

VIII.

**REPORT
AND
CHARTER**

AGENDA

Conference Report and Charter Committee

Sunday, May 19, 2019 – 2:45 - 5:30 p.m.

Monday, May 20, 2019 – 9am - Noon

Room 503

Chairperson: Noni M.

Secretary: Jeff W.

Conference Committee Members

Panel 68

Noni M.*

Dee P.**

Dale S.

Panel 69

Annette D.

Dan G.

Jean K.

Gene M.

Brian T.

*chairperson

**alternate chairperson

- ◆ Introductions – Noni M., Conference committee chairperson.
- ◆ Review Conference committee Composition, Scope and Procedure – Noni M., Conference committee chairperson.
- ◆ Review history of Conference committee – Jeff W., secretary.
- ◆ Report of A.A.W.S. Publishing Department – Ames S., managing editor.

NOTE: 1989 Conference Advisory Action

Each Conference Committee carefully consider their agenda items and strive to make their recommendations for Advisory Actions to the Conference at the policy level. To be more financially responsible, when a Conference Committee recommendation involves a substantial expenditure of money, an estimate of cost and its impact on the budget be part of that recommendation.

- A. Discuss General Service Conference *Final Report*.
- B. *The A.A. Service Manual*, 2018 - 2020
 - Review progress report from A.A.W.S. Publishing Department on the redesign of *The A.A. Service Manual*.
- C. Discuss A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)

2019 Conference Committee on Report and Charter

ITEM A: Discuss General Service Conference *Final Report*.

Background:

1. 2018 General Service Conference *Final Report*

Note: The 2018 General Service Conference *Final Report* was mailed to committee members only.

2019 Conference Committee on Report and Charter

ITEM B: *The A.A. Service Manual*, 2018 - 2020 Edition

- Review progress report from A.A.W.S. Publishing Department on the redesign of *The A.A. Service Manual*.

Background notes:

From the 2018 Advisory Action of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

Following publication of the 2018-2020 edition of *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, the A.A.W.S. Publishing Department undertake a thorough evaluation, update, and redesign of the Service Manual with a preliminary draft or progress report to be sent to the 2019 Conference Committee on Report and Charter.

Background:

1. Report from A.A.W.S. Publishing Department

Report of *The A.A. Service Manual* Working Group

In fall of 2018, a working group was convened in response to the following 68th Conference Advisory Action:

Following publication of the 2018-2020 edition of *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, the A.A.W.S. Publishing Department undertake a thorough evaluation, update, and redesign of the Service Manual with a preliminary draft or progress report to be sent to the 2019 Conference Committee on Report and Charter.

The *A.A. Service Manual Working Group* consisted of former Staff members Adrienne B., Eileen G. and Doug R.; Publishing Director David R., General Manager Greg T. and current Staff member on the Group Services assignment Jeff W., with Associate Editor Julia D. facilitating. They met three times: on October 4, November 16 and December 19 of 2018. The group — with many combined years of experience in both professional publishing and service to A.A., as well as many years sober — was grateful for the opportunity to evaluate *The A.A. Service Manual* holistically and to address concerns and suggestions raised by the Fellowship and broad issues with organization and design, such as functionality, intended audience and overall look/feel.

Please note: All page references pertain to the 2018-2020 edition of *The A.A. Service Manual*.

A. Initial findings of the A.A. Service Manual Working Group

The group agreed that the goal of their work was to ensure *The A.A. Service Manual* is:

- User-friendly, in terms of physical format, layout and organization of information;
- Attractive and inviting in look and tone of content;
- Simple rather than complicated, again, both in look and tone of content;
- Targeted to the user/reader and focused on relevant information.

With these goals in mind, the group considered challenges and potential solutions with respect to the following:

1. Physical format;
2. Design;
3. Organization of content; and
4. Tone of content.

The group also discussed those 2019 Conference Agenda Items being considered for disposition to the Conference report and Charter Committee that related to the update of the A.A. Service Manual. Responses to those items can be found in Part B.

1. Physical format

Currently, the manual does not lie flat. This makes it generally awkward to use at service events and study groups: it is not kept open and used as the resource it is supposed to be, and it is difficult to pass back and forth between users at a table. In addition, the group felt it did not have the “feel” of a workbook.

