

Literature WORKBOOK

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Literature Workbook

This workbook is service material, reflecting A.A. experience shared at the General Service Office. A.A. workbooks are compiled from the practical experience of A.A. members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada).

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“By our Twelve Steps we have recovered, by our Twelve Traditions we have unified, and through our Third Legacy — Service — we shall carry the AA message down through all the corridors of time to come.”

— Bill W., 1951, *The Language of the Heart*

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Introduction

A.A. co-founder Bill W. often called the influence of A.A. literature “incalculable.” Bill wrote in the May 1964 issue of *A.A. Grapevine*:

“Suppose, for instance, that during the last 25 years A.A. had never published any standard literature ... no books, no pamphlets. We need little imagination to see that by now our message would be hopelessly garbled. Our relations with medicine and religion would have become a shambles. To alcoholics generally we would today be a joke and the public would have thought us a riddle. Without its literature, A.A. would certainly have bogged down in a welter of controversy and disunity.”

Today, as in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism is carried by one alcoholic talking to another. But beginning with the publication of the first edition of the Big Book in 1939, literature has played an important role in spreading the A.A. message and imparting information about the A.A. Twelve Step program of recovery.

Why have a Literature Committee?

Literature committees at the district and area level exist today to educate the Fellowship about Conference-approved literature and related service material. More importantly, they exist to maintain the integrity of the A.A. message. Most Literature Committees strive to maintain this level of integrity by following the suggestions outlined in the General Service Office’s A.A. Guidelines on Literature. These guidelines resulted from a Conference Literature Committee suggestion in 1992 that the trustees’ Literature Committee develop Literature Committee guidelines comprised of shared experience from the Fellowship.

So, what is the purpose of Literature service work in Alcoholics Anonymous?

- To inform groups and districts, through displays and other suitable methods, of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items
- To help groups and districts understand the vital role Conference-approved literature has in carrying the A.A. message
- To consider suggestions regarding proposed additions to and changes in Conference-approved literature and audiovisual material
- To encourage A.A. members to read and purchase A.A. literature

The Importance of Literature

The importance of literature to Alcoholics Anonymous cannot be overstated. Experience indicates that a thorough knowledge of A.A. literature is a good way to assure that our primary purpose remains the focus for successful A.A. groups and members. By emphasizing our books, pamphlets, audiovisual and digital service material we can all better participate as part of the solution.

“Literature has played a major role in A.A.’s growth . . . In country after country where the A.A. seed was planted, it has taken root, slowly at first, then growing by leaps and bounds when literature has become available” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. xxiii).

SEE INFORMATION ON TRANSLATIONS OF A.A. LITERATURE....PAGE 33

Indeed, as members of A.A. hail from all parts of society and make their home in almost all places of the world, so does A.A. literature strive to reflect the diversity of its members and their varied needs — all while remaining true to our primary purpose. Moreover, literature need not take the form only of the printed word — or even the electronic word. It encompasses audio and visual means of carrying the A.A. message. It can be accessed and read online — or downloaded for reading later. Many items are available in audiovisual format, as well.

Therefore, many on Literature Committees emphasize using General Service Conference-approved literature. However, items such as A.A. Guidelines, Service Material and bulletins are examples of A.A. literature that are not Conference-approved but are invaluable tools to the A.A. members and groups who utilize them to carry A.A.’s message. Literature committees exist today to maintain the integrity of the A.A. message.

Area Literature Committees

What is an area literature committee?

Simply put, an Area Literature Committee is a group of A.A. members (formed from the districts of an area) which informs groups, district or area assembly members, through displays and other suitable methods, of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items. The Area Literature Committee also provides service-oriented literature for groups, district and area functions as needed, funded and requested.

History of literature committees

The General Service Conference felt it was important that groups be encouraged to appoint literature coordinators back in 1986 and passed an Advisory Action stating: “In an effort to strengthen our network of literature representatives to ensure that A.A. literature is available at meetings, as well as catalog order forms for books and cassettes that individuals are likely to want, it is suggested that groups appoint literature coordinators.”

Today, many local groups, districts and areas have active Literature Committees and dedicated group literature representatives (sometimes called “GLRs”) or literature chairs who share the message of Alcoholics Anonymous by increasing awareness about the wide variety of pamphlets and booklets that deal with the Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous: Recovery, Unity and Service (see the pamphlet “Our Three Legacies: Recovery, Unity and Service”). In addition, members of these Literature Committees often support other service areas with literature found to be helpful to specific populations. For instance, while an A.A. newcomer can be greatly helped with packets containing the pamphlets “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.” and “This is A.A.,” a newcomer to Correctional service will be greatly helped by an introduction to pamphlets like “A.A. in Correctional Facilities” or directions on where and how to get the Corrections Workbook. Some find it helpful to think of a group’s literature representative as a sort of “A.A. librarian” — someone who may not be familiar with every word or subject contained in workbooks, service material, or pamphlets, but knows where to find them, how to obtain them, and how to search for more information.

Still, some areas do not have Literature Committees or literature chairs and some areas and districts need more help in developing Literature Committees. According to one area, a survey revealed that a majority of respondents said they

“felt a need for” an area “Literature chair and Committee to support groups, districts and area assemblies through coordination of educational activities including displays, periodic conference calls and other networking activities.”

Therefore, in 2019, the General Service Conference Literature Committee suggested that the trustees’ Committee on Literature develop a Literature Committee Workbook. To that end, shared experience from local committees has been compiled and organized in this Workbook to represent Area, District and Intergroup/Central Office activity from numerous states in the U.S. and provinces in Canada.

How to use this literature committee workbook

While this Workbook was primarily created to aid in the development and use of Area Literature Committees, the information can be utilized by anyone in an area, district or group who wishes to know more about how to use A.A. literature to carry the A.A. message.

