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2024 ALA Annual Conference

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ALA Annual Conference - YALSA Annual Report

Colleen Seisser, President, 2021-2024

YALSA Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan

Mission: Through networking, advocacy, and professional development, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) empowers all those involved in the profession to provide equitable, diverse and inclusive teen services.

Vision: Our vision is that all teens, from a variety of backgrounds including, but not limited to ability, class, gender-identity, sexual orientation, race, religion and power-differentiated groups, will have access to quality library programs and services - no matter where they occur - that are tailored to the community and that create new opportunities for all teens' to promote personal growth, academic success, and career development, while linking teens and staff to resources, connected learning opportunities, coaching, and mentoring.

YALSA's actions are driven by the strategic plan priority areas outlined below. YALSA also continues to focus on reorganizing and realigning the division as a result of staff resignations and financial challenges. YALSA leadership has embarked on a comprehensive review of YALSA programming to ensure it meets member needs and falls within a strong financial plan.

In February 2023 YALSA welcomed an interim Executive Director. In October 2024, a full-time permanent, Executive Director was hired and shortly after resigned. Immediately following the resignation in December 2023 through present, a current ALA staff member stepped into the position serving both as current Executive Director for the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and Interim Executive Director, YALSA. This past year, YALSA activities have operated under reduced staffing capacity as additional staff positions opened and have not been replaced.

During transition periods, specific tasks have been identified and shifted to related ALA units to continue supporting YALSA's journals and publications, and continuing education.



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Division Strategic Planning Process

YALSA's most recent strategic plan ended in June 2023. Due to staffing and leadership vacancies, a full update to the strategic plan was on hold until early spring 2024 when the YALSA board engaged in robust discussion on the progress that has been made on past strategic plan activities and next steps for an updated strategic plan. The board used the current strategic plan as a guide to evaluate topic areas that may be included in the next iteration of the strategic plan.

An updated strategic plan continues to be under consideration. The YALSA board has identified the activities that have been taken during this past term related to the existing strategic plan:

Goal 1: Strengthen engagement efforts with all those involved with teen library services by cultivating member connections and increasing membership.

- Streamlined the volunteer program by clarifying roles, responsibilities and time commitments
- Streamlined processes within the Board; Uncovered gaps in knowledge and communication, particularly when it comes to the loss of institutional knowledge from previous YALSA Boards and administration.
- The Board has also been working on recruiting volunteers and communicating the benefits of volunteering.
- The Board Advocacy Strategic Committee is looking at ways to support member volunteers particularly in award/selection committees by meeting with chair(s) of the Oversight Committee to better understand their roles.
- Membership recruitment and retention has been a recurring topic of discussion this year. Thanks to the work of the Division and Membership Promotion committee, the Board is going to identify and move forward with some recommendations to better engage members.

Goal 2: Achieve financial stability and support growth by attracting and building alternative revenue sources.

- YALSA has engaged in reevaluating the Symposium and moving toward a new format that is more flexible and cost-effective in support of achieving financial stability.



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- Given limited staffing and financial resources, the Board prioritized efforts that need to move forward, such as the November 2023 YALSA Symposium and Book & Media Awards ceremonies.
- The Financial Advancement Committee has been discussing the creation of a year-round sponsorship guide, once staff capacity allows for more attention on the project.
- The Financial Advancement committee and Financial Stability Board Strategic committee have been developing a plan to advance fundraising efforts and pitch targeted industry sponsors.

Goal 3: Provide and promote programs and resources that speak to the diversity of our members and maximize membership value.

- YALSA has made concerted efforts to communicate the benefits of YALSA Membership
- The YALSA Programming Committee was revamped earlier this year to ensure there is a solid and efficient plan to provide professional development opportunities.
- This term, the YALSA Board and committees have solicited feedback from members and drafted recommendations for board review and consideration of multiples YALSA programs.

Goal 4: Implement advocacy initiatives to promote the importance of teen library services to key internal and external stakeholders.

