

YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Annual Conference, Dallas
January 20 - 24, 2012

Topic: The Hub Manager Midwinter Report

Background: Gretchen Kolderup, the Member Manager of The Hub, YALSA's YA lit blog, has provided the Board with a semi-annual report. The purpose of the blog is to provide an online resource for teens to use to find reading recommendations. This blog focuses on young adult literature and provides teens and the librarians who serve them with a definitive web connection to blog posts, images, booklists, and videos and more all related to teen reading.

Action Required: Consent

The Hub Manager Midwinter Report

Submitted by Gretchen Kolderup

19 December 2011

Overview

Since Sarah Debraski's report in June, The Hub continues to grow: we're writing more posts, attracting more readers, receiving more comments, and recruiting more bloggers. The content we offer has become more varied and timely, and The Hub was nominated for a blogging award. New goals have been established for the coming few months, and I'm eager to see The Hub grow and develop further in 2012.

Statistics

Snapshot (June-November)

- Published 223 posts, 55 of them during our month-long celebration of Teen Read Week in October, "31 Days of Authors"
- Attracted 68,198 page views, an average of 373 each day (compared to 241 page views per day for the previous six months)
- Received 418 comments (compared to 219 in the previous six months)
- We've grown to 26 regular bloggers and have 9 potential bloggers currently working on guest posts after a call for new voices in the December issue of YALSA E-News.

Page views

- June 2011: 7,642
- July 2011: 7,941
- August 2011: 11,584
- September 2011: 10,033
- October 2011: 15,619
- November 2011: 15,376

Top referrers (since creation of blog)

- Search engines (904)
- Twitter (202)
- Facebook (181)
- Yahoo Mail (64)
- Google Reader (61)
- School Library Journal blogs [A Chair, a Fireplace, and a Tea Cozy and Someday My Printz Will Come] (48)
- ala.org (37)

Top search terms (since creation of blog; similar searches consolidated)

- yalsa the hub (1743)
- the hub disney (1661)
- seventeenth summer (370)
- teen hub (355)
- the book smile (317)
- manga genres (218)
- transgender manga (177)
- best audiobooks for road trips (109)

Accomplishments and Notes

In late July, a weekly **Monday Poll** that invites readers to share their opinions on various questions about YA lit was introduced. An average of 54 people vote in each poll. This was an especially effective way to address the controversy surrounding the announcement of the National Book Award finalists, as it allowed readers to share their own thoughts about what was happening.

I took over as the blog manager in August. Shortly afterward, I asked all of our bloggers about what The Hub had been doing well, how it could be improved, and how I could help them with their contributions. As a result of their feedback:

- I've created a **style guide** and an outline of the **writing process** for bloggers
- I now send monthly emails to all of our contributors with **statistics and top posts**
- I've been soliciting posts from our bloggers on **news in the YA lit world** (e.g., authors passing away, non-YALSA awards announcements, and things like the recent Simpsons episode about YA/MG publishing) as it happens.

Our second themed month, October's "**31 Days of Authors**," was a success. Bloggers enjoyed interviewing authors, and October has been our best month (measured by page views) yet. While themed months are more time- and labor-intensive, they increase our readership. I expect future theme months will also do well.

The **breadth of what we cover is increasing** as we move our focus away from reviews. While reviews are still published (especially ones that promote YALSA-recognized books like the titles on the Nonfiction and Morris Award shortlists), our bloggers are also posting:

- More pieces about news in the YA lit world

- Book lists around particular themes
- Analysis of current trends
- Personal essays
- Regular columns like "A Different Light" (which examines LGBT issues in YA lit) and "That Was Then, This Is Now" (which revisits older YA titles and recommends contemporary read-alikes)
- Creative pieces like the Mad Libs-style "DIY YA"
- Group posts with contributions from multiple bloggers around a particular question or theme (e.g., reactions to the release of the final Harry Potter movie or what our YA lit resolutions are for 2012)
- More teen-authored content

The Hub was recently nominated for an **Edublog Award** for Best Group Blog. While we ultimately weren't voted the winner, the nomination speaks to our provision of insightful content that is applicable to our readers' lives and reading and work.

Goals and Further Considerations

- The Hub Advisory Board has been quiet for the last few months, and there were recently two resignations. Once reappointments are finalized, **reinvigorate the Advisory Board** and work with the Advisory Board to create a **work plan** that outlines additional theme months, contests, and major events to be covered.
- Many of our most-viewed posts are announcements about YALSA's awards and selected lists or analysis of trends and current events in YA literature. Work with the Advisory Board to address how we can increase our **coverage of timely events**.
- Continue to find ways to incorporate **more A/V content** in posts like our occasional podcasts, Xtranormal videos, and playlists.
- Increase publication of **teen-created content**.
- The sites that drive the vast majority of traffic to us are Google, Twitter, and Facebook. Address how we can improve our **search engine optimization (SEO)** and **encourage readers to share our posts** on social networking sites.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen Kolderup