Whether your group or committee uses it as a springboard for presentation ideas or to grow a Literature Committee in your district or area, the shared experience of other A.A.s is offered in the hopes that it will prove useful in carrying the message of A.A. through the use and awareness of A.A. literature.

What are the basic literature committee functions?

The duties of a Literature Committee will vary based on whether the Literature Committee serves a group, district, or an area. However, according to the A.A. Guidelines on Literature Committees, in general, the basic committee functions are to:

- Inform groups, district, or area assembly members, through displays and other suitable methods, of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items.
- Become familiar with the information on GSO’s A.A. website (www.aa.org).
- Provide literature for group, area, and district functions.
- Consider suggestions regarding proposed additions to and changes in Conference-approved literature and audiovisual material.
- Encourage A.A. members to read and purchase A.A. literature.

Since the above duties are general in nature, many Area Literature Committees, after experience and time, have expanded upon these to include more specific suggestions and detailed examples in order to help define the scope and activities of a Literature Committee.

A.A. experience indicates that a thorough knowledge of A.A. literature is a good way to assure that our primary purpose remains the focus for successful A.A. groups and members. With this in mind, many Area Literature Committees emphasize A.A.’s books, pamphlets, audiovisual and service material. The manner in which this is done varies from area to area and region to region. Some areas hold

workshops to help local groups and districts learn about where A.A. literature comes from and the Conference process, while others focus on the creation and operation of effective District Literature Committees that utilize Conference-approved literature to carry the A.A. message.

Composition of an Area Literature Committee

In some areas, the Literature chair is an elected position. In one area, the composition of the Area Literature Committee consists of:

- District Literature Committee chairpersons (elected within their Districts)
- Area Literature Committee chairperson
- Area Literature Committee secretary-treasurer

These committee members are elected by District Literature chairs, often in October of even-numbered years using Third Legacy Procedure and presented for approval at the Area business meeting in October of even-numbered years.

How to Find Area Literature Committee Members

Many members of the Area Literature Committee are also chairs of their District Literature Committees and/or literature chairs or representatives of their home group, but, depending on the Area's group conscience, membership on the Literature Committee is sometimes open to all who have an interest. Group Literature Representatives, District Literature Committee members, District Committee members, GSRs and many others with an interest in carrying the message of A.A. through literature are welcome. In one area, the invitation to join the Area Literature Committee is extended to all A.A.s — not just those members in an elected position — who have an interest in A.A. literature and sharing it with others. It is up to the group conscience of each area to decide how to select an Area Literature Committee chairperson and committee members.

What Are Some Duties of an Area Literature Committee Member?

Literature Committee members have varied duties depending on the activities and scope of the committee and the area it serves. Some Literature Committees meet once a month — others meet quarterly and together decide on how to best make the Fellowship aware of A.A. literature and its uses.

FAQs

What is Conference-approved literature? The term “Conference-approved” describes written or audiovisual material approved by the General Service Conference for publication by A.A. World Services, Inc. (AAWS). This process assures that everything in such literature is in accord with A.A. principles. Conference-approved material always deals with the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous or with information about the A.A. Fellowship. Any Conference-approved booklet or pamphlet goes through a lengthy and painstaking process, during which a variety of A.A.s from all over the United States and Canada read and express opinions at every stage of production.

What is Service Material? Service Material differs from Conference-approved literature in that it has not come about through Conference Advisory Action. It is produced when there is a need for information that is readily available on a specific subject. Service material reflects A.A. group experience as well as specific and timely information that is subject to change.

What are A.A. Guidelines? A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). The purpose of these guidelines is to assist groups and members in reaching an informed group conscience.

NOTES

Area Literature Committee — Roles and Responsibilities

From one member:

“For my Area Committee role, I provide input and vote on agenda items. I also made a trifold literature display for both my District and for my Area and have presented at service workshops. My literature display is utilized at all assemblies and conventions.”

Some areas in the U.S. and Canada have found it helpful to outline a more detailed description of the activities and duties of their area’s Literature Committee. For instance, one area Literature Committee defines the scope of their activities and the procedure by which it is accomplished:

Scope:

- To offer a forum for Districts in the Area to share their experience in utilizing Conference-approved literature to carry the A.A. message.
- To facilitate the creation and operation of effective District Literature Committees.
- To provide a communication channel between the Literature Desk at the General Service Office and District Literature Committees.
- To communicate with the Area Delegate.
- To report activities, including a Treasurer’s report, at Area business meetings.

Procedure:

- To hold quarterly meetings where District Literature chairpersons share their experience.
- Each District Literature chair, or an alternate in his or her absence, makes an oral report of District Literature Committee activities.
- The written version of the District Literature chairperson report, submitted to the Literature Committee Secretary Treasurer, becomes part of the Committee minutes.
- District Literature Committee chairpersons, or an alternate in their absence, vote on issues that come before the committee and carry the group conscience of their District Committees in regard to Conference Agenda items pertaining to Literature.

Another area also created guidelines for committees. Apart from promoting the use of, and raising the awareness of A.A. Literature, the area felt that more information on what a Literature Committee can do was needed, and therefore created a list that outlined the purpose(s) of a Literature Committee:

- To inform others of new literature.
- To review old literature.
- Create and review packets for the newcomer, sponsor, and service (these can be done on each of the different levels of service at the Area, District, and Group level).

The area further defined the scope of responsibilities for a Literature Committee at all levels of service.

