

# Highlights from A.A.W.S.

July 27, 2017

The A.A. World Services Board met on Thursday, July 27, 2017, at the General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Richard P., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

## General Manager's Report

General Manager Greg T., reported on the following:

*Information Technology* – Vendor presentations on potential new software systems will be underway through July-August. The backend of the Online Bookstore application is being tested and will be implemented by early September. The security for Fellowship New Vision (FNV) is being redone and will also be implemented by early September.

*Administrative Services* – A number of RFI/RFPs are in progress:

- Communications audit, per General Service Board (vendors narrowed to three);
- Website design (seven vendors selected for presentations);
- Catalog redesign (will result in new printed catalog and design for online bookstores to blend with overall website design);
- HR/payroll system software (will blend with enterprise system going forward);
- French translation services (several potential vendors identified for translation work, including possible Conference background translation in 2018).

Additionally, G.S.O./A.A.W.S. will support the RFP that will be issued for a potential new independent auditor for the General Service Board, A.A. World Services, Inc., and AA Grapevine, Inc., per the recommendation adopted by the General Service Board for a company to be engaged January 1, 2018.

*Archives* – Archives staff is beginning to prepare for construction, which will allow for an internal reconfiguration to expand workstations. During this period, Archives staff will temporarily relocate to one of the meeting rooms and the Archives office will be closed briefly to accommodate construction.

*Human Resources* – The new G.S.O./A.A.W.S. employee handbook has been drafted and is under review by the senior management group. After review by the general manager and a legal review, it will come to the A.A.W.S. Board for approval.

*Office Services* – During the initial office renovation at G.S.O., the room that houses servers for the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine was reduced to a size that does not allow proper air circulation and ventilation of the heat emitted from the servers. The most efficient and cost-effective solution to the

issue is to put the room back to its original size, and this work will be undertaken in late July-early August. Additionally, a security wall and door by reception/conference room area was installed Saturday, July 22.

*International Convention* – The general manager, the 2020 International Convention coordinator, and the Meetings and Events manager attended a site visit in Detroit, Michigan, touring the convention center, housing sites (hotels) in the area, and meeting with vendors including the registration and accessibility companies, various convention center services, and Detroit metro area transportation services.

### June - July Travel:

July 4-10, 2017: 17th Asia-Oceania Service Meeting (zonal), Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

July 19-21, 2017: 2020 International Convention site visit, Detroit, MI.

## Staff Report

G.S.O.'s Website Design Committee is receiving presentations from potential vendors for the redesign and has been synchronizing work with the TCS app project, the communications audit and the bookstore catalog. Updated service material and the yellow Safety Card have been added to the "What's New" section of the website.

G.S.O. staff are working on implementation of Advisory Actions. Additionally, a G.S.O. team has been meeting to prepare for the implementation of the 2017 Advisory Action that G.S.O. strive to translate all background into French and Spanish.

Six new C.P.C. banners were produced for use at national conferences, two in French, two in Spanish, and two in English. The Spanish and English banners made their debut at the National Council of La Raza, July 8-11. The French banner will get its first use in November at the College of Family Physicians of Canada Conference in Montreal.

Local committees coordinated 91 prerelease requests and 18 requests for new meetings. The fellowship at large responded with over 90 volunteers to the CCS "Mail Call" printed in the July prison issue of the Grapevine.

The June 2017 literature activity update report was distributed to all delegates and literature committee chairs in the U.S. and Canada with information from the 2017 Conference, an update on Big Book translations and information about the

availability of the new “Safety Card for A.A. Groups.”

A.A.’s annual mailing to the media, distributed in June to 29,000 members of the media, had an open rate of 20% compared to an average open rate for email blasts of 8%. New literature display signage and floor standing banners of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts were introduced at the Northeast Regional Forum and a full forum workshop on “Safety in A.A.” went well. The first of two Local Forums in 2017 was scheduled for July 21-23 in Area 72 Western Washington with the goal of broadening the understanding of general service among the Latino community. The Local Forum will be in Spanish with translation to English.

## Technology/Communication/Services

The Technology/Communication/Services Committee reviewed progress reports and updates on G.S.O.’s A.A. website software and analytics and heard subcommittee progress reports regarding additional channels of communication with the Fellowship and moving forward with a Google for Nonprofits account. It was generally felt that any proposed development of an A.A. app ought to be tied in with the ongoing website redesign project. The committee also considered getting the help of a qualified consultant and confirmed that the approach to establishing a Google for Nonprofits account should continue, with regular reporting to the board as the project moves forward.

The Board approved the following recommendations brought forward by the TCS Committee:

- That the 2017 Second Quarter Report on G.S.O.’s A.A. Website Activities be forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Public Information.
- That the anonymity-protected version of the 2016 WSM Final Report be posted on the aa.org “A.A. Around the World” page in English and Spanish (the Spanish version to be supplied by Mexico’s G.S.O.).