How could a new format make the manual easier to use?

- **Binding.** Spiral binding would allow the manual to lie flat. Another option would be a three-ring-binder. In addition to enabling the manual to lie flat, this format would allow sections to be moved in and out as changes arise. A second option along these lines would be to print with three holes and perforated pages, produced without binder. This way, users would at least have the option to insert the pages in a binder of their own.
- **Size.** Rather than the current size, the large-print version (8.5 x 11 inches) should become the “standard” size for the manual. Experience shows that most members prefer the current large-print edition over the standard, for several reasons. First, the larger version lies flat. In addition, the larger type size makes it easier to read and to share between users; charts and graphs also become more readable. Finally, it contains more white space, enabling more note-taking by the user (see third bullet under “Design,” below).

2. Design

The current design, while mostly functional, could be improved with respect to facilitating navigation of the book’s contents. It is also not especially visually appealing.

How could page and book design be used to make the manual easier to use? What design elements might make certain components in the manual easier to find? Could the manual be made more attractive?

- **Design hierarchy.** Create a more logical and appealing design hierarchy (headings, subheadings, etc.) and use it consistently throughout the manual. Currently, the design hierarchy is somewhat confusing and not used consistently. The various heading styles (fonts, uppercase/lowercase, alignment, etc.) appear unrelated and are difficult to “read.” A new, easier-to-read font may also be called for.
- **Tabs.** Use tabs along the side of the page to make sections and other important components easier to find. (For example, the Third Legacy Procedure could be tabbed so as to be easily found when needed.) First choice here would be actual cut-out tabs. Second choice would be color tabs along the edge of each page that would correspond to color tabs displayed on the contents pages.
- **White space.** More white space, including wider margins. In addition to assisting readability, ample margins would could serve as note-taking space for users.

- **Color.** Employ color throughout to make chapters and other frequently used items easier to find. This would also enhance the manual's attractiveness.
- **Call-outs.** Use call-outs where appropriate to draw attention to "sidebar" subject matter. Some examples of possible use can be found below, under "**Organization of content.**"
- **Art/Graphics.** The manual could benefit greatly from new graphics, especially as the field of data visualization has grown rapidly since the manual was last designed. Information graphics such as the chart found on page S50 look dated and do little to enhance understanding. New artwork could dramatically improve the appearance of the manual.

The group noted that, ideally, a new, more inviting manual could spark interest in getting involved in General Service.

3. Organization of content

The content of the book lacks focus and direction; it's not clear who the intended reader is. In addition, the manual has not undergone a full update since 2000, but has meanwhile been edited piecemeal in the years since. As a result, the manual has lost some of its flow.

How could the content be organized more effectively? What content should be moved, expanded or edited?

- **Intended reader as organizing principle.** While the manual has multiple audiences, the group recommended using the knowledge base and needs of the GSR as an organizing principle, as the GSR is the link between the group/Fellowship and the service structure. In addition, many if not most members will first read and use the manual when they serve as GSR. Finally, from a sheer volume perspective, GSRs greatly outnumber DCMs and delegates. Keeping the focus on this intended reader could serve as a guiding organizing principle for updating the manual.

With this in mind, the group came up with the idea of opening the book with some form of a "how-to-use" for the manual. To set the tone, the first few paragraphs of "A.A.'s Legacy of Service" would follow. (The rest of "A.A.'s Legacy of Service" might be moved toward the back of the book, perhaps with its own tab.) Next would come an overview of the service structure — essentially pages S15-S18 — to orient the user. Chapter Two ("The Group and Its GSR") would follow. (The rest of "Introduction to General Service," could appear as a later chapter.) The group felt it was important to speak directly to the GSR as early in the text as possible.

