

Group Conscience & NA Literature

World Board

April 2015

In 1991 the World Service Conference passed two motions—one to reaffirm that the WSO holds ownership of NA’s intellectual property in trust for the Fellowship of NA, and another to reaffirm that the WSO is exclusive publisher and distributor of all NA literature.

At the time, WSO’s intellectual property attorney explained to the Conference:

“This needs to be done for the benefit of those people who do not have the time, energy, or the interest to look back at what really happened and would rather argue that the past consists of what they believe should have happened.”

And here we are again—increasing numbers of our members are illegally copying and distributing NA literature around the world, sowing seeds of confusion and disunity, including places where NA is in early stages. In particular, people are publishing a booklet that contains the Third Edition Revised Basic Text with the Second Edition versions of the Fourth and Ninth Traditions, a booklet that was compiled by a few individuals and has **never been Fellowship-approved**. It is bad enough that we have had this ongoing struggle within NA; now it has become a public problem because these texts are being distributed in institutions.



The roots of this conflict go back more than 30 years. The history of the Basic Text is a story that gets told many ways, with different heroes and villains depending on who is doing the telling.

There are some things, however, that are not open to interpretation:

- 1. It goes against group conscience.** The fellowship has decided on these issues repeatedly,
 - ❖ beginning in 1984 when the fellowship voted to return to the First Edition language for the Fourth and Ninth Traditions,
 - ❖ and again in 1988 when the conference rejected the idea of extensive changes to the text beyond fixing the errors in the Fourth Editions,
 - ❖ and again in 1991 when the conference voted against reconsidering which edition of the book should be published,
 - ❖ and again in 1993 when the fellowship approved the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust*,
 - ❖ and again as recently as 2004 when a *CAR* motion was passed authorizing revisions to the Basic Text but specifying no changes be made to chapters one through ten of the text. That 2004 motion resulted in the Sixth Edition Basic Text, which was approved **unanimously** in 2008.
- 2. It’s illegal.** The unauthorized reproduction of NA literature is a violation of copyright law. NA groups can copy and distribute NA literature for use within their groups, but that right does not extend outside the group or to individuals and service bodies.

3. It doesn't make sense. On top of everything else, the portions of the Fourth and Ninth Traditions reinserted into the text of the booklets that are being distributed don't reflect most members' understanding of NA service. The Fourth Tradition essay says of service committees, offices, and activities, **"these things are not N.A."** The Ninth Tradition essay says that service boards or committees **"are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous."** That doesn't even make sense, does it? Are the funds from your area dance an outside donation? Is your local H&I committee somehow not a part of NA?

We are writing this on behalf of NA World Services, and we consider ourselves a grateful part of NA. NAWS provides support and services to addicts, meetings, and service bodies in 132 countries, speaking 77 languages. We interact with professionals and officials who influence the lives of addicts around the world to make our message more available. Here are just a few figures to give you a sense of our work. In the 2013–2014 fiscal year, we

- ❖ gave away and discounted \$460,000 worth of literature;
- ❖ answered more than 5,800 inmate inquiries with an information packet and NA literature;
- ❖ sent out more than 450 group starter kits and more than 45 institutional group starter kits;
- ❖ held quarterly PR web meetings with 206 area and regional trusted servants from seven countries on four continents, and H&I web meetings with 149 trusted servants from 13 countries on four continents;
- ❖ published 54 new pieces of translated literature, bringing us to 900 translated titles for NA recovery literature; and
- ❖ participated in 32 fellowship development and zonal events.

The money to pay for those services comes mostly from literature sales. In essence, when you buy a Basic Text, you are helping to pay for the literature we give away around the world and all of our other efforts.

Despite that fact, some people will tell you that the Basic Text is too expensive and that is why they are illegally distributing an unapproved version. But again, the fellowship's conscience is clear: The motion to produce a lower-cost Basic Text has been before the conference at least nine times; it's been committed once, ruled out of order twice, and defeated at least six times.

In the end, this isn't about politics or personal views; this is about the spiritual principles of group conscience and NA unity. Please respect the will of the fellowship. Illicit literature has no place in our meetings. For more information about NA's copyrights and world services' responsibility to protect them, see www.na.org/fipt.



NA Literature Timeline