

Standing by Group Conscience

Distribution of illicit literature that contains copyright-protected material prompted the creation of two bulletins related to the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust (FIPT)* this fiscal year. The first, *Narcotics Anonymous Copyrights and Literature*, published and distributed in September 2014, provides a six-page history of the issue. It includes “A Brief History of the Basic Text” which frankly discusses the missteps of the 1980s. These conflicts from three decades past appear to be the source of the resentment that inspired the creation of an unauthorized version of the Basic Text. As the bulletin notes, this unauthorized text uses portions from different editions that, frankly, make little sense to most members. The bulletin goes on to describe the painful process leading up to an apparent resolution with decisions by the World Service Conference in 1991. Group conscience expressed by the Conference ultimately directed NAWS to maintain control of our literature and to use it for the benefit of NA as a whole. *Group Conscience & NA Literature*, published in April 2015, outlines the fundamental problem with the practice of a few individuals whose actions continue to sow disunity. Regardless of the turmoil that inspired the original “baby blue,” distribution of these texts makes little sense today, is contrary to the will of the Fellowship as expressed by group conscience, and is against the law. Both essays can be found in six languages, along with other bulletins related to the *FIPT*, at www.na.org/FIPT.

The unauthorized version of the Basic Text continues to be printed and distributed despite these efforts. Some of those involved may not even be aware of the fact that it’s a hybrid of outdated text that is not Conference approved. Instead, they’ve been persuaded by arguments that their actions are warranted because it gets our book into the hands of addicts; that the real deal—the Conference-approved Sixth Edition Basic Text—is too expensive; that its pricing is set to fatten NAWS’ coffers and supports imprudent business practices; and that NAWS’ priorities are contrary to the will of the Fellowship. All of this is paired with mythology about our early years, a willful disregard of group conscience, and the baseless claim that literature developed after 1985 was not written by addicts for addicts. None of these arguments hold up under scrutiny.

In 1982, the Basic Text sold for \$8.00. Adjusted for inflation, that has the same buying power as \$19.65 in today’s dollars.¹ The Sixth Edition Basic Text currently sells for \$11.55 in the United States. Many home groups have long-established practices about providing literature through giveaways or payment plans. In addition, translating and supplying literature has been integral to our fellowship development efforts in parts of the world

¹ Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator, available: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

where NA is just getting a foothold. Literature purchases pay for translations and other services that support fellowship development including literature discounts and giveaways. All told, we gave away or discounted \$539,919 worth of literature in this fiscal year alone. Sales of the Basic Text—and other literature to a lesser extent—make this possible.

The group conscience expressed in decisions at WSC 1991 and by the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust* approved at WSC 1993 reflects the Fellowship’s desire to protect the fidelity of our message by entrusting control of our literature to NA World Services. The Conference has repeatedly affirmed the long-standing practice of pricing literature to support services and development. This practice began with the first printings of the Basic Text. As a Fellowship, we have reexamined this mandate time and again, as each new generation of members comes to question the practice. Each time, we’ve come

to the same conclusion. On at least six occasions, the WSC has confirmed NAWS’ responsibility to protect the integrity of our literature and to price it in such a way that supports services and fellowship development.

And yet, group conscience and appeals for unity seem to have little effect on the most resolute of those seeking to undermine our collective decisions. Legal action remains an option, but given that court decisions have had no discernable impact on this activity in the past, we are hesitant to pursue this course. And so we appeal to you, our fellow members, to help us protect the integrity of our message for the addicts yet to find NA. It falls to each of us to speak up for our Fellowship and to stand by group conscience. We do that each time we question the appearance of illicit literature in meetings or events, and each time we refuse to take non-NA literature into our H&I commitment. We do that by educating ourselves on this matter by visiting www.na.org/fipt and by sharing this information with other members. Group conscience has spoken. It’s up to each of us to stand by it with our actions.



World Convention

WCNA — “The Gift Is Freedom”

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, offered an incomparable backdrop and context for the 36th World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous. The event provided unparalleled opportunities for members from around the world to celebrate recovery together. We expressed the gift of freedom in many languages and cultures and through the variety of workshops, meetings, spontaneous drum circles, entertainment, dancing, and more.

In addition to providing opportunities for fun and fellowship, World Conventions have a way of focusing our public relations and fellowship development efforts. In advance of WCNA 36, the Brazil Zone’s Literature Translation Committee and PR-inclined members collaborated with their NAWS counterparts to set ambitious, but achievable, goals. The LTC set its sights on producing a Sixth Edition Basic Text in Portuguese in time for the Convention. Members worked diligently to translate the stories and coordinated their efforts with the NAWS translations team to get their work press-ready. Never before had the whole Basic Text been available in Portuguese. More than 3,000 copies were purchased during the Convention alone.

WCNA 36 provided a location and occasion for some specific public relations activities aimed at bene-

fitting all of the Brazil Zone. Trusted servants involved with PR at the zonal, regional, and area levels collaborated with NAWS special workers to establish goals based on the vision statement and guided by the current status of NA in Brazil. The overarching aim was to broaden exposure to NA; Brazilians need to know about NA in order to hear our message or to send their loved ones or clients to us. The PR crew organized to expand media contacts in hopes of gaining positive press coverage. This resulted in some Convention coverage by the press and a 20 percent increase in traffic on the website and phonelines.

