



**August 2010 YALSA E-Chat
Joining a YALSA Selection Committee**

Eva Volin: I'm Eva Volin, past chair of the Great Graphic Novels for Teens committee and current committee member of the 2011 Michael L Printz Award.

Eva Volin: The lovely and talented Sarah Flowers is also here, ready and willing to answer any and all selection committee questions.

Eva Volin: The chat officially begins at 5pm Pacific.

Eva Volin: After you log in, please right-click on your "guest name" and reset your nickname so we know who we're talking to.

Sarah Flowers: Hi, Jane.

Eva Volin: A transcript of the chat will be posted online after our chat is finished, so those who weren't able to join us will know what went on.

Eva Volin: Hi, Jane!

Sarah Flowers: Eva, I'll make sure we get the transcript copied.

Eva Volin: Yay, thanks, Sarah.

Jane Gov: Hello! I'm not sure how meebo works, but I don't have access to a microphone.

Eva Volin: No worries, neither do I.

Eva Volin: This chat will work just like a series of IMs

Eva Volin: OK, my timer just went off, so we're ready to go.

Eva Volin: Jane, are you currently on a selection committee, or curious about joining one?

Eva Volin: Hi, Eve!

Eve Gaus: Hi Eva!

Jane Gov: Joining. I just joined YALSA only a month ago, but I've been thinking about joining a selection committee for awhile.

Eva Volin: Is there one in particular you're attracted to?

Jane Gov: Best Books for Young Adults, Alex or Odyssey

Eva Volin: (Also, good for you for getting involved!)

Eva Volin: Oooh, all good choices.

Eva Volin: Have you been on a selection committee of any kind before?

Sarah Flowers: You know that Best Books is now Best Fiction for Young Adults

Jane Gov: No. I'm a newbie.

Eva Volin: That's right. A lot of the selection committees have shifted their focus a bit.

Eva Volin: BBYA is now Best Fiction for Young Adults.

Eva Volin: So it's a more focused list.

Eva Volin: Jane, have you served on a selection committee before with another agency, or would this be your first one?

Jane Gov: First one!

Eva Volin: Yay!

Sarah Flowers: Jane, what's your experience with selecting, reviewing, etc.?

Jane Gov: I used to order books for Borders Books; I worked there for 7 years. I now work at a public library. Sometimes I review books on Goodreads.

Eva Volin: Cool, I got my start in a bookstore, too.

Eva Volin: Are you a librarian (not that you have to be to serve)?

Eva Volin: Hi, Penny!

Jane Gov: I have access to many galleys from my contacts at the bookstore.

Jane Gov: Not a librarian yet. I'm finishing up at SJSU this Dec.

Penny Johnson: Hi everyone! Sorry I'm late!

Eva Volin: Excellent. You have a great resource there at SJSU. Joni Brodart has been on several selection committees and would be happy to answer questions for you.

Eva Volin: No worries, Penny. Glad you could make it.

Sarah Flowers: What are your questions about selection committees?

Penny Johnson: I don't think I know enough to know what my questions are!

Jane Gov: Same here.

Penny Johnson: So I'm just here to find out more!

Eva Volin: Ah, so are you looking for tips and tricks?

Penny Johnson: I am serving, and have served in the past, on several process committees, so now I'm just researching the selection committee landscape.

Eva Volin: Penny, I got my start on the Teen Read Week committee.

Eva Volin: Starting off on a process committee is a great way to learn how both YALSA and committees in general work.

Jane Gov: I've read the descriptions online and have spoken to a few people. I don't know anyone who has served on a YALSA committee.

Eva Volin: It's also a great way to show YALSA that you are willing to do the work necessary to get the job done.

Penny Johnson: I love serving. It has been a great way to get to know people.

Eva Volin: But, that said, serving on a selection committee, even though it's a LOT of work, is incredibly rewarding.

Penny Johnson: Especially since I live in a small town, I love being involved with others all over the nation.

Eva Volin: Penny, I couldn't agree more.

Eva Volin: Jane, I've served on two selection committees and have loved both.

Jane Gov: I'm sure I will too!

Eva Volin: I served on Great Graphic Novels for Teens for three years (the last as the chair) and am currently serving as a committee member on the 2011 Printz committee.

Penny Johnson: Is the "competition" to be chosen for a selection committee very fierce?

Eva Volin: It depends on which committee you want to serve on.