- Webinars and conference sessions have promoted advocacy efforts to YALSA membership.
- Implementing advocacy initiatives is in progress and the Board Advocacy Strategic committee is working on finding opportunities and compiling existing resources.
- The 2023- 2024 YALSA President's theme has been focused on the Freedom to Read. The YALSA President was able to present with colleagues at last year's ALA annual conference and the 2023 YALSA Symposium regarding library staff and censorship/challenges--best practices, things to know, and how to build community. Through these sessions, YALSA's President found that there are teens who are also activating their communities for the Freedom to Read. The culminating YALSA President's Program at this year's ALA Annual Conference in San Diego will highlight a panel of teens and their work as a capstone of the year centered on the Freedom to Read theme.



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Additionally, across all YALSA activities, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion have been a point of focus in all decision making.

YALSA is grateful for the Board and committee volunteers who have accomplished a great deal in the midst of staff turnover and subsequent loss of institutional knowledge.

Continuing Education

In 2023-2024, YALSA formalized a partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding with the ALA Continuing Education unit to enhance the opportunities to secure and produce webinars and courses for teen services audiences. This relationship was explored as an option to support the work that has otherwise languished due to staff vacancies. The Education Advisory Committee will continue to work with member volunteers and the President's Implementation Taskforce to target the development of webinars for members and Snack 'n Chat virtual sessions.

Snack 'n Chat sessions have been designed as free offerings that were launched after the pandemic to support all library staff serving teens amidst furloughs, lay-offs, hiring freezes, and great change. Snack 'n Chats will continue to address members' needs to serve diverse communities and support the field in their professional development.

- Webinars:
 - o Adulting in the Library: Teaching Life Skills to Teens
 - o Outreach Services for Underserved Teens

Book Award Ceremonies

YALSA continues to find the best opportunities to celebrate book and media awardees. The awardees for the 2023 YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction were celebrated virtually in February 2023. The awardees for the 2023 William C. Morris Debut Award, Michael L. Printz Award and the Odyssey Awards, were celebrated in person at the June 2023 AL Annual Conference.

YALSA Programs and Services Review

YALSA is actively assessing current programs and services to determine their relevance and impact on YALSA members and the teen library services community. As such, several programs and services have been under consideration to determine if they are effectively meeting the needs of YALSA members and the YALSA vision, mission, and strategic plan. Programs and services that are being evaluated include:



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Teen's Top Ten

The Teen's Top Ten committee is reimagining the Teen's Top Ten program with a report and recommendations expected to be submitted to the YALSA board by the end of June 2024.

YALSA Programming HQ

The YALSA Programming HQ Task Force is evaluating the resource and how to move forward in the absence of a web platform to support it. Following a report and recommendations submitted to the YALSA board, in March 2024, the board approved directing the President-Elect to appoint a new Teen programming HQ task force to evaluate recommended next steps.

TeenTober

TeenTober occurred throughout the month of October 2023. TeenTober is a new, nationwide celebration hosted by libraries every October and aims to celebrate teens, promote year-round teen services and the innovative ways teen services helps teens learn new skills, and fuel their passions in and outside the library. In 2019, TeenTober replaced YALSA's previous Teen Read Week™ and Teen Tech Week™ celebrations, allowing libraries the flexibility to celebrate all types of literacies according to their library's schedule. Library staff are encouraged to utilize this new celebration to advocate for and raise awareness of the importance of year-round teen services in libraries.

The YALSA Board Programming and Resources Strategic committee requested that the YALSA board consider: Is TeenTober, in its current iteration, meeting the needs of teens and those library employees who serve them? There is not a TeenTober committee to promote or share activity ideas nor is there a way to track participation in TeenTober. The YALSA Board Programming and Resources Strategic Committee sees the need to create a task force to investigate the viability of continuing TeenTober. In December 2023, the YALSA Board voted to direct the President-Elect to create the TeenTober task force to begin work on 7/1/2024.

Young Adult Services Symposium

The YALSA Symposium was held on November 10-12, 2023 in St. Louis, MO. This year's Symposium welcomed 348 attendees. The Symposium featured opening and closing



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panels of romance, fantasy and science fiction authors. Other highlights from the Symposium included:

- YALSA partnered with Graphic Novels and Gaming Round Tables for a pre-conference. Attendees went home with a copy of *Really Loud Librarians*. This was an opportunity for YALSA to work with other ALA groups to reach a larger audience.
- A timely, research-oriented session on A.I. was presented and included a free toolkit for libraries to use A.I. in afterschool programming.

