

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

Topic: Virtual Committee Manual Final Draft

Background: At the 2012 Annual Conference the Board approved the establishment of a taskforce to create a tool that would help the chairs of the two selection committees that are being piloted as virtual committees in 2013 and 2014. The Taskforce submitted a draft to the Executive Committee for review at their October meeting, and then made further edits to the draft based on Executive Committee feedback. Valerie Davis, the Taskforce Chair, has presented a final draft of a manual below.

Action Required: Action

YALSA Virtual Selection Committee Manual

The Virtual Selection Committee Manual was created to aid committee chairs in their work on virtual selection committees. By having best practices and resources available for chairs in one location, this manual aims to facilitate a smooth transition to virtual selection committee work.

Virtual Committee Management & Troubleshooting

Prepare for Positive, Proactive Participation

Before the work begins, provide information and structure for your committee utilizing relevant guiding documents, such as the Virtual Committee Leadership wiki http://wikis.ala.org/yalsagroups/index.php/Virtual_Committee_Leadership as well as your committee's policies and procedures. Since your work will be virtual, providing a **well-organized online home base** via ALA Connect is essential. Although you may be using a variety of digital tools to conduct committee business, select a single location where you can organize and archive the work that will occur. Chairs should also familiarize themselves with the Chair wiki <http://wikis.ala.org/yalsagroups/index.php/Chairs> as it has links to many resources that you will find valuable throughout your term.

Home Base

This is a site that members can return to at any point in their work to get and share needed information. It should include

- a **calendar** of the committee's term, with relevant dates and deadlines for work assignments (and who is responsible for which assignment).

- **documents** (or links to online documents) relevant to committee work, such as the committee charge, policies and procedures, and both blank and completed forms.
 - **contact information** with multiple methods of contact for each member indicating the best ways to reach them.
Ex.: Mandy Committee Member
I check these three accounts most often, and I ranked them in order below:
1) SMS/text 800-555-1234
2) Twitter DM @mandymember34
3) Work email mandym@citycollege.edu
 - **discussion groups, rooms or threads** to allow for members to discuss potential nominees or nominees. Think about how best to organize these discussions. By month? By individual title? By genre? Something else?
 - **participation expectations**, where you formally acknowledge the work, communication level and professional behavior expected from each committee member.
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HINT: A common complaint regarding virtual work centers on “hidden” or inaccessible information. Try to keep information “top level.” This means purposefully organizing information in as flat a layer as possible - members should have to do a minimum of searching or clicking to get what is needed. Think twice before creating folders within folders, or deep hierarchies of documents where information would be hard to find.

Participation expectations should include any work delegated to members during the term of service, as well as the level of participation expected. This could include communication frequency and methods of communication. Best practice suggests that chairs make this a conversation with their committee, to achieve buy-in from members about their commitment. For example, do you have committee members who are able to work a little at a time every day/week on projects slowly and steadily? Or perhaps you have members who are using a sabbatical or vacation time to devote a large, isolated chunk of their time to intense committee work? Get a sense of your members’ personal obligations, work obligations, and other obligations so that you can help them strategically organize their committee work.

HINT: The more you get to know your committee members, the more you will be able to help them achieve their best work by tapping into their strengths. Here’s an example: Committee Member A is a deep thinker and an introvert - he likes to think through all possible aspects of a problem before offering solutions. As the chair of your committee, you notice that A hangs back in real-time chat sessions and has to be prodded to contribute. Yet, after you email A a week before your regularly scheduled phone chat with some issues for him to mull over, you found him to be very thoughtful and articulate about his assessment. A really shines when the committee shares information through their private listserv, where he carefully reads everyone else’s emails on a topic before composing one of his own

responding to concerns and introducing new ideas. You can rely on A to anticipate issues or unintended results that other committee members typically do not think of.

Quick online learner type assessment: <http://www.theslideprojector.com/pdffiles/learnertypes.pdf>

Synchronous vs. asynchronous work:

It can be advantageous to mix work types while interacting virtually, in order to play to member skills & strengths and to accommodate different schedules. Things to keep in mind when organizing a synchronous session include:

- **Timing:** You may have committee members in as many as four different time zones, members who cannot spare time during certain parts of the day or week for committee activities, or members who need to coordinate network access or borrow special equipment in order to communicate.
- **Method:** There are advantages and disadvantages to online chat vs. video chat, or even a phone call. What is easiest for most members? What technology do they have access to at certain points in time?
- **Agenda:** Briefly discuss what is reasonable to accomplish in a limited amount of time. Staying on task means having an agenda (shared with committee members in advance) with talking points, and you can appoint a member or administrative assistant to act as timekeeper to encourage concise conversation.

