

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Chicago  
January 30 – February 2, 2015**

**Topic:** Virtual Pilot Recommendation

**Background:** From February 1, 2013 to February 1, 2015, YALSA piloted one virtual selection committee and one virtual awards committee to test the feasibility of moving this type of work into a virtual environment. The Standing Board Committee on Member Recruitment was tasked with reviewing feedback gathered from those who participated in the pilots as well as the membership in order to make a recommendation to the Board about whether or not to continue the virtual status of these committees. Carla Land, Krista McKenzie, Nicola McDonald, and Rachel McDonald have presented the information below for the Board's consideration.

**Action Required:** Action

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**Overview:** YALSA is a member-driven organization that strives to make use of the abilities and skills of all its members, and to engage a wide range of members in leadership roles. Reasonable representation of members from a variety of backgrounds improves the quality of the finished product and promotes a sense of equity. The virtual selection committee pilot was an attempt to broaden the pool of potential committee members by removing the requirement of in-person physical meetings at ALA's conferences, thereby allowing more members from more diverse backgrounds to participate in YALSA's work, and ultimately to create a stronger product.

Tasks already completed include:

- The pilot of the Margaret A. Edwards Award Committee and Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults Committee has been completed.
- Debriefing of the chairs after the first year of the pilot, and using their feedback to inform the work of year two and adjust resources and support
- The creation and revision (after year one of the pilot) of the chair manual for how to manage committee work virtually
- The expansion of training for selection and award committee members to include a stand-alone session on literary evaluation
- The creation of selection and award committee FAQ on the web site
- Committee members in the pilot were surveyed in April and May of 2014 about their experiences with the virtual committees.

**Proposal:** Continue the virtual status of the Margaret A. Edwards Award Committee and Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults committees moving forward, and pilot up to two additional selection or award committees as virtual.

**Rationale:**

- Virtual committees allow members who are not able to attend ALA Annual or Midwinter conferences to participate in selection and award committees, thereby making YALSA a stronger organization due to increased and more diverse member engagement in the mission and work of the organization.
- Virtual committees accomplish Strategic Plan Objective 4a: Expand and diversify the total membership of YALSA and 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.
- In response to question 18 of the 2014 member survey (“If you have suggestions on how YALSA can enhance existing or create new opportunities for member involvement in YALSA please provide them here”), several members mentioned the need for more opportunities for virtual involvement. Some additional responses specifically requested that more selection and award committees be made virtual.
- Feedback from the committee members who participated in the pilot was mostly positive and did not indicate any barriers significant enough to warrant reverting back to the face-to-face status. Importantly, it was determined that the quality of the products (the award and the list) did not suffer from the virtual status of the committee. Additionally, while there was some initial adjustment and a learning curve, overall committee members could successfully use the technology tools needed to work in a virtual environment. Positive comments included things like the cost savings of not having to attend conference, as well as the benefits of the more frequent communications that happened in the virtual environment. Concerns included the increase in time the chairs needed to spend managing work virtually and the need for committee members to be adept at using virtual tools.
- While the pilot was by and large a success, it is not recommended that all selection and award committees become immediately virtual. Findings from the pilot indicate that the initial transition period requires extra resources and time from chairs and liaisons, and moving all committees virtually at once would put a strain on resources that could lead to unwanted problems for the committees.

**Questions to explore:**

- Does the existing chair and committee member training need to be augmented in any way for these particular groups (e.g. technology training)?
- What additional or different support, if any, does a virtual award or selection committee need throughout the year?

**Recommended Actions:**

- The board vote to make the virtual status of the Edwards Award and Popular Paperbacks Committees official beginning with the 2016 committees and directs the Executive Director to work with staff to update the charges of the committees in the Handbook, and the incoming President-Elect and Awards Nominating Committee to inform potential appointees of the change during the recruitment process.
- The board vote to adapt the existing pilot model and pilot up to two total selection and/or award committees over the 2016-2017 calendar years and direct the President to solicit feedback from selection and award committee chairs, Board and staff to determine which committee(s) is the best fit for the virtual pilot.

**Additional Recommendations:**

- Continue to update and refine the manual for chairs in order to provide chairs with the information and resources they need to manage work virtually.
- Rework selection and award chair and committee member training to address more of the findings from the pilot evaluation, including strategies for team-building in a virtual environment, best practices in communicating virtually, highlighting virtual meeting/virtual collaboration options and hands-on training on how to use needed tools.
- Continue to solicit and use feedback from virtual committee members to keep improving and refining the process in order to ensure member needs are met.

**Existing YALSA resources:**

[Virtual Selection Committee Manual](#)

[Virtual Committee Pilot Evaluation Responses](#)

[Board Document: Virtual Award/Selection Pilot Evaluation](#)

[Board Document: Piloting a Virtual Selection Committee](#)

[2014 Member Survey Results](#)

**Existing ALA resources:**

[ALA's Stonewall Book Awards Committee](#) (works virtually all year, except for meeting face-to-face at Midwinter for the final vote)

[ALA's Virginia Hamilton Award Committee](#) piloted an all-virtual format in 2013

**Other Resources:**

[In The Margins Book Award Committee](#) (accomplishes all work virtually)