Introducing the New ‘Jacketless’ Big Book: A Solution to Better Serve the Fellowship and Carry the Message

First printed in 1939, *Alcoholics Anonymous*—known as the Big Book—has carried the A.A. message of recovery for 83 years. Translated into 72 languages, and counting, the Big Book continues to reach millions of people in approximately 180 countries, helping suffering alcoholics around the world.

With recent and ongoing supply chain disruptions that have resulted in printing and delivery delays of A.A. literature, the Publishing Department at GSO looked for ways to decrease the manufacturing time of hardcover books and reduce backorders. One solution is the new ‘jacketless’ Big Book, which will be available to order in 2023.

The jacketless cover format, known as “paper over board” hardcover, has a printed cover treatment in which the dust jacket cover image is printed on the book itself, thus eliminating the considerable production time needed for sourcing materials and adding a separate paper jacket. A jacketless *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (Item B-2) is also in the works and promises to reduce delivery time.

The new format was the result of efforts by David R., publishing director, and Ed Nyland, nonalcoholic senior print production manager, to scout industry best practices to contain costs and bring A.A. literature to market faster.

“We started bouncing some ideas around with our print representative about their capabilities,” Ed says. “The printed covers idea stemmed from that—just as one of our orders for the B-1 (the hardcover Big Book’s item number) was on press, and our rep made some prototype mock-ups for me. I liked what I saw.” With the enthusiastic support of the AAWS board, and cross-department collaboration at GSO, including Publishing, Staff Services, Member Services, Finance, and Archives, the new format was adopted.

“We really welcome the new jacketless Big Book as an attractive and prudent option that will allow us to get the book printed and into the hands of those who most need it,” says Deborah K., chair of the AAWS Board. She added that the sample she brought to the annual Intergroup/Central Office/AAWS/AAGV Seminar received a positive response.

GSO General Manager Bob W. applauded the efforts to meet the current challenges with innovative solutions. “I’m grateful for this thoughtful process and the collaboration of the Publishing Department, GSO staff, and AAWS board to continue to bring this essential A.A. literature to our Fellowship in a cost-effective and timely manner.”

**Available in 2023: the new jacketless Big Book**

As always, we encourage ordering the Big Book and all A.A. literature from local distribution sources—groups, districts, areas, and intergroups and central offices—as they play a vital role in local Twelfth Step activities. The new jacketless Big Book will be available in 2023 at the webstore, [www.onlineliterature.aa.org](http://www.onlineliterature.aa.org).

Stay tuned for an announcement on [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).
Since the B-1 is reprinting almost constantly, this new format represents a significant press-time savings per year. Ed also has worked diligently to place orders up to six months in advance of forecasted need, as well as make consistent paper selection so bulk orders from paper mills may be placed much more expeditiously than in the past.

“We are careful not to make changes in designs or formats of AAWS literature and other items just for the sake of change,” says David R. “We want to be thoughtful and intentional, always mindful of conserving our resources and striving to best serve our Fellowship and carry the message.”

The Big Book in a Time of War

The new jacketless cover isn’t the only example of the Big Book adapting to supply challenges. A similar situation happened during the closing days of World War II when paper was in short supply and the U.S. government placed restrictions on the size and weight of books — not good news for a book nicknamed “the Big Book.”

According to GSO Archivist Michelle Mirza [nonalcoholic]: “Bobbie B., secretary of the Alcoholic Foundation [the forerunner to the General Service Board] reached out to the War Production Board in D.C. several times, pleading for permission to continue to print more copies of the book by exceeding A.A.’s wartime allotment of five tons of paper.” Ultimately, what became the eighth printing of the Big Book, known as the “wartime edition,” featured reductions in paper weight as well as the book’s trim size, changes that kept the book in production at a critical time.

After the war, the Big Book got bigger again, but Bobbie had performed an important service to suffering alcoholics, especially those in uniform.

The Seventh Tradition in Action: The Power of Self-Support

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

— The Seventh Tradition

Seventh Tradition contributions always have been critical to sustaining and growing A.A.’s service to members and alcoholics who still suffer, while maintaining the Fellowship’s independence from outside help and influence. As the long form of Tradition Seven states: “A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous.”