Things to keep in mind when organizing an asynchronous session include:

- **Timing:** Asynchronous sessions can be ongoing, but parameters can encourage members to accomplish work rather than dither with it for ages. Set both short-term and long-term deadlines so that the work has some immediacy for members. Keeping to a regular schedule of checking in as a chair is an excellent strategy to motivate members to stay on top of their reading and discussions. Posting to ALA Connect weekly or bi-weekly on Mondays, for example keeps the committee focused and avoids a period of “radio silence” from the chair.
- **Method:** The online platform you choose to use for document creation and storage may inform the work as well.
- **Agenda:** Be clear in your communication about what must be accomplished by deadlines and specify in detail the desired outcome.

Sample Mini-Schedule of Activities

This sample schedule incorporates several different activities using different technologies leading up to a work product by a deadline. By announcing the activities in advance, laying out a timeline, and describing the work that must be accomplished, you can proactively encourage members to participate fully in all committee work.

Task: Encouraging field nominations

1. Asynchronous assignment: All committee members should email content for blog posts that could be used throughout the year. Content should focus on encouraging and requesting field nominations for the chair to post online.
2. Synchronous assignment: Everyone answered a scheduling poll saying they could meet for 30 minutes in Google Hangouts on February 3 at 8 PM EST/7 PM CST. Let's use our 30 minutes to discuss different ways of encouraging field nominations. Please arrive in our Hangout promptly: (link to hangout space here)
3. Asynchronous assignment: One idea that came out of the Google Hangout discussion was to write up an article on the impact of selection lists. The chair has contacted the YALS Editor, who likes the idea. Begin creating content for the article and add to the Encouraging Field Nomination folder in our ALA Connect space (link to folder here) by midnight EST February 15.

Did You See That Facebook Post?

While selection committees can be more transparent about their process, award committees have more stringent confidentiality issues. More people are starting to share significant portions of their professional and daily lives online in social media, so it's important to let your members know what is ok to share and what isn't.

- Members must be asked to review the YALSA social media policy. It is recommended to review the points with committee members so that everyone understands thoroughly what aspects of committee work should remain confidential – and whether that information is confidential during their term of service or confidential forever afterwards <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsahandbook/socialmediapolicy>
- Only the chair may publicly represent the committee.
- Inappropriate contact with other folks in the industry, such as publishers or authors, even if NOT conducted publicly on social media, is also not ethical or permitted.
- Disclosing committee business for personal gain, professional gain, or for the gain of other members of the committee is not acceptable publicly or via social media.
- Members should consider posting a well-written disclosure on their online profiles. This consciously reminds everyone of the work that is taking place. Here's a sample statement: "The opinions I express here are my own and do not reflect the assessment of any group or committee I might belong to at any given time."

If a problem arises with a committee member, here are some steps to address it.

- The first step when identifying any issue is to contact your Board liaison. She or he may have some suggestions for the particular concern. Board liaisons are a great sounding board. Don't forget to consult them if you feel uncertain about how to handle some of the more nuanced and tricky situations that can arise.
- Starting a hard conversation: As chair, recognize that different approaches work best for urgent issues. If you feel the matter is pressing, a phone call might be more

appropriate than an email. When addressing the matter with your committee member, a chair might adopt the following:

- A warm, yet concerned tone of voice
- Express a desire to better understand everyone’s viewpoint -- don’t go in using an accusatory tone as that may inflame the situation. Clearly state the problem, potential outcomes for your committee work that the problem could cause, and offer options for a positive resolution.
- Be clear that the issue isn’t personal; rather, it’s about the need for committee members to uphold YALSA’s Social Media Policy or other policies.

Your Board and Staff Liaisons

Every YALSA committee is assigned a board member to be their liaison <http://ow.ly/eRlVq> (.pdf). The liaisons for your committee are an excellent resource that you can use to identify new ideas on how to handle issues, and will be your primary resource if a problem is beyond your control. Take advantage of having them, and consult with your liaisons anytime you feel stuck, unsure, frustrated, or confused. (Of course, they would also like to hear about the good things that are happening as well!)

