm “Second Flying Blind Period” by Jimmy D	Jimmy D is the Southwest Regional Trustee and he talked about the General Service Board and how the age of Covid became our second flying blind period in A.A. history. When the International Convention had to be cancelled in person due to the Covid pandemic, A.A. was not prepared for such an eventuality. The preservation of the society is paramount and the common welfare comes first. A.A. is a spiritual society and it is about unity throughout our history. He spoke of learning lessons from the failures of the Washingtonian Society and the importance of sticking with our singleness of purpose. We have to maintain A.A. as a viable alternative to dying of alcoholism, and the navigation through the new on-line meetings a part of the process.
Friday 23 Sept / 7:30 pm “G.S.O. Archives Presentation” by Michelle Mirza	Michelle is the G.S.O. Archivist and she provided a presentation on archives in general and the resources available. There is now a 2022 Archives Workbook available which updated the last one with some additional material. There is an Archives Checklist we use. There are materials on how to conduct interviews with members who speak American Sign Language (ASL) while preserving anonymity (since facial expression is a large part of the language). The Group History form has been updated. She emphasized the importance of establishing a collection scope and policy that describes what to collect, how to collect it and how to dispose of unneeded materials—we do this with the Archives Policy Statement 1989, 1994, 2006, 2012). Michelle provided a high-level overview of vast mission done by 5 employees in G.S.O Archives and shared the Archivist’s Serenity Prayer:  <b><i>Grant me the serenity to accept the collections I cannot decline, Courage to decline the collections I can, and funding to process the backlog.</i></b>  The G.S.O. tests the acidity level of papers in its collection every five years to ensure there is no deterioration or whether stabilization is needed. They are transcribing and digitizing handwritten letters which is providing searchable access to content, such as an explanation of what Bill meant by “rocketed into the 4 <sup>th</sup> dimension” a question he responded to in a letter.  Michelle emphasized the need to obtain a deed of gift when any collections are donated and make sure to understand any stipulations with restrictions to use.  She concluded with an audio recording of Bill W. stating in part: “...let us never fear needed change/ The essence of all growth is the willingness to change...”
Saturday 24 Sept / 9 am “Digital Archives” – Mitchell B. (working session)	This was fabulous...Mitchell, Area 09 Delegate and past A09 Archivist drove his three scanners from CA to AR to allow an experiential hands-on working session with digitization. This is different the archiving of born digital item, BTW. Mitchel presented at our May Archives Quarterly. He also mentors a group of 10-15 Archives Trusted Servants each month on a Zoom I started for the Pacific region.

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<p>Saturday 24 Sept / 11 am</p> <p>“Copyright Basics for Archivists: Michelle Mirza</p>	<p>Michelle presented a very informative presentation on the importance of understanding copyright if we publish any contents from our archives. I have requested a copy of her presentation and will keep it for reference. Some interesting points: copyright applies to both published and unpublished art/letters/documents/pictorials, etc. The owner of the copyright is the author of the work. Works made for hire (such as for an employer) are owned by the employer if the work is within the scope of the employer. There are specific time frames that copyrights will expire. For instance, an unpublished, never registered document maintains copyright for the life of the author + seventy years. Documents by authors who died before 1951 are now in the public domain, which means they are no longer protected by intellectual property laws and are free to use.</p> <p>G.S.O. policies are in accordance with the law and A.A. principles: Observe copyright law, preserve anonymity, respect expectation of privacy and maintain the condition of the material.</p> <p>Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living; therefore, the joy of good living is the theme of A.A. 's Twelfth Step. (from the 12 and 12)</p> <p>It is important when receiving materials to obtain a deed of gift for the donated materials.</p>
<p>Saturday 24 Sept / 2 pm</p> <p>“The Little Rock Approach” – Percy D. past Area 4 Archivist</p>	<p>Perry provided a brief history of the coming of A.A. to Little Rock as compiled in a treatise “Little Rock Approach - The Founders Share How It Began” Little Rock, Feb 1946 by Bob and Fay W. In the early days in Little Rock, the first group ever to start solely by mail, one of the early members kept finding loopholes in the Big Book, so an attorney wrote the Little Rock Approach Plan to close some of the loopholes. Prospective members were given a small spiral bound “28-day book” in which they were told to write each day what they did to stay sober. The notebook was then submitted to the members who voted on whether they could begin to come to meetings. They were still not members, only apprentices. The members were designated into “squads” to “police” their meetings including a “sniffer” squad consisting of someone who stood at the door to make sure members entering hadn’t been drinking. They had a “no women” rule and didn’t integrate people of color until 1962. Eventually through correspondence with Bill W. the leaders acknowledged their approach was a bit extreme and admitted they were wrong and adopted the A.A. ways.</p>
<p>Saturday 24 Sept / 3 pm</p> <p>“Research and Alternatives—Bill T.</p>	<p>I attended this and then went out and had a ‘meeting between a meeting’ and I will share from the mic at Assembly the standout sage wisdom, truths, and revelations I gleaned from these 10-30 encounters.</p>
<p>Saturday 24 Sept / 4 pm</p> <p>“Online Archives Anonymity” – Billy N</p>	<p>Billy N. is the Chairman of the board of NAAAW. He has a deep respect of A.A. history. He came to A.A. from juvenile facilities and therefore his focus is working with 16-24 year old tough and cool young men. In his opinion Covid was one of the greatest gifts to A.A. because we were forced into incorporating technology into how we do our work. He expressed some concerns raised about the anonymity associated with use of technology. His message is “do not use the traditions to just say no” to technology (e.g., zoom), but understand how best to use it appropriately. 12<sup>th</sup> Step Anonymity is humility to serve without recognition. He also stated that if you have a manual process that isn’t working, a digital solution replicating it is going to be just as bad. His bottom line is that we need to get out of the fear business. In this session, Billy Unpacked some very complex implications for AA’s 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Tradition regarding all sorts of Apps and Platforms</p>

Day / Session Title and Presenter	Summary
Sunday 25 Sept / 9 am Business Meeting	During the business meeting, it was announced that I was elected as a new member of the NAAAW Advisory Board!
Sunday 25 Sept / 10 am "Ask an Archivist" Panel	<p>Questions were taken from the floor to be posed to the panel of archivists. The first had to do with how to insure a collection. One response was that you don't – how can one insure something of spiritual value? Others indicated that insurance covers buildings in which archives are housed and another stated that there are those who are skilled in appraising A.A. collections.</p> <p>Other key points on a variety of questions included: An archive isn't defined by the books you have or don't have. It is important to be able to tell a story with the materials collected, vs. just keeping the materials in a box. The value is in the information.</p> <p>There was a discussion on whether archives are line items in the Area (or District) budgets and whether fundraising can be done to help fund the efforts. Several folks offered examples of how additional funds were raised such as through Traditions Dinners with a portion going to the archives, etc.</p> <p>Today is tomorrow's history, if we do a good job of preserving the appropriate and pertinent information today we will make it easier for archivists of tomorrow.</p> <p>Suggestion was made to conduct video interviews with long-timers – capture it while you can.</p>
Sunday 25 Sept / 11 am "Passing of the Gavel"	The passing of the gavel was formally done by passing the physical gavels from David M., Archivist of Area 4, Little Rock, Arkansas to (Gaytan) of Sudbury Ontario, Canada who will host the 26 <sup>th</sup> annual NAAAW. And it was announced that the 24 <sup>th</sup> NAAAW in 2024 will be hosted by Area 24.