At the Area Level, the Literature Committee will:

- Make sure all District chairs are familiar with the A.A. literature catalog and where/how they can make purchases.
- Inform District chairs of new literature in all formats (print, audio, braille, etc.) in the different languages (English, French, Spanish), as well as where they can order other languages.
- Review current literature for content and relevance.
- Make motions to change current literature.
- Make motions to create new literature.
- Create a list of suggested pamphlets for the newcomer, sponsor, and service packets.
- Make available literature in all formats for purchase or a list of where it can be bought.

How Are Area Literature Committee Meetings Run?

An Area Literature Committee chair reports on a typical meeting of the Area Literature Committee:

The Committee meets regularly. There are usually six to seven members present, with eight members total.

The discussion part of the agenda is usually centered around creative ways to fulfill the Committee's purpose of raising awareness of A.A. Conference-approved literature, audiovisual, and other special items. Recent meeting discussions were about giving notice at individual meetings, on the websites: aa.org and our area website. The idea was to encourage members to frequently visit those sites for familiarity and services available. Those ideas were especially useful during the atmosphere of virtual meetings.

Another discussion focused on Committee Members' highlighting pamphlets of their choice during recovery meetings, and possibly encouraging a fresh "rotation" of new pamphlets (once in-person meetings resume).

Sample of Planned Service Activities: Example 1

Service Activities of Area Literature Committees

In addition to sharing with the Fellowship the many ways that A.A. literature carries the message, an important goal for many Literature Committees is to take the opportunity, where A.A.s gather, and attract other A.A.s to share in carrying the A.A. message through literature.

One Area Literature Committee has been working on:

- Seeing every Area assembly as a chance to collaborate and learn from each other, we've instituted the practice of asking the host district's Literature Committee to present a workshop on a topic of interest to all district Literature Committees.
 - » In January, a district presented "How to Launch and Nurture a District Literature Committee."
 - » In April, we shared the group conscience decisions of district Literature Committees in regard to Conference agenda items pertaining to Literature.
 - » In July, another district presented "Sharing Our Collective Experience: Let's Keep the Ideas Coming."
- We've continued to look for new opportunities to share with the Fellowship the myriad ways A.A. literature carries the message.
 - » Area Literature Committee officers make themselves available to perform outreach, being willing to travel to districts for presentations to GSRs and DCMs and to attend district events such as Carry the Message Day and Founders' Day.
 - » We encourage district Literature Committee chairs to host celebratory events such as Big Book birthday parties and offer suggestions on what to include in literature workshops and presentations at the district level.
 - » We utilize special events, most recently publication of *Our Great Responsibility*, to generate enthusiasm for
 - » A.A. literature in general.
 - » We take a proactive role in introducing the Fellowship to new Conference-approved literature and service pieces, most recently purchasing cartons of our new book and selling it at district events and home groups as well as distributing fliers about it

Sample of Planned Service Activities: Example 2

Area Service Activities

- We start the year off in January by providing a display board and hundreds of pamphlets to give away at the Area Literature Committee table during the weekend long annual Area Convention. And try to hold a drawing to give away the newest literature item in English and Spanish. This is our largest crowd of A.A. members available to us making aware of the new item.
- We are prepared to present and give away pamphlets when invited to District workshops.
- We review and give our thoughts on the agenda items under the Literature section to the area delegate so that they can be informed.
- We provide a display board and lots of pamphlets to give away at the quarterly assemblies.
- We all prepared a short presentation on a variety of literature types to give at the area assembly per the request of the area chair. Included was information on the newest service material, local news of Big Book translations, information on the A.A. Guidelines, a snippet of some PSAs, and video, a review of the newest book, a few giveaways, a few jokes and plenty of time for questions and contributions from the audience. And a couple of slides from a PowerPoint slide show to go along with each presenter.

SEE ALSO SAMPLE PRESENTATIONS (PAGE 31).

FAQs

Who should I contact at GSO regarding A.A. Literature and service material?

To learn more about A.A. Literature and how it is produced, distributed and developed, contact the Literature Coordinator at GSO or visit the GSO website at www.aa.org. There are also many resources for information at the local and Area level, including the Area delegate and other A.A. members who may have served on Literature Committees previously.

How do I start a Literature Committee in my district and what is its purpose?

Working with the Area Literature Committee, members and groups can be approached about selecting a Literature Representative who could then meet with other representatives from the district to share experience and offer support. These district members offer a forum to share their experience in utilizing Conference-approved literature to carry the A.A. message, to facilitate the creation and operation of effective District Literature Committees, to provide a communication channel between the Literature Desk at the General Service Office and to communicate with the Area Delegate.

Is the literature chair also distributing Grapevine literature?

Most Areas have a separate committee for materials produced by Grapevine and La Viña. These committees are often in direct communication with the A.A. Grapevine office in New York.

NOTES

Growing Literature Committees in Districts

Area Literature Committees can accomplish great feats through sharing A.A. literature with the Fellowship, but like everything else in A.A., successful endeavors are a group effort. Therefore, growing Literature Committees in area districts and introducing group members to the benefits of using literature to share the message is an important priority. For instance, one area stated that they were “dedicated to continuing to look for ways to build capacity and increase Literature Committee participation.” To that end, the Area Literature Committee participates in the following activities to increase participation and grow Literature Committees in area districts:

- The Committee chair makes continual outreach to district chairpersons in the Area, encouraging chairs in districts that do not have a district Literature Committee to send representatives (district officers, DCMs, GSRs) to quarterly area meetings so that the message of Literature service work can be shared in those districts.
- Committee members attend the orientation session that kicks off area quarterlies and talk about Literature service work; we invite all GSRs, especially new GSRs, to attend our meeting and workshop.
- We make it a point to introduce ourselves to host district volunteers working the registration tables at area quarterlies, A.A. members who often are unaware of General Service, letting them know about opportunities to get involved in their district Literature Committee.
- We ensure that GSRs understand the importance of a home group Literature Representative and inform their groups that we welcome Literature Reps at our district Literature Committee meetings as well as at our area meetings and workshops.
- We create and circulate to home group Literature Representatives and GSRs intriguing announcements that can be made at A.A. meetings encouraging members of the Fellowship to get involved in Literature service work.