Examples of times to contact your board liaison:

- When you are unsure about committee policies & procedures, or how to apply them (staff liaison)
- When a member is unable to continue with their duties (board liaison)
- If you need to vent, or need a sounding board for a tricky situation (board liaison)
- If you need to talk through the work before you discuss it with your committee (board or staff liaison)
- Anytime!

They are experienced YALSA members and staff whose work includes being your connection to the larger organization, so don’t hesitate to get in touch with your board or staff liaison on a regular basis.

Virtual resources to enable committee work and how they can be used

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

As the interactions with your committee will be constrained by the virtual world, you will need to determine which virtual tools and resources work best for you and your committee. This document sets forth some best practices that can be followed while using those tools and resources.

Committee chairs may find it useful to set up an online chat or conference call with committee members at the beginning of the committee’s tenure, either one on one or as a group. This is a good way of assessing each member’s technological capabilities,

preferences, and comfort level with online tools. One-on-one conversations may only need to last a few minutes, but will give the committee head at least an impression of how best to work with each committee member.

ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS

YALSA provides a variety of tools for committees and other appointed groups, which are outlined at www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/membergroups

ALA Connect

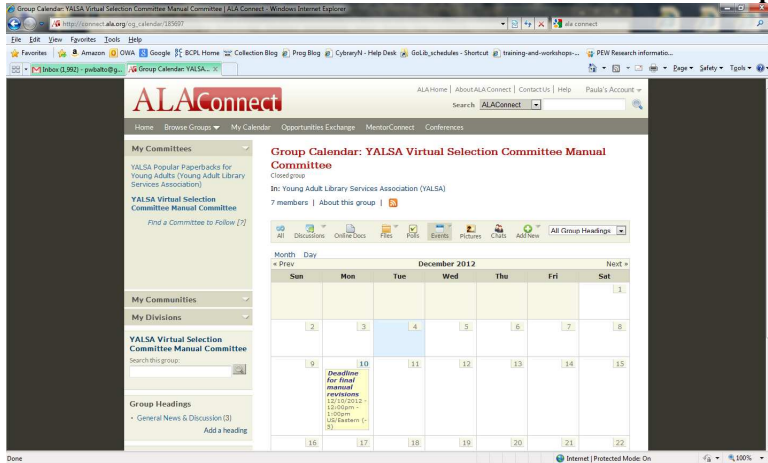
ALA Connect is a collaborative online tool customized for your committee that can be used by committee members to meet virtually and share information. It keeps a virtual group on the same page and working together. Committee groups are automatically created when rosters are determined. You do not need to create a space in Connect for your committee. Each member of the committee can log on to ALA Connect using his or her own ALA username and password. Once logged in, committee members can access the committee they are associated with by using the drop down menu “My ALA Groups” near the top of the page.

Users can customize their own profile with contact information, a picture and other personal information. They can also create a setting where notifications are sent to personal emails automatically when there is activity in the ALA Connect group. This prevents having to log in and check for postings or correspondences continually. ALA Connect archives committee materials from year to year, providing an ongoing record of the committee’s proceedings and title lists. The committee’s space in ALA Connect is a closed space, and only appointed committee members have access to it. To learn more about ALA Connect, visit <http://connect.ala.org/chair-faq>.

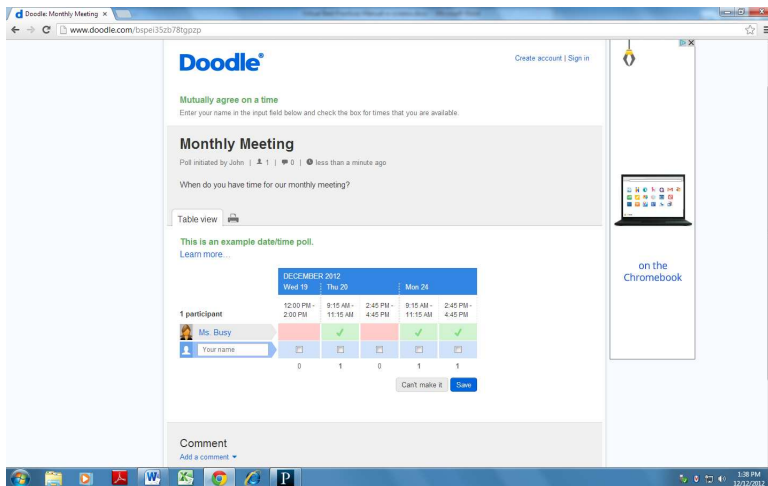
SCHEDULING

A strategy that has worked successfully for past chairs is to create a meeting schedule at the start of the year. Initiate this by determining if there are any recurring times or days of the week that your committee members cannot participate in an e-chat or conference call. Once you know that information, create and then share a calendar of virtual meetings for the term of the committee. Doing this in advance helps committee members come up with a plan to ensure they’re available during the meeting times. Each committee has its own calendar in ALA Connect to keep track of deadlines or meetings. Members can download the events to their Outlook, Google or iCal-based calendar.

