

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Annual Conference, Chicago  
June 28 – July 2, 2013**

**Topic:** Badges for Librarians Update

**Background:** YALSA competed in the fourth Digital Media and Learning Competition in Feb. 2012 and was awarded \$75,000 to create badges for librarians, as a new means of providing continuing education to librarians and library workers serving teens. Linda Braun, the Project Manager, submitted a progress report to the funder in June, a copy of which is provided below.

**Action Required:** Information

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**Project Title:**

Preparing Librarians to Meet the Needs of 21st Century Teens

**1. Overarching Narrative**

To date funds for the project were spent on planning for the development of the badges, attending badge recipient meetings, and marketing and PR. We have worked with two web development firms to plan for building of the learning management system that will be used for the badges. We have also worked with these firms to consider the design of the badges site. During the first phase of the project we worked with our technology partner, Badgeville, to develop a method for connecting the YALSA badge project to the Badgeville platform and the Mozilla OBI. However, because of compatibility issues we are no longer working with Badgeville and have completed the contract with them and made all required payments: A project manager and YALSA staff have worked together on all aspects of the project including the web and curriculum development and marketing. We have also worked to collect information about those working with teens, and library school students, who may be used as testers if the timeline allows for that phase of the project.

**Team**

- Beth Yoke, YALSA Executive Director oversees the budget and contracts and works to guarantee that all aspects of the project align with the association's needs and goals
- Linda W. Braun, project manager
- Eve Gaus/Nicole Gibby Munguia, Program Officer of Continuing Education for YALSA works on the curriculum and web development components - acts as the liaison between web developers and the American Library Association (ALA) technology staff and worked with the ALA Graphics department on badge design.
- We have worked with staff members of the Pixo web development firm to begin planning for the badge website design and OBI integration, and are now working with staff at Palantir who will build out the badge site and the OBI integration for YALSA.

### **Identification of audience(s)**

The badge system is based on the YALSA Competencies for Librarians serving youth. Therefore the badges are designed for library staff who work with teens and would like to improve and enhance their skills in serving that age group successfully.

### **Goals/aims for the badges/badge system**

The initial goals for the badges included assisting library staff working with teens in gaining skills needed to serve the age group successfully and to provide professional development experiences in a format that helps staff to participate from wherever they are as well as demonstrate new ways of learning and recognition of skills. The goals for the project have not changed; however, because of changes in the timeline and unanticipated budgetary considerations related to technology, the scope of the goals and the badges has been rethought in order to meet the demands of the timeline and the budget.

### **Badge System Design Models**

YALSA is developing skills-based badges. Early in our planning stages we anticipated using a pie-badge system approach with levels. Because of budgetary constraints and the system we originally were using with our technology partner, Badgeville, we were not able to move forward with this plan. In the current project badging model, badge earners will complete tasks and receive community feedback on the artifacts developed as a part of those tasks. Badges will be awarded when a pre-determined number of positive feedback responses are received by the badge earner. Badge earners who do not receive positive feedback will have the opportunity to revise their artifacts and re-submit.

### **Methods**

Following conversation with other badge project awardees, attendance at badge-related webinars, and research on the topic of badges and recognition, YALSA decided to use a community-based/rubric approach to badge criteria. A rubric is provided for each task that badge-earners are involved with. Earners can gauge the success of the artifacts they develop via the rubric and submit their work when they think they have achieved success as defined by these tools. Community members evaluating the work of badge-earners will have the same rubrics available and will be asked to determine success based on those. Community members evaluating the work will also be asked to provide feedback, positive and negative, to badge earners to help in the skill development, understanding, and learning processes.

### **Experience**

The importance of a learning management system on which the badge activities, tasks, behaviors, and artifacts can live. This system needs to be robust in order to allow for high-level activities that guarantee badge-earner understanding of the process as well help them to achieve success.

