and 30 members, and the mailing list and group listkeeper become attractive options at that point. (Also, some email software limits the number of cc: recipients).

Getting Registered

A big step comes when the group is well established, and decides to be recognized as a member by the Online Intergroup of AA. This is the only point at present where an online group can be "identified." OIAA was created by online groups, and provides a free webpage directory of online meetings of all kinds. Listing on that directory may provide the group with a source of new members from anywhere in cyberspace, which is anywhere in the world.

Group Size

Some groups have grown to more than 600 members, while others like to stay small and break off into new groups when they have 30 or 40 online members.
A group which becomes a member of the Online Intergroup of AA provides a representative to that list who takes part in the service business of all of online AA. This provides a rich background in AA service as it is practiced on the internet all over the world.

Getting Organized

Some online groups add service positions as they seem needed ---

A **listkeeper** to keep the addresses current, an **Intergroup representative (IGR)** for its OIAA membership, a **secretary** to keep order in the meetings and take care of whatever new problems the group may encounter, a **treasurer** to handle Seventh Tradition funds, and so on. It is entirely up to the group to organize and manage itself as it sees fit, but there is much experienced advice from other online groups available through the Online Intergroup. You never have to be alone in cyberspace with Online AA.

Practicing the Twelve Traditions in Cyberspace

Experience has shown us that groups which use the Twelve Traditions have the best chance of maintaining unity and ensuring their ability to be there for the sick and suffering alcoholic who reaches out for help. Groups stick to our single purpose - recovery from alcoholism, protect the anonymity of their members, avoid affiliation with or endorsements of outside enterprises and are self-supporting.
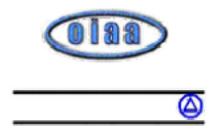
Further Information

Further information is available from the OIAA Web Site at:

www.aa-intergroup.org

or from:

mailto: help@aa-intergroup.org

Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Getting Started in Online AA

Getting Started in Online AA:

- *History of AA in Cyberspace*
- *Computers and Lists*
- *Email and Realtime Meetings*
- *Organizing for Service in the Group (Role of online secretaries,*
- *Listkeepers, IGRs, etc.)*
- *Tips on Getting Started*
- *Resources*

Introduction

Alcoholics Anonymous meets on the internet now. As soon as people began to talk to one another using computers and "bulletin boards," AA members began to band together in the interests of sobriety in the AA Fellowship.

A Little History

The first AA meetings online used Bulletin Boards and were around 1986. Email groups started forming in the early nineties and the development of the worldwide internet rapidly fuelled the growth and variety of groups. The first online AA group, Lamp-lighters, was formed in 1990, and has met by email continuously since then. By the turn of the millennium, there were well over 150 online AA groups with more than 6,000 members and an Online Intergroup of AA, most using email, but some using real-time chat or web page technologies to communicate the experience, strength and hope of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous.

What is an AA Group?

Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Getting Started

The mechanics of starting an online AA group are not difficult. All it takes is two or more members with connections to the internet and ability to communicate. Sometimes one posts a topic and others add their experience and thoughts. To make things easier, most groups begin with email software which permits copies to multiple addresses. Then one message can arrive at everyone's computer "mailbox" from a single post. No matter what time of day each member reads or posts, the message remains in his mailbox until the recipient picks it up, so after there are a few members, the meeting appears to be continuous.

After a period of time, if the list of copy (cc:) recipients gets too large or there are too many new addresses to keep up with, the group may begin to use commercial mailing list software, either as part of a sponsored list (which means all members receive advertising), or as part of a paid list (which means there must be contributions to pay the "rent"). There are several sources for each type of mailing list, and there are groups which use each type.

Open/Closed ?

Recently a need has been found for the establishment of some open meetings. At this time guidelines have yet to be considered for such cyber-groups. Such meetings would need to be inclusive of email and real-time.

Some Service Positions

Besides the traditional service positions of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer there is a new post in AA service in the online group. It is a "listkeeper," a person who administers the list of members and often must work with the technical aspects of whatever technology the group uses to enable meetings among the membership.

This takes some time, and is very valuable to the growing group. Usually, the group goes through some "growing pains" as they discover that the cc: list gets confused as new members are added and older members change Internet Service Providers (and addresses). While using cc: lists, the group's cohesiveness depends upon each member carefully keeping up with all changes to the list, so that all members get all the shared posts. It gets to be a chore usually between 10