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Committee chairs may find it useful to use a free online tool such as Doodle (www.doodle.com) to poll members about availability when virtual meetings must be scheduled. You will just need to sign in and create a poll that can then be sent out to committee members. You can track which committee members have and have not responded.

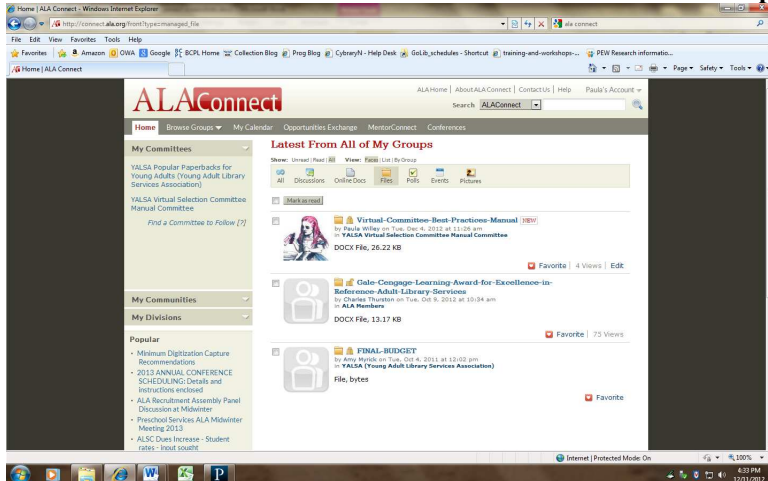


SHARED DOCUMENTS

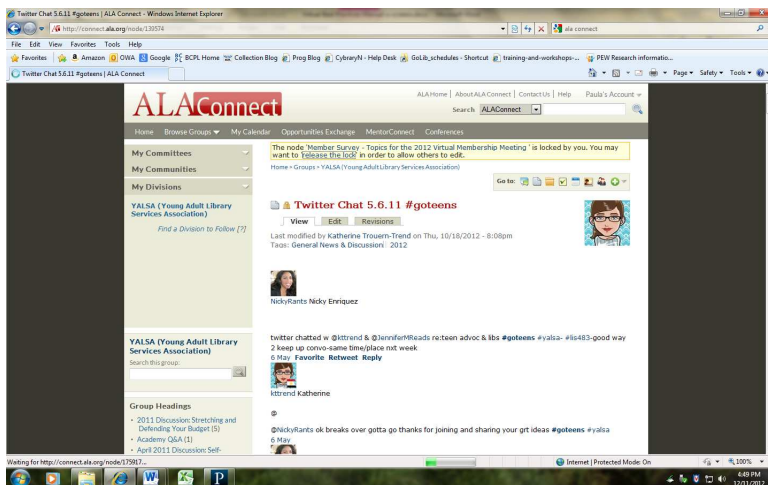
Completed documents

Use ALA Connect to upload all the documents that the committee uses, including Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, PDF files, and spreadsheets. Nomination lists and meeting agendas should be uploaded here. Not only does this provide a central library of proceedings for this year's committee available for them to refer to and print at their leisure, but also gives next year's committee a jumping-off point from which to work.

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Working documents



Utilize the Online Docs node in ALA Connect to create collaborative documents. This function of ALA Connect allows members to edit and change documents without having to download a file, edit, and upload for others to see.

