

Topic Two
Anonymity and Social Media
March 8, 2025

Under Item J of the agenda of the Public Information Committee of the 75th General Service Conference (GSC) of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Committee is asked to **review the progress report on the creation of news releases to address anonymity and social media.**

On February 4, 2025, I was invited by the District 87-21 Committee (Granby) to discuss A.A.'s perspective on anonymity and social media. To do so, I prepared a brief history of the role of electronic media in carrying the A.A. message and the principle of anonymity. Here are the main points:

1) On anonymity and social media, see the brochure *“Understanding Anonymity”*.

2) At the 2011GSC: It was recommended:

That the theme of the 2012 General Service Conference be: *“Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age”*.

That the topics for presentations or workshops at the 2012 General Service Conference be: A. Carrying the A.A. Message: and, at article 2.: Social Media on the Web

3) At the 2013 GSC: It was recommended:

That the 63rd General Service Conference affirm that the Internet, social media and all forms of public communications are implicit in the last sentence of the Abbreviated Version of the Eleventh Tradition, which reads, “At the level of the press, radio and cinema.”

4) At the 2022 GSC: It was recommended that:

The following revisions be made to the brochure *“Understanding Anonymity”* to become:

- *Anonymity in the Digital Age*

Q. I maintain a website and social media pages. At what level should I protect my anonymity on the Internet?

A. Publicly accessible aspects of the Internet such as websites featuring text, graphics, audio, and video can be considered the same as publishing or broadcasting. Unless password-protected, a website requires the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio, and film/ video. Simply put, this means that A.A. members do not identify themselves as such using their full name and/or full-face photos. **It is suggested that when A.A. members gather as A.A. members or as an A.A. group**

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on social media pages and other similar platforms that these pages are set to “private” rather than “public.”

The following text was also added to the brochure *“Understanding Anonymity”*:

Q. Are virtual A.A. meetings considered “Public”?

A. These online gatherings are not streamed to the general public; however, information about the meeting is provided to A.A. members, potential members, and to the general public as with in-person meetings. While some members feel comfortable using their full names and faces other members feel it is more aligned with Tradition 11 to use only their first name and last initial or turning their camera off. For safety purposes some groups have provided helpful reminders in their group format that picture-taking or screen shots are not in keeping with the principles of anonymity.

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The discussion at the District 87-21 meeting focused on the Area 87 Facebook page. One of the many interventions from GSRs was to ask, “Why expose our members to unintentional breaches of anonymity despite the warnings that appear on the Area 87 Facebook page?”

“You are responsible for your anonymity. On this page, we block comments and the list of subscribers is confidential. It is not possible to block “Likes” and “Shares”. If you click “Like” or share a publication, you will be identified. That's why we suggest you don't “Like” or “Share” a post”.

The Area 87 Facebook page does not allow users to comment, but cannot prevent anyone from “liking”. In doing so, the user, whether an A.A. member or not, links his or her own Facebook account to the Area 87 page.

If a Facebook account contains personal opinions such as political views, religious views or other, we are thus allowing an association of “other” ideas or the amalgamation of “other” ideas with the A.A. program.

The Twelve Traditions of A.A. are clear. No affiliation with or endorsement of any organization, individual, etc. outside of A.A.; A.A. has no opinion on outside issues. The General Service Conference itself does not use social media such as Facebook or Tik Tok, to name but a few. Whenever the Conference uses electronic media to carry the A.A. message, it does so in such a way as to ensure that the anonymity of its members is protected, not to say “shielded”.

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On February 5, 2025, I sent the following request for information to all delegates to the 75th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous: « Area 87 (Southwestern Quebec) has had a Facebook page for almost a year. It is in French only. I attended a district meeting yesterday. Several questions were asked about our Facebook page. One member asked if other areas of the Conference had a similar Facebook page. I have two questions for you: “Do you have a Facebook page similar to ours? If not, are you planning to create one? »

Of the many responses received, no Area claimed to have a Facebook page, with the exception of one district where we were assured that the private Facebook page is closely monitored by the administrators and is only used to communicate events taking place locally.

Finally, to tie in with the first topic, it was the Area Committee that voted unanimously in favor of a Facebook page for the Area. The G.S.R.s weren't present ... and when you talk to them about it, well, you hear opinions and ideas that weren't expressed before a final vote was taken.

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