



2nd Annual Conference of the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians (ASDAL) held at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland, 1982

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

# Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians (ASDAL)

---

## KEITH CLOUTEN

Keith Clouten, M.L.S. (University of Southern California), retired in 2003 as Library Director of Andrews University. In retirement, Clouten has given volunteer library service to Adventist institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. He has authored several books and articles in professional journals. He is married to Ngairé with two adult daughters and five grandchildren.

---

The Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians (ASDAL) is an international organization for individuals interested in SDA librarianship. Since its inception in 1981, ASDAL has functioned as an active and energetic professional association, enhancing communication between SDA libraries, and promoting and operating library services to SDA institutions worldwide. The association holds an annual conference, publishes a newsletter as well as a professional journal, awards the D. Glenn Hilts Scholarship, and is a cosponsor of the Adventist Digital Library. ASDAL also maintains a Listserv for its members.

*ASDAL Action* began publication in 1982 as a simple newsletter, but has developed into a colorful online magazine with feature articles, preconference information, postconference reports, reviews of new publications, job openings, and news briefs.

The annual conference, meeting for five to seven days, is held on a different college or university campus each year. It functions as ASDAL's annual business meeting, receiving reports from officers and committees, acting on recommendations, and planning new programs or services. Professional papers and guest presentations are interspersed with tours to local cultural institutions and tourist sites. Until 2014, preconferences or postconferences typically focused on SDA library resources and topics of interest to school and academy librarians. Beginning in 2015, programming organized by the Archives and Records Management Steering Committee (ARMS) and the Adventist Resources Steering Committee (ARS) has been integrated into the main conference schedule.

In 2016 ASDAL launched the *Journal of Adventist Libraries and Archives* (JALA). This peer-reviewed online journal publishes both research and theoretical articles that address issues common to SDA libraries and archives. It aims to foster and enrich professional practice in these two distinct but conceptually related services to the SDA Church.

ASDAL continues to contribute significantly to the academic quality of SDA college and university programs internationally. Membership in library networks and shared access to important databases magnifies the association's value to the church's educational institutions.

## History

The earliest known meeting of SDA librarians occurred at Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) in February 1951.<sup>1</sup> At intervals from the 1950s through the 1970s, librarians from North American SDA colleges and universities met formally, always in conjunction with sessions or conventions of church academics. Besides giving opportunity for librarians to get to know each other, these meetings allowed them to discuss a variety of current professional issues—collection development, library instruction for students, building and space needs, censorship of library materials, conversion of collections from the Dewey Decimal System to the Library of Congress Classification, training of academy librarians, and areas of cooperation. Between the late 1950s and 1980 an *SDA Library Newsletter* was produced irregularly and circulated mainly

within North America.

In June 1981 nearly forty librarians, representing eight SDA colleges and universities across North America, met independently at Pacific Union College in California. In response to a felt need for a professional association, the group voted ASDAL into existence, with Lawrence Onsager, then library director at Union College, as its first president. The first issue of *ASDAL Action* was produced in January 1982, and the first annual conference was held in the summer of 1982 at Columbia Union College (now Columbia Adventist University)<sup>2</sup>

## Access to Periodical Content

Before the advent of today's information and communication technologies, librarians struggled with the challenge of providing access to the content of SDA periodicals for students and researchers. As early as the 1930s and 1940s, two librarians, Theofield G. Weis at Washington Missionary College (now Columbia Adventist University) and D. Glenn Hilts at La Sierra College (now La Sierra University), created their own card indexes to selected SDA periodicals, but their potentially valuable indexes were not accessible beyond their respective campuses. A stint at cooperative indexing, involving distribution of carbon copies from a central office, was tried in the 1960s, with limited success.

In 1971, after much discussion and unsuccessful lobbying for funds, George Summers, director of Loma Linda University libraries, initiated and largely financed the first volume of the *Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index* as a printed product. Financial issues disrupted production until June 1981, when urgently needed support for the *Index* became the main agenda item for the foundation meeting of ASDAL at Pacific Union College. With energy and determination the new organization addressed the financial crisis, securing an initial budget from the SDA General Conference. In 1993, production of the *Index*, now managed by ASDAL, was moved from Loma Linda University to Andrews University. The *Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index* continues to be a valuable research tool, now as an online database with links to the full text of articles in several SDA journals<sup>3</sup>

## Adventist Resources Steering Committee (ARS)

Of special relevance for ASDAL is the collection and preservation of SDA publications, in both print and digital formats, and making them accessible to anyone anywhere. This last aspect involves identifying, describing, and classifying the items so that they may be effectively organized, stored, retrieved, and accessed by users. Beginning in 2015, an Adventist Resources Steering Committee has provided programming as part of the ASDAL conference.

From 1983 the annual conference included a preconference or section committed to issues and questions regarding SDA resources. Topics included physical preservation of materials, local collections, compilation of bibliographies, an index to obituaries, and bibliographic access to dissertations and theses. Since 2010 a major

focus of ASDAL has been the creation of an Adventist Digital Library as a combined initiative of the General Conference Archives, the Ellen G. White Estate, and the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University.

## ALICE (Adventist Libraries Information Cooperative)

The Adventist Libraries Information Cooperative is a service of ASDAL to provide member libraries with enhanced database access opportunities at reduced costs through collective efforts and resource sharing.

Subscription databases in a wide range of subject areas made an appearance during the 1980s, first utilizing the compact-disc format, but quickly advancing to online access with the arrival of the World Wide Web. Because individual libraries were hit heavily with the rising cost of database subscriptions, ASDAL developed the concept of an SDA library network to negotiate price reductions. In 1986 ALICE was born as a consortium of libraries in North American SDA institutions, but it was soon enlarged to accommodate institutions abroad. In 2018 ALICE had 18 member libraries in eight countries, with licenses for more than a dozen relevant databases.

