

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

Topic: Member Benefits Best Practices

Background: During the spring Executive Committee meeting via conference call the group directed the Executive Director to work with staff to investigate best practices in member benefits and to share that information out with the board. A report is provided below for the board's consideration.

Action Required: Discussion

Industry Best Practices

ASAE's 2007 *Decision to Join* study

- Gathered statistical data from a survey of 16,944 people — including those who currently are members, formerly were members, or never belonged to an association — who were asked a series of questions about why they joined, left, or never bothered.
- Key findings:
 - The individual decision to join does not hinge on a cost-benefit calculation; rather, the decision to join reflects an appreciation that goes beyond personal benefits (i.e. what's in it for me?) to a less quantifiable value that an association generates by creating a community of individuals who share a common bond.
 - The top personal benefits for deciding to join an association highlighted by respondents are 1) networking with other professionals in the field and 2) gaining access to up to date information.
 - 46 percent of current members said the most important function was providing training/professional development to members. The next most important functions were providing technical information to members (44 percent); providing timely information about the field to members (37 percent); and providing networking opportunities (36 percent).
- Other findings
 - Elected leaders within an association may not necessarily reflect the collective views of members
 - Young people rate association offerings such as career information and employment opportunities as important but rank as low associations' performance in servicing those needs.
 - In the past associations have been able to hold information and networking as an exclusive member benefit, however modern technology has removed that monopoly.
 - Associations need to reconsider how they offer, management, and reward ad hoc involvement by members.

- Individuals whose dues are paid by their employers value their membership as much as those people who pay their own way.
- There is a trend away from employers paying the membership of staff.

The End of Membership as We Know it, by Sarah Sladek (ASAE, 2011)

- Associations need ‘outcomes-based member benefits’
 - Don’t focus on the feature, but the outcome. E.g. instead of saying membership provides networking opportunities, say that membership leads to professional contacts that can lead to new career opportunities.
 - Ultimately want to do research (via member survey) to quantify that statement
- “members join your association because they believe in your ability to solve a problem for them”
- “a successful membership benefits formula is equally practical and emotional”
- There are three types of associations:
 - Scrooge associations – everything is ala carte and actual member benefits are few
 - Milk associations – give almost everything away for free to anyone, and since member only benefits are few, there’s little incentive to join
 - Antique associations – ceased to be relevant and their benefits are no longer what members want

Current YALSA Members’ Only Benefits (as listed on the web site)

YALSA provides these exclusive benefits that help members

- **build skills and knowledge to give you a competitive edge over colleagues** via free, exclusive access to [YELL](#) (YALSA E-Learning Library), discounts on products and books, discounted registration for [online courses](#), [live webinars](#), [conferences](#), and more
- **add more value to your library and become indispensable at work** via eligibility for more than \$125,000 in YALSA's [grants, scholarships, stipends, and contests](#) for members each year
- **stay up to date on the latest trends and resources** via free subscriptions to publications like YALSA's award-winning quarterly journal, [YALS](#), and [YALSA E-News](#), the monthly e-newsletter
- **meet new professional contacts that can lead to career opportunities** via members you meet and interact with on virtual and face-to-face [committees](#), [Interest Groups](#) and more
- **make your daily work easier** via access to support to help you deal successfully with book challenges, cutbacks and more
- **get recognition for your achievements** via members' only [awards](#)
- **gain leadership skills to take you to the next level** via our [mentoring program](#), [Board Fellowship](#), and more
- **make a difference for libraries and teens** via [service projects](#) and [fundraisers](#) (.pdf)

Needs

Based on the *Decision to Join* and *The End of Membership as We Know it*, YALSA does currently offer the kind of members' only benefits that people want as well as an adequate array of member benefits.

- YALSA's fall surveys indicated that members and nonmembers both had a low level of awareness of YALSA's portfolio of member benefits. Some steps have been taken to address that, including:
 - Revamping text on the Join Us and Members Only web pages
 - Recording a free "how to get the most of your membership webinar"
- Further action can be taken, such as
 - Leveraging social media, including scheduling Tweets that feature member benefits and adding content to YALSA's Facebook page
 - Revamping YALSA's membership brochure
 - Creating house-ads for *YALS*, the blogs and the E-News that feature different member benefits
 - Sending quarterly e-blasts to targeted member groups about benefits that feature benefits of interest to their group
 - Other?
- Possible areas for enhancement would center around better fulfilling member needs, as indicated in the fall survey, including:
 - identifying and supporting best practices
 - providing information about emerging technologies
 - promoting and publishing research
 - 70% of members are wanting more virtual and local opportunities
 - expanding e-resources in key areas
 - 80% of respondents supported the idea of a searchable database of teen programs
 - 63% of respondents supported the idea of a full, text online *YALS*

E-Content as a Member Benefit

In the association industry, many organizations offer members' only e-content as a means to help members get the latest news, stay up to date on trends, connect with one another and access tools that give them an edge in their job. This content can be things such as:

- Membership directory
- An interactive online member community
- E-learning resources
- Industry reports
- Legislative action center
- Ask an expert services
- Full text content to print publications
- Self-guided certification programs
- Directory of industry related vendors broken down by product or service

The members' only content YALSA currently offers is

- YELL (YALSA E-Learning Library), which is a collection of all of YALSA's previously recorded webinars that are available for free, on demand
- Back issues of *YALSA E-News*

- Password protected access to YALSA’s member groups wiki (work space for committee members)

Questions for the Board relating to e-content

- Based on the array of member benefits already being offered as well as the member survey results, is there a need that these benefits are not currently addressing, and if so, could it be met through e-content? If so, would new content need to be developed, or could existing content be repurposed?

Additional Resources

- Association Web Site Best Practices: Creating a Members Only Section, <http://ow.ly/m9nhy>
- How to Build a Member Relationship that Lasts, <http://ow.ly/m9naS>
- Offering Nonmembers Periodic Access to Members’ Only Information, <http://ow.ly/m9noi>