

THE GAA Library and Archive



Since its establishment in 2007, the GAA Library and Archive has been collecting the publications, records and archives of the GAA at central, provincial and county board levels.

The GAA Library and Archive now seeks to expand its collections to include material at club level.

To help achieve this ambitious aim, this club document, which seeks to pre-empt the many questions that GAA clubs may have, has been prepared and disseminated to GAA clubs throughout Ireland and abroad.

Overview of the GAA Library and Archive

What does the GAA Library and Archive collect?

The GAA Library and Archive collects material that contains information on the GAA. This includes material written *about* the GAA (books, magazines etc) and material *created by* the GAA (records and archives).

The specific type of material collected by the GAA Library and Archive includes administrative records (minute books and convention reports in particular), publications (books and articles), magazines, annuals, photographs, posters and flyers, GAA newspapers and match programmes.

Put succinctly, the GAA Library and Archive is interested in acquiring any GAA club material that contains information that can, or will, be used by historians and researchers, both now and in future years.

At Congress 2010, the motion was passed adding a 'Records Rule' to the Official Guide (Rule 4.15). This 'Records Rule' stipulates that (a) The Records created and received by the Gaelic Athletic Association, its members and administrators are the property of the Gaelic Athletic Association. (b) The Records of the Gaelic Athletic Association shall be transferred to a recognised GAA Archive in accordance with such directions as may be given by Central Council.

The GAA Library and Archive is particularly proud of its collection of GAA minute books and convention reports. At the moment, the GAA Library and Archive possesses minute books from the Central Council, Provincial Councils, County Boards and Clubs dating back to 1887. These minute books are unique and irreplaceable; if these books are not properly preserved, as



discussed below, there is every possibility that the information contained within them will be lost forever. An unfortunate example of this, is that the Central Council minute books for the period 1884-1899 have been long lost to the GAA: as such, historians have had to rely on external accounts (newspapers etc) when writing about the formative years of the GAA.

Why does the GAA Library and Archive collect this material?

The GAA, as the leading sporting and cultural organisation in Ireland, has a rich history dating back to its foundation in 1884. The history of the GAA is intertwined with the history and development of modern Ireland. As such, the history of the GAA is of huge interest to a variety of disciplines: third-level students, historians and journalists in particular. From experience, the GAA Library and Archive realise that those interested in conducting a thorough and detailed research into the history of the GAA, desire access to the internal records of the GAA i.e. GAA minute books and convention reports, rather than any other external sources (i.e. newspapers and books).

Who can access the material held by the GAA Library and Archive?

When the GAA Library and Archive receives an item, or collection, it advertises this fact through its website www.crokepark.ie. This website also contains the standard GAA Library and Archive application form – people who want to access the material held by the GAA Library and Archive fill out this form and return it to the GAA Archivist (gaaarchive@crokepark.ie). Anybody can apply to access the material held by the GAA Library and Archive. The GAA Library and Archive has accommodated a range of disciplines from junior-certificate students through to history professors, from within Ireland and abroad.

Where do these people access the material held by the GAA Library and Archive?

The GAA Library and Archive, based in the GAA Museum, Croke Park, has a dedicated and fully-supervised reading room. It is only within this reading room that people can view their chosen material. The normal rules that apply to any library and / or archive are in operation here i.e. no food or drink, pens, tip-ex etc.; researchers are only allowed to use pencils and laptops for taking notes in this reading room.

Photocopying or scanning is not available in this reading room but researchers are, subject to the prior approval of the archivist, allowed take a limited number of digital photographs for personal research purposes only.



The GAA Library and Archive is not a lending library – under no circumstances whatsoever will any material be allowed to leave the library. The only place people will be allowed view the material is in the fully supervised reading room.

Does the GAA Library and Archive conduct research on behalf of people?

Similar to other libraries and archives, the GAA Library and Archive does not conduct research on behalf of people. The GAA Library and Archive offers people the facilities and resources to conduct their own research. The GAA Library and Archive can, however, offer people advice, assistance and guidance to people on what would best suit their research needs.

Club material and the GAA Library and Archive

What type of material is the GAA Library and Archive seeking from GAA clubs?