## Publishing

The committee accepted the Publishing Department report, highlighting the following information:

*Gross sales:* June gross sales are under budget with actual gross sales at \$961,000, which is a \$243,720 or 20.23% negative variance against budget of \$1,204,720. For 2017 through the month of June, gross sales are above estimate: \$7,316,669 actual sales vs. estimate of \$7,157,772, which is a \$158,897 or 2.81% positive variance.

*Web sales:* Total web sales for June 2017 through the Online Bookstores stand at \$613,899, which accounts for about 64.8% of total sales for the company. Online orders for June stand at 1,301 which is 68.37% of the 1,903 total orders. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for June are \$437,072, and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$176,826.

*Digital books:* Total ebook gross sales January through June 2017 stand at \$110,189 with 28,342 units distributed. Additionally, a new ebook feature improving pagination navigation has been completed, with implementation to take place simultaneously upon receipt of all three language versions.

*Translation reviews:* January-June 2017 saw a 45% increase

in translation reviews over the prior year and thus far 29 reviews were completed across 14 languages. Notable new requests come from: Brazil, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The committee also reviewed a request from an area for permission to begin work on a “re-translation” of the Third Edition Spanish Big Book. After thorough discussion, and in light of the history provided, the committee agreed that it would be a disservice to the Fellowship to foster multiple translations of the Spanish Big Book, and that there was not an expressed need within the Fellowship at this time for a re-translation of the Third Edition Spanish Big Book.

*Catalog Redesign:* From the four vendors issued RFP documents, a vendor is to be selected August 1.

*A.A.W.S. domain names:* The committee reviewed an attorney memorandum regarding possible solutions/actions to one ongoing negotiation and discussed the latest developments regarding A.A.W.S. domain names. The committee agreed to continue discussions.

*Twelve Concepts audio project:* The committee discussed the project which is currently on hold, as per the committee’s request, and asked that the Publishing Department research cost estimates regarding production of The Twelve Concepts in audio format (in English, French and Spanish) by A.A.W.S. The committee also requested that the Publishing Department inform the Area that the project should remain on hold at this time.

*Translation services update:* The Publishing Department is now using French translation and editorial services from the pool of freelance vendors developed through the recent RFI process and has completed reviews and updates for the French editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Daily Reflections*, *Living Sober* and a number of pamphlets and other materials. Additionally, *Daily Reflections* and the reprinted pamphlets have been redesigned with new covers and, where necessary, updated to reflect actions of the 67th General Service Conference. Progress continues with the development of comprehensive Style Guides in French and Spanish to facilitate the upcoming translation of Conference background material.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Publishing Committee:

- That dubbing in French and Spanish be provided for the video “A New Freedom.”

## Finance

*Unaudited financial results:* The G.S.O. six-month unaudited financial report revealed that gross sales were \$7,313,388 or 2.17% ahead of budget, contributions were \$3,771,670 or 13.31% ahead of budget and total operating expenses were \$7,821,310 or 1.40% less than budget. Net profit for the six months was \$966,876 compared with a budgeted profit of \$14,988.

*International Convention:* The committee heard a report from 2020 International Convention consultant Gregg Talley, providing a schedule of expenses incurred so far and describing a recent site visit to Detroit where preliminary efforts concerning transportation, security and border crossing have begun.

*Self-Support:* Following creation in June of an ad hoc A.A.W.S. committee on Self-Support that will report to the board through the Finance Committee, the committee met and agreed that its scope should be to recommend actions and ideas to A.A.W.S. that will help the Fellowship approach self-support from the perspective of contributions vs. services. The committee will also make a report to the trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee and it was suggested that the committee work with G.S.O. staff in order to keep abreast of any pertinent input received from the Fellowship.

Also noted was the impact of switching to new paper for the Big Book last year, which has already saved as much as \$70,000. There has also been a significant overall reduction of Conference expense in the travel, meals and accommodations cost line. Additionally, discussions have been taking place within the department regarding how to process contributions more effectively and efficiently.

The committee also acknowledged with gratitude the recent grassroots self-support effort wherein members have been sending \$7.27 (the average cost per member for G.S.O. to provide services to the Fellowship) as part of their Seventh Tradition contributions. The committee was encouraged by this fellowship-wide effort and appreciative of the expression of support made by individuals, groups, districts and areas who contributed in this way.

### Internal Audit

This committee has met twice via conference call and reviewed internal and external documents identified by the committee as possible resources in defining the Composition, Scope and Procedures of the committee. The committee prepared a matrix of audit items to be reviewed and will continue reporting back to the board.