Hand-out

Technology As Service

*"The measure of technology value in AA
is its support of 12 Step progress"*

- **What service challenges do you have with Technology that is currently in use?**
- **What service needs do you believe Technology could provide solutions for?**
- **Do you believe a National AA Technology Workshop conference could help?**

Round Table Chair – Brouck
Note taker – Blaine

Friday March 1 2013 7:30PM - Begin

Brouck Introduction:
What caused the idea to do a Tech round table?
How do we change the discussion about technology in AA?
We have discovered a lot, and people have figured out that we must have technology discussions match our spiritual principles, traditions, and concepts. We hope to start a series of discussions.
- introduces Blaine -
We formed an eTech team for AAWS (3 members). We were involved with stabilizing the AA app for the Big Book (eReader), and are available ongoing.
- continues -
Getting the word back to the fellowship in terms that we can understand is the goal.
We don't have a central authority in AA, and it is difficult to have tech discussions at a conference and think that the message will get back to the AA members as a whole.

- question to room -
How many people work in technology (5 or so hands)? How many use technology in service work? (20 or so hands). How many people want to know what this is all about ☺? (nearly every hand)

Differentiates from and mentions the the Webmaster round table (following night round table):
We have noticed that the discussion in this arena has been changing… e.g. "If you are an Intergroup, you must have a website", etc.

Announcement:
praasa2013@box-e459.org -- will automatically add addresses to a discussion list – Content TBD

Loosely captured attendees (more came in after this capture):
DCM and eServices Chair, DCM, DCM, Member, DCM, Chair special needs, Lit Chair for Central Office, DCM / CPC panel chair at Area, Alt DCM, DCM, Area Chair, Alt DCMC, DCMC, Intergroup Chair, Treatment standing chair, District Special Needs Chair, District Registrar, Area PI, DCMC, Area Webservant, Member (prior Area Webmaster), DCM, DCM, DCM, GSR / District Archives Chair, DCM, Newsletter editor and Alt Web "person"-slash-Secretary, Area A/V Committee Chair, Alt GSR, Central Office Mgr and member of board of dir at large for the C/O, Communications Chair / Intergroup Webmaster, Sound guy for Area, Panel 63 communications chair and Webservant, DCM,

Area Literature Chair, Group Treasurer, Panel 63 Area Website Committee Chair, past Area secretary and currently a meeting opener, past website guy on several committees
Topics (3):

• **What service challenges do you have with Technology that is currently in use?**
1. We have more eyeballs looking at the problem than GSO - lots of stock in what comes from these
2. I perceive a gap and not enough sympathy from the GSO board and conference w/ the struggle to get our books online like Kindle – an easy process, etc. The app we are currently using is not good and we are way behind the curve… and we have pressure.
3. the main way that I use tech as Lit Chair is by using AA.org. I find the website poorly designed and awful to use. Mostly, it only works with an older version of Netscape to submit orders for literature online. Our latest Area computers don't have the right stuff, etc.
4. we have the challenge of rotating technologists for website at our district and how that gets passed on. There is a language barrier "keeping it simple" w/o speaking "Greek". Challenges with guidelines for anonymity… links, etc. We can link, but not post the guidelines on our website, etc. It sounds like a good idea to have a Technology Gathering, but would it be able to be brought back and spoken to the common person, etc.
5. situation at my district where our previous web chair left his position, and it was a while before we had a new one. The new person was not given the instructions from the prior chair. This is a problem. People ask why we are paying money for this website, so why do we have it. Do we really need it (comes up in conversations). This is kind of like when the Treasurer runs off with money. We had no way of accessing the website to even shut it down.
6. at our Area, we have challenges where our Webmaster isn't even in our Area. He lives in another state. How do you attract a new Webmaster? There is no scope or guidelines… this is all new territory. How do we address these challenges? AND how do you pass it on? There is no workbook, etc.
7. has GSO ever considered making a set of guidelines for technology

[Brouck] They would not want to publish guidelines w/o a voluminous amount of input.   And if they got this, there is nobody at GSO to read all that information. A Tech Workshop could help with something like this in theory. The eTech team is also working on the 12 Statements of IT.

8. Is there a bunch of people working on tech at GSO?

re: no, there are people working on apps and some things but they are very lean

9. I fear that AA is going to be so slow in getting this setup for us to get to eBooks that we going to lose out on all kinds of economy.

[Brouck] we recognize that you cannot take 2.5 years to put out eBooks in a market that outdates technology in 18 months. This is pretty well understood today.

