

## Social Media: Another Tool to Carry the AA Message

I became aware of the text “*Anonymity and Social Media*” presented by the Delegate of Area 87 at the pre-Conference Assembly held on March 8, 2025. My impression and reaction would have been quite different if this document had been presented by someone other than the delegate, the most influential position in an Area.

I acted as the Coordinator of Area 87’s Technology Committee in 2020-2024 and I’m very sensitive as regards the issues surrounding anonymity in the digital environment. Nevertheless, I believe we must be careful not to “throw the baby out with the bathwater”, which is why I felt compelled to react to our Delegate’s text.

### Duty of circumspection

Delegates have a duty of circumspection: they must refrain from taking a position. According to the A.A. Service Manual, the delegate must “show leadership in solving local problems affecting A.A. Traditions” and “be open-minded and able to listen to different points of view”.

How can the trust of members on both sides of a conflict be gained if he favors one side at the start? Has our delegate listened to all points of view before speaking to the members of a Pre-Conference Assembly?

I argue here the following.

In 2024, District 87-21 expressed their desire to shut down the Facebook page. According to the DCM and GSRs, this page presents a risk for anonymity breaches. To follow up on this information, the Technology Committee offered District 21 to make a presentation on the subject of social media.

Surprise! In our stead, it was our Delegate who visited District 21 last February 4, 2025. That’s is what led to the text we refer to now.

The argumentation in his presentation only provides one side of the picture. In the text, there are statements that do not represent today’s reality. Not everything is presented, and a lack of information misinforms the reader. In short, this document leads to the unequivocal decision **to cease all publication on social media.**

Let’s review the text point by point:

1. The backgrounder refers to two motions for resolutions in 2011 and 2013 concerning anonymity on the Internet, including social media. Our Delegate omitted to remind us that in both the *Global Media Plan* and the *Internet Guidelines*, there is no indication that AAs should “prohibit” the use of social media. To the contrary, these **instances encourage such practices.**
2. From the pamphlet *Understanding Anonymity (P-47)*, the text also refers to a question and answer about websites. This is off-topic in relation to digital media. On the other hand, the following question in the pamphlet addresses the subject of digital media as follows: “For more information on anonymity online, see the *A.A. Guideline on the Internet* at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), and the October 2010 issue of *AA Grapevine* on *Preserving Anonymity in a Networked World.*”
3. Our delegate also insists on anonymity in virtual meetings. Here again, we’re off the subject of digital media.

4. Further on, our Delegate speaks of “*association with or endorsement of any organization or individual*”. Let's be clear, the Area 87 Facebook page does not contravene this tradition. When someone clicks on “Like”, this does not imply any association between AA and that person. This individual **cannot comment**, and Area 87 only publishes texts from AA literature or announcements of AA events (conventions, information booths...). To make an analogy, let's say that when a person (non-member, member, journalist, political representative, etc.) visits an AA convention, his or her mere presence at an AA event doesn't mean there's an association. The “Like” we see on social media is simply a record of someone's visit to our FB page.
5. Finally, the document states that the General Service Conference does not make use of social media. This is false, as the G.S.O. has had a presence on digital media for several years through the Grapevine. A Grapevine Instagram page is similar to a Facebook page with the possibility to click “Like” and leave a record of a person's profile. There are over 13,600 subscribers and 2,731 publications where you can also see the profiles of people who are members or not. So, there are thousands of “likes” from subscribers and visitors on these platforms. However, as it is the case with the Area 87 FB page, it is not possible to comment on of the posts. View subscriber and publication statistics at [https://www.instagram.com/alcoholicsanonymous\\_gv/](https://www.instagram.com/alcoholicsanonymous_gv/)

#### **Does the Grapevine contravene AA Traditions?**

#### **Should we also reach up to Conference level to have this page and other publications on social media shut down?**

Of course, I'm also aware that each group or area is autonomous in their own way. But we also need to draw on the experience of the movement as a whole.

**Here are some recent A.A. references on the subject of social media.** These excerpts clearly demonstrate the opposite of the message expressed in our Delegate's document.

1. Excerpt from the Global Media Plan (2025):  
*“As we learn to be more effective with this information **over a multitude of platforms** such as our websites, **Instagram (GV), YouTube, LinkedIn, the Meeting Guide app, the GV app, ...fit within our guiding principles and to measure their effectiveness in carrying the message.**”*
2. Excerpt from MG-18 A.A. Guidelines on the Internet - Link to aa.org [here](#)

#### **GENERAL SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES**

*Facebook and other social networking platforms are public in nature. **The platforms in and of themselves do not infringe on our principles of anonymity or any other Traditions.** It is **the actions of the individual** that may cause harm to themselves, to others, or to A.A. as a whole... **Using these platforms to provide information about anonymity online may actually strengthen the principle of anonymity at the public level.***

3. It was **Bill's vision** that to remain relevant we must establish and maintain an adequate and contemporary public image. He said:
  - a. *"We need the increasing goodwill of publishers, writers, TV and radio stations. These local, national and international publicity outlets should be opened more and more widely, always renouncing, however, pressurized promotional tactics. It is through all these resources that we must try to carry the A.A. message to those who suffer from alcoholism and its consequences."* (From the Global Media Plan, previous version).
  - b. Were this text updated to today, Bill would certainly have been talking about social networks and other digital media.

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### **Why be present on social Media**

The Area 87 FB page is the only official French-language AA social networking page in North America. The Grapevine pages are in English and Spanish. Of course, there are **private pages** as well. A.A. members may participate, but no G.S.R., D.C.M. or Delegate can tell a member what to do. That's up to each individual.

It's also important to understand how social media work. There is a lack of understanding of the algorithms behind the "Like" links. As we've seen, when a visitor clicks a "Like" on a publication, it doesn't mean that **an affiliation** has been created. Or that a simple "Like" can lead to public controversy. There's no written expression of affiliation, nor is there an opinion on display. In the digital world, these "links" create a web and enable algorithms to define the kinds of publications that will be displayed on the news page of other profiles, and possibly lead a person in pain to Alcoholics Anonymous publications. This linking process never shows who has clicked "Like".

In reading the *Internet Guidelines*, we see it's important to be cautious and keep a watchful eye on changes to the rules of publication. This is what the Technology Committee team does very conscientiously.

Today, politicians, businesses and influencers reach people through social media. How can we not be present on digital media to reach people who suffer from alcoholism?

Given the importance of social media today, we have a responsibility to get the AA message out to suffering alcoholics. The primary motivation for my involvement in service is to carry the message, as suggested in Step 12. That's why I believe in our presence on social media.

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