So, what can a newly elected Literature Committee chairperson do to get a committee off the ground?

- Find a meeting place and establish a time for a monthly Literature Committee meeting.
- Get the meeting place and time published in your monthly Intergroup newsletter.
- Start making announcements at A.A. meetings that your district has a Literature committee that’s looking for members. Ask anyone who wants to learn more to see you after the meeting.
- Show up at the committee meeting every month, without fail, even if you’re the only attendee. Keep in mind the old adage: “If you build it, they will come.”

*Once the basics are in place, what comes next
for Literature Committee members?*

- Review the list of activities recommended by the General Service Office for Literature committees. Select with your committee members one or two activities that you can do with even a small committee and start tackling them.
- As soon as possible, elect an alternate Literature Committee chairperson, as well as a secretary-treasurer, so there will be back up to the chairperson and to ensure the committee's continuation at the end of the chairperson's two-year term of office.
- If your Literature Committee is not already funded by your district, prepare a budget for your committee that will support your needs (for example, copies of material you want to share at GSR orientations, A.A. literature you want to include in your literature display and the materials to create the display, etc.) and bring it to your district body for approval.
- Attend your district meeting and give a report about what your committee is working on. Ask members of the district committee (officers, DCMs and GSRs) to consider joining the Literature Committee.
- Order a complimentary literature display package from the General Service Office and begin building a literature display. Add to the display as finances permit.
- Write and submit articles about the work your committee is doing and your need for additional volunteers to your Intergroup newsletter.
- Make sure the information about your committee, including your meeting date and time, is on your district's website.
- Encourage home groups to designate a Literature Committee representative who can attend your monthly meetings and bring information back to the group.
- Stay informed about proposed changes to A.A. literature; share this information in your district reports and communicate it to GSRs and group literature representatives.
- Update your district via your report and keep GSRs and group literature representatives informed of any new literature or changes to existing literature that result from Conference action.
- Attend the Literature meetings/workshops at Area assemblies, share your progress, listen to the experience of other district Literature Committee chairs, and ask for help.

EXAMPLE OF ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AN AREA LITERATURE COMMITTEE:

Suggested announcements for inviting Literature Committee membership at A.A. meetings

- If you're looking for a great opportunity to carry the A.A. message, please consider becoming a member of our district's Literature Committee. The goal of this committee is to inform home group members of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items and how it helps us carry the A.A. message. If you want to learn more about joining the Literature Committee, please see me after the meeting.
- A.A. co-founder Bill W often called the influence of A.A. literature "incalculable," stating that without it, our message of recovery would become "hopelessly garbled." Here in District, we have a committee that meets monthly to talk about how we can better inform home group members of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items and how it helps us carry the A.A. message. If you'd like to learn more about joining the Literature Committee, please see me after the meeting.
- All A.A. members are familiar with the Big Book, the "Twelve and Twelve" and the Daily Reflections. But did you know that the Big Book was recently published in Farsi? Or that we have a new service piece that focuses on safety in A.A.? Or that we have a new pamphlet called "The God Word" that features the experience, strength and hope of atheist and agnostic A.A. members? You can learn about new and updated A.A. literature as well as how we use A.A. literature to help us carry the message by becoming a member of the District Literature Committee. If you'd like to learn more, please see me after the meeting.

Are You a New District Literature Chair or New Group Literature Representative?

Much A.A. literature contains shared experience to guide those new to participating in a new District Literature Committee — whether it is at your home group as a new Group Literature Representative (GLR) or as a new committee member or chair of your District Literature Committee. The A.A. Guidelines on Literature Committees has many suggestions.

Suggested List of Responsibilities and Tasks for a New District Literature Chair

- Maintain a stock of suggested literature to give to new GSRs.
- Keep a stack of catalogs for A.A. literature.
- Keep an ample supply of current general service, Conference-approved pamphlets, books, and audiovisual material, as well as other A.A. material.
- Set up this material for viewing and sale at functions including workshops, conferences, conventions, roundups, and meetings.
- Order literature for district activities as needed.
- Become familiar with the general contents of all literature in order to provide information to inquirers.
- Be represented at and participate in Literature Committee functions and from time to time communicate with the General Service Office.

Within the United States and Canada, District Literature Committee chairs also share their experience, detailing some of their service activities. One district chair shares:

“The service activities of my District Literature chair role involve monthly meetings in which I share current events from GSO, including new publications, pamphlets, and general information regarding the expanding communication tools and avenues available to help carry the A.A. message. I present and pass out a pamphlet each month (entitled ‘pamphlet of the month’) for the recipients to share with their groups. I purchase new brochures at intergroup to share via my Literature chair budget.”

Shared Experience:

Another District Literature Committee shared the following:

At the District Level, the Literature Committee can:

- Inform groups of new literature and all formats (print, audio, visual and Braille), in the different languages (English, Spanish and French), as well as where they can order other languages.
- Find literature that is appropriate for specific workshops.
- Review current literature for content and relevance.
- Make motions to create new literature.
- Make motions to change current literature.
- Make available Service Manuals.
- Make available copies of *Box 4-5-9*.
- Make available, to the groups, a list of pamphlets to create newcomer, sponsor and service packets.
- Create and distribute service packets.
- Contact corrections and treatment facilities and inquire about need or interest in A.A. literature.
- Contact hospitals, doctors' offices, and libraries and inquire about need or interest in A.A. literature.
- Take orders, purchases, and distribute literature for A.A. groups who are not serviced by Intergroup or Central Office.
- District Committee chairs and members are a part of the Area Literature Committee.

