

# World Service Conference Public Information Committee Resource Paper on PI and the World Wide Web

March 1998

## *Introduction*

This resource paper is for use within area and regional service committees. While much of this material seems obvious to experienced users of the World Wide Web, many of our members do not understand what the World Wide Web is or how it functions. Hopefully this document will answer many questions those members may have concerning the World Wide Web, the ramifications for Narcotics Anonymous as a fellowship, and aid the decision of whether or not to place a "page" on the Web.

This paper will be replaced by a chapter in the next revision of the PI *Handbook*. We would like to thank all the members of NA on the Internet who helped to create this document. Much of the material in this resource paper is based on their input. If you have any questions or comments, please address them to the WSC PI committee through the WSO, or you may contact us directly.

## *What is the World Wide Web?*

The World Wide Web is a part of the Internet and is made up of "pages" or "websites" which have text, graphics, sounds and even animation. The website is much like a bulletin board in a clubhouse, but you don't have to leave your house to look at the pages. The Internet has experienced explosive growth in recent years. One part of that growth is the World Wide Web. On the Web, anyone with a computer and a modem can get almost any kind of information they want, from A to Z. Even more exciting is the fact that all of these pages are linked to other pages creating a giant web of information.

## *How do NA Websites get started?*

An area or region may assign a subcommittee, often Public Information, the task of researching the issues and being the primary point of accountability for the page. Announcing the intention to begin investigating the feasibility of a website an area or region website working group will often bring new members to the committee that have some experience with the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Web pages featuring information about Narcotics Anonymous come from various sources. Sometimes an individual will bring the idea to a service committee. The service body may discuss the value of having a presence on the World Wide Web. It is important to develop a web page that follows

established guidelines, conforms to the group conscience of the area or region, and is maintained within the context of our Traditions.

When an individual addict, or a small group of addicts take action without the benefit of the area or region's group conscience, it is important to remember that these individuals are enthusiastic about their recovery and are trying to find ways to reach the still suffering addict. Often they do not have Public Information experience and do not understand some of the issues or traditions that affect public information service. They may not even understand that a web page is a public information project. Most areas will try to find ways to bring them into the service structure by educating the individual about public information and encouraging the member to continue working on the project within a committee structure

*Should my service committee put up a web page?*

Each committee needs to analyze its own priorities with respect to Public Information. The Internet and the World Wide Web are powerful media, and can reach millions of people all over the world both inside and outside the fellowship of NA. Keep in mind however, that although computers and the Internet are very exciting and the Web is being given a lot of attention in the media, to date, there are still a relatively small percentage of people on-line. A web page should not necessarily come before a phone line, PSAs, a poster campaign or community meetings. These efforts will reach a higher percentage of people in your local community. The idea is to reach the most suffering addicts with the least amount of money. Our Eleventh Concept says, "NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly." This concept can be extended to our service efforts in general. We can't do everything, so we must choose what we can do and do it well.

*What can I put on a web page?*

The contents of a page can be varied and are really only limited by your imagination, as long as you stay within the Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. Very important, do not duplicate any copyrighted material whether it is owned by WSO or anyone else. Since we are concerned with Public Information issues, this discussion will be limited to that topic. Keep in mind that the overwhelming majority of people viewing your site will be NA fellowship members and recovery professionals. The contents of your page should be geared to help them as much as possible. A good idea for basic information. is a meeting list for your area or region, a helpline number, and a button for individuals to request additional information via email. You may consider posting NA's published presentation papers: "Facts About Narcotics Anonymous," and "Narcotics Anonymous-a

Commitment to Community Partnerships." Both are specifically to addiction care providers and are available on WSO's website. In general, keep it simple. Put the most important information at the top. Start slow and build. We suggest that you look at the World Service Office's web page at <http://www.wsoinc.com/> for some ideas.

*What can we do with links?*

We suggest that you have a link to the World Service Office website. If you choose to link your page to other NA web pages, make sure that those pages do not link to any non-NA pages. You should also make sure that any pages that you link to are officially sanctioned and supported by a service committee of Narcotics Anonymous. There are several pages on the Web today that contain recovery material, but they are personal pages and don't necessarily contain an NA message. Some also contain links to non-affiliated organizations, or even commercial pages. We must keep our sixth tradition in mind and be careful not to provide an implied endorsement of any outside enterprise.

*Do you have any guidelines for NA websites?*

Some simple guidelines are important:

1. The internet account that is attached to the page should be owned by the committee, not an individual, for the same reasons we don't recommend NA phone lines located in members' homes.
2. In line with our seventh tradition, the committee should fund all costs associated with the page. If a community access account is obtained, it should not be subsidized to any greater degree than any other non profit organization.
3. The web person should periodically check all your links to make sure that they are still active and contain NA public information that is in line with our traditions and the *PI Handbook*.
4. A notice should be placed at the beginning of the website that signifies that it is the official website of the XYZ region of Narcotics Anonymous.
5. A project such as this should not be started unless the committee is committed to continuing it. These web pages will be viewed by the public at large. It hurts NA as a whole if they pop up and disappear all the time.
6. At least two members of the committee responsible for the website should know everything about the page, how to maintain it, how to update it, etc. This helps to ensure that if one member leaves the committee, the website will continue.

*How do we let people know the URL of our website?*

You can place the URL for your website anyplace that you would list a help line phone number: on your meeting lists, posters, etc. However, most people will find your website through search engines on the Web itself. It is important to register your website with these search engines.

*Could you define some of these terms for me please?*

- Surfing - Browsing various sites on the internet or the World Wide Web.
- Search Engines - A program on the internet that searches websites and other internet resources by keyword. To find all the locations that refer to "addiction" or "recovery," simply type the keywords and start the search.
- URL - Uniform Resource Locator. This is the "address" of a web page.
- HTML - Hypertext Markup Language. This is the computer language that is used to create a web page.
- Java - Another web programming language. Java applets allow animation, sounds and instant updates of information.
- VRML - Virtual Reality Modeling Language. A tool that enables programmers to create three dimensional virtual worlds on the Web.
- ISP - Internet Service Provider. To access the World Wide Web, anyone, including your service committee will need an ISP. There is usually a fee charged by any ISP to access the internet on a monthly or hourly basis.
- FIPT - Fellowship intellectual Property Trust. This is a legal document that describes the copyrights of NA literature. All copyrights of NA literature are owned by the WSO in trust for the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.
- Web Master - The person who is the single point of accountability for maintenance of a web page. This individual is responsible to carry out the wishes of the service committee, forwarding e-mail.

- Link - A way to immediately jump from one web page to another. On a web page, a link is usually a graphic icon or bold-faced text.
- Hits - The number of times that a web page or site has been accessed.
- Counters - A feature on a web page to count the number of hits, or the number of downloads, or any other type of event.

Comments and suggestions on this resource paper are welcome.

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