“It’s important to create as much awareness as possible so that members know how the General Service Board uses Seventh Tradition contributions to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic,” says Clint M., AAWS nontrustee director and chair of the AAWS Self-Support Subcommittee, which looks at ways to communicate to the Fellowship the significance of the Seventh Tradition. While contributions are sent to the General Service Office (GSO), the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous has fiduciary oversight on how funds are used at GSO.

Coffee and so much more

A.A. members likely see the benefits for their groups of contributions put in the basket: coffee and cookies at meetings, racks of A.A. pamphlets and books, and rent paid to the meeting location. But contributions also support the important work at GSO.

“Group contributions pay for all the work that happens through GSO, through the Corrections desk, Public Information, Group Services, paying salaries, etc.,” says John W., AAWS nontrustee director who also serves on the Self-Support Subcommittee. “Contributions help fund everything.”

Paul Konigstein (nonalcoholic), AAWS chief financial officer, says that while self-support contributions reached record levels in the last three years, the pandemic-related decrease in revenue from literature sales and rising production and delivery costs made those contributions more critical than ever. “We have always depended on the revenue from our literature sales to supplement self-support income. Unfortunately, the
cost [of producing and selling literature] has increased from 40 percent of total sales to 50 percent over the last year or so.”

The importance of self-support stories
The Self-Support Subcommittee is working to increase awareness of the crucial role that Seventh Tradition contributions to the General Service Board play in funding services. They are updating the Seventh Tradition Fact Sheet, available at www.aa.org, a service piece that provides examples of the many ways member contributions help members to carry the A.A. message. The fact sheet, according to Clint, now will include “real-life examples where general service staff people have performed tasks or done work over a period of time which shows the use of those contribution dollars” in a very concrete way.

For example, Eileen A., Corrections coordinator at GSO and secretary of the Self-Support Subcommittee, says that “when a person in custody writes to the office, thanks to contributions from A.A. members throughout the United States and Canada, we are able to enclose a small sample of complimentary A.A. literature. It is wonderful to see the hand of A.A. reaching to anyone, anywhere. This has been true especially during the pandemic when correctional facilities were shut down to visitors. Often these members could not get help otherwise, and we get letters saying, ‘thank you’ every day.”

The emergence of the “digital basket”
John W., a member of the subcommittee, says we are collecting information from the Fellowship on so-called digital baskets — Seventh Tradition contributions collected by groups via apps like PayPal and Venmo. Digital baskets came into wider use during the pandemic, when many groups were meeting virtually. “The idea is to provide shared experience and guidance on what we’ve learned about this method of contributing,” he says.

To this end, the subcommittee, via GSO staff, has collected shared experience from a survey of groups that use digital baskets. Eighty-eight groups responded to the survey, including 22 who received the survey through OIAA (Online Intergroup of A.A.). Overall, respondents noted that digital contributions made the group treasurer’s job easier — they did not have to handle cash and could transfer money directly to the group’s bank account. Members reported they could stop worrying about bringing cash with them to meetings and also could set up monthly contributions. The survey found there are technical challenges involved with apps like Zelle, Venmo, and PayPal. And some groups that meet in person feel that passing an actual basket inspires group unity in a way that digital contributions do not. However, groups for the most part saw virtual baskets as a way to facilitate their ability to help carry the A.A. message to suffering alcoholics.

“Reminding people of everything we do”
Method of contributing aside, John W. points out that it was through contributions that the Fellowship was able to build up the prudent reserve it drew down on during the first year of the pandemic. “The demands that were put on the General Service Office and on the financial health of the organization were enormous,” he says. “We could have been eligible to take federal money from the Paycheck Protection Act at the time, but that was outside money, so we didn’t pursue it. Now, needing to build that reserve back up, it seems a good time to talk about how we were able to survive the pandemic really because of people putting money in the basket that goes around the room or that’s posted in an online group.”

Paul Konigstein agrees. “The best thing we can do in terms of self-support is to keep reminding members of everything we do. And rely on the service struc-
ture, the delegates, the DCMs, to get the message out there.” He emphasizes the range of activities at GSO as carried out by the staff assignments, including Group Services, Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections, International, Literature, and Regional Forums. “Everything that’s done at each level of the service structure, those activities — they all need self-support in order to carry out those activities,” Paul says. “We don’t solicit. It’s attraction rather than promotion.”