10. back to the other question… There is a guideline on INTERNET that is available.
11. there is a wonderful book out -- The Group Handbook – copy of guidelines in there. A page in there for suggested topics for meetings.
12. touch on the analogy of the Treasurer running off with the money. One example was person who had control of the webpage for a convention and hijacked the page content. It is important to take into consideration to have more than one person to have access to the technology.

13. service challenges – I've sent e-mails to the special needs desk at GSO and never heard back. E-mail is extremely useful and almost critical, especially in Areas like mine with so many square miles. Running into a problem with people who want to be of service. We have people that have shared phones (in a group home for instance) or people who don't have computers or internet access for e-mails.

[Brouck] How do you make technology work across a spectrum of communications methods?

14. one of the services challenges I have – it has been a battle of playing catch-up. The challenge is that things are in constant change. What is good today [changes tomorrow]. This is a challenge. There isn't a great enough source available to harness everything into one format. Webmail at my Area is difficult. They are constantly updating things, but using it is a challenge for me. We have six different e-mail accounts, and all these passwords, etc. Keep things simple.
15. the future of AA is people younger than us. They will grow up and have technology. Look at the kids today. If GSO doesn't have the manpower to keep up with technology, it is going to be hard for us to be "with it". GSO doesn't have the money to take care of it. They need more people. How are we going to get more people in GSO to step up and do it.

[Brouck] our GSO is producing technologies with the amount of people we have allowed them, and they are doing the things we have asked them to produce. Some people would like them to produce more, but we the fellowship have not produced advisory actions, etc. GSO is hesitant to do this w/o it coming from the Areas.

16. We are asking GSO to do stuff for us, but we have fund that. Are we going to turn around in the fellowship and say here go do it… and then fund it.
17. off subject, but a problem I see. We have four districts on our peninsula… three have there own website. It is very rural. They don't do technology very well (old hippies, etc.) Each district has there own rules. Some say that things are "outside issues", so they won't list flyers. Would like to see content continuity across web sites. We have an Area Webmaster and a Chair and they are planning to hold quarterlies, so maybe it will get better.
18. NAATW (or international wkshp). Maybe develop best practices guidelines just like a lot of AAs pamphlets. Another thing that could be helpful… lots of skillful people around… create a forum where knowledgeable members can answer question that come into the forum. For the people that don't have access to the technology, best practices, even updated once per year could help. This has come up and gone over and over again for 20 years.
19. as the eServices chair, I have all the login information as does the webmaster. We are developing best practices to stay current across rotations. Another question: why do we seem to think that we as AA need to figure out the technology? As we have our discussions, we talk about the bigger spiritual ideas. Do we have to figure out how to build apps, etc, when there are amazing people out there that we can hire to do these things.
20. it seems like technology is changing on a daily basis… obsolete two days later, etc. How do we stay current w/ Technology and still keep the integrity of our General Service Process. We cannot wait 5 years for some of these decisions. The majority of us are over 30, 40, ~50, and if I can't figure something out on my phone, I call my children. We need to tap into our young people. They know how to do this as a second nature. I went to young people to ask them during preconference, and they said they just want to feel needed.

[Blaine] 1st tech statement of the 12 is above [reads quote from handout]… good aligning statement

21. our group's website is the best. Young people in a group I was in with backpacks and backwards hats… and the say "dude" a lot. I asked them how many of them found AA through technological devices. Like 85% of them raised their hands. I can imagine in 15 or 20 years time, the delegates will get an iPad w/ everything they need and they will vote on it at the General Service Conf. For me to sit and gripe about technology is really use pioneering those conversations.

- **What service needs do you believe Technology could provide solutions for?**

22. I would like to see where groups can make donations online at GSO
    [crowd corrects that you can already do this]
    Can't there be icons online telling us about handicap meetings, etc. Districts to post meeting minutes and blogs online. AA.org to have a live chat on the website.
23. I would like to see where groups can make contributions online at GSO
24. Would like to talk about Dropbox or some sort of cloud storage. In our Area, we have committee meetings where the delegate gives CDs of the background material on one CD each to the DCMs. On Dropbox, we could e-mail everyone a link at once.
25. we do that, too, in our area
26. we are trying to switch our e-mails at our Area over to Gmail-based products to use shared drive. I know a speaker meeting that records the speaker and shares the recording on Dropbox. A forum to share this experience would be very valuable.
27. These are really broad subjects. For me, it is the flow of information. I really like what the Grapevine has done with the quote of the day. Box 459 is seasonal, etc. Grapevine will send me an e-mail saying "Young and Sober" just came out. The technology I use is by passing along information. It took me a long time to find out how to get on the 459 list and others like it.

[Brouck] last comment… "I just want to get the information and I want to get it to the other people than need it, too". It is not recognized that this is an issue… or it is not prioritized per se.

