

YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Dallas  
January 20 – 24, 2012

**Topic:** Environmental Scan: E-books

**Background:** The e-content landscape is one that is rapidly growing and changing with issues of collection development, formats, circulation, budgets, policies, legal issues, and access at the forefront of topics that librarians who serve teens need to consider. Because of the volatile environment that currently surrounds e-content, librarians are not sure where to turn. YALSA members and the association are perfectly positioned to support their colleagues in their understanding of e-content by keeping up with current trends and seeking out flexible ways in which the association's member groups, publications, and staff can support others in the field. The YALSA Board may want to consider forming a member group that advises and collaborates with YALSA staff, other member groups, and the library community about the various issues surrounding successful integration of e-content into library services for teens.

**Action Required:** Discussion

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## Overview

While there are books and articles on the topic such as *No Shelf Required I* (Sue Polanka, ALA Editions, 2010) and “Now is the Time: Ebooks and Libraries” (Linda W. Braun, *YALS*, Summer 2011), these tend to go out of date quickly and don't always address teen needs specifically, and as a result teen services librarians are not sure where to turn.

The following is a synopsis of some of the areas in which librarians serving teens are facing uncertainty related to e-content and library services.

## Collection Development

Developing an e-content collection is similar in some ways to developing a print collection, but there are also significant differences. Like print books, e-books are not only fiction but also nonfiction, textbooks, comics and other graphical formats, and magazines. Similarly, the definition of “books” is changing as a result of technological development, and both fiction- and nonfiction-focused apps are now available and can serve the purpose that print books once did.

There are fewer sources for critical reviews of e-books, enhanced e-books, and e-reading apps, and in some libraries, the person responsible for selecting and ordering e-content may not be the person who selects or orders print materials for teens. Thus the level of input in e-content selection from teens--or even teen services librarians--may be very different from that in the

selection of print materials. There are few resources and guidelines for weeding a collection of e-books or e-reading apps, so weeding may happen less often due to the lack of physical constraints on the collection, opening up the possibility of outdated collections.

## **Access**

Issues of access affect both what librarians can provide and what teens can read. Related to collection development, the extent to which different publishers have made e-books available ranges greatly: some offer full access to both new and backlist titles while others offer backlist titles only. Others still offer libraries a different list of e-books for lending than they make available through online retailers. Some offer different titles to different libraries. The levels of DRM vary from publisher to publisher and vendor to vendor as well. Patrons, too, may face access issues: some teens have e-reading devices of their own (be they dedicated e-readers, mobile phones, or simply Internet-connected computers), whereas other teens depend on their libraries for the devices that let them access e-content.

## **Technology**

Because librarians serving teens do not always have easy access to the technology used for reading on devices, they find it challenging to understand teen needs and interests in this area, evaluate e-content, and provide advice and support on reading in this environment. Some libraries:

- Have implemented an "e-book petting zoo" so that staff and users can try out e-reading devices.
- Purchase and lend devices so that staff and users can try them out for themselves.
- Provide training where staff members receive hands-on time to learn how to use Kindles, iPads, Nooks, and other devices.

Library schools are just beginning to integrate components into the curriculum where students in youth programs are required to use e-reading devices in order to understand the implications for teen library services.

## **Member Needs**

Recent posts to YALSA's mailing lists (see references below) indicate that members are often unsure of how to handle e-content at their libraries. They may be made responsible for ordering e-books without having read an e-book before and are seeking advice about review sources; evaluation criteria; how teens are using e-content; whether or not to provide devices; how e-readers are used in schools; and questions of access, compatibility, and licensing.

Other organizations and ALA groups are beginning to look at aspects of digital content and libraries.

- ALA has formed an e-content digital working group whose charge includes advising ALA on opportunities and issues related to e-content in libraries and exploring options for expanding digital content in libraries.
- ALSC is looking at how to integrate e-books into their awards selection process.

- *School Library Journal* is anticipating the creation of an e-books guide.
- *Library Journal* and *School Library Journal* sponsor a yearly web-based conference on the topic of e-content.

Along with the work of the groups mentioned above, resources do exist for guidance in integrating e-content into the library, such as the comprehensive guide *No Shelf Required*, publications and resources produced during the LJ/SLJ Ebook Summit, a YALSA webinar on e-readers in libraries, and various scattered blog posts and journal articles.

However, the quickly changing landscape of e-content means these resources go out of date rapidly, and librarians working with teens are left having to continually seek out new information that meets their and their teens' needs. Furthermore, there is not yet a focus from one or more groups on supporting the understanding and integration of e-content of those who work with teens.

