

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Annual Meeting, Las Vegas
June 26 – July 1, 2014**

Topic: Member Access to Virtual Board Space

Background: The YALSA Board has heard both formally and in informal conversation that there is confusion among the YALSA Membership about how the Board operates. Many members believe that the YALSA Board only does work at Conferences, and are unaware of the virtual meetings and work that is done throughout the rest of the year. Building on the movement to be more transparent, this proposal would help YALSA members see the work that the YALSA Board does between conferences and gain a greater understanding of how the Board works overall. It could also improve lines of communication between the Board and the Membership and allow for more dialogue. Carla Land has presented a proposal below for the Board's consideration.

Action Required: Action

Best practices for governance indicate that openness and transparency are key to a successful organization. According to "Transparency" (BoardSource 2013):

"There is no obligation for nonprofits to share their planning documents that allow them to remain competitive, prepare for the future, or simply brainstorm about possibilities. Confidential material that would jeopardize the reputation or integrity of an individual must remain disclosed."

In the same document, however, it is also noted that "(t)o exceed the minimum requirements can determine a nonprofit's reputation and its survival capacity if someone ever questions its practices."

The YALSA Board has taken many steps to be transparent, and members are overall satisfied with the organization. The 2012 member survey results indicated that 80% of members would definitely recommend YALSA to a colleague or coworker. In recent virtual Town Hall meetings, however, some members shared that they would like more opportunities to learn about the work of the board and how the governance process works.

What the YALSA Board is already doing:

In regard to openness and accessibility, the YALSA Board is already working toward making the organization as transparent as possible to the membership in several ways, which include:

- Holding YALSA Board Meetings at ALA Midwinter and Annual Conferences as open meetings, and offering an Information Forum at the beginning of each session, where any conference attendee can share information or ask questions
- Publicly posting meeting dates, agendas, Board documents, and meeting minutes for members to read both before and after conferences on the YALSA website
- Writing YALSAblog posts explaining action items and decisions, which has helped to open up dialogue between the Board and membership
- At Annual 2013 Carrie Kausch submitted a proposal for increased YALSA Board transparency, which was approved by the YALSA Board. Insofar as what the YALSA Board does both at conference and in-between conferences, many of the suggestions within that proposal have already been adopted by the Board Members, including but not limited to the following:
 - Leveraging social media more through the use of live Tweeting Board meetings at Conference
 - Sharing blog posts via Twitter
 - Asking for feedback regarding the work of the Board through Twitter and other social media
- Having several virtual Town Hall meetings throughout the year with the YALSA President so that more members can engage in discussion.
- Publicly posting board member's photos as well as email and Twitter contact information on YALSA's web site
- Helping to staff the YALSA booth at ALA, Division and state conferences to be available to members who have questions about governance, board service, etc.
- Soliciting member feedback via regular member surveys, and incorporating the feedback into board decision-making
- The President provides a monthly governance update to the membership that's posted on the YALSAblog

One issue that has been taken into consideration is that some YALSA members feel that they receive *too much* information. Finding a balance between informing and over-informing has proven tricky, as those who feel over-informed can tune out important information. In an effort to increase transparency and knowledge of Board activities but not overwhelm the membership as a whole, the following proposal is submitted.

Allow read-only access for any interested YALSA member to the YALSA Board ALA Connect space.

In the interest of giving the members who have requested more information access to it without overwhelming those who don't, and in the interest of increasing transparency within the association, the YALSA Board could open its ALA Connect space on a read-

only basis to YALSA members who want to see how the board conducts work year-round via its virtual space. This would prove beneficial in several ways:

- It will keep a majority of the Board’s work in one location, making it easy for both YALSA members and Board members to keep track of the work done in between conference.
 - Currently some topics are discussed on the Board listserv and some are discussed on ALA Connect when most could conceivably be discussed in one place. In the interest of making it clear how we do our work year-round, and making it easier for us to keep that work organized for ourselves, utilizing ALA Connect for *non-confidential* business and utilizing the listserv for *confidential* business would help to keep Board work organized, keep Board work transparent, and show how the Board comes to its decisions.
 - As per The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, private/confidential information conducted on the Board listserv would include personnel matters, pending legal issues, disciplinary action and other sensitive matters. Generally, any information that the membership has a right to know, such as fiscal reports, is not considered confidential. As per BoardSource, “there is no obligation for nonprofits to share their planning documents that allow them to remain competitive, prepare for the future or simply brainstorm about future possibilities. Confidential material that would jeopardize the reputation or integrity of an individual must remain undisclosed.” For example, discussing an individual’s qualifications for an appointment or award, such reviewing Board Fellow applications, would be a confidential discussion that would take place on the listserv.
- Allowing YALSA membership the access to see how the Board conducts business on ALA Connect will help to familiarize the membership with not only what business is being conducted, but *how* it is being conducted, which will help them build knowledge of the governance process.
 - This aspect is something that was in Carrie Kausch’s original proposal, and using ALA Connect in this way would be an effective way to *show* rather than *tell* membership how things are done.
 - Many more members would be able to see the Board in action via ALA Connect than at the face-to-face meetings at conferences.
- It will promote the use of ALA Connect with the membership.
 - Discussion space can be dedicated in the general YALSA section of ALA Connect to comment on recent Board happenings, and this would give the Board access to membership’s views and thoughts as well.

Why ALA Connect?

The rationale behind using ALA Connect and not the Board listserv are as follows:

- As a governing body of a division of ALA, if the YALSA Board shows support in the use of ALA Connect in this way it may increase its use by our membership.
 - All YALSA members have access to ALA Connect and can utilize the space, but not many do.
- By keeping a majority of the Board work on the Board ALA Connect space, it would not only make it easier for the Board members to go back and look at what work has been done/comments have been made, but it would be easier for YALSA Members to also look at their own leisure to see what work the Board has done. In-coming Board members would also be able to look back on previous discussions that happened before their appointment to the Board.
- YALSA Members can easily send messages to Board members via ALA Connect simply by clicking on their name.
- ALA Connect settings can be set up to send emails on new topics or discussion responses so that one does not have to log in constantly to see if there are any new posts.
- Discussion threads involving several members would be easier to read than Twitter conversations, which can be hard to follow if someone is not following everyone involved in the conversation.

Considerations

- Before opening up access to the Board ALA Connect space, the discussion threads that are currently available should be scanned to ensure there is no confidential/ private information posted that members would be able to access.
- Guidelines for what kind of information will be posted on ALA Connect and what information will be posted on the YALSA Board listserv should be established.
 - Any discussion that would happen in an open meeting of the YALSA Board would be eligible to be posted on ALA Connect.
- Definitions for what constitutes “private/confidential information” should be established using industry accepted definitions.
- Timeline- Proposed action depends on how long it would take to go through current Board posts and remove/make private confidential information.

Proposed action: The YALSA Board direct the Executive Director to work with staff in order to develop guidelines for posting information to the listserv vs. the Connect space and remove and archive offline or make private any Board discussions that contain confidential information, and to notify the membership that read-only access for any interested YALSA member to the YALSA Board Connect space is available by October 1, 2014.

Additional resources:

- May 2014 Town Hall recording, <http://connectpro87048468.adobeconnect.com/p10wwphdnad/>
- Board Transparency & Accessibility proposal from Annual 2013, <http://ow.ly/xTUHx>
- “Transparency”, BoardSource 2013 <http://ow.ly/xp7EZ>