Jane Gov: I thought this was the best time to get involved since I'm graduation in Dec. and will have a bit more time for reading.

Eva Volin: Time is something you'll need more of than you think.

Eva Volin: The first thing you need to do is turn in a volunteer form.

Eva Volin: Have you done that yet?

Jane Gov: I usually read about 100 books/yr, but I've heard that some committees read more.

Sarah Flowers: Don't forget there are other selection committees, too, like Fabulous Films and Amazing Audiobooks.

Jane Gov: I have printed it and is in my file of to-dos.

Eva Volin: Oh, yes. You'll read a lot more than than, typically.

Jane Gov: I love audiobooks!

Eva Volin: Here's the link to the form, just in case:
<http://yalsa.ala.org/forms/selectionvolunteer.php>

Eva Volin: You'll need to fill out a new form EVERY YEAR.

Eva Volin: YALSA won't keep the form on file, so it's something you'll need to keep track of.

Eva Volin: But really, that's the hard part. 😊

Eva Volin: Sarah's right. The selection list committees are a lot of fun.

Sarah Flowers: And when you fill out the form, tell us in the comments section why you would be a good selection committee member.

Penny Johnson: Did my last message post? I got a message saying it didn't, but it is showing up on my screen.

Eva Volin: Don't just apply to be on the Awards committees -- get your feet wet where you can.

Eva Volin: Nope, Penny, nothing came through.

Sarah Flowers: I will be making committee appointments this year, and I don't know everyone in YALSA, so convince me that you're the right person!

Eva Volin: Jane, I absolutely loved being on GGNFT, so I'd imagine Audiobooks would be just as fun.

Penny Johnson: Meebo doesn't like me! My message won't go through!!

Eva Volin: Make a case for yourself. I lobbied HARD to get on GGNFT and it payed off.

Eva Volin: Try retyping it?

Jane Gov: Yes, I'll join whichever committee seems like the best fit. I'm currently also on the NMRT Endnotes Committee.

Eva Volin: Excellent. Previous committee work, even if it's not with YALSA, shows you have experience working with a team.

Penny Johnson: I'll try again: Currently I am the chair of two task forces, the convener for an interest group, and a member of another temporary task force.

Eva Volin: This is a good thing.

Penny Johnson: Am I even eligible to serve on a selection committee right now?

Eva Volin: Ha! Penny, that's a lot to do at once!

Penny Johnson: Yeah, I love being involved!

Eva Volin: Sarah, I'll let you field this question.

Sarah Flowers: Well, the interest group doesn't matter.

Sarah Flowers: Task forces usually don't last too long, but

Sarah Flowers: you'll want to be sure you are wrapping things up before your selection committee term would start.

Penny Johnson: So, if I fill out a selection committee application now, when would that committee begin?

Sarah Flowers: After Midwinter 2011.

Eva Volin: Hi guest3832754! If you right-click on your guest name you can change it to your real name. That way we'll know who we're talking to!

Jane Gov: I'll be at the Midwinter meeting in Jan.

Penny Johnson: Hmmmm. One of my task forces is in charge of Annual 2011 pre-conference.

Eva Volin: The biggest obstacle in terms of serving is that you can't be on two selection committees at the same time.

Eva Volin: Hi, Christine!

Christine Claiborne: Hi! I'm just listening in for now. I just began terms on a few committees

Eva Volin: Now that the selection committees have been reconfigured a bit after the BBYA/BFYA change, is that the committee terms overlap differently.

Eva Volin: It's something to watch for, especially if you decide to run for a seat on one of the Awards Committees.

Jane Gov: Good to know, Eva.

Eva Volin: Which committees are you serving on, Christine?

Sarah Flowers: Also some of the award committees have a different timeline, because of elections.

Penny Johnson: Can one serve on a selection committee and also serve on the YALSA board at the same time?

Christine Claiborne: YALSA Best Books for Young Adults (Admin Assistant)

Sarah Flowers: You could, but I wouldn't recommend it.

Christine Claiborne: YALSA Teen Tech Week and YALSA Organization and Bylaws

Christine Claiborne: full plate

Eva Volin: The Board meetings and the selection committee meetings always seem to be at the same time. It's impossible (practially) to be at both.

Penny Johnson: Okay, good to know.

Eva Volin: Christine, no kidding!

Christine Claiborne: but it's exciting!

