

**YALSA Board of Directors
ALA Annual Meeting, Washington D.C.
June 20-25, 2019**

Topic: **Membership Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities**

Background: **As a result of discussions at ALA Annual 2018, the Board directed the Division and Membership Promotion committee to add the task of evaluating and making recommendations to improve member engagement around the appointment process and volunteering opportunities. Below is a comprehensive overview of the committee’s recommendations.**

Action Required: **Consent**

Overview of the Issue

At Annual 2018, the Board Document 29 “Improving the Member Engagement Experience” was discussed. That document contained discussions, ideas, and concerns about the communication and membership engagement surrounding volunteer opportunities. Specifically the need to address the volunteer application, communication regarding the appointment process, and improving recognition of committees and committee members. Additionally, the hope that the ALA Connect Volunteer Match software could alleviate some of these problems. However, little movement has been seen in implementing the software. One of the questions listed for the Board’s consideration was what role can/should the Division and Membership Promotion Committee play in implementing the recommended actions?

In August 2018 the Board directed the Division and Promotion Committee to evaluate current membership engagement around volunteer opportunities, from discovery to post-application, and make recommendations for improvements. Contained in this document are specific actionable items that the Division and Membership Promotion committee recommend for either YALSA Board Members, the committee itself, or potential task force carry out.

Additionally, while creating these recommendations the Board discussed changes to the Volunteer Application in early December 2018 and voted to direct the YALSA Executive Director to work with YALSA Staff and ALA Staff to update the YALSA volunteer form with proposed language in Board Doc for Midwinter 2019 #14. There could be some overlap with the DMP committee recommendations and the results of completed volunteer application improvements.

Here are the recommendations from the Division and Membership Promotion Committee:

Online

The DMP has several suggestions for the YALSA website. The assumption is that many members turn to the website as their first step towards volunteering. There are some important key pieces of information that should be added to be website:

- Time: Each committee has a calendar of activities, including the deadlines for applying to be on the committee, when appointments are made, and the height of “committee business”
- Expectation/Qualification - Each volunteer opportunity is different and finding the “right fit” is somewhat difficult if you’re unfamiliar with committee work, current lingo, etc. Adding information about desired qualifications, expectations, etc. will assist in matching volunteers.
- Overall Communications: DMP has some recommendations for general communication practices between YALSA and interested volunteers and there are various recommendations for improving the communication process during the application and appointment processes contained in the Actionable Items list below. These recommendations will assist in creating better matches and sense of transparency. Additionally, the unanimous consensus among DMP committee members is that the volunteer form is currently buried and hard to find on the website and making it more prominent is a top priority. Leadership opportunities are an important draw for prospective members; therefore, YALSA may also benefit from having some information available to all those who visit the YALSA website and not just members who are logged in. For example, committee information, upcoming opportunities (awards, taskforces, etc.).
- Once a volunteer form is completed, members frequently comment on “never hearing anything.” The response to a completed form should include information about when appointments will be made and notifications will be sent out. Additionally, several DMP members attempted to apply for committees after deadline and didn’t receive information regarding deadlines, try next year, or other opportunities. YALSA members not selected for a specific committee need feedback and encouragement for continued participation and to avoid “application burn-out.”

Actionable Items

- The form needs to be more prominent on the YALSA website.
- Information about awards committees should be public-facing, rather than behind user name/profile
- Feature deadlines for the applications more prominently and on each committee’s page
- Provide a brief annotation of committee on the volunteer form so you know what you’re applying for
- Provide some brief information about workload and when work needs to be done for all committees.
- Explain what different qualifications are needed/preferred for the different committees:
ex. Review experience for awards committees

- When the appointment deadline has passed: send emails that the position has been filled and what other opportunities might still be available
- Define things like round table, award committee, process committee, shared award committees (when interdivisional or additional membership may be required)
- If needed include information about number of committee slots and applicants. For example, “There were 100 applicants for 10 positions on XYZ taskforce.”
- Improve message displayed after form is submitted (esp: larger text)
- Include information about chairing opportunities or on the form where an applicant can indicate if they are interested in chairing. Give a link to a page that explains chairing or make it more prominent on the form with additional information.

