

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

Topic: Frequency of the YA Literature Symposium

Background: The Symposium Evaluation Task Force was established by the Board in January 2012. Its charge was to explore the feasibility of an annual YALSA symposium beginning with 2014, including determining: 1) Whether or not YALSA has adequate staffing and resources to hold an annual event; 2) whether or not the event should remain literature focused; 3) if there is adequate demand from the library community for an annual event; 4) publisher interest. Franklin Escobedo, the Taskforce Chair, has provided the group's final report below.

Action Required: Discussion

1) Whether or not YALSA has adequate staffing and resources to hold an annual event:

While YALSA appears to have adequate resources to move the YA Lit Symposium from the biannual event to an annual one, there is a great risk to YALSA if they fail to sell out a symposium as the cost could be greater than the benefits. Additionally, adding the additional conference planning to the limited YALSA Staff could also overwhelm the staff.

2) Whether or not the event should remain literature focused:

The Taskforce put out a survey to the membership, and received 138 responses. The large part of respondents (60.5%) were in favor of expanding the focus beyond literature. One of the questions that was asked was what type of speakers would make them more likely to attend the symposium. The majority of respondents (73.7%) were in favor of a mix of YA Authors and YA Professionals. When reviewing this year's YA Lit Symposium survey, many of respondents were also looking for sessions that would help them at work.

3) If there is adequate demand from the library community for an annual event:

Currently out of the members surveyed, only 6% said they would attend every year. A larger part of the members surveyed (39.5%) responded they would attend every other year. One of the largest barriers to attending the symposium is cost, as 67.4% of responders did not attend the 2012 symposium for this reason.

4) Determining publisher interest in an annual format:

While over a hundred publishers were contacted by the Taskforce, only 14 responded to the survey. A little over half have never attended the YA Lit Symposium. When asked if they would attend every year, 46% responded they would likely attend. There were positive responses to having authors be involved in programming for the YA Lit Symposium. While the publishers showed little interest in the survey, we do believe that in the long run, publishers will begin to take an active role in the Symposium.

Task Force Recommendation

While many of those surveyed were in favor of expanding the YA Lit Symposium beyond just literature, there is not enough enthusiasm to make the YA Lit Symposium an annual event.

Many librarians are still faced with financial hardship that blocks them from attending.

Nevertheless, we would recommend that YALSA explore the expansion of the programming element of the biannual symposium to include programming that will help strengthen our profession. Some of these sentiments were expressed in the survey responses from this year's attendees.

List of Task Force Members:

Franklin Escobedo, Chair

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