

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Annual Conference, Las Vegas
June 27 – July 1, 2014**

Topic: Updating the Social Media Policy

Background: With increasing attention given to books on social media, YALSA may wish to adopt a new policy regarding online behaviors to continue to assure the confidentiality of its award committees as well as freedom from conflicts of interest, or perceived conflicts of interest. In June the YALSA Board, via its space in ALA Connect, discussed the recommendation and voted to approve it. Including the item as a part of this meeting simply ensures it will be entered into the official record of the association.

Action Required: Consent

YALSA members are enthusiastic users of social media, and utilize the medium to great effectiveness to promote YALSA's resources, advocacy messages, and activities. One large social media activity is the promotion of YALSA's book and media awards. With increasing numbers of authors, illustrators, publishers, and readers looking online for information about new and notable materials, both YALSA sources and individual member accounts can be identified as sources for reading recommendations. As online activities become increasingly connected to personal and professional identity, it is important for YALSA to maintain strict confidentiality and avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest to maintain the integrity of the awards.

YALSA's current social media policy states "Award committee appointees must not discuss books on social media that are eligible for their award in any way that could lead to a conflict or lack of confidentiality in regards to their committee," and members have admirably followed those guidelines. However, the ease at which statements can be removed from context and rapidly shared among a vast audience makes it imperative that YALSA refine existing guidelines that will ensure YALSA standards are maintained and members have a memorable award committee experience.

The new policy would take effect February 1, 2015. The President-Elect will incorporate the revised policy into the chair and committee trainings that take place once the fall committee appointments have occurred. There is also a brief FAQ to provide information to members in advance of their term.

Recommendations

1. YALSA modify the existing social media policy to state “Award committee appointees must not discuss books on social media that are eligible for their award in any way that could lead to a conflict or lack of confidentiality in regards to their committee. This includes posting personal reviews in spaces such as Goodreads, blogs, or other platforms that are not closed YALSA forums.”
2. YALSA adopt a review policy related to award committee service that states “Award committee members may not publish reviews of titles that are eligible for their particular award during their term of service in professional journals (print and/or electronic) or other professional and personal outlets.” Since YALSA committee rosters are often public information, published reviews attributed to specific committee members can be misconstrued or taken out of context and disseminated.

Requested Board Action

The YALSA Board approve the recommendations to modify the social media policy, and direct the executive director to work with the President-Elect to incorporate the revised social media policy into the award committee chair and member trainings for members whose term starts February 1, 2015.

Timeline

June 2014	YALSA Board accepts the recommendations proposed and updates the social media policy
July 2014 - August 2014	President Elect and task-force recruit members for appointments
September 2014 - October 2014	President Elect and task-force finalize appointments
November 2014	President Elect and Executive Director prepare for chair and committee member trainings incorporating revised social media policy with other YALSA resources for chairs and committee members
December 2014	President Elect and Executive Director conduct chair and committee member trainings which include information on the revised social media policy among other YALSA resources for chairs and committee members

Additional Resources

Frequently Asked Questions about the

YALSA Social Media Policy – blogging and review revision

Why has this policy changed?

YALSA members have served with the highest level of honesty and integrity on award and selection committees. This change works to ensure there can be no question as to the integrity of the awards and the committee members, and holds the process above reproach or suspicion.

This change also prevents outside third parties, who may not know committee members or their professional qualifications, from raising questions of ethics or impartiality of the award committee's decision.

What does this mean for reviewers?

Members serving on an award committee may not publish reviews of titles that are eligible for their committee award during their term of service in professional journals (print and/or electronic) or other professional and personal outlets. This is because committee affiliation is public information, and any published reviews attributed to specific committee members may undermine the confidentiality of discussions, or the impartiality of a committee member. Any outstanding reviews must be completed, submitted, and published before the committee's term of service begins.

Does this mean I may not blog or tweet?

Committee members may not blog or otherwise communicate electronically (outside of the internal committee work process) regarding any aspect of eligible titles during their committee term. Once their term is complete, committee members may not discuss the status of books as having been or not been under consideration, suggested, and/or nominated for the award or anything else discussed during the closed committee meetings.

How can I obtain a variety of critical opinions about books under consideration throughout the year without violating confidentiality guidelines?

Committee members are welcome to speak with others regarding eligible books, to benefit from conversations that provide diverse perspectives on titles. During verbal, in-person discussions, such as “mock” award discussions, committee members are encouraged to:

- Share public information about the award process and the terms & criteria of the awards, as this information publicly available in the committee manuals at www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists, and provides education and publicity regarding YALSA's award lists.

- Remember that your comments, especially negative comments, will be remembered more readily than positive comments, so be sure to practice active listening and ask open-ended questions when participating in any discussion.
- Be careful to not publicly dismiss a book.
- Outline, or frame, the discussion carefully. This helps avoid comparing eligible titles against each other.
- Be careful to identify your personal opinion and clarify that you are not speaking on behalf of the committee or as a committee member. Using “I” instead of “we” can help avoid misidentification.