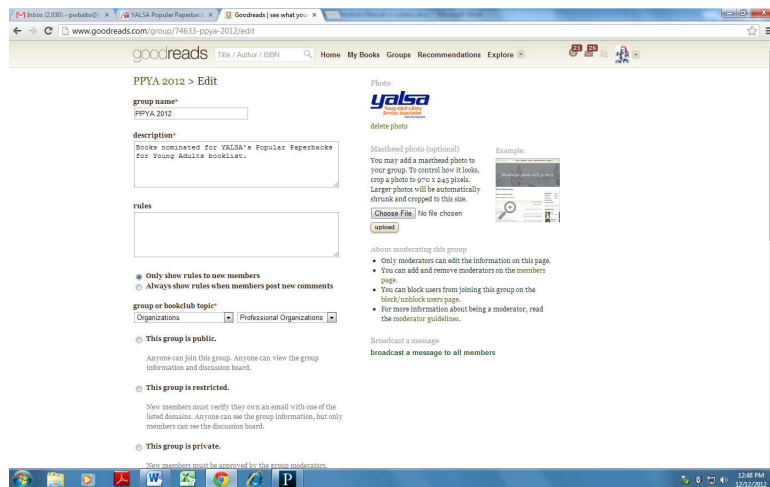
Online Docs are editable onscreen and track revision data, so they are good for agenda building, meeting minutes, and allowing members to chime in on the nominations they have read or completed.

DISCUSSION FORUMS FOR NOMINATED TITLES

Ongoing discussions

ALA Connect allows for multiple concurrent discussion threads to be active at any given time. Chairs can use these as a way of organizing discussions related to committee work. Committee members can also post discussion questions to engage others in conversation and get feedback on ideas such as whether or not a title is strong enough to nominate.

Committees may wish to use Goodreads to establish a private book group and set up discussion threads on specific books; however, this can also be achieved via the Discussions tool in ALA Connect. Schedule a time for each book to be available for discussion. Discussions will be available to view throughout the committee time. Be sure to provide a link to Goodreads in the committee’s space in ALA Connect, if you decide to use this resource.



In order to keep the committee’s discussions private, which is imperative, choose the “This group is private” option on the Group Settings page.

Goodreads also allows chairs to track how many committee members have read each nominated title. Book discussions can be opened by the person who nominated an item or in any way the chair sees fit.

Live discussions

Committee chairs may wish to schedule one or more real-time meetings using video, voice, or text-only chat.

ALA Connect allows for committees to meet virtually and hold meetings. There is nothing to download and no video equipment to worry about when using this synchronous text chat tool. Committee members sign into ALA Connect and join the chat room by clicking on “Chats” on the right of the toolbar, typing their name into the Chat name box, and clicking on the “Create chat session” button.

See “Other online collaboration tools” below for help selecting the best option for your group to meet online should you wish to try voice or video online meetings.

- Set up a document with an agenda and a presentation of titles that will be discussed. Have this information available well before the scheduled meeting.

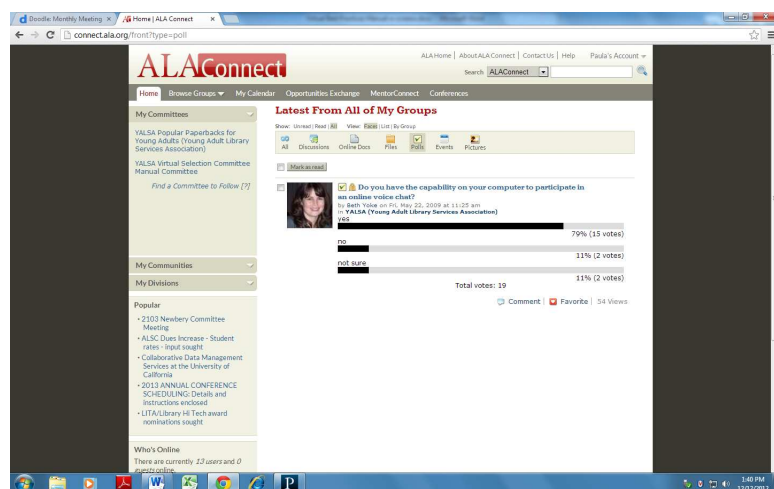
- Schedule a video call or chat through your tool of choice so that all committee members can gain access to the meeting.
- Throughout the meeting, update the meeting minutes or take notes on the discussion in real time.
- Contact your staff liaison to arrange a conference call for your committee.

In this way, the chair can see how people are reacting to titles and information and judge level of participation.