For New Group Literature Representatives:

Tools and references for New District Literature Committees and Group Literature Representatives/chairs

Does Your Group Have a Literature Chair?

Since the Big Book was published in 1939, A.A. literature has carried the message to untold numbers of alcoholics around the world — and all this without the conventional advertising and marketing techniques routinely employed by “outside” publishing companies, techniques considered fundamental to any successful publishing enterprise.

So, how has this come about? Books, pamphlets, service materials all working their way into the hands of needy and appreciative alcoholics. Our basic printed message, carried effectively from one A.A. community to another. The literature, clear and distinct, providing solutions to sufferers caught in alcoholism’s grip.

Many would say it begins — like most things in A.A. — with the group, where skeptical and shaky newcomers are introduced to A.A.’s many helpful resources. So, does your group have a literature chair? Someone to show members the wide variety of Conference-approved materials, to recommend pamphlets to interested newcomers looking for a means of instant identification, to set up literature displays or put packets together of materials especially helpful for beginners?

The General Service Conference felt it was important that groups be encouraged to appoint literature chairs back in 1968 and passed an Advisory Action stating: “In an effort to strengthen our network of literature representatives to ensure that A.A. literature is available at meetings, as well as catalog order forms for books and cassettes that individuals are likely to want, it is suggested that groups appoint literature coordinators.”

For some groups, though, it’s not always easy to get a literature chair in place. At a recent area assembly, Laura V. (Panel 61, Area 38) described the current situation at her home group in Sikeston, Missouri — one that she hopes will change.

“Let me start by telling you about my home group. We have anywhere from 20-25 home group members and are fortunate if we have six to eight people show up at our monthly business meetings. When elections roll around, we are usually hard pressed to fill all of our positions and electing a literature chair is not a top priority. It is difficult for us to buy literature since the closest intergroup office is 150 miles away, so we sometimes try to piggyback our orders onto another group’s or the district’s order. We are also often short on funds and do well just to pay our rent and other expenses, so must wait to place an order until we have the money available.

“I do not tell you this to garner your sympathy, but to give you what I believe is a realistic picture of the struggles faced by many rural groups in our area, and perhaps some of the smaller metro groups.”

But Laura is not satisfied with that picture of A.A. in her hometown and continues on. “Now, what if my group had a literature chair that was able to partici-

pate in a local literature committee at the district, where they could coordinate a literature order with the other group chairs? And what if those group and district literature chairs were able to participate in an area literature committee with their peers, helping members to learn about available Conference-approved literature and get involved in area service? I believe literature would become a more accessible and vibrant part of our groups,” she says.

As Laura notes, ordering A.A. Conference-approved books, pamphlets and materials from the General Service Office or the local intergroup and making sure they are properly displayed at meetings is just one aspect of the literature service. Such activities can be expanded at the district and area level to include service-oriented literature displays for all kinds of events, including district assemblies, forums and workshops. Some group and district literature chairs have even joined together to host literature-focused workshops or sharing sessions on a particular aspect of the Fellowship. An afternoon of sharing on A.A. history, as written in *A.A. Comes of Age* or *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, is one idea. Some groups have even hosted an afternoon or evening of A.A. videos or films to celebrate their group’s anniversary, as noted in this account in the January 2001 Grapevine from the Acceptance Group in Montreal:

“A few years ago, for our group’s ninth anniversary, the last Wednesday in May, we decided we’d celebrate in a special manner, different from what the other groups in the Montreal area ordinarily do. So, instead of buying a huge cake and inviting a special speaker with umpteen years of sobriety, we invited our co-founder Bill W. to come tell us his story himself.

“We got a 16-mm copy of the one-hour film *Bill’s Own Story* from G.S.O. in New York, rented a large room for the occasion, and served chips, popcorn, soft drinks, tea, and coffee to a crowd of the seventy-five to one hundred fellow alcoholics we had invited through our Area News Bulletin. The following week, the film was our topic for discussion. Several members found this experience moving. Seeing and hearing the man to whom we owe our lives, many were brought to tears.

“Encouraged by the success of that experience, the next year we showed the short video *Rap With Us*, a Conference-approved film produced specifically for young people in A.A. And the following year, we presented the film *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous*. Each time, the projection was followed by a discussion, where members were invited to comment on the film.”

Clearly, there are many different ways to carry the message through A.A. literature, and having a literature chair simply opens the door.

For more information about the position of literature chair, see the pamphlet “The A.A. Group... Where It All Begins,” or visit G.S.O.’s A.A. Web site at www.aa.org for the A.A. Guidelines on Literature.

A “job description” and suggested activities for a literature chairperson and/or representative is found in “The A.A. Group” pamphlet and in the A.A. Guidelines on Literature Committees. Much of the content is reproduced here:

