Sangha Publications Network Protocols

Publications protocols for sangha members living in Elders' Council monasteries

The Sangha Publications Network (SPN) is a group of senior samanas delegated by the European Elders' Council (EC) to consider and oversee standards for publications produced by sangha members living and training in EC monasteries. This is a list of the currently agreed protocols those sangha members are asked to follow. Two further documents will be distributed: an introduction to the "why" of the protocols with some background for sangha members, and one providing guidance for abbots and Elders asked to make decisions.

SPN members: Ajahn Tiradhammo, Ajahn Sucitto, Ajahn Munindo, Ajahn Amaro, Ajahn Candasiri, Ajahn Jayanto, Ajahn Abhinando, Ajahn Ahimsako, Ajahn Gavesako

SPN consultants: Ajahn Jinavamso, Ven. Moneyyo, Sr. Tisara, Ven. Gambhiro

General permission for any publication:

1. Under ten vassas: seek and obtain the endorsement of the abbot or senior nun of the community in which you reside and follow their guidance on how to proceed (which should be according to these protocols).

2. Over ten vassas: consult with the abbot/senior nun of the community in which you reside and follow all SPN protocols.

3. First seek permission from an EC monastery publications body ('publisher') and ask them what support is available:

    • Amaravati Publications for those who normally live at Amaravati or Cittaviveka.

    • Aruno Publications for those who normally live at Aruna Ratanagiri.

    • Another EC monastery's publishing arm.

4. Over ten vassas: if your monastery's publisher rejects your project, you can approach another EC monastery publisher.

5. Over ten vassas: if you then wish to approach a different, non-EC monastery publisher, including print, websites, or apps (in which case these protocols and any other SPN guidelines should likewise be respected) obtain the endorsement of two SPN members.

6. Exceptions: Exceptions to publications protocols can be requested on behalf of a sangha member by the abbot/senior nun of a Branch or an Associated Monastery, from an SPN member. Exceptions involving commercial publications require consensus approval from the SPN, who will inform the Elders' Council Meeting (ECM) to be minuted.

Checking:

Step 1 (checking content) – find competent lay readers to check:

7. Over 10,000 words: obtain feedback from at least four competent lay people who have read the entire work and reviewed it with regards to readability and general usefulness, and flagged anything that seems potentially questionable.

8. Under 10,000 words: obtain feedback from at least one competent lay person as above.

Step 2 (checking content) – check with a sangha Elder:

9. Over 5,000 words: requires checking by one Elder of the SPN, who is to check any queries that the lay reader/s brought up, and also read enough of the publication to feel confident that it meets our standards. This approval concerns:

   a) the validity of the expression of Dhamma,

   b) that the work does not defame the Triple Gem (or any person),

   c) does not excessively promote any individual,

   d) that it does not break confidentiality.

10. Under 5,000 words: can be passed by any Elder conversant with publications protocols.

11. After content has been checked and approved by an Elder as described above, the name of that Elder should be retained for reference.

Step 3 (copy editing):

12. Content should be in keeping with the guidelines provided within the *Sangha Words* manual and its extracted Style Guide, for work published by all EC publishers, including monastery websites.

13. Follow the editorial requirements of the publisher publishing the work:

   a) Usually a competent editor approved by the publisher should edit the work (using *Sangha Words* and its Style Guide).

   b) The work should be proofread, usually by several proofreaders if the work is substantial and of more than passing interest, using the Style Guide.

   c) If publishing on a website, follow the editorial practices of that 'publisher'.

14. The name of any editor/s who contributed to the work should be retained for reference.

Digital publications

E-books & PDFs:

15. Follow all SPN protocols.

16. Forest Sangha Publications may produce an electronic version of a work for publication on forestsangha.org. This requires that the work be further endorsed by an abbot of a WPP Branch Monastery (not an Associated Monastery) who certifies that SPN protocols have been adhered to (including any necessary approval by an SPN Elder).

Websites (includes apps):

17. **Monastery websites:**

    a) Should follow SPN protocols.

    b) The abbot is responsible for seeing that SPN protocols are followed on that monastery's websites.

18. **Website updates (news, calendar entries, page text, etc.):** Receive permission from the abbot to publish on that monastery's website.

19. **Web articles:** Follow all SPN protocols.