Due to the vast number of GAA clubs, it would be impossible for the GAA Library and Archive to centralise every single document produced by every GAA club. For this reason, the GAA Library and Archive has identified the main types of documents it would like to receive from each club. These documents are:

- Club minute books
- Club convention reports
- Club match programmes and souvenir programmes (i.e. opening of grounds)
- Club publications (books, magazines and annuals)
- Club photographs

If your club has any documents that are not listed above, but you think might be of interest to the GAA Library and Archive, please contact the GAA Archivist directly (astaunton@crokepark.ie / (01) 8192350) who is happy to offer advice.

Why should clubs deposit their records in the GAA Library and Archive?

One of the most common questions the GAA Library and Archive receives when collecting material nationwide is ‘why should my club send its material to Croke Park?’

There are a number of compelling answers to this question but the main answer, undoubtedly, is the level of resources the GAA Library and Archive can provide to GAA units. These resources can be divided into 1) staff 2) facilities and 3) accessibility.



1. **Staff:** Since its establishment in 2007, the GAA Library and Archive has employed a professional archivist, fully trained in all aspects of cataloguing, preserving and administering access to these records.
2. **Facilities:** In addition to employing a professional archivist since 2007, the GAA has invested heavily in developing the requisite facilities befitting an archive of national importance. The storeroom, in which all archival material received is stored, is environmentally controlled and monitored. All paper based material, whether it is a 19th century handwritten minute book or a printed Microsoft word document, has to be stored under certain conditions to ensure its long-term survival. The GAA Library and Archive's storeroom is set to these conditions (17 degrees and 55% relative humidity). As part of the Heritage Council of Ireland's Museum Standards Programme, the GAA Library and Archive's storeroom has been inspected by the Heritage Council on two occasions; on both occasions the inspectors were completely satisfied with the procedures in place.
3. **Accessibility:** One of the central tenets in establishing any archive is to ensure that records are centralised in one secure location. Apart from security and preservation advantages, discussed above, another benefit of a centralised archive is the ease of access afforded to researchers. As mentioned, the GAA Library and Archive provides access to these documents through its dedicated and supervised Reading Room. This access, however, has to be strictly controlled and regulated. The use / overuse of fragile documents will result in their deterioration.

Before the establishment of the GAA Library and Archive, researchers travelled extensively throughout Ireland, (and abroad), seeking access to individual provincial and county board records. The creation of a centralised archive now means that researchers can access the records and archives of the GAA in one centre, and through a dedicated reading room. Once again, the employment of a full-time archivist ensures that access to this material is carried out in a controlled, systematic and documented manner.



What if my club material contains confidential information?

When collecting material at central, provincial and county board level, a frequent concern raised was what happens if the material, minute books in particular, contain confidential information?

For certain types of documents (minute books in particular) the GAA Library and Archive operates according to the 'thirty-year rule'. Club minute books will not be offered to the public until thirty years after their creation – this means that a club minute book covering the years 2001 to 2003 will not be offered to the public until 2033. However, if this minute book contains any confidential, sensitive or personal information, it will be closed for at least 80 years, possibly forever. Clubs themselves can request that minute books remain closed for a period further than the standard 30 years.

Other material, such as convention reports, match programmes, etc. will be open to the public shortly after the GAA Library and Archive receives them. As this material is disseminated to the public, it is presumed that it does not contain any confidential material.

What happens to my club's material once sent to the GAA Library and Archive?

Once the GAA Library and Archive receives material from a club, the standard GAA Museum 'Donation Form' will be signed by the GAA Library and Archive and issued to the corresponding club. A signed 'Transfer of Title Form' will also be issued. It must be made very clear that once these two forms have been signed by the club's representative, the material donated by the club will become the absolute property of the GAA Library and Archive.

Transportation of club material to the GAA Library and Archive

Due to the number of GAA clubs, it would be impossible for a representative of the GAA Library and Archive to visit each GAA club to collect relevant material. For this reason, transportation of club material to the GAA Library and Archive shall be the sole responsibility of the relevant club. The GAA Library and Archive will not reimburse clubs for any expenses connected with the transportation of club material to the GAA Library and Archive.

It is strongly recommended that clubs, when in a position to deposit material in the GAA Library and Archive, contact the GAA Archivist Adam Staunton (astaunton@crokepark.ie / (01) 8192350) in advance to arrange a suitable date for deposit. This will ensure that all relevant paperwork will be prepared in advance.



Next Steps

If clubs have material that they believe is suitable for inclusion in the GAA Library and Archive, or if clubs would like more information on the GAA Library and Archive, they should contact the GAA Archivist, Adam Staunton (astaunton@crokepark.ie / (01) 8192350).

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