

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

Topic: Virtual Award/Selection Pilot Evaluation

Background: In June 2012, the YALSA Board voted to establish a two year virtual pilot of one awards and one selection committee, and to evaluate their performance and impact after one year. The stated purpose of the pilot was to broaden committee member participation beyond members who come to conference, as requested by the membership. The committees, the Margaret Edwards Award and Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults Committees, completed their first year of the pilot in Jan. 2014. April Witteveen and Jack Martin surveyed committee members-- including chairs from both committees—and provide the results below. The Board may want to discuss the results of the evaluation in order to inform the President Elect's upcoming round of selection committee appointments.

Action Required: Discussion

Rationale for the Pilot

22% of the comments that members left in the open comments section of the 2012 member survey were requests for more virtual committee opportunities:

1. More virtual committees that does not require attendance to both annual and midwinter (just one or the other)
2. I'd like to see more opportunities to get involved that don't require attendance at national conferences. Most libraries don't pay for travel.
3. CONTINUE WITH VIRTUAL MEMBERSHIP ON COMMITTEES. INCREASE INFO ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS WAY
4. Why are those of us in academic libraries, who are lower paid than most, barred from participating in most selection committees since we cannot attend both winter and summer annual conference? We are the most specifically involved in the frontlines of working with teens, yet we have difficulty getting funded for conferences and often cannot pay ourselves. Wouldn't lists, and teens, be better served by providing flexibility to these committees so that the lower-earning, yet highly educated scholastic and other YA librarians might participate? After all the reading and judging is most of the work! Discussions can be done virtually! I have served on the Texas Library Association Committee and I know that to be true.
5. I would love to see more regional opportunities for book discussions and lists rather than just the national ones -- maybe more online opportunities?

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6. I teach in a small Catholic high school in Louisiana. Opportunities (i.e. money) to participate in conferences, webinars for a fee are nonexistent.
7. I love that more committees are going virtual. While I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to meet with my fellow committee members face to face, the fact is that many members are unable to participate due to financial and time constraints. Virtual committees allow members to be active without a huge financial or travel commitment.
8. Since I can't usually attend midwinter, I would love to see more virtual committee appointments made available to members.
9. Those of us who live in rural or sparsely populated areas of the US have a harder time getting our voices and input heard. For example, travel to conferences at our own expense as a member of selection committees. We are not in population hubs and the expense to fly is discouraging.
10. It would be wonderful if there were more opportunities for virtual involvement in committees. The cost to attend conferences makes committee membership difficult for many to afford. I would love to be more involved but am not able to do as much traveling as is required of committee members.
11. I am finding it very difficult to find ways for me to get involved. I have yet to find anything that is truly possible, especially since many of the committees require you to either be working in a library or travel to one or more of the conferences- a financial impossibility for me.
12. I would love to serve on a YALSA committee but cannot afford to attend the conferences--thus I am not involved.
13. It seems like the majority of opportunities for involvement mostly revolve around the conferences which a lot of staff cannot attend. If you can grow meaningful virtual engagement, that would help strengthen the organization.
14. More virtual opportunities. I have to pay my own way to attend conferences.
15. With budget cuts in education, it is difficult for school librarians to attend conferences (it has to come out of pocket), and many committee appointments require travel to mid-country or cross-country destinations. So if one can't afford plane fare and hotel fees, one can't serve readily on YALSA committees.
16. I think the current direction of moving toward virtual opportunities is fantastic, and I would love to see this continue.
17. I would really love to participate in one of YALSA's award committees, but due to my circumstances of being the only Teen Librarian for our system makes it so that I cannot afford to go to both ALA conferences, both financially and practically. Our staff are only allowed one national conference a year due to budget cuts and the annual ALA conference is smack in the middle of summer reading. Would love to find ways to participate without required attendance.
18. more chances to serve on committees virtually.