20. **Personal websites, blogs:**

    a) Follow all SPN protocols.

    b) In general blogs should not be created by those under ten vassas.

    c) The creation of a blog or website requires endorsement of the abbot of the monastery where the sangha member resides.

    d) That abbot is responsible for communicating the necessity to follow these protocols, and referring the site creator to an SPN member if questions remain.

    e) If not living in a monastery then check with an SPN member.

    f) Sangha members should inform a community they move into if they currently publish on the Web, and should follow the new community's Internet use standards.

21. **Social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Tumbler, Google Plus, etc.):** Use of social networking sites is highly discouraged, and not allowed for sangha members in most monasteries, with few exceptions. Follow the policy in the monastery where one resides, as per the ECM agreement from April 2010, where all members of our community should be required to consult the sangha in which they are resident before signing up to or using any social networking site. Each community has clearly articulated policies on the use of the Internet, and Facebook and social networking sites in particular. New members should inform their community if they are on a social networking site.

Images (also see Design):

22. **Clarify copyright:** Before using photos or artwork in publications including websites, effort should be made to obtain permission from the copyright holder (usually the photographer).

23. Do not assume you have permission to use images of sangha members.

24. **Images of Ajahn Chah:** Any publication of Luang Por Chah's image must be approved by the Elder/s responsible for this in the area where the publication is being produced:

    For Europe: Ajahn Sucitto, Ajahn Munindo, Ajahn Amaro, Ajahn Vajiro (approval from two members of this group is required).

    (For Thailand: Ajahn Kevali; **N. America:** Ajahn Pasanno; **Australasia:** Ajahn Kalyano.**)**

Video:

25. Use of video as a medium for Dhamma presentation is generally discouraged.

26. For anyone outside the sangha wishing to make a video they would publish featuring the sangha, the abbot can decide after appropriate consultation with their community.

27. Making a video available for distribution by physical or digital means, including non-sangha websites, requires the approval of two SPN members.

28. Posting a video on a monastery website requires approval by the abbot.

29. When used on the Web, hosting a video on a sangha website server is preferable to using a commercial video hosting service; though of these, Vimeo or a less cluttered, more private service than YouTube is better.

Audio:

30. For anyone outside the sangha wishing to create audio they wish to publish featuring the sangha, the abbot can decide after appropriate consultation with their community.

31. Making audio available for distribution by physical or digital means requires the endorsement of an Elder.

32. Posting audio on a website needs approval by the abbot.

Design:

33. Follow the design principles outlined in *Sangha Words*.

34. The design (typesetting, font choice, layout, cover, etc.) of a work is considered important by the SPN. The publisher is responsible for the design of any work it publishes.

35. Design principles for sangha publications include communicating a feeling of peace, modesty, spaciousness, care, consideration and respect for the Dhamma and for the reader.

36. Images of the Buddha or teachers should be portrayed reverentially rather than as an aesthetic design element. They should not be covered by text.

37. Images of the author of a work should not appear on the front cover. A small image accompanying a brief bio on the inside pages or back of a book can be appropriate.

Copyright:

38. All copyright issues must be confirmed as thoroughly checked: this includes text, images, and any other media.

39. There should be a copyright notice on all printed works, e-books, and PDFs. Websites should make copyright of their content clear.

40. In order to preserve the ability of the sangha or author to freely distribute the work and prevent its misuse, the copyright notice should be one that either:

   a) Retains all rights to the work for the sangha publisher or sangha author (not for an outside publisher), or

   b) One that carefully gives permission to freely distribute the work without allowing for commercial use. This is tricky because simple wording such as 'permission for free distribution only is hereby granted' leaves open the possibility for other publishers to insert ads or otherwise make commercial use of a work which they are freely distributing. Therefore the currently agreed copyright notice to use in this case is the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (see: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

41. Any necessary permission must be obtained from the relevant publisher(s) to make use of quotations in other works. In general, as we are producing material for free distribution, commercial publishers will be happy to grant permission as it publicizes their work. As a standard, a small quote (less than 270 words) does not need permission. Free distribution networks will generally not expect to have to grant permission, but in all cases the specific copyright allowances must be followed, and publishing details should be cited.

