

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Annual Meeting 2021, Virtual  
June 26, 2021**

**Topic: Establish a President’s Theme Implementation Taskforce**

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The 2020-2021 President’s Theme and Initiative center around Representation in Recruitment and Retention – Further Supporting YALSA’s EDI Plan. The outcomes from the initiative supporting the 2020-2021 Presidential Theme include:

- Provide the membership with quarterly continuing education strategies and ideas that support and celebrate the diversity of library staff and the teens they serve.
- Identify and engage in efforts that aim to study the value of YALSA resources amongst library staff who work with teens that are seen as “non-members.” There are many non-member library staff whose actions adhere to the YALSA mission or support the YALSA vision and who utilize YALSA resources regardless of having purchased a YALSA membership.
- Develop a report that includes findings from the aforementioned study, as well as provide recommendations on strategies for engaging non-members.

**Accomplishments:**

- **Provided 4 CE**
  - **December 10, 2020 webinar** - Serving the Public During Difficult Times (with 22x20)
  - **December 17, 2020 Chat & Snack** - Supporting Teens During Difficult and Challenging Times
  - **March 11, 2021 webinar** - Gather Your Peeps: YALSA Interest Groups
  - **June 10, 2011 webinar** - Stories That Inspire: Celebrating Our 2020 Successes
- **YALSA Member Survey questions-** contributed questions regarding member and non-member values and YALSA’s resources.
- **Hosted Non-Member focus groups** to discuss values, resources and YALSA awareness.

**Discovery and Discussion:**

The Taskforce began with a discussion centered around the question:

“What comes first: the audience we serve or the resources we have?” Are we trying to identify an audience that values the resources YALSA currently provides, or are we trying to determine what resources are valuable to current members and how to provide them to a specific audience? This question provides the compass to determine value/values. This discussion lead to more questions/statements to consider, such as:

- Do we have too many resources?
- Are our resources aimed at the right audiences?
- “YALSA is there when we need them... but we don’t need them every day.”
- We want people to value YALSA whether they become members or not.

- Non-member engagement - target an audience or do something more general?
- What are the audiences that YALSA serves? Are any audiences missing?
- YALSA needs to advertise better; communicate with various groups more efficiently.

This discussion was important because [different audiences](#) have different needs; therefore, YALSA must promote its resources to multiple audiences with targeted messaging. According to Essentiam’s analysis non-members valued retrieving tools, resources and programming for use at their libraries most. (YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 16, 28)

- **Staff working with teens**

It is important to use the term “staff” -- not everyone working with teens in a library setting has or is required to have a degree. Anyone working with teens needs to feel welcomed to participate, engage, and use YALSA resources.

***Question to consider: What are the opportunities for non-librarians and library school students? What messaging is YALSA using to promote opportunities that might deter students and staff?***

- **Early career teen librarians**

“The organization can feel cliquy and hard to break into.”  
(YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 29)

Teen librarians that are getting started need mentors, advocacy, and other resources as they begin their career. Many early career teen librarians don’t even know what they don’t know, or where to find information that would be useful. Frequently, they turn to their immediate supervisor for assistance, but in many cases that person does not have experience in teen services. A mentorship or welcoming program will aid in creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for newbies with the organization.

- **Mid-career librarians**

This audience is seeking leadership and a different type of mentorship. They have experiences that they are interested in sharing and they are discovering themselves as leaders. Many are asking themselves: “Am I ready for management?”

**Question to consider: How effective can a YALSA mentor program or Leadership institute be in creating future leaders in the field of teen services?**

- **Teen department managers and coordinators**

Managers and coordinators have different expectations thrust upon them; creating programs for an institution, while balancing management duties. Additionally responsibilities include HR/staffing issues, managing budgets, grant writing/dealing with donations, advocacy with library boards and other internal departments, and scaling of programs.

**Question to consider: Could YALSA partner with LAMA to provide support for these managers and coordinators who are not front-line workers but are still in a position to manage those who directly support teens and teen services?**

- **School Librarians**

“School librarians come second to public librarians.”  
“As a school librarian, I don’t feel as welcome as I used to.”  
(YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 30)

School librarians feel less welcome in YALSA, even at the level of having different lingo about library work. Given the interest overall in connecting with people who know and understand the job, this would be an area YALSA should work on -- school librarians will be more likely to join if they feel others understand what they do and can provide support for it (network and community). School librarians are often focused on questions of collection development -- they want to know what books and other resources will support their students and teachers, and they want to know the latest on how to update, weed, and organize their collection, as well as the best ways to support teens and adults in their schools. Many schools do not pay for professional memberships, so school librarians are also looking for what seems to be a good deal, as they’re paying for it themselves.

