

Literature Report

Prior to my trip to Florida I had been asked to explore some of the areas of confusion that had arisen in S.L.A.A. in the UK around the subject of literature, seeking clarity where possible from FWS (Fellowship Wide Services) and the BOT (Board of Trustees). For example, there had been some concern expressed at UK Intergroup around the cost of shipping on literature orders, there was a lack of clarity around the UK's request from FWS for permission to print copyrighted Conference approved literature in the UK and some questions had been raised around the use of S.L.A.A. copyrighted literature in H.O.W. I raised and researched these questions on your behalf and have outlined the facts in this report as best I can.

Literature/Shipping Costs

In order to illustrate the various costs and issues involved in this discussion, I present the following information based on a recent UK literature order.

In April 2009 the UK bought 151 copies of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text from FWS. For orders over 150 copies FWS normally charge \$10.45 per book. However, for approximately a year and a half FWS have been selling the Basic Text to the UK at a reduced rate of \$8.45 (£5.19 at current exchange rate of \$1=£0.61), \$2 less than their actual rate. I believe this price was originally negotiated down as a result of discussions between the UK Literature Secretary and the FWS office. On this order of 151 books the specially discounted rate from FWS saved the UK £302 on the actual cost of S.L.A.A. literature (at the current exchange rate).

For this same order FWS also reduced their charge to us for shipping. This was due to UK Intergroup having raised a query as to the cost of shipping from the US. I had personally been aware of some concern at various Intergroup meetings I had attended as to whether FWS or the BOT were doing all they could to help us with the shipping costs.

I spoke to Rita H, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, whilst in Florida and she referred me to her article in the *June 2009 Conference Newsletter*. She had written about a trip she made to the FWS Office in Texas in April 2009 during which she participated in the processing and packing of this particular order of 151 books:

'With 4 of us working it took about 30 minutes to pack 11 boxes of about 17lbs each (cost \$53.95 each to send to the UK-cheapest rate found)...Then we carry the 11 boxes to the car, load it, drive to the post office about 15min away, try to find a parking space close by, carry the boxes in (2 boxes at a time-40lbs) or 6 trips for 1 or 3 trips for 2. With this big a load it is best to take 2 staff so one gets in line to wait..... I share all these details as it important for us to know the time required for shipping and handling. The total bill to ship the UK order that will take 6-10 days to arrive - \$594. Staff time 2hrs at the office and another 2hr driving/waiting/processing at the post office-total 4hrs minimum; and that is if all goes well which luckily it did while I was there. I am told it is not always so easy.'

I am told that this order arrived promptly in the UK. Delivery of the order to the UK cost FWS \$654 (including time for handling and labour from FWS staff). However, they charged this out to the UK at only \$500, which works out at £2.02 per book at the current exchange rate. This reduction saved the UK \$154 or £95 in shipping costs.

In total, with the special discounted rate on books and the under-charging on shipping, FWS saved the UK £397 on this single literature order. The actual cost to us for each copy of the Basic Text in this order, including shipping, was £7.21 at the current exchange rate.

I believe it's worth noting here that new copies of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text on the UK Amazon website are priced at £11.50. Standard delivery per book is £2.75. Total cost per book including delivery is £14.25. This works out at £7.04 more per book than we have been paying when we buy direct from our Fellowship Wide Services in bulk (over 150 books).

To bring this subject up to date I have been informed that FWS are now no longer able to offer us this special discount, not least because their wholesale printing costs have recently risen by around 20%. Despite this extra cost to them they have taken a decision not to raise the cost of the Basic Text but to absorb the extra costs and reduce their profit margin instead. They will be continuing to sell the Basic Text at their actual rate of \$10.45 for any orders of over 150 books.

Therefore, if we were to replicate the April 2009 order of 151 books at the current rate of \$10.45 per book it would cost us \$1,577.95 or £965.95 at the current exchange rate. If we were also to pay the actual shipping costs (as they were then) of \$654 or £363.69 at the current exchange rate, the total cost of the order would be \$2,231.95 or £1,366.49 at the current exchange rate. With these new figures the cost per book for the UK works out at £9.05 including shipping at the current exchange rate. This still saves us £5.20 on the cost of the same book from Amazon.

Copyright Approval for UK Printing

I am aware that there was some communication between the UK and FWS earlier this year in an attempt to establish an agreement whereby the UK could have the Basic Text printed locally. In some European countries permission has been granted for the translated version of the Basic Text (Germany for example) to be printed locally.

I learned that the Chair of the BOT had hired a lawyer to commence discussions as to the viability of granting copyright permission to the UK. Costs for these legal meetings were paid for by FWS in their willingness to assist us as best they could in this process.

The BOT gave this matter top priority at one of their regular Board meetings in March 2009. Due to various legal complications surrounding the copyright status of S.L.A.A. literature a proposal was put forward at that meeting as follows. FWS proposed that they could arrange for the delivery of literature templates to a printer sourced by UK Intergroup. Due to the copyright constraints FWS would then pay for the printing of this literature on the UK's behalf. The UK would arrange for the storage and distribution of this literature at their own cost. As and when required, orders for that literature would be placed by the UK to the FWS Office at a price to be negotiated in further discussions.

As further debate was required at this time in order to move this project forward, nothing was agreed or finalised. In fact discussions came to a halt with the last recorded conversation between the UK and FWS/BOT taking place at the end of April 2009. I am unclear as to why this dialogue didn't progress but it seems that the matter did not get discussed further at UK Intergroup and so no feedback was returned to the US.