Current YALSA Practices “What we do”

The general consensus among DMP committee members is that YALSA could utilize social media better to showcase committee work and members. DMP recommends exploring ways of greater connections and communications between YALSA’s Social Media Manager and committees, for programs such as Twitter Take Overs, InstaStory, etc. Telling the story of what a committee does starts with the people involved: committee chairs, members, etc. DMP recommends exploring ways that committee membership can be more transparent and public facing, include a specific contact person that may be willing to share insights about a specific committee’s work. This could be incorporated into YALSA 101, 301 or a 201 could be created.

Actionable Items

- Increase Social Media Use to communicate about volunteer opportunities: create an Instagram and increase usage of Facebook to share information about committee work. Employ Twitter Takeovers to center more on committees and their work.
- Someone from each committee, roundtable, etc is designated to communicate with the YALSA Communications Manager to share information that needs publicizing on their work.
- Possibly some kind of requirement to share information about committee work on a regular basis (ex. YALSA blog posts, ex. of regular post: “Things learned after serving on a committee”)
- Introducing committee members at the beginning or end of their charge (“Class Photo” similar to the Board photos)
- Hold a volunteer fair virtually or at Annual with committee members willing to talk to those interested in serving. This could also be done via email submission to create a webinar or on a Twitter Takeover
- Revamp the YALSA 101 session to focus on volunteering, or create a YALSA 201 session for the in between members of 101 (brand new) and 301 (experienced leader) who are looking to step up their involvement. DMP Committee Chair, Yvette, recommends that a YALSA Task Force be created to evaluate the YALSA 101 and 301 Sessions and whether it is best to revamp 101 or create a 201.

Acknowledgements

Finally, the DMP committee has ideas that could be added to the current efforts to acknowledge members' hard work. This includes having committees/task forces/etc. make recommendations for a weekly or monthly volunteer shout-out, and making sure each committee has a class photo. However, the DMP committee feels that best way to evaluate the acknowledgement process is conduct a member survey and discover what membership would find most valued. A survey would help prioritize suggestions and give insight into how best to serve those that are currently serving on committees, etc. DMP would be happy to create and administer a survey.

Actionable Items

- Recognition during National Volunteer Week
- Thank you messages from chairs to members and to their supervisors at the close of their term
- Weekly Member Shout in the eNews
- Monthly thank you's in the President's report
- Membership survey conducted by the Division and Membership Committee

Questions for the Board's Consideration

What tasks can be given to the Division and Membership Promotion Committee?

What is the role of YALSA staff? If some recommendations are complicated by staff time cost, then what could be alternate solutions?

Does the current YALSA website capabilities prevent some of the recommendations, if so, what could be a work around?

Financial Implications

Staff time

Considering any physical events, or added conference sessions, costs for supplies

Any costs that might be associated with additional new physical acknowledgements (paper, stationary, swag, etc.)

Evaluation/Measuring Impact

After recommendations are executed, a member survey around volunteer opportunities, access, and communication

Increase in volunteer applications where we have been experiencing a decline

Increase in diverse applicants and appointments

Improved attendance at YALSA 101 sessions (if carried out, high attendance at 201 sessions)

Increase in awareness and understanding by membership of committees and their work, or a measurable increase in items shared socially and in YALSA communications about volunteers and committees.

Alignment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Goals

By increasing communication and awareness of committees and the work members do as volunteers, we make these volunteer opportunities more accessible and therefore increase the likelihood that diverse members would volunteer. Additionally, by increase our communication and acknowledgement of our members work on a micro level (photos, stories, shared

experiences) we will share more of what our membership is doing for YALSA and should highlight diverse stories.

Possible Next Steps

Assign recommendations to committees, Board members, and/or YALSA staff. Create a task force to evaluate YALSA 101 (201) and 301 sessions.

Additional Information

2018 ALA Annual Board doc #[29](#)

Vote called February 15, 2019: 10 yes, 4 abstain.