

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
February Meeting via Conference Call
February 29, 2008**

Topic: Request for Board Action: Teens’ Top Ten Merge with CBC

Background: In September 2007, the Children’s Book Council (CBC) contacted the YALSA Office with a request to join the Teens’ Top Ten with a new “Teens’ Choice Book Award” the CBC plans to launch. The Board considered the idea at their 2008 Midwinter Meeting and concluded that they needed additional information from the CBC before making a decision. The CBC wrote a proposal, which is provided below.

Action Required: Action

Proposal from the CBC:

An Opportunity to Help Lay the Groundwork for the Teen’s Choice Book Awards

Children’s Book Week 2008

Children’s Book Week, a weeklong celebration of the written word, introduces young people to new authors and ideas in schools, libraries, homes, and bookstores. Through Children’s Book Week (CBW), the Children’s Book Council and the CBC Foundation encourage young people and their caregivers to discover the complexity of the world beyond their own experience through books. Children’s Book Week (CBW) was established in 1919 to promote literacy and children’s books. *It is the oldest national literacy event in the United States.*

The CBW promotional poster has been created by Mary Grand Pré, illustrator of the Harry Potter books. The poster will be unveiled at an event sponsored by Commerce Bank. The Mary Grand Pré poster will be available at no charge to booksellers, libraries, and schools from the Children’s Book Council. Scholastic Book Fairs will be distributing many of the posters.

The Women’s National Basketball Association has agreed to celebrate CBW at WBNA venues across the country. Author readings at pre-game receptions will be an exciting new program introduced during Children’s Book Week 2008. In addition, we are exploring the possibility of giving books away to children at games during that week, inviting children’s authors to participate during half time and holding children’s sports author signings at the NBA store.

Children’s Choice Book Awards 2008

This year’s CBW celebration will be held from May 12 to May 18 – *the first time the event has been held in spring.* To add to the celebration of reading and writing during CBW, the Children’s Book Council (CBC) is launching The Children’s Choice Book Awards, the only national child-chosen book awards program for CBW 2008.

Each year, in association with the International Reading Association, the CBC produces the Children’s Choices booklist, a collection of 99 books chosen by children as their favorites of the year. Five teams of readers across the country, totaling 10,000 school children, receive over 600 books to choose among. Their votes decide the final list, which is comprised of 33 titles in each of three age categories: kindergarten to second grade, third and fourth grade, and fifth and sixth grade.

From this list, the CBC will extract a short list of the five books in each age group that received the highest number of votes. This short list will then be promoted to children across the country to allow them to pick their favorite book of the year. Voting will be available online and through paper balloting.

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Millions of children nationwide will vote on the Children's Choice Book Awards. Voting will occur online at www.bookweekonline.com. Kids will vote anonymously as individuals. However, teachers, librarians, and booksellers will also have the option of collecting paper ballots and submitting their kids' votes as one collection of numbers. This will be done online, but the adult in charge will be required to submit their name, organization, and other contact information.

Children's Choice shortlist titles will be announced to the industry on February 16. In-store promotions can begin as early as March 1 (though April is more likely) and end on May 18. Barnes & Noble will create displays of all the finalists during the voting period and will host voting events. We have indications that other large retailers, as well as independent booksellers will be doing the same. We are in discussion with Scholastic, Inc., which is exploring ways to promote the finalists at Scholastic Book Fairs.

We have retained the publicity firm, Goodman International Media, in recognition of the fact that the success and broad reach of the project will depend to a large extent on the manner in which it is promoted. Our publicist is already assisting us in promoting the awards program to publishers as well as to booksellers and librarians who will be encouraged to make certain they have the books in contention in stock and, finally, to children, their parents and their teachers, to let them know that this is their opportunity to speak up and let publishers know what kinds of books they like to read.

The awards will be announced on May 13. The Today Show's **Al Roker** will be the first recipient of the Children's Book Week Impact Award at the CBW gala, for his services to children's literature. Robin Williams and Julie Andrews have also agreed to participate in the event.

