

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Dallas
January 20 – 24, 2012**

Topic: Engaging & Supporting School Library Members

Background: At the core of YALSA's mission is its members, and in support of the strategic plan's goal area of Member Recruitment and Engagement, it is vital that the association ensure that it is meeting the needs of all its core member groups. There are 1,221 secondary school librarian members who make up 24.6% of YALSA's total membership. YALSA provides many resources and services helpful to school librarians and their work with teens, yet some school librarians feel left out of YALSA's offerings. YALSA conducted a May 2011 survey of school librarians, and the results from 277 respondents (22.7% of total school librarian members) are the basis behind this proposal.

Action Required: Discussion

Survey Findings:

An e-newsletter was overwhelmingly identified as the most useful resource tailored for a secondary school library audience (71%).

An email message was the overwhelmingly preferred method of receiving time-sensitive information from YALSA (91%).

The respondents indicated that they would be most likely (46.8%) to take advantage of school librarian networking opportunities (meet-ups) at state conferences. There was some interest in a unique online social networking space for school librarians, with 49% indicating that they would be somewhat likely to use one.

By far, YA literature is the continuing education topic of highest interest (73.6%) followed by digital literacy, emerging technologies, and teen reading habits/trends, all higher than 50%.

Of all respondents, 23.8% indicated that they were very likely and 54.5% were somewhat likely to participate in intensive, virtual professional development activities that span more than one day.

When asked about awareness of and interest in new resources YALSA has launched in the past year, the most common choice for each example was "unaware but will check

out." This included in order of greatest level of interest: free bookmarks, etc. for all 2011 award winners (71%), the Research Journal (60.2%), The Hub (57%), free archived webinars to members (48.4%) and process committee participation being 100% virtual (33.5%).

Most respondents do not access ALA Connect (63.5%), with the number one reason being they were unaware of it (55.7%) followed by not liking a separate social networking site to log into, preferring something they are already using (30.7%).

In an open ended question, respondents were given the opportunity to share how YALSA may best serve library members. The largest number of comments fell into the following categories: feel left out of YALSA; social networking/blogs blocked during the school day so cannot access information or communicate in that way; less flexible during the school day than public librarians so cannot attend webinars during the day; YALSA needs to advocate for school librarians at the state level and in general.

Recommendations:

Because most of the school librarians are interested in literature-related information, market those opportunities (i.e. The Hub, YA Lit Symposium, webinars, conference programs, award list resources and publications) directly to school librarians.

When describing resources, events and conference programs that have relevance to both public and school librarians (such as those related to YA literature, research and technology), use inclusive terminology that does not appear to limit the audience to public librarians.

Continue to schedule webinars and other virtual events of interest to school librarians outside of the school day and during summer months.

Continue to be aware of filtering restrictions on social media for some schools, and to communicate through a variety of platforms.

Knowing that school librarians prefer receiving important information via email and e-newsletters, continue to strategically use those methods of communication.

Increase awareness of how the mission and goals of YALSA and AASL differ. Many school librarians seem unaware of the boundaries that exist between AASL and YALSA in terms of restrictions on activities. For example, only AASL is able to provide resources and services involving information skills instruction.

Rationale:

One in four YALSA members is a school librarian.

Across the board, very few school librarians were aware of YALSA resources introduced in the past year.

Although e-newsletters from AASL and SLJ Teen are of interest to secondary school librarians, their focus is not YALSA programs, resources and services. One purpose of a YALSA e-newsletter would be to directly market YALSA opportunities for engagement and demonstrate the value of YALSA membership to help retain school librarians.

That some school librarians feel “left out” indicates that YALSA is not engaging those members as well as it should and thus may not be taking advantage of their expertise as members (i.e. getting school librarians to serve on committees and actively participate in the association in a variety of ways).

School librarians are interested in networking with each other through YALSA membership.

The proposal supports the strategic plan goal of Member Recruitment and Engagement:

- Objective 4b: Significantly more members are involved in an array of active and representative member groups that work together to advance YALSA’s mission and goals.
- Objective 4c: Significantly more members are involved in the mission and work of YALSA through such venues as blogs, publications, surveys and events.

Proposed Actions:

1. Direct the President to establish an advisory board of members interested in school librarianship whose charge includes creating a quarterly e-newsletter for school librarians with items contributed by YALSA members in order to provide content tailored to the specific needs of school librarians and to raise awareness about how the mission and goals of YALSA and AASL differ.
2. Direct the President to recruit YALSA members to establish and oversee an interest group for members interested in meeting teen needs in a school library setting.

Additional Resources:

- AASL Mission & Goals - <http://bit.ly/seAQLw>
- School Librarian Survey Results - <http://svy.mk/skwFGV>
- SLJ Teen e-Newsletter - <http://bit.ly/rs6OXw>
- YALSA Discussion & Interest Group FAQ - <http://bit.ly/uJsrnY>