Some of the questions that might have arisen for discussion at Intergroup around this proposal are as follows:

- FWS pointed out in their initial proposal that it would cost much more to print literature in the UK than in the US due to the vast differences in wholesale quantities. At that time the Basic Text was costing FWS around \$1.90 per book for 10,000 copies. Based on initial quotes obtained by FWS on our behalf for 500 copies, costs for printing the Basic Text here in the UK could cost them up to \$7 per book.

- Storage, distribution and labour costs (i.e. postage and packaging) added to the high cost of printing here in the UK could potentially increase the costs of literature way beyond what we are currently paying.

In researching the subject of copyright in 12 Step Fellowships for this section of my report I discovered the following facts of AA's history. Originally the AA Big Book was shipped from the US where its copyright lay. Eventually as AA grew in the UK, permission was granted for the UK to print the Big Book here. However, Bill W attached a condition to this agreement. He stipulated that if the US were to relinquish their copyright on the Big Book then all profits made from the sale of this literature would need to be kept to one side in a so-called 'Development Fund'. The monies in this fund were to be used for *one thing only* - carrying the message of recovery from the disease of alcoholism to areas where there was little or no knowledge of AA.

I am also aware that, due to the various issues involved in changing the status quo around literature, and with no Group Conscience discussion emanating from the UK on any of the above concerns, FWS have left the current literature arrangement as it stands.

HOW literature copyright breach

A point of concern arose recently on the subject of S.L.A.A. copyrighted literature being reprinted in the UK without permission from FWS. Prior to my trip to Florida I had received an email from Leon C, the Chair of the Conference Literature Committee, regarding questions at Conference level around H.O.W. produced literature.

On arrival at the ABM I approached Leon in order to discuss this matter further with him. To my knowledge the issue is one of copyright. H.O.W. literature reproduces large sections of copyrighted Conference approved S.L.A.A. literature and has been doing so for some years without permission or approval from FWS. The reproduction and distribution of any copyrighted literature without permission is essentially an illegal act. With great sensitivity Leon C explained to me that whilst FWS were not about to confront and pursue us legally on this matter, we might wish to examine our present use of S.L.A.A. copyrighted literature and consider taking a different course.

It seems clear to me that there needs to be some thoughtful discussion on this issue regarding how we might resolve it within the principles of our Fellowship. Here are the questions as I see them:

- Do we request that the H.O.W. meetings remove those sections from the H.O.W. Beginners' Kit that are S.L.A.A. copyrighted material?
- As the kit is almost entirely constructed from S.L.A.A. copyrighted material i.e. large sections of the Basic Text and various Conference approved pamphlets, removing this literature would effectively make the kit redundant. Does this matter if the original literature these sections were taken from are now more readily available for sale at meetings?
- Do we have a financial amend to make around this? Can we concede that S.L.A.A. UK has illegally profited from the reprinting and selling of copyrighted literature?
- Do we revise the H.O.W. literature in accordance with this information and submit it to Conference for approval?

I suggest that UK Intergroup might wish to set some time aside to carefully consider this information, firstly to consider the responsibilities of S.L.A.A. UK as a whole (as opposed to the H.O.W. groups) in this point of concern, and secondly to discuss the most appropriate way for the UK to resolve the matter with FWS.

FWS profit from sale of literature

I am aware that a question arose at UK Intergroup about FWS making a profit from the sale of Conference approved literature. I gather that there had been some confusion from the UK as to why FWS would be making a profit at all. I have conducted some research on this question and would like to present the following quote from Bill W., co-founder of AA, which may further inform this discussion:

'Some of us have another concern, and this is related to the so-called book 'profits'. The fact that AA Headquarters and most of the groups sell books for more than they cost is thought to be spiritually bad. But is this sort of noncommercial book income really a profit after all? In my view, it is not. This net income to the groups and to AA's General Services is actually the sum of a great many contributions which the book buyers make to the general welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. The certain and continuous solvency of our world services rests squarely upon these Contributions.'

In my understanding of guidelines around financial matters, as informed by Tradition 7, the key point is that the Fellowship must remain self-supporting. I would propose that one of the ways in which FWS can achieve and maintain a position of self-support is through the sale of Conference-approved literature. At Conference this year during the Financial Presentation, the Chair of the Board Finance and Operating Committee (BFOC), Richard C, and the General Manager of FWS, Linda Hamilton, cited that contributions from all sources (i.e. groups, Intergroups, members) represent 45% of the corporation's income while literature and related sales (i.e. chips, CD's) represent 55% of the revenue.

I would also point out that the UK Literature Committee puts a mark-up on the Basic Text to cover its own expenses and to remain self-supporting.

In the AA Guidelines on Finance there is another quote from Bill W which reads:

'...these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion – to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to recognition on our part that AA must everywhere function in full strength – and that, under our Tradition of self-support, we are all going to foot the bill'.

With this in mind I would suggest that we in the UK might actually have a *duty* to assist FWS in making a profit from sales of their copyrighted literature. My recent experience at the Annual Business Meeting and Conference of S.L.A.A. in Florida showed me that the level of service being undertaken and achieved worldwide through the FWS office, the 17 active Conference Committees and the Board of Trustees is impressive. It seems to me that if we are honest and open-minded about our own processes, and willing to learn, there is a lot we might learn from the work that is being done there.

The service I observed in all areas of outreach such as overseas translation, prison outreach, public information and the creation of new resources and literature left me feeling deeply humbled and full of gratitude. It seems to me the perfect example of how profit from the sale of literature is being put to good use in carrying the message of recovery far and wide to the sex and love addict who is still suffering.

Lara F
UK Delegate S.L.A.A
2nd September 2009