Paul thinks that digital contributions are an important factor going forward for A.A. but sees challenges. “How to uphold the Seventh Tradition and make sure that the person clicking on the Contributions button at www.aa.org is in fact a member of the Fellowship? We accept PayPal on the website because the interface with PayPal allows a member to confirm A.A. membership by checking a box before the contribution information is entered.” Paul adds that he is often asked why GSO does not accept contributions via the Venmo app. “The reason that we don’t is that Venmo does not offer an interface to which you can add a button you can click to tell us you’re an A.A. member,” he says. “So, there is no way on the Venmo app currently for someone to indicate, ‘I am an A.A. member.’”

Members sending a physical check should mail it to the new PO Box number that was introduced last year:

Post Office Box 2407
James A Farley Station
New York, NY 10116-2407

Contributions mailed to that address go directly to the bank. “If you send a check to Box 459, we have to then send it to the bank,” Paul says. “Sending a check to the new address means it will cost less to process the contribution, leaving more money to serve the Fellowship.”

To learn more about contributions and self-support, please visit www.aa.org/aa-contributions-self-support.

Meet Clint M.,
New Nontrustee Director for A.A. World Services

“Doing service has always been a part of my program,” says Clint M., a new nontrustee director for A.A. World Services. He was selected for a four-year term at the General Service Board meeting in May.

Clint, who has been sober for more than 30 years, currently lives in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, although he adds that “Winnipeg is actually still home.”

The new role has been a whirlwind of activity. “The orientation was in June and there was a fairly steep learning curve trying to get up to speed,” he says, noting the intense preparation for the subsequent board meetings in July and October.

Clint has been involved in service throughout his time in A.A. — beginning with “cleaning up after the meeting, being handed the keys to the club room, and making coffee,” he says. “One thing led to another, and then I was voted to be the intergroup rep for my homegroup.”

Since then, he has held other positions, including alternate delegate and chair for his Area, district committee member (DCM), general service representative (GSR), and chair of the Policy and Procedures Committee for the Ottawa Area Intergroup for about three years. He also reached out for help with his roles in the Fellowship.

“When I was a delegate [for Area 80, Manitoba], I got a service sponsor,” Clint says. “My service sponsor explained the application of principles in our service work and how to understand the roles and responsibilities and challenges of service work.” For instance, he explains, “before we get involved in officer roles in our area, most of us are exposed to the Twelve Concepts and how to apply them. It was helpful to have someone else who has already applied those principles to this work show me how to use them.”

Before sobriety and service, Clint says he had a “mixed professional background. I was an accountant by trade, as well as a professional pilot.” Once he was sober, his professional accountant career grew to include management work with the Canadian government for over 20 years in various roles.

“The skills that I bring forward were mostly acquired after I sobered up,” he says. “I believe I’ve always had the abilities, just not the application. Today I can use and apply my skills to the work of the Fellowship. There’s a lot happening right now, and I take great pleasure in being able to pitch in.”

Clint also serves on the subcommittee for the upcoming Fifth Edition of the Big Book, as well as the subcommittee to translate the Big Book into plain and simple language. In addition, he’s chair of the subcommittee on self-support and member of another looking at how to facilitate interaction between the Fellowship and GSO.

Along with David S., the new nontrustee director of the Grapevine (see profile in this issue), Clint has “just started a workgroup to update the pamphlet for the older alcoholic, so we are looking for stories and ways to approach that.”

Reflecting on his early days in A.A., Clint says he could not have imagined the extent of his service today. “I could do things for my home group and for my club
house when I sobered up, but I didn’t even have a clue about serving at the area level,” he says. But he remembers when the seed was planted. “The first time I went to a Forum was in Winnipeg, and it was a really neat experience,” he says. “It was my first contact with anyone from GSO and the Grapevine, and I think that sparked something that has just stayed with me throughout the years.”

David S. Joins Grapevine Board as Nontrustee Director

“The Grapevine is a fantastic innovator, and I am keen to be a part of the next innovations,” says David S., who joined the AA Grapevine board in 2022 as a new nontrustee director.

Marking 30 years of sobriety this year, David lives on a 125-acre poultry farm in New York’s Hudson Valley after a long career in publishing and media in New York City. Today, while his partner manages the farm, David runs his own consulting practice.

