

**YALSA Board Meeting
2005 Midwinter Meeting
Boston, Massachusetts
January 14-19, 2005**

Topic: Online Community Software

Background: On December 17th ALA's ITTS unit signed an agreement with NetOn-Line for the Online Community software. The purpose of the software is to allow members to communicate and work in a shared online space. Beta testing by staff and members will begin in spring 2005.

Action Required: None

Online Communities

To further enhance continuing education and e-communities, in the spring of 2005, the ALA will launch an online communities application that will allow members to work online in virtual space, combining some of the many features common to widely-used Web sites like My Yahoo!, Web Junction, LiveJournal, and others.

An Online Community is essentially a controlled area of web space in which a group of members can collaborate. The controlled area will have restricted access based on an ALA ID and password. The necessary features include: Threaded Discussion, Shared Links, Shared Files, Event Calendar, Chat, Archives, Polling, Member Profile/Business Card, White Board, Online Status of Members/Who's Online, Help, and the ability to integrate RSS. Seamless integration of online community discussion threads and shared workspaces, discussion list output, Web site access, and instantly-available information regarding the member's "place" in the mix of ALA communications and membership opportunities is the end goal of this large undertaking.

Features:

Threaded Discussion. Also described as bulletin boards, topics can be created by members and others can reply. Discussions will accommodate emoticons, sharing active links, avatars representing the member, quoting other posts, and preview/edit/delete capability pre-posting. Attachments are not allowed. User may set preferences to access (send, receive) messages via private email account as individual message or digest format, or access messages via the

web only. Moderator will be able to tag common questions to a dynamic FAQ of the community.

Shared Links. A section of each community will allow members to share links to other web sites. Each shared link should require and display a URL, site name, and an annotation.

Shared Files. A section of each community will allow members to share uploaded files. Each shared file will require and display a filename, a document name, and an annotation.

Event Calendar. Each event will display a date, beginning and end time, a name, and an annotation. Users will be able to add events to a calendar at three different levels:
Private: Events added with this status will only be visible to the individual user.
Community: Events added with this status will be visible to the community.
Global: Events added with this status will be visible to everyone in all communities.
Users will have the ability to compile and export community calendars to desktop and PDA.

Chat. Synchronous discussion system will allow any community member to initiate a chat with any combination of the following options:

Private chat between invited members of a community

Open chat for all members of a given community

Chat open to all ALA members

Save transcript of session

Moderated chat (a moderator must approve each post to a chat)

Within a given chat session, the following options will be available:

Block a user/Ignore a user

Send working URLs within chat

Format text (bold, color, etc.)

View list of current chat participants

Link to current participants' profiles [described below]

Chat will not support file sharing or images.

Archives. Archives of each community will be both searchable by keyword using Boolean logic and browsable by either date or subject. The archives should include all threaded discussions, shared files, shared links, and chat transcripts. Users will be allowed to limit their search to a specific community, or to search globally across all committees, with the understanding that the user will not be able to view search results for communities of s/he is not a member. There will be some sort of visual cue or icon displayed to indicate that a search result is unavailable to the person searching.

Polling. Simple multiple-choice polls allowing only one vote per member can be created. The moderator will be able to designate each poll as anonymous (user ID is not connected to the specific vote) or recorded (each user's vote is visible to all members of that community). Global administrators will be allowed to "push" a poll to all communities.

Member Profile/Business Card. Each member will have a profile, with the following fields:
Username (this is the only required field and will be auto-generated from ALA's Association Management System -iMIS)

Image (.gif or .jpg)

Email address

Mailing addresses

Web URL

IM screen names (Yahoo!, AOL, ICQ, etc.)

ALA Community online status

Unit, section, and group memberships (auto-generated from ALA's Association Management System - iMIS)

The email address and mailing addresses will be pulled from iMIS.

White Board. Group members are enabled to work together on a common document using file sharing and software tools.

Online Status of Members/Who's Online. Members will have the option to display a list of community members currently logged into ALA's Online Communities, with option to initiate private/individual or community online chats.

Help. On every page of the community, a link to online help will be available. Online help will include contact information for ALA staff as well as documentation for using ALA Online Community features.

The system will have the ability to integrate RSS.