1. Familiarize yourself with this workbook. While all information may not be applicable to your group activities, it contains valuable ideas and shared experience of others seeking to share A.A.’s message using our literature.
2. Plan ahead where you want to exhibit A.A. literature.
3. Prepare a budget.
4. Become familiar with A.A. literature and audiovisual material.
5. Fill out the Literature Chairperson Information form (available from GSO) and send it to GSO’s Literature Coordinator. Make a copy and give it to your area literature chairperson. Two or three times a year, GSO sends updates and literature activity reports to literature chairs or contacts.
6. Ask GSO for a complimentary literature package to create a display.
7. Contact GSO for a copy of the current Literature Catalog, which includes information on how to order AAWS and Grapevine publications.
8. Make sure that A.A. Conference-approved books and pamphlets, ordered from the General Service Office or purchased from the local intergroup (central office), are on hand for meetings and properly displayed.
9. Group literature representatives can obtain information on their responsibilities by writing to the literature coordinator at GSO. Regular communications are sent to literature representatives from GSO.
10. The A.A. Guideline for Literature Committees is also a valuable resource.
11. For A.A. literature and subscriptions to the A.A. newsletter *Box 4-5-9 in English, Spanish or French*, checks should be made out to A.A. World Services, Inc. Many A.A. groups purchase bulk subscriptions to *Box 4-5-9* (in units of 10) for distribution to their members, thus providing them regular communication with A.A. in the U.S., Canada and countries throughout the world. Encourage the GSRs to suggest that their groups subscribe to *Box 4-5-9*. A digital subscription to *Box 4-5-9* is available online at no charge.
12. A.A. members who serve in their groups or districts on Literature Committees are asked to also participate in their area’s Literature Committee. In many areas, A.A. members do not need a district position to become a member of the Area Literature Committee.
13. An overview of the substance and content of our literature is found in *The A.A. Service Manual*.

Shared Experience:

What can a Group Literature Representative do?:

At the Group level, the group's literature representative can:

- Inform members of new literature in all formats (print, audio, visual, and Braille) and in all languages (English, Spanish, French), as well as where they can order other languages.
- Give literature reports informing members of A.A. books, such as the Big Book, the "Twelve and Twelve," and the A.A. Service Manual, as well as different pamphlets.
- Maintain a literature rack.
- Keep the literature rack stocked with current literature.
- Maintain an inventory of literature bought and used by their A.A. group.
- Review current literature for content and relevance.
- Make motions to change current literature.
- Make motions to create new literature.
- Create, maintain, and make available newcomer, sponsor, and service packets.
- Provide literature for literature studies.
- Contact corrections and treatment facilities to see if they have a need or interest in A.A. literature.
- Contact hospitals, doctors' offices, and libraries to see if they have a need or interest in A.A. literature.
- Group Literature Committee members should be a part of the district and area Literature Committees.

A Few Suggestions on Getting Started

Utilizing Presentations

Many on Literature Committees have noted the usefulness of presentations to A.A. members at the group level or at a district meeting or area assembly. One Literature chair shared some information about why information about A.A. Literature should be passed on:

“It is not just caring for the literature rack but making people aware of the literature available. Literature can help at all levels of sobriety, from the people just starting out in sobriety to the old timers who need literature in different formats. Informing people about the different literature available can also help them find answers they need.”

She then continued, in a manner that can easily be utilized to address members of an A.A. Group:

“Struggling with a Step, Tradition or Concept? We have literature that can help. Are you taking drugs and medication? We have literature to help explain how A.A. can still help. In a location with no alcoholics that look like you? Or in a remote community with few meetings? We have literature to keep you connected and help you stay sober. If you can't read or if you read in a different language, we have literature in different formats and languages that can help carry the message. Blind or deaf? We have literature for you, too. Basically, we have literature for everything and as Literature Committee members we focus on getting the word out about the different literature and formats available to help people recover from alcoholism.”

Literature Displays

Many in A.A. find a literature display a welcoming visual at group meetings. If your group does not have one, consider creating a display with A.A. literature. Upon request, the General Service Office will provide a complimentary literature display package which contains one copy of all the A.A. book dust jackets; one copy of all pamphlets; one set of A.A. Guidelines, Lists of Service Material from GSO; new literature flyers; List of Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services for the United States/Canada, and Overseas, *The A.A. Service Manual*; and the A.A. Literature Catalog. GSO will mail this display package as soon as your request is received.

Adaptations of A.A. Service for Virtual Contexts

Until recently, much of our shared experience in carrying the A.A. message with A.A. Literature has been based on in-person, “brick-and-mortar” Twelve Step work. Many A.A.s now conduct a varied number of Literature Committee meetings virtually.

One Area Literature Committee adapted their activity for virtual contexts, including meetings, workshops, etc. by using video conferencing software for:

- Monthly district Literature Committee meetings.
- Quarterly area Literature Committee business meetings.
- Area pre-Conference meeting.
- Area Literature Committee meetings.
- Posting of relevant literature-related material in Chats.

Between area quarterlies, and utilizing virtual meetings, the members of an Area Literature Committee work toward increasing their accessibility and offer opportunities for sharing and communication among district Literature Committees. To do so, they have established the practice of communicating via a virtual platform, built a subscription expense into their annual budget, and created the position of Virtual Meeting Coordinator to ensure that virtual meetings are organized, reminders are sent, and minutes are kept. The virtual meetings are chaired by the Area Literature Committee chair.

This same Literature Committee works with their Area web servant to utilize the Literature Committee page on their Area website to archive quarterly meeting minutes and virtual meeting minutes, as well as resources for district Literature Committee chairs, including workshop presentations offered at area quarterlies, GSO guidelines for Literature Committees, *Box 4-5-9* articles pertaining to Literature, and documents related to Conference agenda items pertaining to Literature.

Another Area Literature Committee also adapted their activities for a virtual context by asking their Technology Committee to create a newcomer page on the area website that any committee could add content to, along with a statement for groups to create their own packets.

Adaptation of A.A. Service for Virtual Contexts for non-A.A.s

Utilizing a virtual platform, a Literature Committee was able to provide helpful information to a professional by providing the pamphlets *A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues — and their sponsors*; and *How A.A. Members Cooperate with Professionals*. These pamphlets were created specifically to connect with professionals who treat alcoholics and address their needs in a professional setting.

