

The New York Public Library

ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

Office of Children's Services

The Branch Libraries

8 East 40th Street
New York, New York 10016

June 7, 1979

Ms. Zena Sutherland
The University of Chicago
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Dear Zena:

I regret this late reply, but life is one meeting or deadline to be met here, and without adequate secretarial help for a three month period, it gets downright impossible.

In regard to your question about the N/C banquet: I have never been one totally against the banquet, since every year newer members to the profession seem enchanted by the affair and the opportunity to see "celebrities" in the children's book world. I do believe it is the numbers of us who have been to several dinners who object to the little details which tend to minimize the true purpose of the awards.

1. I do think that an inordinate amount of ALA staff time probably goes into preparation for the dinner which could probably be delegated and should not be such an all-consuming effort for the executive secretary, especially since there are usually experienced people on local arrangement committees who could manage many details to relieve her time and release her for more productive membership needs.
2. The cost of the dinners may be a deterrent for some but 1700 + attendance indicates that many don't mind attending. The complaints about costs I've heard generally come from publishers who find the costs of the tables, placement, etc. exceedingly difficult. I do believe, without the support of the publishers, a great deal might not be possible at this major meal event. The main criticism of the dinner therefore has been that it is in effect a publishers' awards event, rather than a professional award or awards for notable achievement.
3. The best that has sometimes happened, is the opening of the area to auditors after the dinner has been served and the speeches are to be made. Some few people do or have taken advantage of this

- opportunity to hear the acceptance speeches. I say few which means most are at the dinner, or choose to stay away entirely.
4. Has the task force noted that YASD, the ALA President, and others also have major meal events, - none as far as I know except the Exhibitors Round Table dinners - match the attendance of the N/C banquet. Has the task force investigated the similarities or differences of these affairs? It would be one way perhaps to assess the problems we seem to have over the ages.
 5. One other bone of contention is that in spite of the tremendous attendance at the N/C banquet, most of the money does not go directly to the Division. The logistics of this bears investigation.
 6. The recent suggestion to winning publishers to contribute to the potential professional education of a librarian seems a step in the right direction. Perhaps if some percentage of money from each ticket could be earmarked or guaranteed for the Melcher Scholarship fund some of the pain of the cost of the meal would be reduced.
 7. The change in format of the N/C announcement at Midwinter seems to generate adequate interest. What needs to change really is probably the festivities before and after the banquet - the pre-dinner reception; the post-dinner reception and the attendant exclusivity. What about these costs? Anyone who can afford to attend ALA nowadays could or would spare the \$16 - \$18 or so dollars, for a special occasion, provided the event is open for the meal and the speeches, or for the speeches alone.

The fact that non-ALSC members buy tickets does not sound at all unhealthy to me. The fact of life is, that many young ALSC members may not even make it to the Conference at all since some libraries will only subsidize officers, or people on committees in ALA etc. This is not to be interpreted as lack of interest in the N/C event. The few who found an alternative event, it seemed to me, did focus their award around some sort of "breaking bread" event albeit cheaper, but their main objections were for the nature of the awards - types of books etc., and the practice of not remembering the profession. Donations to the Melcher Scholarship satisfies the latter criticism.

No matter what changes are made, I'm certain that the entire membership of ALSC would still not attend any Awards' affair - meal or no meal.

I hope this helps, Zena. These are my random thoughts. Good luck!

Sincerely,



(Mrs.) Barbara Rollock
Coordinator of Children's
Services

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