We are working with Jerry Davis, a television producer who, among other projects, was part of the production team for the Tony Awards, on possible TV coverage of Children's Choice Awards Ceremony. He is currently pitching network executives.

Teen Choice Book Awards component for 2009

In future years, the CBC will add a Young Adult component to the awards program, which would be the Teen's Choice Book Awards. Like the Children's Choice program, it is vitally important that this short list be created by the teens themselves. The YALSA Teens' Top Ten list is a great fit for this new award. If this collaboration were to go forward, YALSA would handle all details in creating the shortlist. The CBC could help promote the program by asking it's members and those nonmember publishers who regularly submit to the Children's Choices Program to send books to YALSA (or designated locations) for the program. This could easily be done as part of our submissions process for our other lists. This solicitation will go out in April 2008.

The books on the short list of the Teen's Choice Book Awards must be published in calendar year 2008 to be considered for the awards to be presented in May 2009.

The CBC must have the list by early-February 2009.

Once the short list has been chosen through the YALSA's Teen's Top Ten List, the CBC would be responsible for maintaining the voting process and presenting the final award.

As a the source of the short list for the Teen Choice portion of the Children's Choice Book Awards program, YALSA would be promoted on the CBC website, in promotional copy relating to the awards program, in the CBW gala printed programs, and during the Children's Choice Book Awards presentation in May 2009.

We look forward to discussing working together with YALSA on this exciting project. As mentioned earlier, we need to begin requesting submissions for this program in April. In order to give us time to create an alternative, we need a definitive answer from YALSA by the end of February.

Additional Information:

According to Association Forum (an association for associations that provides resources and professional development for association leaders), there are 10 reasons not to enter into a strategic alliance:

1. The alliance does not add value to your organization
2. Your partner is not willing to enter into some form of a contract
3. You or your partner is not prepared to do what needs to be done to ensure a successful outcome such as careful planning, reorganization, re-engineering
4. Your organizational cultures are so different that you can not seem to come together
5. Your by-laws prohibit it, or your membership will not support it
6. The due diligence process turns up an issue, such as:
 - a. A conflict of interest is identified
 - b. The combined cash flows of the new organization will not support required programming
 - c. The alliance will significantly impact your financial health
 - d. your organization will have to assume liabilities you are not prepared to handle

Recommendation from the Executive Director:

Based on my conversations with Michelle Bayuk, Marketing Manager for the CBC, and Robin Adelson, Executive Director of the CBC, I recommend to the Board that YALSA not enter into an alliance with the CBC regarding the Teens’ Top Ten and the Teen’s Choice Award. Based on the list of ten reasons above, I have concerns about the following:

- #1 no added value: neither the Marketing Manager nor the Executive Director were able to articulate to me the benefits to YALSA that this alliance would bring. It seemed that their interest in YALSA is because our organization already has a system in place for delivering ARCs to teens and receiving feedback from them. Having YALSA continue this work, but using it as an easy way to facilitate their own award seemed to be their primary interest in YALSA.
- #3 partner not prepared: neither the Marketing Manager nor the Executive Director were open to requests or suggestions from YALSA. The proposal given above appeared to be non-negotiable. Additionally, it is unclear what extra responsibilities YALSA staff would have to take on, and at this time existing staff do not have the time or resources to take on a significant new project.
- #4 different organizational cultures: the CBC is a professional trade organization made up of publishers whose primary goal is to sell more books, while YALSA is a volunteer member organization made up of library workers whose main goal is to ensure that the young people in their community have access to excellent library services and resources to support their personal and work lives.
- #6a: conflict of interest: there is a possible conflict of interest in regards to what ARCs are made available to the teens. The CBC is not inclusive of all publishers. While the CBC says that other publishers will be welcome to submit ARCs for consideration, it is unclear if the separate process will actually be equal.