

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Seattle  
January 25 – 29, 2013**

**Topic:** School Library Member Engagement Taskforce Report

**Background:** At the core of YALSA’s mission is engaging and supporting members. In order to implement the strategic plan goals in Member and Recruitment and Engagement, perceived and real needs of all core member groups must be addressed. Secondary school librarians serving teens in high schools and middle schools comprise 27.6% of YALSA’s total membership. In an effort to gather data to provide background information, YALSA conducted a survey of school librarians in May 2011. At Midwinter 2012 the Board directed the President to create a task force to study school librarian engagement in YALSA. The resulting function statement directed the task force to evaluate YALSA’s portfolio of services and resources and to utilize member survey results to identify school library member needs in order to identify strategies 1) for raising awareness of YALSA resources and services that are appropriate for school libraries and 2) to engage school library-focused members in the mission and work of YALSA.

**Action Required:** Discussion

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**Evaluation of Survey Results:**

Of the approximate 1,300 school library members in 2011, 277 responded to the survey. The Task Force evaluated the results of the survey through their collective lens of serving teens in school libraries. The survey results showed interest from school library members in a newsletter targeting their needs. They are most often interested in YALSA’s information about literature and rely on book award and recommendation lists for help with collection development and curriculum support. This may be because school library members have not typically seen the value or usefulness to them of other YALSA programs or resources. Raising the awareness of other YALSA resources may make the perceived value more attractive. The task force also noted that most respondents prefer receiving information in email rather than having to check blogs or ALA Connect.

**Possible Strategies for Raising Awareness of Existing YALSA Resources to School Librarians:**

The evaluation of YALSA’s resources produced the following recommendations from the task force for raising awareness of resources and services that are useful for school librarians.

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- Communicate directly with all school library members so that information can be specifically targeted to them which will not only give them timely and targeted information but will make them feel included by using the email list already compiled by YALSA staff
- Publicize The Hub to school library members in a targeted manner, perhaps through the existing school library member email list or with a newly created listserv
- Add links to lesson plans or classroom activities to the book award or book recommendation web pages (some of this is already available)
- Create an e-newsletter for YALSA school library members
- Consider branding the existing column slated for inclusion in each edition of *YALS* is focused on or related to serving teens in school libraries

**Possible Strategies for Engaging School Librarians in the Mission and Work of YALSA:**

**New Strategies:**

- Target school library members with opportunities for involvement in virtual committees, perhaps with an electronic newsletter or a listserv targeting YALSA school library members
- Encourage current committee chairs and members to personally invite qualified school library members to serve on committees, juries and advisory boards
- Publish “personal stories” on the YALSAblog, YALSA E-News or in *YALS* where school library members tell how they became involved in the work of YALSA and what it means to them both personally and professionally
- As the board moves forward with keeping the YALSA Continuing Education Advisory Board on track, plan to have at least one member from the school library community
- Create a YALSA/School Library listserv or other focused way of communicating with those who work in or support school libraries, and which also allows them to communicate with each other and which would have a narrower focus than other listservs or forums available to school librarians
- Create a column in *YALS* that is focused on or related to serving teens in a school library setting

**Expansion of Existing Strategies:**

- Encourage and support school librarians to present at state conferences
- Realizing that CE is in part revenue driven, continue to make sure that at least some of the continuing education offered by YALSA is attractive and useful to school librarians or at least includes the school library perspective, whenever possible
- Create school-focused videos for inclusion in the YALSA Academy
- Although many of the resources available from YALSA to support Teen Tech Week™ and Teen Read Week™ work in a school setting, continue to point school librarians in the right direction via the school library focused discussion forums on the Teen Read and Teen Tech Weeks sites
- Include state and local conferences attended by YALSA school library members in any kind of “road show” activities organized by YALSA where local library workers could

present a program, host a social event, or staff a YALSA table or booth with ribbons, etc. available so that they can personally connect with attendees (if YALSA's budget allows)

**Rationale:**

- More than one in four YALSA members identifies him/herself with a school library setting.
- Understanding the needs of this group as well as the barriers to engagement will allow YALSA to ameliorate some of the “left out” feelings expressed by members.
- When survey respondents were asked whether they were using or were aware of 5 new YALSA resources, the survey results revealed a low level of awareness. Increasing awareness of YALSA resources or how they can use them in a school setting, can help school library members make the most of their membership.
- Creating an environment where school library members can more easily use YALSA resources and also where they can be encouraged to participate (as well as encourage each other to participate) will only enhance member involvement.

The proposal supports the strategic plan goal of Member Recruitment and Engagement:

- Objective 4b: significantly more members are involved in an array of active and representative member groups that work together to advance YALSA's mission and goals
- Objective 4c: Significantly more members are involved in the mission and work of YALSA through such venues as blogs, publications, surveys and events

**Recommended Board Actions:**

1. Direct the Executive Director to work with the Communications Manager to oversee the creation of an email newsletter for a school library audience, and to solicit content for the newsletter through existing communication channels, and evaluate its usage after one year
2. Direct the Editor of *YALS* to establish a branded column that is focused on serving teens in school libraries
3. Direct the Executive Director to work with the Communications Manager to set up a listserv having the unique focus of serving teens in a school library setting
4. Direct the President to establish a task force to compile, post and promote lesson plan resources around YALSA's recommended reading
5. Direct the Executive Director to work with the Program Office for Continuing Education (once the position is filled), to recruit individuals to create YALSA Academy videos appropriate for a school library audience

**Additional Resources**

- 2011 School Library Member Survey results, <http://ow.ly/gzms3>