Eva Volin: Also, one thing to keep in mind with the selection committees is that you aren't just reading nominated books.

Eva Volin: You're also reading books that you decide NOT to nominate.

Eva Volin: It's your job as a committee member to seek out and find the books people should know about.

Eva Volin: You can't just sit back and hope the publisher decides to send it to you.

Eva Volin: It's a lot like dating. You have to get out there and find the perfect book. Heh.

Penny Johnson: 😊

Sarah Flowers: Which is where Jane's bookstore contacts could help out.

Jane Gov: 😊

Eva Volin: Absolutely!

Jane Gov: Publishers sometimes send me books too

Eva Volin: Advance Reader Copies become your friends.

Sarah Flowers: Yes, although you ALWAYS want to read the final bound version before deciding.

Eva Volin: But it's important to remember to go back and read the finished copy, too. There are often changes made between the time the ARC is published and the finished version is

released.

Jane Gov: I love ARCs. That's how I got to read Hunger Games and Catching Fire before my friends.

Jane Gov: Yes, they do make changes. Sometimes deleting entire chapters.

Eva Volin: Will Grayson, Will Grayson is a good example of an ARC where changes were made.

Jane Gov: Ah. Didn't know that. Will have to compare.

[19:27] Christine Claiborne: has left the room

Eva Volin: It's a good example to use, because so many of us picked up ARCs at various trade shows.

Eva Volin: Is there anything else you two would like to know about?

Penny Johnson: So, are selection committee members expected to buy their own books?

Jane Gov: I think I'm ready to fill out an application.

Eva Volin: In a worst case scenario.

Sarah Flowers: Eva, maybe we should talk a little bit about participation at meetings.

Eva Volin: Sure.

Penny Johnson: Unfortunately I need to say good-bye. I am actually still at work, and the circulation desk is calling my name! Thank you for the info!

Eva Volin: Thanks for joining us, Penny!

Penny Johnson: Bye, everyone!

Eva Volin: Feel free to email me if you have more questions.

Sarah Flowers: I think one of the hard but interesting things about being on a selection committee is reading/watching/listening to materials that aren't your own cup of tea.

Eva Volin: I agree.

Sarah Flowers: But you need to learn how to evaluate them fairly and express that to others.

Eva Volin: I really do have to force yourself to read outside your box.

Eva Volin: The goal is to come up with a well-rounded list.

Sarah Flowers: And to learn to appreciate those things, and to see what teens might find appealing about them.

Eva Volin: Otherwise it's not useful.

Eva Volin: It's also important to remember the target audience when reading and evaluating.

Eva Volin: Who cares if a 40-year-old woman loves the book.

Jane Gov: Very true.

Eva Volin: The question is will a 12-18 year old love the book.

Eva Volin: It's an important distinction to make.

Sarah Flowers: With some committees more than others.

Eva Volin: It's also important to remember where you're coming from.

Eva Volin: If you live in an urban area, your teens may react differently to a book than a teen from a rural town might.

Eva Volin: Or a liberal area vs a conservative area.

Eva Volin: So thinking outside your comfort zone is important.

Sarah Flowers: Right, and back to the individual preference issue, I know a librarian who will NOT read a book in which a dog dies, but it could still be the best book of the year.

Eva Volin: And if, for example, the best book for a popular paperback theme is a graphic novel, then the committee members need to be ready to read graphic novels.

Eva Volin: Serving on a committee has very little to do with personal preference, and everything to do with serving teens. And sometimes that's hard.

Sarah Flowers: One other tip: have an organization scheme of some sort.

Jane Gov: It's like working the reference desk.

Eva Volin: Ha! Exactly.

Sarah Flowers: Keep track of what you've read, will read, what's been nominated, etc.

Eva Volin: YES!

Jane Gov: I use Goodreads. Is it okay for our ratings to be public?

Eva Volin: Some people are able to do this via GoodReads. That's fine if you're on one of the public committees.

Sarah Flowers: I remember Cindy Dobrez and Lynn Rutan writing an article in YALS about being on BBYA, and trying to remember, "Was that the book with the alcoholic father and the best friend who died, or the book with the alcoholic best friend and the father who died?"

Eva Volin: It's a little tougher if you're on an Awards committee, but it can be done.

Eva Volin: The trick is to put up a disclaimer stating that the ratings are your personal opinion and don't reflect the opinion of any committee you may be serving on.