Commercial publications

As a general rule, sangha publications are for free distribution only and commercial publications and contracts are not to be undertaken by sangha members, especially for publications with Dhamma content. If for any reason an exception is sought, a proposal – before the work is initiated – must follow the SPN process outlined here:

1. Speak to an SPN member about the proposal and obtain their support.

2. Write up the proposal, giving consideration to the Factors to Consider outlined below and describing why the proposed publication should be considered for approval as an exception to the rule not to publish commercially. Also include the following information:

   a) Who the publisher would be.

   b) Who would have copyright to the work.

   c) Whether there would be a written contract.

   d) What the details of the contract would be.

   e) Whether or not the sangha would be able to freely distribute the work in all formats, physical and electronic.

   f) If not, what the restrictions would be.

   g) Whether the publication would be sold for profit or at cost.

   h) Where the money from the work's sale would go.

   i) Whether audio or any other rights would be included.

3. If initial approval for the proposed publication is obtained by consensus from the SPN, follow any further steps the SPN asks for, with a view to obtaining their final approval.

4. The SPN then presents the proposal to the ECM for approval.

5. Follow all SPN protocols (including checking and approval of text, etc.).

Factors to Consider (when proposing a commercial publications project):

- The principle of not selling Dhamma for profit.

- The faith of laypeople who support the sangha. There are many supporters who are inspired by the sangha's upholding of free distribution-only Dhamma distribution, who can become disappointed and may lose some faith when this principle is compromised.

- Wat Pah Pong norms and expectations, e.g. the ethos of free distribution of Dhamma material and their trust in the Western sangha to make decisions accordingly.

- Restricting availability. Commercial publishers usually require the relinquishment of distribution rights over the works they publish. This can mean that fewer people are able to receive the work if the sangha is not able to make it freely available, especially in digital formats.

- Causing problems for the sangha in the future. When distribution rights have been relinquished, unforeseen problems can arise later on, with the work unavailable for compilations or reprints, or translation rights and other decisions out of the sangha's hands when the need arises.

Interviews/media (also see Video & Audio):

Procedure to follow for sangha members living in ECM monasteries who wish to give an interview to be published in commercial media (such as a newspaper or documentary):

• Over ten vassas: Obtain approval from the abbot of the monastery where one resides; if traveling, from an SPN member. Abbots should consult with their communities.

• Five to ten vassas: Obtain approval from the abbot of the monastery where one resides as well as from an SPN member.

• Under five vassas: Media interviews should not be given.

• Documentaries involving the whole community could include any sangha resident at the invitation of the abbot/senior nun.

Periodicals, etc.

Procedure to follow for sangha members living in ECM monasteries who wish to submit an article or chapter to a commercial publication (such as a periodical or edited compilation):

• Over ten vassas: Obtain support of an SPN member.

- Five to ten vassas: Obtain approval from the abbot of the monastery where one resides as well as from an SPN member.

- Under five vassas: Works should not be submitted.

- The nature of the publication in which a sangha member's work is to be included should be considered and deemed suitable by the SPN member.

- Follow all SPN protocols (including checking and approval of text, etc.).

Definitions:

A work: A piece of writing, images (including video), or audio.

Commercial publication: Any work, in print or digital format, which is either a) sold for a profit; or b) published by a non-sangha publisher who would have the right to require payment in return for distributing the work (whether or not for profit).

Publish: To prepare and issue written work, images, or audio for distribution to the general public.

Publisher: A person or entity (e.g. a company, a monastery, a sangha body such as Amaravati Publications, etc.) that prepares and issues a work for distribution to the general public.

Sangha Publisher: A sangha member, monastery, or sangha publications body who prepares and issues a work for distribution to the general public.

Non-sangha Publisher: Any person or entity that is not a sangha publisher, who prepares and issues a work for distribution to the general public.

Copyright: the legal right, held by the creator or person/entity to whom they assign, to publish or otherwise make available a work.

Sangha Publications Network (SPN): The body delegated by the Elders' Council (EC) to decide upon publications matters for sangha members living in EC monasteries.

Some Distinctions:

- Work commercially published in a collection or periodical, including interviews, is seen as distinct from work commercially published on its own. There are separate SPN protocols for each case (see above).

- Note that the copyright holder and publisher of a work may or may not be the same.

- Making available to the public a facility to sponsor the cost of printing of any number of copies of a work (for personal use or free distribution), whether by offset printing or print-on-demand (POD), is considered distinct from commercial publishing.