

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A. WEBSITES

1. Q. How do we start to set up a local A.A. website?

- A. Decisions in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous are usually made through an informed group conscience and the decision to post a web page is no different. Whether area or district, central office or intergroup – A.A. experience suggests forming a committee to discuss all aspects of setting up a website, including all possible concerns about the Traditions. The committee may want to consider the purpose and audience(s) for the website.

Early on, it is important to agree upon a method for gathering the group conscience of the local A.A. community, and to inform local groups, districts, areas and central/intergroup offices (if affected) about the committee's progress. When the committee has reached a consensus, its findings are shared with the whole group (district, area, etc.) and a decision is made through an informed group conscience vote. It is then that the actual work on the website can begin. It is helpful to remember that there is no need to let the speed of this technology dictate the speed of our actions. Technical questions regarding this communication method will need to be answered by experts in that field.

2. Q. Who is responsible for a website?

- A. A thoughtful and informed group conscience is encouraged to be responsible for deciding the contents, policy and procedures involved in setting up and maintaining a website. It has been suggested that a webmaster (web manager) be appointed or elected to serve as a trusted servant, responsible to the committee or groups served. This can be an arduous task if the webmaster is responsible for updating local meeting information.

3. Q. How do we select a domain name for our website?

- A. What you choose for your domain name should, again, be determined by the group conscience. To preserve Alcoholics Anonymous' trademarks and service marks, individuals and A.A. groups are asked to avoid using these marks ("A.A."; "Alcoholics Anonymous"; "The Big Book") in their domain names. It has been our experience that many service entities have integrated lower case "aa" into their domain name along with other identifying information (e.g. www.aacentraloffice.org or www.area999aa.org).

4. Q. What A.A. information is suitable for a website?

- A. The group conscience will determine the contents. Copyright restrictions apply to material displayed on the website – just as copyrights protect A.A. literature. Websites created by A.A. areas, districts and central/intergroup offices are permitted to quote a phrase, sentence or brief paragraph excerpted from A.A. literature – such as the Big Book (*Alcoholics Anonymous*), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *The A.A. Service Manual*, and Conference-approved pamphlets – without a prior, written request to do so. When this occurs, the proper credit line should be included to ensure that the copyrights of A.A. literature are protected. After a quotation from a book or pamphlet, the credit line should read: "Reprinted from (name of publication, page number), with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc."

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Aside from websites created by A.A. areas, districts and intergroups/central offices, all others wishing to include A.A. material on their websites must request permission from G.S.O. to do so.

5. Q. Who pays for a website?

- A. In keeping with our Seventh Tradition, A.A. pays its own expenses and this applies in cyberspace A.A. as well. Free web hosting sites are available on the Internet, but often require the inclusion of mandatory advertising space or links to commercial sites as consideration for their use. To avoid confusion and to guard against inadvertent association or promotion, care should be taken in selection of the web host site.

6. Q. What about linking to other sites?

- A. Linking to other A.A. websites will often have the positive effect of significantly broadening the scope of your site. Information contained on these sites becomes instantly available to those visiting your site. However, since each A.A. entity is autonomous and has its own group conscience, a site to which you have linked may start to display information which your group conscience finds objectionable; and there is no way to know when this might occur, or to prevent it from happening. Linking to non-A.A. sites is even more problematic. Not only are they much more likely to display non-A.A. and/or controversial material, but linking might imply endorsement, if not affiliation, regardless of the contents. In the final analysis, experience strongly suggests that, when considering linking to another site, committees proceed with caution.

At G.S.O. we have attempted to avoid some of these pitfalls by confining our links to known A.A. service entities, and by incorporating a mandatory exit from our site (including when accessing application software such as Adobe Reader, provided to assist visitors in reading Portable Document Format (PDF) files). The mandatory exit applies even in those cases when someone wishes to activate any of the links we have included on our site. Additionally, we post a prominent notice to that effect.

7. Q. How do I link to www.aa.org and www.aagrapevine.org?

- A. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) provides web banners intended to facilitate navigation to the www.aa.org website. Web banners must link to the www.aa.org website and may not be altered in any way. A.A.W.S. reserves the right to have our web banners removed if we deem the content within which they are placed as contrary to the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, or otherwise inappropriate.

For information on linking to www.aagrapevine.org, please contact Grapevine directly.

8. Q. What about anonymity?

- A. We observe all of A.A.'s principles and Traditions on our websites. As anonymity is the "spiritual foundation of all our Traditions," we practice anonymity on A.A. websites. Some A.A. websites contain password-protected sections for members only, but publicly accessible pages of an A.A. website have the potential for reaching the broadest possible audience and,

therefore, require the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio and film. For more sharing on this topic, see the resource page **Anonymity — A Vital Spiritual Principle** on G.S.O.'s website.

9. Q. Will the General Service Office of A.A. act as a “clearinghouse” for local websites?

A. There is no central authority in Alcoholics Anonymous; hence, the General Service Office of A.A. is not a “clearinghouse” for local websites. Questions regarding the Traditions, contents, linking, etc. are determined by a local group conscience. G.S.O. is available to share collected experience on any subject, including websites. At this point, though, G.S.O. has only limited sharing from local website committees regarding their experience with matters which are unique to website creation.

10. Q. What can be found on G.S.O.'s A.A. website (www.aa.org)?

A. In keeping with our Twelve Traditions and viewing the Internet as a form of public and electronic media, G.S.O.'s A.A. Website was originally set up as a public information tool. It has been broadened to include material that is more directed to members of our Fellowship. The site provides accurate and consistent information about Alcoholics Anonymous to the general public, media and professionals in English, French and Spanish.

11. Q. How many people visit G.S.O.'s A.A. website?

A. In 2008, the website was visited 4,008,083 times, for an average of 10,951 visits daily. In 2009, the website was visited 3,946,058 times, for an average of 10,811 visits daily. In 2010, the website was visited 4,310,603 times, for an average of 11,810 visits daily. In 2011, the website was visited 4,102,550 times, for an average of 11,239 visits daily. In 2012, the website was visited 4,756,623 times, for an average of 12,996 visits daily. In 2013, the website was visited 6,819,949 times, for an average of 18,735 visits daily. In 2014, the website was visited 9,422,116 times, for an average of 25,813 visits daily.

12. Q. Is an A.A. website promotion rather than attraction?

A. As our co-founder, Bill W., wrote:

“Public information takes many forms – the simple sign outside a meeting place that says ‘A.A. meeting tonight;’ listing in local phone directories; distribution of A.A. literature; and radio and television shows using sophisticated media techniques. Whatever the form, it comes down to ‘one drunk carrying the message to another drunk,’ whether through personal contact or through the use of third parties and the media.”

The needs and experience of people in your own area, large or small, urban or rural, will affect what you decide to do. If you have further questions do not hesitate to contact our office at:

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