VOTING

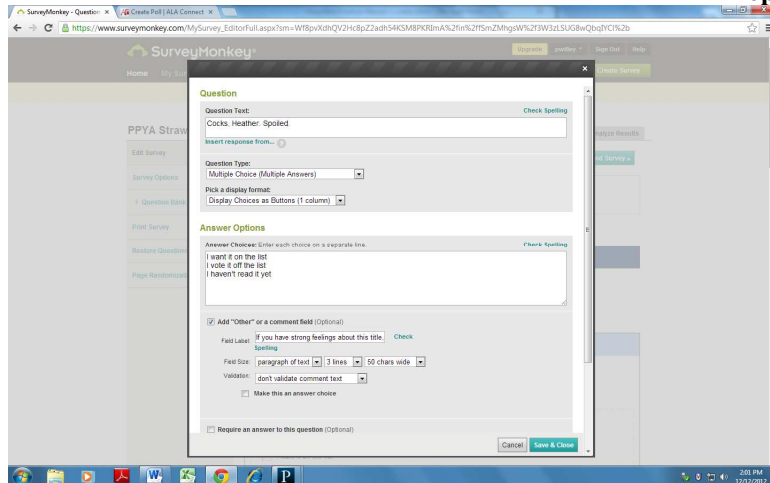
“Show of hands”

In ALA Connect the chair can create polls to gain group consensus on discussion topics. The chair is able to create surveys with single questions and multiple-choice or Yes/No answers. There are no fill in the blank or ranking options. Results can be viewed as graphs showing how each person voted. This feature could be used for straw polls and voting for book lists.



Detailed surveys

SurveyMonkey is an easy-to-use, well-known online tool. It allows for multiple questions of many different types. SurveyMonkey surveys will not be archived in ALA Connect; however links to results should be archived there.



OTHER ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS

Google Hangouts:

Hangouts (currently limited to 10 users) can be recorded or broadcasted, and users without a camera can participate via phone. Additionally, side conversations can occur via text chat.

Users must have a Gmail account. Committee members log into Google+ and click “Start a Google hangout.” From there the leader will add people to the hangout and the chat experience can begin. Mobile devices require the free app.

Oovoo

Free video calls, up to 12 people. Can be used by PC and Mac as well as iPhone, iPad, Android phones and tablets and smart phones. Extreme ease of use makes this a good resource for virtual work. Signing in for video calls is as simple as setting up an account and adding people to a call. Privacy settings allow you to control who can see the call.

Skype

Skype is a proprietary voice-over-Internet Protocol service and software application. This means that phone calls are made over an Internet connection rather than using a landline or cell phone. The service allows users to communicate with peers by voice, video, and instant messaging over the Internet. The free uses of Skype are Skype-to-Skype calls; one-to-one video calls, instant messaging

Face time

Apple’s free one-on-one video chat interface for use on Mac, iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch. Users sign in with Apple ID and can video chat with anyone else on the apple network.

YALSA Conference Calls

Conference calls can easily be established by contacting [your](#) staff liaison and scheduling a time. The call in number and pass code will be provided to you.

Goodreads

Goodreads allows “Secret groups” – groups that cannot be found in Goodreads except by their members. Titles can be added to the group and members can keep track of the titles that they have read and those that they should try to track down.

Members of a secret group can engage in discussion about each title, and these discussions are not visible to non-members. Committee members must be aware, however, that their star ratings and reviews of nominated books would be visible to other Goodreads users. *Therefore if you choose to use Goodreads committee members need to be advised to not rate or review committee books.*

Doodle

Doodle allows chairs to send out a link with options for meeting times. Simply sign in and create a poll that can then be sent out to committee members. The poll will track which committee members have and have not responded.

SurveyMonkey

Questionnaires with multiple questions, and questions with answers of multiple types, including open-ended questions, can be made in SurveyMonkey. After creating a survey, a link to it can be emailed directly to committee members, and the results aggregated and analyzed in SurveyMonkey. This can be a powerful timesaver when it comes to voting titles on and off lists.

The Best Defense is a Well-Prepared Offense

Through strategic preparation, you can anticipate doing great work with your virtual committee. The chair must keep the committee motivated and moving at pace. Remember to use tools that fit the situation in front of you, and encourage communication and collaboration.

Proposed Board Action: adopt the manual as presented above and 1) direct the board liaisons to the PPYA and Edwards Committees to share it with the in-coming chairs, and 2) direct the Executive Director to work with staff to post the manual on the Chair Wiki.

Additional Resources:

- “Piloting a Virtual Selection Committee” Board doc #13 for the 2012 ALA Annual Conference, <http://ow.ly/gEfiZ> (.pdf)
- Chair Resources Wiki, <http://wikis.ala.org/yalsagroups/index.php/Chairs>