

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

Topic: Awards & Selected List Evaluation Taskforce Final Report

Background: At the 2011 Midwinter Meeting the Board voted to establish a taskforce that would evaluate the changes made in 2010 to the BBYA, Alex and Nonfiction list and awards. The overall goals of the evaluation effort are to 1) as best as possible given the newness of the resources, determine how useful the new BFYA list, expanded Alex list and Nonfiction award nominees are as collection development and readers' advisory tools; and 2) decide if the BFYA committee is structured in the best possible way to ensure a high quality product. The taskforce has provided a final report below.

Action Required: Discussion

December 18, 2011

To: Members of the YALSA Board of Directors

From: Pam Spencer Holley, Chair, Selected List & Awards Changes Evaluation Taskforce, [Members: Alicia Blowers, Diane Colson, Shari Fesko, Shannon Peterson, Teri Snethen and Jason Wells]

Subject: Report of Task Force Committee

Committee Jury or Task Force Function Statement: Create a set of evaluation tools then use them to measure the overall success and impact of the following changes: 1) narrowing the BBYA list to fiction; 2) increasing the number of recommended adult titles through publication of the official nominees from the Alex Award Committee and 3) establishment of the Nonfiction Award and publication of its list of official nominees. The evaluation will include feedback from current and previous members of the BFYA, Alex and Nonfiction Committees, an analysis of the appropriate 2010 and 2011 lists and awards (BBYA, BFYA, Alex, Nonfiction) as well as feedback from the library community about the degree to which these resources are effective readers' advisory and collection development tools. The taskforce chair will submit quarterly updates and a final report which discusses findings.

Procedure -

1. Task force members divided into three subgroups with Diane and Pam covering Alex, Teri and Shari BFYA and Alicia and Shannon Nonfiction. Jason critiqued survey questions from a publisher perspective.

2. An initial survey of past members of the three list/award committees was conducted.
3. The three lists were analyzed.
4. A final survey open to all users of the three lists was conducted.

Analysis of Three Years of Lists -

1. Alex
 - a. 24 fiction and 6 nonfiction titles [majority of nonfiction were memoirs]
 - b. Of the fiction, 25% were historical; horror and realistic fiction were 17% each; and fantasy and mystery at 13% each.
2. BFYA
 - a. The lists trended older and edgy
 - b. About 50% were realistic, 15% historical and 18% fantasy with remainder comprised of horror, paranormal, dystopian, sci-fi, etc.
 - c. Very little for lower end of age range
3. Nonfiction
 - a. 2010 list weighted toward middle school and tween readers and consists primarily of biographical titles. List seems balanced in appeal to both male and female readers
 - b. 2011 list includes diverse assortment of titles [biography, civil rights, spies] and wide age and gender range

Results from Committee Member Survey:

1. The majority of respondents agreed that interacting with peers who are passionate about teens and reading was a benefit of serving on any of these committees. There was also agreement that their ability to discuss and select books for teens was enhanced by their experience.
2. Reader's advisory, booktalking, displays and book clubs seem to be the primary ways in which these lists are used. Nonfiction had the highest usage for curriculum support.
3. Respondents felt that reading load was what they expected.
4. There was consensus that BBYA and BFYA were two different animals and one was not better than the other. They are just different and members need to get used to the changes. Members were also satisfied with this being a YA lit only list as Alex does a fine job of honoring adult books with appeal to this age group.

Results of all surveys can be found at the following websites:

BFYA: http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=gtEqH4_2fksC_2fVLsbSc5dvS0xkN_gosPUZh2eEJcNYRqRM_3d

Alex: http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=8G8BI4BTQsOLY4CSzHdbEpAy8m_2fRhUQtrHPVdHnAChY_3d

Nonfiction: http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=NK_2bcyDOQSKAGxEVwqEwzH95TtPnn_2b37NI_2bDSoB8_2fKnQ_3d

Recommendations based on the Results of the Surveys

Alex

1. Keep the Alex Award selections to ten award-winners and a list of vetted nominations.
2. Continue to find new ways to publicize the Alex Award, possibly by targeting selectors of adult materials. Survey participants indicated that ordering books for the adult collection is not within their realm of responsibility, and that ordering second copies for the teen collection is costly.
3. Promote suggested uses for the Alex Award winners, such as summer reading lists, café book clubs, or teen book reviews.