### **The value of the community in badge development and implementation**

YALSA sought input from library staff via an open meeting at the ALA Midwinter Meeting 2013. The feedback from that group on the behaviors and tasks for the badges and on the badge design was invaluable in taking our next steps in curriculum development and graphics for the badges. The need to have early conversations with the web development team and/or tech

partners to guarantee that all understand the process and goals and that all agree on the process and goals. If that understanding and agreement is not in place then it's important to seek other partners.

### **Outstanding Questions**

We have quite a bit to do in terms of the technology side of the project. The curriculum is developed - with a few changes probably still required. At the moment we have committed to working with a new web development team who should be starting on developing the site, the learning management system, and building OBI integration very soon. Once that part of the process begins we will need to continually internally test the badges and also continue to get the word out about the project and how library staff at all levels can be involved in earning badges and being a part of the badge community.

### **Open Badges Infrastructure (OBI)**

Our project will align with the OBI, however we have not started that part of the process yet.

### **2. Assessment/evaluation**

What are the 3 main challenges to widespread adoption of your badge system for your organization?

1. Making sure that library administrators and library school faculty understand the value of the badges and how they can be used as a form of recognition of skills. In order for the badges to have value for the community, administrators have to be on board in this way.
2. Making sure that library staff serving teens understand the value that badges can have to their professional development and that they can be used as a form of demonstrating skills and knowledge.
3. Building community so that library staff at all levels participate in the badge feedback and awarding process. We need to make sure that there are people involved in the community who will provide the feedback required in order for a badge-earner to earn a badge.

What is your badge system testing strategy? How have you or will you be testing your badge system prior to deployment? There are currently about 30 people who have volunteered to test our badges. However, because of the current timeline constraints we are not sure we will be able to test the system prior to deployment.

What are the top 3 factors that the success of your badge system are contingent upon?

1. A curriculum that library staff will be able and willing to take part in. Feedback from those attending the meeting at ALA Midwinter 2013 suggested that the tasks developed were too easy. We have increased the difficulty of the tasks and have to evaluate whether or not they are too time-consuming/difficult for badge-earners.
2. As mentioned above, participation by the community. Without community involvement badge-earner work will not be evaluated, thereby making it impossible to award badges.
3. A user interface that is easy to use for the badge earner and community member providing feedback. We need to make sure that the process of using the badges site doesn't get in the way of earning badges.

What have you done, or do you plan to do, to evaluate your badge earner community?

Once the badge project is up and running, if our technology allows, we will keep track of the process of badge earners including how long it takes to complete a badge, how often an earner starts a badge project and doesn't complete it, how involved in the community the badge earners are, how many badges earners work on, and how often badge earners revise their work based on feedback from the community.

What will you do with the results of your evaluations? What research, if any, will be based on these evaluations, and do you plan to publish the outcomes?

It is likely that many of YALSA's publishing outlets will be used to inform others about the badge evaluations and what they mean for professional development and recognition in the library profession. These include: the journal YALS, the official blog of the association, and the Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults. It is also likely that YALSA will work with their partners on other projects such as the American Library Association, ConnectedEducators.org and ConnectedLearning.tv to get the word out about the results of the evaluations of this project.

### **3. Impact/Scaling**

Please describe any impact your badge system may have already had on your organization and your learners

Due to the challenges we've faced in getting the project up and running, we have had less of an impact than originally intended. However, we have been able to help library staff gain an understanding of badges and why they are an important tool to use in professional development and skills recognition. Another outcome is that the project has helped to raise a general awareness of badges among the library community, and library staff have begun to incorporate the use of badges in some of their programming and services for their patrons. The project has also given YALSA the opportunity to connect with other institutions that have similar goals.

How would you characterize the impact your badge system will have on the badge ecosystem? YALSA's badge system is different than many others that are a part of this project. Because the system is geared to adults, and not young people, and because it is skills based and not identity based it can serve as a model of how professional development can be provided in this way. It is also a system that over time may be built out to have a more varied approach to badge earning including pie badges and identity and affinity badges. Once the system is in place it has the potential to act as a model for the potential of scaling over time.

