

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Annual Conference, Las Vegas  
June 27 – July 1, 2014**

**Topic:** Revisiting YALSA’s Organizational Structure

**Background:** In January 2014, YALSA released its report on the future of teens and libraries, funded by IMLS. The report proposes many significant changes to the work that has traditionally been done for and with teens in libraries. The report also has implications for the future of YALSA to lead this change. However, this could be difficult given the current structure and state of the association. Chris Shoemaker and Jack Martin have provided a new framework and platform below onto which the new vision for the association could be created. The Board may want to discuss these implications and determine the changes that need to occur, particularly in organizational structure, in order to move into the envisioned future outlined in the futures report.

**Action Required:** Discussion

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Over the past 10 years, the following changes have occurred in YALSA:

**Staff**

- The association’s staff has grown from 3 full-time staff to 5.5 full time staff.

**Members**

- YALSA has increased its membership from 3,943 to 5,129.
- YALSA has increased its member committees and other groups from 27 to 73
- YALSA’s board has increased in size from 14 to 18 members

Staff and member groups focus on supporting the needs of members through a variety of programs and initiatives. The current focus of the association’s staff and member engagement groups is strongly aligned to long-standing events and programs such as conferences and booklists and awards. These functions are primarily in line with a traditional library environment, one that is internally focused on physical materials and one which faces modern challenges related to funding and public perception.

YALSA’s report, “The Future of Teens and Libraries: a Call to Action,” proposes significant changes in the delivery of public service for and with teens, which also impacts the work of the association. The key shifts for libraries are:

- Shift from traditional print literacy into digital and multiple literacies
- Shift from library staff as content expert to connector and coach
- Shift in use of library spaces from book repositories to spaces that facilitate hands-on learning and content creation

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- Shift in community demographics requiring cultural competencies and acknowledging diverse communities
- Shift in programming models to involve stronger community partnerships, connected learning opportunities and outcomes measurement

These shifts are not just happening to library staff in school and public libraries around the country. They also have an impact on the association and how its staff and member volunteers conduct work and connect with the world outside of libraries. In order to support members that are transitioning to the future envisioned in YALSA’s report, the association needs to take the same bold steps outlined in that document for library staff. YALSA must work towards:

- Building and leveraging partnerships that support libraries and the teens that they serve.
- Building its fundraising capacity that will in turn bring initiatives to members that will in turn allow for initiatives that support those working with teens in libraries.
- Developing learning opportunities for library staff working for and with teens so that they can implement the ideas presented in the report.
- Recruiting those outside of the field who can bring fresh voices and ideas and help YALSA and those working for and with teens to implement the ideas of the futures report.

**Potential outcomes**

1. Stronger levels of member engagement for more members over more interest and need areas.
2. Greater capacity to become a clearinghouse for other resources and ability to connect with other organizations more broadly.
3. Leap into the 21st century and position YALSA as a forward-thinking organization that others – library workers and those outside the field - want to be a part of.
4. Ability to target new funding streams which provides opportunities to increase revenues, reach new markets, and support more members more broadly.

**Questions to Consider**

1. What would YALSA look like if the association started today?
2. What structural, institutional and funding changes need to occur for YALSA to be better able to support the work of the Futures report?
3. Should YALSA transition from connecting activities to the strategic plan, agenda items for example, to linking activities to ideas presented in the futures report?
4. How might YALSA create opportunities for members to participate in a broader set of activities beyond the traditional ones that are focused on knowledge of library materials? What would those new opportunities look like?
5. How might a new structure create opportunities for the board and members to create a shared vision for YALSA?

**Additional Resources**

- The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: a Call to Action, [www.ala.org/yaforum/future-library-services-and-teens-project-report](http://www.ala.org/yaforum/future-library-services-and-teens-project-report)

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