BFYA

1. The length of the list should be determined by the votes of the committee members and not by a predetermined number. In the same vein, there should be no attempt to “balance” the list by genre, age group or gender.
2. There was satisfaction with Alex and Excellence in Nonfiction as selectors of adult and nonfiction titles.
3. Suggestion that there be an equal number of first year and veteran members on the BFYA committee so mentoring can occur.

Nonfiction

1. There is an obvious need for an increased number of high quality nonfiction titles to serve teen readers.
 - a. Create procedures which clarify the nomination process in hopes of creating a broader, more robust vetted list which committee members would feel comfortable using.
 - b. Annually highlight nonfiction titles found in various award and selection lists, such as titles from Alex, Great Graphic Novels, Quick Picks, Popular Paperbacks, etc. to be used as a collection development and reader’s advisory tool in libraries.
 - c. A selection list similar to BFYA could also be created to highlight only non-fiction with teen appeal.
2. Continue heavy marketing in order to spread awareness of the award, to create buzz on the early released shortlist, to solidify the existing timeframe [to publishers], and to promote the reception.

Comment from the Chair of the TF

At the moment I don't know whether there will be a formal request from the 2012 Nonfiction Chair or not, but having served on this committee while the evaluation was going on, I'm taking the prerogative of sharing a stumbling block we encountered this year – the vetted list. We all love the idea of a vetted list, but there's a world of difference between nominating a book for the Excellence in Nonfiction Award and nominating a title for consideration for the vetted list. One thought that was mentioned was having a two-tier system with a title first suggested, which makes it eligible to be nominated for the award or, if not nominated, at least eligible for the vetted list, so that might be one way. The other piece of this is that there are no guidelines for what constitutes a vetted list [just because a title is nominated does not mean it belongs on a vetted list] and that might be something that another task force can tackle, along with a manual of policies and procedures for the chair.

General Recommendations

1. Devise creative ways to promote these lists so that more librarians, teachers, book sellers, etc. are aware they exist.
2. There seems to be no need to change any of these award/selection lists; rather, people are happy with the results that are produced. Some individual comments might indicate otherwise, but those are greatly in the minority [the comments are interesting, but so few that one can't determine any major changes from them.]
3. A few of the comments indicated a wish for even more titles. Better promoting Quick Picks [for nonfiction with appeal to teens] and Popular Paperbacks [for thematic approaches] would provide those opportunities.

General Comments about the Survey taken by all users of the list

www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=xnI1TT90UMk5ctHGzgwNBtQBuw6kusSFYW5xKkQ_2fuZQ_3d

1. BFYA is the most recognized of the YALSA lists, followed by Alex and Nonfiction [only 38.2% aware of NF]
2. There is general satisfaction with the number of titles selected from 94% for BFYA to 86% for nonfiction.
3. Although the rankings vary among the lists, Alex and BFYA are primarily used for reader's advisory, ordering, training and book clubs. As might be expected, the nonfiction list is used primarily for ordering, curriculum support and displays.
4. The quality of all three lists was rated Excellent to Good by more than 95% of the respondents.

Item #29

5. 85% of the respondents felt that YALSA's complete set of lists and awards provided all or most of their collection development and reader's advisory needs.
6. 23% of the respondents were not aware of YALSA's Best of the Best Lists.
7. 60% of the respondents were YALSA members while 40% were either not or not sure if they were members.
8. 83% of the respondents had never served on a YALSA list or award committee.

Conclusion

With 85% of the respondents feeling that the YALSA lists meet all or most of their collection development and reader's advisory needs, it would seem that no changes need to be made to the Alex, BFYA, and Nonfiction lists. It is to the credit of all committee members that 95% of the respondents stated that the lists range from good to excellent. YALSA members and nonmembers are least aware of the nonfiction list, but it is the newest and it will take time to build awareness.

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