Symposium Evaluation Task Force has surveyed YALSA members about the Symposium and provided a report to the YALSA board in early 2024. YALSA is evaluating the Symposium performance and getting member feedback that will inform next steps for the Symposium.

Additionally, YALSA provided Symposium registration stipends for qualified applicants who were either a library member with at least one year of experience or students enrolled in an ALA or National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education accredited library with a focus on serving young adults to attend the conference.

Recipients were:

- J. Hodnett, Churchill County Library, NV
- Valerie Tohom, San Jose State University, CA

Publications

Due to staff capacity, publication of YALSA's journal has varied in timing. In FY25 work will be done to revisit the status of YALSA's publications.

Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults (JRLYA) - The purpose of *Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults* is to enhance the development of theory, research, and practices to support young adult library services. As the scholarly, refereed journal of the Young Adult Library Services Association, *Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults* distributes major research findings worldwide through electronic publication twice per year (spring, fall). This publication has been on hold.

Young Adult Library Services (YALS) - *YALS* features articles that showcase best and emerging practices, provides news from related fields, spotlight significant YALSA events and opportunities, and offer in-depth reviews of professional literature. *YALS* is scheduled to publish quarterly (spring,



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summer, fall winter). This publication has been on hold. The next issue is in progress and expected to be published by the end of summer 2024.

Fundraising and Partner Development

Fundraising to Support Member Services & Resources Friends of YALSA Each year Friends of YALSA is tasked with raising over \$14,000 to support member grants and awards. The Financial Advancement Committee organizes this fundraising effort. In the fall of 2023, YALSA was able to host a silent auction featuring a diverse selection of signed books and teen library services resources that generated over \$1500. YALSA did not achieve its goal in FY 24 largely due to staff vacancies that did not provide the much-needed guidance and support for fundraising efforts.

Member Grants, Awards, and Scholarships

Joann Sweetland Lum Memorial Grant - The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) has named Sally Miller, a librarian at Walt Morey Middle School in Troutdale, Oregon as the recipient of this year's Joann Sweetland Lum Memorial Grant, which aims to recognize a librarian who has planned a creative, innovative project that promotes literacy. Established in 2020, the Joann Sweetland Lum Memorial Grant is an annual \$1,000 award funded by friends and family of Joann Sweetland Lum. As a classroom teacher, a college professor, and a mother, Joann Sweetland Lum was an avid user and advocate of libraries.

Minudri Scholarship - In late Summer 2020, the Minudri Scholarship was established as a YALSA member benefit, in memory of ALA Past-President Regina Minudri. This scholarship supports an individual in graduate school who is studying to work with teens in libraries. Scholarship applications have been under review and a new recipient will be announced late summer 2024.

The 2023 Minudri Scholarship was awarded to:

- Michelle Cheng, University of Alabama

Spectrum Scholars - Each year, YALSA sponsors two Spectrum Scholars with an interest in serving youth ages 12-18 in a library setting. Established in 1997, the Spectrum Scholarship Program is ALA's national diversity and recruitment effort designed to address the specific issue of under-representation of racially and ethnically diverse librarians within the profession while serving as a model for ways to bring attention to larger diversity issues in the future.

YALSA supported two Spectrum Scholars for the 2023-2024 term:



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- Angelica Moreno Lopez, University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign
- Heidi Samantha Orozco, Simmons University

Both scholars have demonstrated a passion for working in school libraries with young adults.

Advocacy

The YALSA Advocacy Toolkit has served as a resource providing practical tips, messages, facts, and strategies to help library advocates speak up on behalf of teens.

In March 2024, the YALSA board directed the President-Elect to appoint YALSA Board Action Advocacy Toolkit Task Force to commence work July 1, 2024 and report back to the YALSA Board with a plan for the updates needed, a timeline for implementation, and an initial plan for distribution and marketing support by October 2024.