- **Logical content moves.** More broadly, the group felt that other sections could be moved toward the back for reasons both of logic and ease of use. For example, the glossary, which is now awkwardly in the middle, might be placed later in the manual and tabbed. Other pieces might be simplified and/or combined, in particular, “The Area Assembly” and “The Area Committee,” which logically belong together.
- **Underemphasized topics.** The group felt that certain topics were important items that merited expansion/amplification as well as delineation as separate sections.
 - The piece “Third Legacy Procedure” (S21) should have new graphics and a clearer, more thorough explanation of how it works.
 - “Working with Intergroup and Central Offices” (S42) could become its own chapter, as this is an important relationship that is not always well understood.
 - A piece on the role/importance of service sponsors should be written and added as a call-out (or similar). The group felt that throughout the manual were instances of information being communicated that might better come from a service sponsor.
- **Potential edits/removals.** The group questioned the wisdom of retaining in full items that may be redundant or irrelevant, such as the following:
 - Forms (S29 et al.). These can always be found online, and they are always being updated.
 - Literature lists (S84). These can be found online; a website link may suffice.
 - Bylaws of the General Service Board, A.A.W.S., Grapevine (S114-S144.). While aware that including these was a Conference action, the group wondered if it was necessary to keep them. They seem especially extraneous if the manual’s primary intended audience is the GSR.
 - Vertical lines indicating what was removed/changed from previous editions and accompanying chart. The group acknowledged that while this also stemmed from a Conference action, they felt it was confusing and wondered whether its usefulness has been outgrown. It was added that individuals who want this information can research it in Conference/Advisory Actions reports (or in earlier editions of the manual). Furthermore, the vertical lines could easily be mistaken for typographical errors, and they would look especially out of place in a new design.
 - Sections on inactive GSR (S28), inactive DCM (S33), inactive service members (S37). Group questioned the relevance of these, with one member pointing out these could become footnotes. These sections are also somewhat negative in tone (see “**Overall tone of content**” below).
 - Extraneous, overly complicated information generally. For example, “The secretary should have a ‘reasonable period of sobriety,’ which might mean two years in an area where A.A. is still young, four or five years in an older

- area.” This kind of information can also come off as overly controlling, “micromanaging” (see bullet under “**Overall tone of content**,” below).
- Delegates’ “Personal Experience” (S52). See below response to Agenda item.

The content itself must also be reviewed for inaccuracies, updates, etc. This will be done with an eye toward not only accuracy and currency, but also relevancy, per the group’s goal of making the manual more focused.

4. Overall tone of content

Another broad issue is the “tone” of the manual, which most agreed wasn’t always supportive.

How could the tone be improved? Ideally, what should the tone accomplish?

- **Present service in a positive light.** The group felt the tone needed to be consistently upbeat and positive. Certain passages are negative in tone. For example, on page S58, a meeting is described as “hot and heavy” when “lively” would do.
- **Build trust.** The group felt that the tone should communicate that service is a “we” undertaking. Some noted that they believed some trust has been lost between various A.A. entities, with one member commenting that we “need to remember we are all on the same team, and that we are here to carry the message.” To amend this, more inclusive language could be used throughout. For example, “trusted servant” might replace “individual” where appropriate. In addition, it was suggested that a quote from Bill W. on trust at the outset of the manual could be helpful in this regard.
- **Reflect A.A.’s practice of “suggesting.”** Some language in the manual sounds overly demanding and intrusive (“micromanaging,” “controlling”) to some. Removing language such as the above-referenced note on page S46 would help. In addition, reminding and/or informing the reader of the importance of service sponsors could replace directives such as on page S54, “Finally, don’t plan any big social events in New York or figure you’ll make a few business calls there.”

B. Proposed Agenda Items relating to *The A.A. Service Manual*

1. That a modification be made to the *A.A. Service Manual* page S82: A footnote be added to S82, listing the titles of the books described on S82 as “The first four books written by Bill W.” (4/15/18) (*This actually appears on page S84 in the 2018-2020 version, middle of the page.*)
2. The following paragraph be added after the listing of Duties in the chapter *The Group and Its G.S.R.* in the *A.A. Service Manual*:

“What I saw, and heard, and felt.

In the reports of the service activities in which I participate, I try to share what I saw, heard and felt. This way, having grown from my experience, I think I better inform members of my group by sharing my gratitude as well as my enthusiasm for service work.” (4/22/18)

3. The following paragraph be added after the listing of Duties in the chapter *The District and the DCM*. in the *A.A. Service Manual*:

“What I saw, and heard, and felt.