We also worked to build relationships in the important fields of health and justice. Ultimately, this resulted in hosting a panel discussion at which three physicians and a “therapeutic justice prosecutor” (think: drug court) discussed the benefits of their cooperation with NA. Some 40 members of the health and justice community—social workers, treatment professionals, educators—attended the panel along with 500 NA members. Together, the PR efforts held in conjunction with WCNA 36 represent a significant contribution to expanding NA’s reputation as a viable program of recovery.

The accomplishments of Brazil NA volunteers and their NAWS counterparts continue to have ripple effects. NA is now at the table for important discussions with federal policy makers. There is great optimism about





increasing access to federal prisons, lifting obstacles so that we might bring the message to imprisoned addicts more easily. In addition, the NA community in Brazil has been given more opportunities to raise NA’s profile through participating in professional conferences. And because routing calls to local phonelines from a single, toll-free number was a priority for policymakers, Brazilian members are working with us to establish such a telecommunication system for NA Brazil. One can only imagine the number of addicts whose journey to recovery was in some way made possible by those efforts linked to WCNA 36.

Of course, cataloging this return on our investment represents the bright side of the WCNA 36 story. It’s also important for us to take a clearheaded look at the financial shortfall and learn from this experience. To be clear, it’s been our practice to plan World Conventions outside North America as break-even events and to accept, or even expect, some financial loss in exchange for the PR and fellowship development opportunities. That was the case with WCNA 33 in Barcelona, Spain, in 2009 and WCNA 28 in Cartagena, Colombia, in 2000. The losses in San Antonio, Texas, with WCNA 32 in 2007—attributed largely to the recession, but also illuminating the role of location—inspired some planning practices that made fiscal sense. We learned that members are more apt to travel when the destination offers opportunities for recreation outside the Convention. Rio certainly seemed to fit the bill in this regard. While the destination was certainly attractive, our judgment of its affordability—especially for the Brazilian

NA community—proved inaccurate and was further impacted by an unforeseen financial collapse in Brazil.

Based on an analysis of WCNA 32 in San Antonio, we aspired to offer pre-registration early and to make plans based on real numbers. Although an honest effort was made to apply this lesson in planning WCNA 36, our experience in Rio reminded us of our powerlessness over global economic conditions. In this case, those conditions delayed or prevented our ability to offer early pre-registration. Such delays ruled out the possibility of payment plans and made the practice of planning based on accurate attendance projections impossible. In addition, the exchange rate took an unfavorable turn for Brazilians, preventing many from attending. These same economic conditions might have made the trip more affordable to others outside Brazil, but came too late for many to join us.

One of the central lessons of the WCNA 36 experience points to the nature of research required when determining whether a location is viable as a Convention site. Although our world has seemed to get smaller in so many ways, in fact, international commerce and travel are increasingly complex. Going forward we recommend a more in-depth process that takes into account

Future WCNA Locations

<p>2018 WCNA 37 Orlando, FL, USA</p>	<p>2021 WCNA 38 Asia-Pacific/Middle East/ Africa</p>
<p>2024 WCNA 39 North America</p>	<p>2027 WCNA 40 Europe</p>
<p>2030 WCNA 41 North America</p>	

the many factors—economic, social, and political—that might influence a Convention’s success. We need to carefully consider the impact of government regulations, the cost of permits, and banking regulations. These issues once seemed very far from us, but more and more we understand the need for a multidimensional approach to our events. The culture within the local Fellowship with regard to attendance and registration also merits special consideration. Our model for World Conventions going forward may need to adapt to local conditions to a greater extent than it has in the past.

With the writing on the wall predicting shortfalls in registration and merchandise sales, we took a number of cost-saving measures as the Convention neared. These ranged from consolidating space to reducing our use of air conditioning, to performing setup and cleanup ourselves. Many of the costs of the Convention infrastructure were not negotiable, however. Faced with the choice of going forward knowing the financial price or canceling altogether knowing the cost in both money and reputation, we held our collective breath and put on a great Convention.



Fortunately, the money we spent facilitated the important public relations work detailed previously. Although the investment was larger than anticipated, so was the return. The Board and NAWs staff conducted an analysis on the Convention in the months that followed. In brief, we concluded that given the unique circumstances of WCNA 36, we simply did the best we could. The 2016 World Service Conference will have the opportunity to discuss the Convention and provide input that will shape the events planned for Orlando, Florida, in 2018 and in Asia-Pacific/Middle East/Africa in 2021. An accounting of the WCNA 36 budget compared to actual expenses appears below.

	Combined Fiscal Years	Budget	Variance
WCNA 36 Income			
Registration	\$303,731	\$350,000	(\$46,269)
Newcomer Donations	2,456	28,000	(25,544)
Merchandise	130,783	440,000	(309,217)
Other Sales	1,250	0	1,250
Rebates	0	21,052	(21,052)
Total WCNA 36 Income	\$438,220	\$839,052	(\$400,832)
WCNA 36 Expense			
Registration	\$ 53,425	\$ 96,000	(\$42,575)
Program	157,225	183,219	(25,994)
Merchandise	104,465	178,000	(73,535)
Facilities	349,394	188,000	161,394
Support Committee	50,168	44,000	6,168
Administration	108,253	149,421	(41,168)
Total WCNA 36 Expense	\$822,930	\$838,640	(\$15,710)
Total Net	(\$384,710)	\$412	(\$385,122)