What plans do you have to scale your badge system?

At the moment we have one badge for each of the association's seven competencies. However, there are many skills and understandings in each competency and we would like to be able to address more of those. We would also like to implement a pie badge system so that as a badge earner earns badges within a competency he or she is given a badge slice that they can build on in order to eventually become an uber-badge earner in that competency. Mentor and community expert badges would also be a possibility so that we can award those members of the community who are strong mentors and that act as experts in working with badge-earners. And, we would like to develop identity and affinity badges particularly around special events and awards that YALSA hosts and sponsors.

How successfully are you getting institutional buy-in, or adoption from your learners?

Because we are still in the early stages we don't have a clear indication of this yet. However, there has been great interest in the project from library staff who attended our event at ALA Midwinter 2013 and from those who have volunteered to be badge testers. We hope that this is an indication of buy-in and interest.

#### **4. Sustainability**

What plans are in the works, or do you plan to put in the works in order to sustain your badge system? Please include grants you have applied for, or that you plan to apply for, that would support sustaining or expanding your badge system. As we are still working on initial implementation of the project we have not moved forward in applying for grants or other funds in order to maintain the system and move it forward. Once the badge system is launched the project team will consider next steps that might be taken in order to expand and sustain the project.

Cost: Once your badge system is built, how self-sustaining is it? How much do you anticipate maintenance to be?

The plans for the badge system as they currently stand are for it to be self-sustaining with the community making that possible. Maintenance should be minimal - outside of the human capacity required by members of the badge earner community.

#### **5. Communications/outreach**

For those who want to follow the development, implementation, and adoption of your badge system, what social media sites will you be posting updates to?

For the length of this project YALSA has used its publishing outlets including the association blog and journal, Twitter, Facebook, and monthly e-newsletter to get the word out. We will continue to do that as the project continues and we work to gain badge earners and build the community.

What outreach strategies will you employ to communicate and support your badge system? conferences, webinars, presentations, etc. has your organization participated in, or plans to participate in, on behalf of your badge system?

As mentioned above, YALSA presented a program at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in 2013. We will also present at the LITA (Library Information and Technology Association) Forum in November 2013. The 2014 ALA Annual Conference is another opportunity. We have also submitted a program proposal for the 2014 Public Library Association (PLA) conference for a presentation on badges. We will know in July if the proposal is accepted. YALSA has also used the YALSAblog as a means of featuring news about badges, such as an interview with Erin Knight, and also updating readers on progress in regards to this project. Once the badges are fully operational, YALSA will promote them via a webinar and one or more Google Hangouts.

#### **6. Community**

How will you, or members of your project remain engaged or involved in the OBI, DML, and HASTAC communities after your grant period ends? Following the launch of the badge system it is likely that YALSA leaders will continue to attend the annual DML conference and to disseminate relevant OBI, DML, HASTAC information and resources to our members and to

the library community. YALSA will also evaluate future DML/HASTAC competitions, grants and opportunities for a possible fit with YALSA's goals and determine on a case by case basis whether or not to participate.

What are the 3 most important things about building a badge system you would share with another organization just getting started?

1. Think carefully about the tasks and behaviors you set up for badge earners. Make sure to consider what the goals of the badge earning experience are, how to set up behaviors and tasks to reach those goals, and how the success will be measured in order to guarantee that a badge earner has gained the skills, knowledge, or understanding required.

2. Consider the role of the community in developing the badge system and in helping to make sure that the badge earning experience is successful.

Ask how you can engage members of your community to help gain buy-in from leaders and from those who need to recognize the validity of the badge system. Also, ask yourselves how the community can play a role in badge awarding and what incentives are available to community members who participate in the awarding process.

3. Be aware of the technology required in order to make a badge system work. A learning management system and a well-crafted website are required in order to achieve success in the badge earning process.