28. why are these "best kept secrets" this way?
29. I came to this because I am like the least tech-oriented guy in the world. I am thinking of QR codes that you scan. I see them while I'm wandering around a store, etc. Our guy for the district has put on our meeting schedule and the newsletter, etc. I think QR codes might be a cheap easy way to keep things updated.
30. it sounds like technology isn't a high priority at GSO. Is there something as a fellowship that we can do?
31. I was previous registrar… tremendous difficulty getting people registered in a timely manner. I understand that the database used to do this is not normalized. I see that they have a legacy systems issue. We need a floor action to allow GSO to be empowered to have them look at what they need so we could approve it. The problem is that they are reluctant to act, and they NEED to act. Whoever is responsible at GSO needs to be empowered so we don't bounce around on this.
32. maybe an idea would be to form a special service committee that has the power and autonomy to address these issues and develop these questions from AA. This committee could consolidate the best and most relevant ones in a timely manner. Our area had some key issues around Facebook, etc. It took forever to get answers from the fellowship. Rather than having a guideline or pamphlet… a special service committee that can o this quickly and stay relevant.
33. this last comment is somewhat like the Grapevine editorial staff

34. I agree about empowering GSO to make changes, but on the other hand, didn't they make the decision to kill the Android app w/o consulting us? Are the empowered or are they not?

[Brouck] gave background on eTech advice to put Android on hold for a time. GSO ultimately decided not to finish it due to cost

[Blaine] the communications slowness up and down the service structure is highlighted here

35. it isn't becoming clear how a more in depth technology study in AA is going to happen. I think we need a subcommittee to do an in depth look at technology. I think we need a vision of how to get started.

[Blaine] we are a sharing culture – we share experience -- 5 years ago there were very few webmasters… now there's a lot. The eTech team's mini-vision is to go to all of the Regional Forums to help stimulate this sharing and assist in passing it around a bit quicker, so that we can do what we already do so well.

36. step back to topic on Grapevine's ability to do this and not others. On the Daily reflections issues. If it came out in e-mail, I probably wouldn't look at my paper print version very often anymore.
37. I see us going in two different directions… One is to hire technology people to do the work and the other is to integrate technology into their product line and it failed. The website and technology is in addition to what we do. What we do is face to face, etc. But when I want information, I go online. We are becoming a technology organization, especially with young people. How do we reach out to young people in AA… technology is the way to go, because they will go there first. Online ordering is second nature now… eBooks are second nature… this stuff is mainstream and we are not there.
38. isn't AA a publishing company.?

[Brouck] comments on AAWS as a book publisher in NYC. We are a very unique publisher.

39. I was told a few hours ago that we stopped after the Apple app is because we don't want to become a company who creates apps. If the conference agenda is approved, we'll have it on all the readers.
40. I don't think that people really appreciate some of the tools (like the ask it basket). If ten people wrote questions in the basket, I think people will answer those questions.
41. I've been on committees that excel and others that are not good at it (young people are better). Technology doesn't get its own roundtable. We just need to apply spiritual principles. I would like GSO to petition the fellowship on how we apply spiritual principles to tech issues.

- **Do you believe a National AA Technology Workshop conference could help?**

42. Two tracks… the people that use it and the people that provide it
    [Consumers of Technology AND the Implementors of Technology]
    I could certainly see our communications chair attending that every year.
43. Impulse is to say that I love the idea, but… How much would it cost? What would get accomplished? $1000 is too much… How about a virtual meeting instead of a conference at an Area level? But a conference… it would be fun, but I'm not sure it would translate.
44. the connection of people. That's what we have here at PRAASA, too. The Archives workshop is like that too, even though people serve at different levels… all coming together in one room.

45. conference / workshop concept and building on technologist… and others said about being users. We could do this as an online conference. Having the users and the techs in the room together to connect. Doing the conference electronically, the only issue is time zones.
46. in our area, the Archivist goes to the NAAW… funds permitting.
47. online forums concept… people who are into technology usually end up on online forums on the Internet to read any number of topics and contact people who have made those posts. It is self-teaching on your own time, etc. The model already exists.
48. no need to create a separate conference. We have any number of regional events that technology could be an adjunct to. Forums, etc. can be used to gain consensus on things quickly and consolidate information… grassroots feedback, post it online, etc.
49. e-mail exchange went around recently about a discussion group online. The moments between all the technical exchanges, in the hallway something amazing happens. I really love the idea of having a national conference. I think trying to stick it adjunct to other forums, we don't give it the time and weight it deserves.
50. even if it happened for a year or two and then died on the vine, it would be worth it. E-mail, schedule databases, area, intergroup, etc. I think an entire weekend could be used to discuss all these things.

9:30PM – End