Pilot Evaluation, as approved by the Board at Annual 2012:

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“At the end of the first year, the committee chairs would submit reports evaluating virtual member participation, and would include accomplishments and challenges encountered in the virtual discussion process. YALSA Board members would review how well the virtual committee enhanced the strategic plan goals on increased member engagement and participation. In addition, event attendance and ticket revenue will be reviewed to see what, if any, impact the virtual committee pilot project has had. The board will then make recommendations as to continuing or expanding the pilot program. The two pilot committees would continue to meet virtually until the Board moves otherwise.”

Both the 2014 Popular Paperbacks and Margaret Edwards committees were surveyed in March 2014 using the following questions. A link to the survey can also be found below:

- What committee were you on?
- Have you served on other YALSA selection or awards committees?
- How often did your committee meet virtually?
- What tools and/or technology did you use to meet virtually?
- Which tools were the most effective? The least effective?
- What was the level of engagement from your virtual committee members?
- What were the benefits of meeting virtually?
- What were the challenges?
- What changes would you make to the virtual selection/awards committee manual after having gone through this process?
- What did your committee members say about the virtual committee experience?

Draft of online survey:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BkZfoGkMICFFDsb1LPiXSmSIHaaspwVjWDZFCFNAOg0/viewform>

The following data is based on the responses of the committee members:

Pros

- There is a definite cost savings for members not having to travel to conferences and generally makes selection and awards committee positions more accessible to YALSA members who cannot afford conferences.
- Communicating virtually enhances committee members’ writing and project management skills. It also allows members more flexibility in how they manage their workload.
- Members had an increased awareness of virtual meeting/collaboration tools and how they might use them professionally.

Cons

- According to some members, virtual committee work was not as “fun” as F2F committee work.

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- The virtual meeting environment requires different skill sets from members, and it is more of a challenge to team-build and engage certain members in a virtual environment than a F2F setting.
- In the virtual environment, conversations are less spontaneous (which could also be a pro).
- There is a difference in nuance of between written communication vs. verbal/F2F communication. Some members were more well-versed in verbal; others were more experienced with written/online communication.
- Varying time zones made finding a good meeting time for all difficult on occasion.

Other valuable committee member comments included:

- “I think if the committee work could be modified to require a F2F meeting to determine the final winner, that would be an improvement.” (Edwards Award current chair feedback)
- The need to be aware of tone of language in written communications-- encouraging tact, etc.
- Virtual committee work has a different timeline-- “Virtual committees work with less rigid timelines, more gradually, and more asynchronously” (Popular Paperbacks chair feedback)
- “I was worried the experience would feel isolated, and it didn’t” (Popular Paperbacks member)

Event Attendance / Ticket Sales

Ticket sales to the Edwards event at Annual have not been negatively impacted by the virtual pilot:

Event	Attendees 2010	Attendees 2011	Attendees 2012	Attendees 2013	Attendees 2014 (as of 5/29)
Edwards Luncheon	148	226	129	144	153

Recommendations

- Overall: Continue the MAE and Popular Paperbacks committees in their virtual format through the end of the 2-year pilot project (ending 2015).
- Based upon this data and the reports from other committees, the Board may want to explore expanding this pilot to other selection and awards committees.
- Continue to update and refine the manual for chairs in order to provide chairs with the information and resources they need to manage work virtually.
- Rework chair training to address more of the findings from this evaluation, including highlighting virtual meeting/virtual collaboration options and hands-on virtual

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training on how to use each (and when is the best time to use each-- i.e. needing to see faces in a Hangout for tough conversations/decisions vs. using an online chat service)

- Ensure that all recruitment material and messaging for these committee positions must focus on the virtual nature and the pros/cons in order to find candidates who can fully embrace this format.
- In spring 2015 re-evaluate the next iteration of committees and make a final decision as to whether or not to continue these committees in virtual format.

Additional Resources

- 2012 Board document establishing the pilot project, <http://ow.ly/xYRtt> (.pdf)
- 2012 Member Survey Results, <http://ow.ly/xYTPy>
- Strategic Plan, www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/strategicplan