### **Proposed Next Step**

Because there is no one area in which librarians serving teens require support when it comes to e-content, the YALSA Board should direct the President to appoint a task force whose charge will be to monitor trends in e-content, including apps and enhanced e-books. The task force will take a big picture view regarding the e-content landscape, with the following projects within their scope of responsibility:

- Develop a set of tip sheets on a variety of topics related to teens and e-content in libraries.
  - These downloadable tip sheets will be brief and will cover topics such as collection development, programming, evaluation, policies, and so on. The tip sheets could be packaged as single entities or grouped together based on theme and content. Because these documents will be compact, they will be easy for task force members to update as information and best practices change. The task force will monitor blogs, listservs, Twitter, and journals covering areas including--but not limited to--libraries, technology, and education in order to determine the topics to be covered in these tip sheets and to identify tip sheets that need to be updated, added, or weeded.
- Work with the YALSAblog Manager and Advisory Board to create a schedule of posts that will summarize recent e-content news for readers of the blog.
  - These posts would be similar in format and style to the YALSAblog Research Update that is now a monthly feature. One or more task force members will be responsible for writing the monthly posts for the duration of the life of the task force. As task force members will be charged with keeping up on e-content topics, they will be best suited to the writing of these posts.
- Work with The Hub Manager and Advisory Board to create a schedule of reviews and commentary of new titles in app, enhanced-e, and/or e-book exclusive formats to be published on The Hub.

- Task force members will write the first four months of reviews, and then the Hub Manager and Advisory Board can identify bloggers to continue the reviews.
- Work with YALSA’s Program Officer for Continuing Education and the association’s Continuing Education Advisory Board to suggest topics for webinars and conference sessions about e-content and to identify presenters for these programs.
- Work with YALSA’s Web Services Manager to market materials produced by the task force.

While awards and selected list committees have a variety of questions about how e-content fits into their work, this task force will not be charged with evaluating and making recommendations related to these member groups. The purpose of this task force is to focus on how to support members’ work with e-content and not how e-content is integrated into YALSA initiatives such as awards and lists.

Each year the value of the task force will be evaluated by the YALSA Board and, based on the assessment, the group will be renewed for another year or sunsetted if it is determined that e-content has been integrated into library services for teens and members no longer need special support in this area.

#### References: Listserv Conversations

1. Circulating e-readers  
<http://lists.ala.org/sympa/arc/ya-yaac/2011-05/msg00258.html> (23 May 2011)
2. Statistics related to publishing of e-books and traditional print books  
<http://lists.ala.org/sympa/arc/yalsa-bk/2011-08/msg00963.html> (28 August 2011)
3. E-books and e-readers in a school setting  
<http://lists.ala.org/sympa/arc/yalsa-bk/2011-04/msg01024.html> (27 April 2011)
4. Finding reviews of e-books  
<http://lists.ala.org/sympa/arc/yalsa-bk/2011-11/msg00255.html> (10 November 2011)

#### More Resources

- **Ebooks on Fire: Controversies Surrounding Ebooks in Libraries**  
<http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/dec11/Hamaker.shtml>  
An article by Charles Hamaker in the December 2011 issue of *Searcher* that highlights some of the challenges librarians face integrating e-books into library collections and services.
- **Library Journal/School Library Journal E-book Summit**  
<http://www.thedigitalshift.com/events/e-book-summit/>  
An annual web-based conference on e-content and libraries.
- **No Shelf Required**  
<http://www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired/>  
A blog by Sue Polanka that is a companion to her 2010 book of the same title on e-book

topics.

- **Now is the Time: E-books and Libraries**  
An overview over the world of e-books in teen services by Linda W. Braun in the Summer 2011 issue of YALS.
- **Reading Unbound: E-Readers and Your Library**  
<http://tinyurl.com/readingunbound>  
A YALSA webinar presented in July 2011 by Wendy Steadman Stephens that presents ways for librarians to provide access to e-content and addresses technical and logistical support for teen e-reading.
- **Survey of State Libraries Finds that 39% of US Libraries Lag Behind in Providing Ebooks**  
[http://www.cosla.org/documents/Press\\_Release\\_on\\_Downloadable\\_Media\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.cosla.org/documents/Press_Release_on_Downloadable_Media_Survey.pdf)  
A November 2011 press release from COSLA outlining the results of their survey on e-books in libraries.