

**Fall Executive Committee Meeting
October 25 – 26, 2015, Chicago**

Topic: Student Member Engagement

Background: The Chair of the Student Member Engagement Taskforce, Mary Anne Nichols, has provided an update as to the work of the taskforce as well as some questions for the Executive Committee.

Action Required: Discussion

Charge:

We will work with YALSA staff to:

- 1) Inventory YALSA's online presence to identify content of specific interest to LIS students and promote this content via the student listserv, YALSA E-news, and other communication channels. Determine missing content and make recommendations for creating it;
- 2) Identify what LIS students learn in library school and where the gaps are that YALSA might address;
- 3) Compile a list of resume building resources, sample resumes, resume writing tips, FAQs, job search tips, etc. and post on YALSA's wiki;
- 4) Recommend additional special programming or resources YALSA might provide for LIS students by evaluating existing and conducting new surveys as needed to determine student needs;
- 5) Determine what additional ways beyond the mentoring program that YALSA can provide access to leadership development and experienced members.

Term and makeup of the committee:

September 2013-June 30, 2015

The task force is made up of 2 LIS faculty from ALA accredited schools; two members who started this task force as LIS students, but have recently graduated; and a recent graduate. We originally also had a sixth member who was a former board member and current librarian, but she had to resign for personal reasons. She has not been replaced.

Progress of task force:

We began our work by discussing the characteristics of current students. The task force defines student engagement as any type of interaction with the organization and how that interaction makes them want to become involved and maintain membership. We talked about communications to them and the overload of information they receive. We came to the conclusion that they like to work virtually and hence social media would be a good way to reach them. We had to remain focused on engagement as some of our conversations addressed recruitment, which is a different topic altogether. We first held meetings on ALA Connect using the chat function. Documents were uploaded. Discussion during chats was good, but getting the task force motivated to respond and react at other times was slow. Google docs were used for

group work to compile resources. Recently Google Hangouts has been used to chat in order to see each other so task force engagement seems to have improved since the move.

Work completed in response to Task #1:

- Inventory of YALSA website, journals, and communication channels maintained on spreadsheets
- Inventory of ALA website, journals, and communication channels maintained on spreadsheets
- Compiled information and sites that would be of interest to YALSA student members. Identified what information was hard to find (barriers to access). We also identified why student members would need information and how they would use it.
- Began Twitter campaign to share some of the information we found. Task force members' private Twitter accounts were used identifying @yalsa with the hashtag #yalsahiddengems4lis
- Many of the task force members joined the YALSA student member listserv and have posted some information. Traffic is slow (really nonexistent) and when we have posted we don't get a response.
- Posted to various YALSA listservs (including student one) an announcement about the wiki update
- Request for board action to add student member page to website. The resources and sites from the inventory allowed the task force to see what information could be targeted to students. A draft of this request for board action was sent to our Board liaison for review but she has not replied.

Work completed in response to Task #3

- Researched new resources on finding and applying for jobs, writing a resume, interview questions for teen librarians, job search tips.
- Researched information for FAQs and general job searching
- Formatted resources for uniformity
- Wrote copy to include FAQs and job search tips
- Updated and added this information to job resources wiki - http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/Job_Postings_%26_Resources

Work completed in response to Task #2 (and #4 and #5)

The task force has discussed approaches to this task several times. It considered looking at young adult course syllabi from ALA accredited schools. This is a daunting task that might not reveal what is needed. Syllabi typically only have general information and learning outcomes so it can be difficult to determine actual content of classes. A LIS youth services faculty survey has been suggested. However, a member of the group suggested that faculty might not cooperate to a large extent for fear that YALSA is undercutting the goals of LIS. It is doubtful that LIS faculty would admit to gaps given that their goal is graduate teen librarians ready for the profession. In addition, one of the task force members published a recent research study of what faculty teaches and how they teach in relation to youth services. The results were published in 2013 in *JELIS* and in 2014 in *Children and Libraries*. Completing a similar survey did not seem wise given this

information. In addition, the task force is unclear as to the purpose of identifying the gaps from the LIS faculty point of view. While YALSA can perhaps fill some of the gaps, it does not guarantee that student members identify with those gaps as needs. Lastly, there is no guarantee that providing the content to fill the gaps would lead to students becoming engaged in YALSA. The focus of the group turned to researching student needs, including how they prefer to receive information, what they expect out of their membership, what they feel their professional development needs, what they feel unprepared for etc. The topics raised in tasks #4 and #5 (mentoring, leadership, and programming) for the task force could also be addressed as information is compiled.

YALSA just completed a member survey, so it was felt that the survey technique can be overused. Given the popularity of social media, a Twitter Chat was planned for September, 2014. It was hoped to have a series of these but the first was to really begin a conversation with LIS students. Research on student member engagement also suggests encouraging members to converse via social media. This Twitter Chat was not successful. After this failed attempt, Beth Yoke shared some information on how to best plan and implement a Twitter chat so the possibility of a series of Twitter Chats remains.

Future work in response to all tasks:

- Blog post highlighting the work of the task force and also to mention the job resources wiki. This in itself can raise awareness that YALSA is trying to engage student members.
- We are considering the content of the Futures report in determining what skills they will need to meet the future. Our thought was to conduct the series of twitter chats to reveal this by asking students. YALSA can then design member services around those needs.

Recommendations to improve student engagement:

- The Student Member Engagement task force has discussed and researched successful methods of student member engagement. YALSA rates fairly well as far as best practices, especially in the realm of social media. The research also suggested the following:
 - Communication should be personalized to sub-segments of memberships.
 - Members should contribute articles to newsletters and publications.
 - Members should feel welcomed and feel a part of the community.
 - Member activities and contributions are recognized.
 - Allowance of interaction with higher levels of leadership.
 - Provide a well-managed career center

The ideas below address some of the suggestions found in the research and are recommendations:

1. Better cooperation with LIS faculty who can identify student members for committee work, scholarship applications, and submissions for publications. Also make sure that LIS faculty is aware of YALSA research agenda.
2. Student centered webinars that are free of charge
3. Student section on current website
4. Better cooperation with state library organizations and their student members

5. Conduct focus groups of LIS students at ALA Annual and the YALSA Literature Symposium to determine needs and wants, how they use YALSA
6. Student member spotlight in YALSA blog or e-News
7. Student member posts on blogs talking about what they are learning or researching in LIS or question they want to ask of Board or membership.
8. Targeted emails to student members
9. Specialized information sheet provided with membership materials when they join
10. Discussion forums for conversation or online community
11. Advertise YALSA to student groups at LIS schools.
12. YALSA student chapters at LIS schools – could be virtual communities in various regions
13. Meet and greets at Annual or YA Literature Symposium with board members or volunteers

Request of the Executive Committee:

The task force appreciates the Executive committee reviewing our progress. There is still nine months of our term remaining and the task force members are dedicated to this task. Given the remaining tasks and the discussion surrounding them, the task force respectfully asks for the establishment of priorities and guidance for the remainder of the work.

What is the best approach for the task force to address task #2 of determining gaps in LIS and YALSA?

How will the answer to this improve student engagement? This perhaps seems the most confusing part to the task force members. Does YALSA have an idea of the characteristics of a typical student member? (age, etc.). Given the demographic, we are wondering what way of communicating with them is best.

The task force would like to receive the information from the member survey, especially if the questions asked if the person taking the survey was an LIS student. Results can be segmented so the aggregate responses from student members can be reviewed. It might be that more recommendations can be made after reading that data.

We appreciate any advice and direction the Executive Committee can provide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Anne Nichols

Chair, Student Member Task Force