In the reports of the service activities in which I participate, I try to share what I saw, heard and felt. This way, having grown from my experience, I think I better inform members of my group by sharing my gratitude as well as my enthusiasm for service work.” (4/22/18):

4. That the Trustees Committee responsible for Report and Charter consider adding the Short Form of the Twelve Traditions to the inside front cover of *The A.A. Service Manual*. (10/08/18)
5. That the Trustees Committee responsible for Report and Charter consider adding the Short Form of the Twelve Concepts for World Service to the inside front cover of *The A.A. Service Manual*. (10/08/18)
6. That the 2019 General Service Conference consider modifying the note on page S-106 of the *A.A. Service Manual*, 2018-2020 to specify that the principle stated on page S-104 must be also applied to the official French and Spanish translations of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions provided by G.S.O. Current language of footnote 2: This applies to the original English version only. Proposed Change to footnote 2: This applies to the original English version, as well as the official French and Spanish translations provided by the GSB only. (12/3/18)
7. That *The A.A. Service Manual* be updated to include the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and St. Maarten on the Regional Map (pg. S69) and the Area Map (pg. S97) when it is reprinted. (12/13/18)

Working Group Responses to Proposed Agenda Items

1. The group felt this was possible if desired.
2. & 3. The idea for these items may have come from the “Personal Experience – past delegates offer practical experience” pages S52-55.

The group felt these additions should be discussed in light of the following considerations:

- The “Duties” section is written in the third person, and to suddenly shift from third person to first person could be jarring.
- The emphasis in GSR and DCM reports should not be on one individual’s experience or on personal sharing. A.A. members have varying points of view and emphasizing one individual’s point of view does not feel in keeping with our principles.

That said, a solution to accommodate these additions (and their earlier counterpart, “Personal Experience – past delegates offer practical experience”) would be to design them as sidebars with tinted-color backgrounds, perhaps placing them at the end of the corresponding section. This would differentiate the personal sharing from the main body of the text. They could also be easily changed with new editions of the manual.

4. & 5. The group felt that this would depend on the new format of the manual. These items might better be placed inside the book with a tab. The group was not opposed to their inclusion per se.

6. The group suggested this draft of language for the footnote:

“This applies to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as presented in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* in English, French and Spanish.”

7. The group unanimously agreed the map should be so updated.

C. Next Steps

Begin development of text outline and continue with extended review process. Rough draft is expected in fall 2019.

2019 Conference Committee on Report and Charter

ITEM C: Discuss A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)

Background notes:

Here are Advisory Actions and Additional Committee Considerations concerning Directories from the last 10 years:

From 2009 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee reviewed a list of proposed editorial changes to the A.A. Directories and forwarded them to the Publications Department.”

From 2011 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee briefly discussed the A.A. Directories and noted that there were no requests for changes to the A.A. Directories.”

From 2012 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee briefly discussed the A.A. Directories and noted that there were no requests for changes to the A.A. Directories.”

From 2013 Advisory Action of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“In light of the recent decision not to publish regional directories this year, the committee asked the staff secretary to communicate their concerns to the A.A.W.S. Board about the still existing, albeit decreasing, need for print resources by A.A. members in rural and remote areas, and those members who may travel frequently.”

From 2014 Advisory Action of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee considered the A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.) and requested that the General Service Office explore alternative methods of accessing and distributing the contact information contained in the A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.). The committee requested that a report be brought back to the 2015 Report and Charter Conference Committee.”

From 2015 Advisory Action of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“A limited run of the A.A. Regional Directories (Canadian, Eastern U.S. and Western U.S.) be printed annually for purchase upon request.”

From 2015 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee considered the A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., Western U.S. and International) and suggested that the section currently called “Online Meetings” be reviewed and possibly renamed “Online Meetings/Groups” to reflect the Twelfth Step work that some online groups carry out beyond the meetings.”

From 2016 Advisory Action of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The category title “Online Meetings” be changed to “Online Meetings/Online Groups” on page vi and vii in the A.A. Directories.”

From 2017 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee discussed the A.A. Directories and noted there were no requests for changes at this time.”

From 2018 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter:

“The committee discussed the A.A. Directories and noted there were no requests for changes at this time. The committee also reviewed a memo from the G.S.O. General Manager informing the committee that the A.A. Directories, Canada, Eastern U.S. and Western U.S. would not be printed in 2018 due to the implementation of a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.”

Note: Directories have been mailed to committee members only.