## Archives and Records Management Steering Committee (ARMS)

In 2014 the General Conference Archives in Silver Spring, Maryland, hosted the ASDAL conference. Presentations focused on the special needs of archivists and records managers, both within libraries and church administrative units. Beginning in 2015, ASDAL conferences have included an ARMS section.

## Automation

Application of computer processing in SDA libraries began in the 1960s. It culminated in the installation of online public access catalogs (OPACs) during the 1980s. Library application of computer technologies was an important emphasis at several ASDAL conferences. A trend away from print to digital resources, especially for expensive print journals, became evident by the year 2000. Conversion of extensive SDA print and photographic resources to digital continues to take place at several member institutions, leading toward the creation of the Adventist Digital Library in 2016.

## Internationalization of ASDAL

When ASDAL launched in 1981, membership and participation was almost entirely North American. Within two years this began to change, with 10 overseas members. A committee was established in 1986 to study the needs of SDA libraries abroad; this led in 1991 to the appointment of an overseas library coordinator as an officer of ASDAL. Special services to libraries abroad included provision of books, assistance with periodical subscriptions, and cataloging assistance.

The 2000 ASDAL conference at Andrews University saw a significant attendance of librarians from Europe, Asia, and Africa. Rapid growth in the number of SDA universities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and South America led ASDAL into becoming a truly international organization in its membership and focus. By 2019 one third of membership is outside North America, with representation from 13 countries. These members are increasingly active participants and presenters in the annual conferences.

The first international conference of ASDAL was held at Newbold College, England, in 1995. Subsequent conferences convened in Mexico (1999, Universidad de Montemorelos), Argentina (2002, Universidad Adventista del Plata), South Africa (2007, Helderberg College), Philippines (2012, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies), and England (2017, Newbold College).

## Professional Issues

In 1984 ASDAL appointed a standing committee on academic rank and tenure for librarians. Surveys of existing practices at North American institutions were conducted, with recommendations that all professionally qualified librarians should have faculty rank and tenure. ASDAL has also fostered a philosophy of Christian librarianship, exploring ways in which librarians can be Christlike in attitude and service to their clients.

## Scholarships<sup>4</sup>

The D. Glenn Hilts Scholarship is offered by ASDAL. The scholarship was established by Margarete Hilts in memory of her husband, Glenn Hilts. It was first awarded in 1985 to recognize excellence in scholarship and to encourage individuals with leadership potential to seek employment in an SDA library. To qualify, applicants must be Seventh-day Adventists in good standing who have been accepted into a library school accredited by the [American Library Association](#), and expect to study at least one full academic year on a full-time basis. Applicants not attending a library school in the United States or Canada must be accepted into an overseas graduate library school recognized by the [International Federation of Library Associations](#).

## School and Academy Libraries

SDA librarians have always been concerned with the quality of school and academy libraries. This includes meeting standards for collections and services recommended by the American Association of School Librarians (a division of the American Library Association). ASDAL established a School Libraries Section at its 1983 conference, and subsequent conferences until 2013 included a preconference or postconference for school and academy librarians.

## Seventh-day Adventist Library Classification System

A Classification Scheme for Adventists and Ellen White was developed at Canadian Union College (now Burman University) in 1980 as an expansion of the Library of Congress BX 6100 classification schedules to better accommodate materials by and about Ellen White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. ASDAL adopted the scheme in 1984, appointing an editor and a standing committee to manage the classification, making changes, additions, and modifications as they become necessary. The classification scheme is now accessible as an online service from the ASDAL website, and is widely used by libraries in North America and abroad<sup>5</sup>

---

## SOURCES

*ASDAL Action*, 1982–Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians.

Brenneise, Harvey, "Meetings of SDA Professional Librarians Prior to the Formation of ASDAL." *ASDAL Action* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1992).

"D. Glenn Hilts Scholarship," accessed July 3, 2019, <http://www.asdal.org/hilts-scholarship>.

"History of the SDA Periodical Index": Papers presented at the 21st ASDAL Conference at Pacific Union College, June 2001. Part 1, 1932–1971, by Marilyn Crane; Part 2, 1971–2001, by Keith Clouten.

*Journal of Adventist Libraries and Archives (JALA)*, 2016–Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians.

*Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index*. Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians.

Tan, Felipe E., ed. *A Classification Scheme for Adventists and Ellen G. White: A Modification of the Library of Congress Religion Schedules, BX 6101–6189*. 2011 ed. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians, 1980. Accessed July 3, 2019. <http://www.asdal.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/documents/classification2011.pdf>.

---

## NOTES

1. Harvey Brenneise, "Meetings of SDA Professional Librarians Prior to the Formation of ASDAL," *ASDAL Action* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1992).
2. *ASDAL Action*: 25th Anniversary Commemorative Issue 25, no. 1 (Summer 2005).
3. "History of the SDA Periodical Index": Papers presented at the 21st ASDAL Conference at Pacific Union College, June 2001 (Part 1, 1932–1971, by Marilyn Crane; Part 2, 1971–2001, by Keith Clouten).
4. "D. Glenn Hilts Scholarship," accessed July 3, 2019, <http://www.asdal.org/hilts-scholarship>.

5. Felipe E. Tan, ed., *A Classification Scheme for Adventists and Ellen G. White: A Modification of the Library of Congress Religion Schedules, BX 6101–6189*, 2011 ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians, 1980), accessed July 3, 2019, <https://www.asdal.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/documents/classification2011.pdf>.

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000