“I spent my 35th birthday in treatment,” David recalls. “My friends like to remind me that I went straight from Fire Island to treatment. It wasn’t until I got to treatment that I realized I was just one of many, that I was a garden-variety alcoholic. It made me sad, but I also felt a lot less alone.”

David followed the well-worn path to steady sobriety after treatment. “I went to a meeting, I got a sponsor, and I got serious about it right away, and I’ve been sober ever since,” he says. “I also ditched my old friends and got rid of all the alcohol in my house, and my friends had to be a part of my recovery. The people who I’ve seen succeed in A.A. make those hard choices.”

David’s experience with service began at his two New York City home groups. “The Ninth Avenue group was my gay home group and New But West was my working home group,” he says. “I was always good at putting away chairs, because it combined my OCD with not having to be around people.”

His first service role outside the group was as a general service representative (GSR) for the Ninth Avenue group when he was eight years sober. Before that, he says, “I was career focused, and as I got older and had more free time, the more I could do service outside the group level.”

He learned of the opening for a new nontrustee director at Grapevine at NERAASA (the Northeast Regional A.A. Service Assembly) where two current board members spoke. David recalls: “The current Area 48 delegate, Tammie E., said: ‘Put yourself out there, let go of

the results, because if you don’t put yourself out there nothing is going to happen.’”

His career focus is now paying off in his new role with Grapevine. In addition to his experience as Treasurer for Manhattan County and the literature chair for Area 48, David says, “My real appeal is my media experience launching brands across multiple platforms,” including guiding media companies from print to digital and beyond. “And I have a soft spot for small format magazines.” In addition, David holds an MBA in finance.

After witnessing tremendous change in publishing and media in the last 30 years with the growing dominance of digital content, David says that “everything in print is at risk. Magazines were the first to be impacted, but eventually the pressure will be on books as well. To be smart in the world of media today is to be in the right place in the right format.”

David hopes his experience and dedication to the Fellowship helps to advance the publication that has served as “the collective voices of A.A.”

“I am looking forward to bringing the message and the voice of the Grapevine to the Fellowship in as many ways as we can and still be able to support ourselves,” he says. “We have a lot of great content, and it will be nice to figure out how to bring that all together — the books, the website, the archive, and podcast.”

REMINDER

OUR CONTRIBUTIONS ADDRESS HAS CHANGED

We now have a separate post office box that has been established for Seventh Tradition contributions only. Please send contribution checks payable to “General Service Board” to:

Post Office Box 2407
James A Farley Station
New York, NY 10116-2407

This dedicated PO box enables us to process contributions much more efficiently and at a significant savings to the Fellowship. You also can continue to make contributions online at www.contribution.aa.org using a major credit card or PayPal.

For more information or assistance, contact our Member Services team at memberservices@aa.org or 212-870-3023.
The General Service Office is Reopened to Visitors

Visitors are welcome to the General Service Office Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Tours are scheduled at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 2 p.m., and last about 45 minutes.
On Fridays, G.S.O. hosts an open A.A. meeting at 11 a.m.
There is also a guided tour offered after the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

Schedule Your Visit to G.S.O.

Please note that in accordance with building policy, all visitors must register in advance to gain access to the building. We strongly recommend that individuals contact us prior to their visit so that we can list them into the building's security system. In addition, groups of 10 or more must contact us ahead of time to schedule their visit so that we can best prepare for their time at the General Service Office.

For more information and to schedule your visit, email gsotours@aa.org or call 212-870-3430.

COVID-19 Policy

The health and safety of visitors and staff is our top priority. During the initial period of reopening, all visitors must wear a facial covering throughout their stay. We ask that individuals refrain from visiting if they have symptoms of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 14 days, or have been in close contact with someone infected with or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 within the past 14 days.

We will continue to update this policy based on guidance from public health authorities.

Purchasing Literature

We understand that visitors may wish to purchase literature while at G.S.O. Unfortunately, under the terms of our lease agreement with the building that houses G.S.O. offices, we cannot sell merchandise or function as a bookstore. You may purchase literature from area Intergroups/ Central Offices or at our online bookstore, https://onlineliterature.aa.org.

Location Details

The General Service Office is located on 11th and 8th floors of a building called the Interchurch Center. The building's main entrance is at 61 Claremont Avenue between 119th and 120th Streets. If you are taking the subway, the nearest station is the 116th Street Station on the Number 1 train line.