Adaptation of A.A. Service in Virtual Gatherings

Additionally, one committee member describes how she introduces herself in on-line meetings outside of Literature Committee meetings: “I have been introducing myself at announcement time as a Literature Committee member, and then I provide a tidbit of literature information. This information could be introducing my service position and stating that I am available after the meeting to answer questions about literature, or introducing a pamphlet, book or webpage.” The same committee member also shares literature information on social media in *closed* A.A. groups by including a graphic and beginning the post with “Did you know....?”

Shared Experience and Sample Presentations:

Literature Workshop at an Area Assembly

Opening: My name is _____ and I am an alcoholic. I am honored to be serving as the Area Literature Committee Chair this term. The purpose of the Literature Committee is to raise the awareness for A.A. Conference-approved literature, audiovisual and other special items. There are several Literature Committee members here today coming from seven different districts. We are prepared to present on a variety of A.A. Literature topics.

When Do We Pull Out the Guidelines?

Since becoming a member of the Literature Committee, which has not been very long, I have learned something that I did not know before. A.A. publishes Guidelines, how many of you here knew that? The best way to start is with the definition of a Guideline:

“...information intended to advise people on how something should be done or what something should be..”

How many of you know the number of Guidelines that are published by Alcoholics Anonymous? Sixteen (16) well at least that is all that they sent me in the package I ordered. We have Guidelines covering Archives, Finance, Treatment, CPC, Corrections, Public Information and even Literature. There are some more that cover Central or Intergroup Offices, A.A. Answering Services, A.A. members in the Alcoholism Field, Conferences and Conventions and even the Relationship between A.A. and Al-Anon.

A few more guidelines include Accessibility for all Alcoholics, Sharing the A.A. message with the Alcoholic who is Deaf, and Cooperating with the Court, DWI and Similar Programs.

One of my favorite Guidelines is the one on Internet and this one is 5 pages long and there are good reasons why it is this long. Not only does it cover the social networking aspects of being online but also talks about anonymity, not only of yourself but also that of others. I know that when I first sobered up I wanted to tell everybody - *“Look at me I have quit drinking”*, but online is not the place. This guideline also gets into the use of the internet in committee business, online meetings and much more. Many of the committees use a virtual platform for meetings.

As a DCM we encourage our members to participate in a committee at the District Level as well as the Area Level, but I have had people tell me they would consider it, but they don't know what the Committees are about or do. These Guidelines are and should be the first step for that person who wants to know what it's all about. I believe that each District as well as each group should have a set of Guidelines on hand. They are a great source of valuable information.

One last thing, at the top of each Guideline there is this statement:

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience.

Thank you

Any questions?

Where does "Service Material" come from?

Service Material comes from the General Service Office. GSO receives letters, emails, phone calls, and has past correspondence relating to shared experiences of things that work, things that don't work and things to keep in mind. This is the same process that Bill W. and the early A.A.s used in the days before the first A.A. Conference only they didn't have the technology that we have been blessed with. Back in the day it was by letters, phone calls and word of mouth. Thankfully they made a decision to keep a record of all correspondence. All the information that the GSO receives comes from the A.A. Groups, A.A. members. Probably one of the most important things to keep in mind is that A.A. literature, including "Service Material," is reflective of A.A. members' experience carrying the message. It is produced, in turn, to support ongoing efforts of A.A. members to carry the message.

Participation in the General Service structure at the home group, District and Area by any and all members is essential for the best collective shared experience to be published. Communication with the General Service Office also supports development of helpful content, as well as useful formats.

Service Material is generated as the need arises on any given topic, recognizing that as time goes by things may change. Example - Anonymity Online and Digital Media used to be called Anonymity Online. When the service material was first written there were no Digital Media to worry about. Since it was written the GSO at some point started receiving shared experiences related to the Digital Media. So all the information was compiled and was added to the Anonymity Online service material and now we have Anonymity Online and Digital Media.

So GSO puts together our A.A. service material from the wealth of shared experience — good or bad — accumulated over the years from the groups and members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Any questions?

Who translates all the different Big Book languages?

The Foreword to the Fourth Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* says, in part, “Literature has played a major role in A.A.’s growth, and a striking phenomenon of the past quarter-century has been the explosion of translations of our basic literature into many languages and dialects. In country after country where the A.A. seed was planted it has taken root, slowly at first, then growing by leaps and bounds when literature has become available. Currently, *Alcoholics Anonymous* has been translated into forty-three* languages (now seventy-five languages.)”

Translations come about in two ways: (1) Occasionally, professionals in countries where A.A. is new ask that we translate a basic book or pamphlet for their use, and (2) More frequently, bilingual local members where A.A. has taken root begin translating A.A. materials such as the Preamble, The Twelve Steps, The Twelve Traditions and other recovery literature. Eventually, local A.A. groups and/or boards move on to larger projects, such as the Big Book or *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Before anyone — A.A. group, board or member — begins translating A.A.’s copyrighted literature, they must first request permission to translate by contacting the Legal Licensing & Intellectual Property department at GSO (Translation Licensing). Their email contact is tl@aa.org. On receipt of a request for permission to translate an A.A. title, our Publications Department usually asks that a translation of the pamphlet, or a few chapters of the book be submitted for review. The proposed new translation is checked by professionals to assure clarity and adherence to the sense and spirit of the original English work.

If the translation does not adequately reflect the original material, or is of uneven quality, the A.A.W.S. Board will consider authorizing that the work be done through our professional translators. Accuracy and integrity are especially important for translations of Bill W.’s writings as well as other A.A. material. Each translation should reflect the tone and spirit of the original work.

Some helpful references:

“Translation process”: A presentation by Doug R., Director of Staff Services, GSO, New York, at the Asia Oceania Service meeting in Chandigarh, India, July 24, 2011.

