

ENSURING WE HAVE “NOTHING TO FEAR”:

Adventist archives and manuscript
collections and Adventist history

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“We have nothing to fear for the future,
except as we shall forget the way the
Lord has led us and His teaching in our
past history”

(Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 196)

- **Oscar Wilde: British and Americans are “two people with everything in common except language”**
- **Ensuring or insuring? Both, really ...**

- This presentation will elaborate my vision for the role the GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research [ASTR] in promoting denominational history and “Adventist Studies”—two areas in which librarians are the first port of call for most students or researchers, and are, to some extent, the informational gatekeepers.
- **For this reason, I will also elaborate on areas where we can, should and hopefully will collaborate and cooperate fruitfully**

History: a biblical perspective

- Moses commanded the Israelites to “*be careful* and watch yourselves so that you do not *forget* the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart”; to be “*careful* not to *forget* the covenant of the Lord”; and to be “*careful* that you do not *forget* the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt” (Deut. 4:9, 23, 6:12)
- “Teach [these stories] to your children and to their children after them.” (Deut. 4:9)
- Remembrance requires care and effort! And it must be transmitted to the next generation.

History: a biblical perspective

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Christ, the author and finisher of our faith”

(Heb. 12:1–2, NKJV)

GC ARCHIVIST'S ROLE:

To develop cooperative working relationships with existing denominational archives, and assist in the development of other research & archives centers

To coordinate resources for denominational research throughout the denomination so as to bring about the most serviceable utilization of existing denominational source materials.

GC Executive, Minutes, 73–1867

OBJECTIVES FOR GC ARCHIVES

1. To promote more research and publication (broadly conceived) in the areas of Seventh-day Adventist history and Adventist Studies
2. To promote a broader awareness of our heritage and past among the denomination at large

In order to achieve these ends:

- i. To establish better inventories and guides to archival, manuscript and rare book collections
- ii. To make available online, in digital form, the widest possible number and variety of historical sources

VISION FOR SDA ARCHIVES AND MSS COLLECTIONS

- We need specialization and working cooperatively, not in competition (and this is true also in digitization, see below!)
- Where college/university libraries *don't* have significant collections, then *don't* seek to establish ones
- Where they *do*, work to promote—but also specialize, and be willing to cooperate across sector as a whole, accepting and promoting each specialization

VISION FOR SDA ARCHIVES AND MSS COLLECTIONS

- CAR: has and would remain a depository of record with strengths in all areas

BUT IN ADDITION

- LLU: strength in history of the medical work
- PUC: strength in doctrinal and other controversies of the mid- to late 1970s and early 1980s
- Southwestern: strength in history of work in region
- **And what others? Please share**

WHAT'S NEEDED:

- Researcher's guide to the GC Archives
- Guide to sources on sabbatarian and adventist history in Adventist university and college libraries—including summaries of holdings, at least at collection level
- Perhaps initially in North America only?
- Overall guide to the sources of Seventh-day Adventist history, in academic libraries, denominational archives and in other archives/libraries

ASPIRATIONAL

- Establish a journal of critical studies on Seventh-day Adventism (*Journal [or Review] of Adventist Studies*)
- Money for scholarships or travel funding—even if not a lot, at least some—and could be vested in ASDAL
 - Scholarships for students wanting to do original research for PhDs
 - Travel grants for researchers wanting to visit GC Archives or wanting to visit *e.g.* CAR at Andrews, Union College’s Heritage Room, PUC’s Utt Center for Adventist History, and so on

MORE ONLINE PRESENCE

(I) ARCHIVES/MSS

- GC Archives now has Twitter feed:
<https://twitter.com/#!/GCArchives>
- Our websites badly need a redesign to make them more user-friendly—at present they are very 1990s in feel!
- GC Archives will be moving away from scanning and uploading periodicals and books
- Instead towards much more of an Archives emphasis: digitizing archival documents and placing them online
- **Could your university or college do likewise??**

MORE ONLINE PRESENCE

(II) PUBLISHED SOURCES

- **Create an online digital historic Adventist library**
- Mostly primary sources but with relevant secondary sources
- Primary sources to include audio and visual as well as well as print
- AdventistLibrary.net/ .org/ .com—with re-directs from adventistlibraries.org/ net/ com, adventistresources.org net/ com
- Or part of a broader “AdentistResources.org” website

AdventistLibrary.net: concept

- Grand vision: unified database and web platform
- Expensive, time-consuming
- An incremental approach has been identified (rather than waiting massive grant to do all the work at one go)
- Gradual integration of AdventistArchives.org, White Estate online writings, and CAR
- Interim website to go up in August
- With capacity for including not only three main websites but other websites as well
- Move towards “hotlinks” from Adventist Periodical Index and from Adventist Obituary Index

“NOTHING TO FEAR”

- The online digital library has huge potential:
 - For general church historians
 - For historical theologians (development of doctrines)
 - Sociologists of Adventism and historical missiologists
 - BUT ALSO lay-people: tremendous resources in terms of photographs, mission stories, etc
- Greater archives specialization and cooperation should lead to more research on our history;
- And therefore greater self-understanding—crucial at a time of internal debate
- **All in all, will ensure (or insure!) we *do* remember and therefore have “nothing to fear”**