Upcoming Holiday Building Closures

Please note the GSO office will be closed December 23, 26, and 30; January 16; and February 20.
Mark Your Calendars and Make Plans to Attend the 2025 A.A. International Convention

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

July 3-6, 2025

Vancouver will welcome A.A. members from around the world for the 2025 International Convention. This will mark the 90th anniversary of the beginning of our Fellowship’s founding.

Please check the convention webpage at www.aa.org/international-convention for more information, the latest news, and FAQs. As the Convention approaches, the page will be updated with registration information.

Taking place once every five years, the A.A. International Convention marks the anniversary of Bill W.’s first meeting with Dr Bob and the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935. At the Convention, members and their families and friends from around the world attend meetings, workshops, dances, and events. A highlight is the traditional flag ceremony to celebrate sobriety worldwide.

Let’s celebrate sobriety together in Vancouver in 2025!
NOTE: Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, events may be canceled or moved to online formats. Please contact the event coordinators as listed before making your plans.

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site. For any additional information, please use the event contact information provided.

January 2023

6-8 — Garden City, Kansas. 52nd Annual Southwest Kansas Conference. Write: Ch., 105 S. Main St., Ulysses, KS 67880.


27-29 — South Padre Island, Texas. Sober in the Sand. Write: Ch., 108 Madelyn Rose, Bayview, TX 78566; Info: dist27dcm@gmail.com.

27-29 — Wazahachie, TX. XXXVIII Reunion Zona Norte. Write: Ch., 3118 Dawes Dr., Dallas, TX 75211.

February


3-5 — Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Mid Winter Round Up. Write: Ch., 742 Station A, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5B4; Info: district5nwr@gmail.com.

10-12 — Kerala, India. 15th International “Convention Near the Waves”. Write: Ch., Trivandrum South 16/4/2138(2) Mahalakshmy Building, Nalamchira, N Trivandrum, Kerala, India. 695015; Info: aakovalam@gmail.com.


24-25 — Indian Rocks Beach, Florida. Steps to Sobriety. Write: Ch., 1615 1st street Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785; Info: https://www.steps2sobriety.org.

24-26 — Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 2023 Western Region AA Service Assembly (WRAASA). Write: Ch., 5 Mathias Ave., Spruce Grove, Alberta T7X 2S3; Info: https://www.wraasa.org.


March

03-05 — Houston, Texas. 60th Foro Estatal de Oficinas Integrugros del Estado de Texas. Write: Ch., 5412 Birdwood Rd., Suite “B” Houston, TX 77096; Info: www.aasoftorohouston2023.org.

03-05 — Los Angeles, California. PRAASA 2023 (Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly). Write: Ch., 710 S. Myrtle Ave., Suite #121, Monrovia, CA 91016; Info: PRAASA.ORG.

03-05 — Rochester, NY. Flower City Fellowship Convention. Write: Ch., 1000 Elmwood Ave., Rochester, NY 14620; Email: office1@rochester-ny-aa.org.


17-19 — Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pre-Conference Weekend of Area 60 Western Pennsylvania. Write: Ch., 2860 Royer Mountain Rd., Williamsburg, PA 16693; Info: altdelegate@wpaarea60.org.


24-26 — Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. 76th South Carolina State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 30189, Charleston, SC 29417; Info: chas.stateconvention@gmail.com.


April


21-23 — Manchester Village, Vermont. Area 70 Vermont 57th Annual Convention. Write: Ch., Area 70 Convention, Box 302, Arlington, VT 05250; Email: area70convention@gmail.com.

21-23 — Saint Louis, Missouri. 15th Annual Spring Fling Convention. Write: Ch., Box 22002, St. Louis, MO 63126; Info: www.springflingstl.com.

May


5-7 — Lake Jackson, Texas. 27th Annual Mouth of the Brazos Conference. Write: Ch., Box 1641, Clute, TX 77531; Email: corey.c@aa-sea.org.

19-21 — Burns Lake, British Columbia, Canada. Burns Lake Round Up. Write: Ch., 3040 Babine Lake Rd., Burns Lake, BC V0J 1E8; Email: BRROUNDUP@outlook.com.

19-21 — Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Area 57 (OK) 2023 State Conference. Write: Ch., Box 18996, Oklahoma City, OK 73154; Info: conf_chair@aaklahoma.org.