“Alcoholics Anonymous,” Fourth Edition, forty-second printing, April 2019.

Any questions?

What Is the Purpose of the A.A. Service Manual?

The A.A. Service Manual was originally known as the Third Legacy Manual. Bill W. began writing it in 1951, and it has eventually become the booklet that we have today. The General Service Conference Report and Charter Committee is responsible for annually reviewing and approving updates and revisions to our manual. Tradition Nine and its spirit of minimal organization in A.A. is the essential guide for any changes necessary. Revised editions are printed every two years.

The publication contains a history of A.A.'s Third Legacy of service, then moves into our familiar Conference structure, the upside-down pyramid.

The Conference Charter and General Service Board Bylaws are also a part of the manual. The Twelve Concepts, or principles of service, were also written by Bill W. and added in 1962. These Concepts provide a unique business model that has served A.A. well.

Any questions?

A.A. Literature Catalog & Digital Mini-Catalog

How often is the A.A. Literature Catalog updated? An updated A.A. Literature Catalog is published every two years.

Additionally, a digital mini catalog can be found on the AA.org website under the A.A. Literature / Other Service Items / link.

Hopefully it will help A.A. members discover what is new and revised in the A.A. literature and other items.

The plan is to update this resource as necessary and to help share information on new items as they become available.

If you need a copy of the current catalog, please stop by the literature committee display table and get one.

Thank you

Any questions?

Our Great Responsibility

Hi, my name is _____ and I am an alcoholic. I am currently serving as a District Literature Chair. I am excited to introduce to everyone the latest A.A. World Services book release, entitled *Our Great Responsibility*. This is the first original title released by A.A.W.S. in 30 years, and is now available in English, French, and Spanish. The last book published was *Daily Reflections*, released in 1990.

This new book contains a selection of 16 talks given by Bill W. addressing the General Service Conferences between 1951 and 1970. Bill's talks are derived from archival audio recordings and reflect years of research and transcription.

Launched in 1951 and meeting annually ever since, A.A.'s General Service

Conference has been the primary mechanism for an increasingly diverse membership. The annual GSC's purpose is to determine and deliberate its collective "group conscience" on a wide range of matters affecting A.A. as a whole. Bill addressed the Conference annually for two decades, from its inception up until his death in January 1971. The book *Our Great Responsibility* gathers many of these talks and captures Bill's innovative and visionary thinking on numerous A.A. themes.

We get to read Bill's personal thoughts on group conscience, the trusted servant, principles of A.A. service, relationship of principles to personalities, and even the necessity to stand alone at times. The book begins with a concise history of the founding of A.A.'s GSC. Bill fought long and hard for the idea of an annual conference as a means to keep A.A. alive and well, even beyond the lives of the founding members. The 16 talks presented by Bill are remarkably timeless and timely and provide fresh perspectives on the A.A. Fellowship in his own words. Bill consistently focuses on inclusion, and reminds us that we are all the same in our humanness, but that we often see things in different ways. Bill was passionate about forging a path in which A.A. could live on and continue to attract and support suffering alcoholics. He advocated for inclusion, diversity, accountability and service, among other topics, all of which are still relevant today.

Enhancing the written text are more than 60 black and white and color images from A.A. Archives, some never before published. There are photos of people, places, original manuscripts, hand-written drafts, bulletins, magazine covers, and vintage posters. I particularly enjoyed seeing the cover of the 1939 *Liberty* magazine in which A.A. is first mentioned in print on a national level. The 1941 *Saturday Evening Post* cover is included; that is the issue that contained the infamous Jack Alexander article about A.A.

Following the 16 talks by Bill, the book concludes with three talks by special friends of A.A. Lois's address at the 1966 Conference is included. She referenced the history of Al-Anon, which she helped form after the 1951 A.A. Conference. Next, there is a talk in 1953 by Bernard Smith, who was one of Bill's closest and most trusted advisors. Finally, Dr. John Norris presents a talk in 1971, which is the year that Bill died.

Through seven decades the General Service Conference has refined and renewed A.A.'s message in order to better spread the word of hope and recovery to suffering alcoholics. The new book, *Our Great Responsibility* offers readers around the world a window into how A.A. moves forward in unity.

Any questions?

Videos and Audios

Hi, I am _____ and I am an alcoholic. When I first came to A.A. in 1986 I thought I needed help. I was very naïve. The only thing I knew about A.A. and alcoholism was from the movie “The Days of Wine and Roses” and its depiction of alcoholism.

Recently my involvement with the literature committee has made me aware that there is much more than just the Hollywood versions of A.A. found in movies like “My Name is Bill W.” and “28 Days.” We have at our fingertips more than 40 videos and audios to make clear the concepts of A.A.: Informative, entertaining, stimulating and thought provoking, they cover many areas important to the understanding of A.A. — what we do and what we don’t do.

It should be noted that the faces of actual A.A. members are obscured to protect their anonymity. We take the anonymous part of our name seriously. These videos and audios can be found at www.aa.org. Search for videos and audios at this link https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/videos-and-audios

FAQs

How do I make sure that I will be receiving updates from GSO? When committee chairs or members are selected, they should get in touch with GSO as soon as possible and provide their contact information. GSO's Fellowship Connection will keep them in the loop of various communications from the Literature assignment and any Literature orders they make.

What if I have problems with my order? Get in touch with the Member Services Department: G.S.O. Member Services Department, Telephone: 212-870-3023, Email: memberservices@aa.org.

Can I get literature and service material in French and Spanish? Yes. A.A. Literature published by AAWS is provided in English, Spanish and French. Additionally, many items can also be provided in other languages. Check the Literature Catalog and Order Form for information on translations.

NOTES