- **Students and student workers**

Students need the same support as newly graduated teen librarians. Additionally, the resources that YALSA provides may assist in completing course work and provide some insight into “the front lines” of librarianship. **Recommendation: YALSA offices need to maintain a directory of library school contacts that can be used to share information and volunteer opportunities. The directory needs to be shared with Chairs.**

- **Library Administration (Managers & Directors)**

“Please educate our directors and managers on the space and time needed to give meaningful support to teens”  
(YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 59)

This audience has a dual purpose; YALSA can assist in communicating administrative priorities to teen staff (strategic planning, funding, outcome based programming ) and target advocacy efforts to this audience for greater understanding of teens, teen services and programming (it looks different). Many teen serving staff have expressed a frustration with the lack of understanding/support administrators/managers have regarding teen services.

**Question to consider: How can YALSA advocate with managers/administrators to provide a wider understanding of teen competencies and their implications for services and programs?**

The Taskforce next took a deeper dive into YALSA resources and categorized them based on access. Due to financial issues, we acknowledge that not everyone can afford to be a member of YALSA. What is the value of membership? Why pay? On the surface, membership has the privilege of access to the following resources:

Pay as You Go	<a href="#">Free with Membership</a>	FREE
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<p><b>Webinars</b>  <b>Conferences &amp; Events</b>  <b>Publications - YALS</b>          Publications - Research Journal          OnSite “trainings” - institutes          Self-paced e-learning</p>	<p><b>Awards &amp; Grants</b>  <b>Free Webinars</b>  <b>Leadership opportunities</b>          ALA Connect          YALSA eLearning Library  <b>Interest Groups</b>  <i>Conference discounts</i></p>	<p><b>The HUB</b>  <b>YALSABlog</b>          Collection Development/”the lists”          TeenTober          Programming HQ          Teen Book Finder database and App</p>
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Essentiam’s report had an interesting nugget:

“Each individual has their own set of tools -- individuals aren’t aware of all of the tools, too much to choose from.”(YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 42)

We believe that this is a consequence of the various audiences that YALSA is trying to service. We are a buffet and haven’t specialized in a specific aspect of teen library services. Our tools represent the tools needed for developing teen services staff and the various aspects of serving teens - their development, programming ideas, YA lit, etc.

**The Website:**

According to Essentiam’s findings the website is by far the way most members and non-members connect regularly with YALSA. Any individual, especially non-members, seeking information about YALSA or our resources will naturally go to the website. The website does not help users with this; while all of the information is there on the website, it’s only easy to find if you already know what you’re looking for. The website is cumbersome to navigate and works best if you do a search for a particular thing, rather than browsing. As one respondent stated, “it would be desirable to have a more streamlined entry point to content like one landing page to access all the resources listed in the survey.” (YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 47, 55, 60)

Recommendations:

- **Library student internship** - This internship will serve two primary purposes; first, introduce a library student to YALSA resources and second to provide website support by utilizing a short-term intern to review the website for dead links and outdated information.
- **Project for consideration** - conduct a **UX design audit**: User experience enhancement task force/focus group - UX design is a hallmark of good web design; however, UX design is based on target audiences and their preferences. What are the preferences for YALSA’s audiences? What information is preferred on the landing page? How should information be organized? What jargon should be used? There are some tech nonprofits/organizations that will do such work pro-bono, such as [Fuzzy Math](#) and [Taproot](#).

**Advocacy & Assistance**

YALSA is well known for its willingness to assist library staff in advocating for dedicated teen services and provides several advocacy resources. Advocacy includes both advocating for the importance of teen

services in the community as well as advocating for dedicated teen staff members. This was reflected in the findings from the focus groups:

- “Advocate for teen services librarians to be respected, put in leadership positions within their organizations and be compensated equitably with other professional counterparts.”(YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 61)
- “Please educate our directors and managers on the space and time needed to give meaningful support to teens.” (YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 59)
- Help with peers within the library, better understand youth, their needs, tendencies, etc.
- “I work so hard to get them in. then the other staff chases them out.” (YALSA 2021 Strategic Planning Research Report, p. 45)

Recommendations:

**Management/Administrative introduction into Teen Services retreat/pre-conference -**

Target audience will be library directors and other library administrators without Teen services and will introduce the attendee to the hidden barriers of policy & procedures regarding teens, various aspects of teen programming, roles of teen staff and teen community building. There will need to be a differentiation between this and a workshop for new managers of a teen services department. T3 is an excellent fit for this type of project and have already begun to work in this area. This could scale or build on current activities.

**EDI** concerns around representation could be addressed by increasing the opportunities for non-members, especially those from underrepresented groups, to participate in networking/leadership opportunities. YALSA should explore partnerships with affiliates and other BIPOC groups to provide training, resources, etc. This will increase the visibility of YALSA’s efforts and increase the amount of diverse voices within various aspects of YALSA.

YALSA needs to be aware of some issues of inclusion regarding the budgetary status of small, rural, and tribal libraries. YALSA also needs to be aware of librarians serving conservative communities, and that these communities are seeking resources that are appropriate/of interest to their communities. This need was expressed by the following comments:

- Held minority views or positions, including being school or academic librarians
- “More about serving conservative, small, rural areas. Dealing with extremely conservative patrons and parents.”

**Recommendations:**

- YALSA’s EDI efforts and activities need to be more transparent and visible.
- YALSA needs to give small, rural, tribal and conservative communities a platform to express their needs.