Sarah Flowers: Right.

Jane Gov: That's a good tip Eva!

Eva Volin: I'm old skool and keep a notebook with tabs.

Eva Volin: Other folks use private blogs or livejournal accounts.

Sarah Flowers: I used an Excel spreadsheet when I was on Printz.

Jane Gov: I use my ratings at work to recommend books, so online is best for me.

Eva Volin: But it's important to know that there's no guarantee that there will be Internet access in your meeting room.

Jane Gov: Printouts.

Eva Volin: So it's important to have a backup plan if all your notes are online.

Eva Volin: Printouts work. 😊

Eva Volin: Sarah brought up participating at meetings. At the moment there aren't any provisions made for virtual members of selection committees.

Jane Gov: The committees only meet twice a year? Midwinter and Annual meeting?

Eva Volin: So if you do get chosen to be on a selection committee, you have to commit to being there.

Eva Volin: Yep, Midwinter and Annual.

Eva Volin: The rest of the discussion takes place online.

Sarah Flowers: Yes, although much work is done virtually, as well.

Eva Volin: Lots and lots of emails. 😊

Sarah Flowers: And, again regarding participation, you have to make a commitment to participating both virtually and actually.

Sarah Flowers: Responding to emails, etc.

Eva Volin: The ALA Connect pages are also used by various committees, as well as an abundance of Google Docs.

Eva Volin: Selection committees really do keep you busy all year.

Eva Volin: Before she left, Penny asked about having to purchase books.

Eva Volin: Sometimes you do. But it's never the first choice.

Eva Volin: For example on GGNFT, it's a new committee and a new idea for a lot of comics publishers.

Sarah Flowers: Your chair and/or admin assistant will contact publishers about review copies for you.

Eva Volin: A few publishers either never responded or refused to send more than one or two copies per committee.

Jane Gov: Share

Eva Volin: In that case I, as the chair, would buy a copy and we'd mail it around to each other.

Sarah Flowers: It helps if you work in a library that gets samples and/or arcs.

Eva Volin: Not great, but it worked.

Sarah Flowers: Or a big library that purchases most things.

Eva Volin: The mainstream publishers, though, all know what YALSA is and are willing to send books.

Eva Volin: Interlibrary loan is your friend!

Jane Gov: Is there a timeline for finishing certain books?

Eva Volin: As Sarah said, it's important to let the chair and/or Admin Assistant do the requesting.

Eva Volin: All nominated books need to have been read before any official discussion takes place (Midwinter and Annual)

Eva Volin: You'll know a month or so in advance of the meeting so you'll have your deadline.

Sarah Flowers: And generally, you can't vote on anything that you haven't read all the way through.

Eva Volin: Exactly.

Eva Volin: You really SHOULDN'T vote on anything you haven't read all the way through.

Eva Volin: OK, there's about 10 minutes left.

Sarah Flowers: But it can be hard on your committee if some people really love a book, but not enough people have read it to vote it onto the list.

Eva Volin: It can be heartbreaking!

Eva Volin: I've known some people who take the week off before Midwinter just to make sure they have time to finish all the reading and re-reading.

Eva Volin: Committee members take their responsibility pretty seriously.

Sarah Flowers: And you will learn a lot about evaluating materials.

Jane Gov: Very good tips. Thank you!

Eva Volin: We have about 5 minutes left. Have we forgotten anything?

Sarah Flowers: Please feel free to email either of us with questions.

Jane Gov: I will. And we'll get the transcript for this chat via email?

Eva Volin: Absolutely.

Sarah Flowers: Actually, I think it will be on ALA Connect.

Eve Gaus: Yes, on Connect

Eva Volin: Ha, sorry, my responses seem to be coming late.

Jane Gov: Sounds great! Thanks so much!

Eva Volin: Yes, absolutely feel free to email, the transcript will be on ALA Connect.

Sarah Flowers: Nice to talk with you, Jane.

Eva Volin: Thanks, Jane!

Jane Gov: You too! I'm signing off now.

Sarah Flowers: Thanks, Eva.

Eve Gaus: Thanks Eva and Sarah

Eva Volin: Don't forget to send in the volunteer form!

Jane Gov: Yes, thank you!

Eva Volin: Thanks to you both. This was fun.

Jane Gov: I'll fill it out right after I finish my final tonight.

Eva Volin: Good luck!

Jane Gov: Thanks. Bye!