

**YALSA Board Meeting
2005 Annual Conference
Chicago, Illinois
June 23-29, 2005**

Topic: ALA's Online Communities

Background: This new member service will go live later this summer. Basic information is provided below. This has the potential to be a great communications tool for members and member groups, such as YALSA committees. Live chat, threaded discussions and file sharing can facilitate the work of committees, especially in between conferences.

Action Required: For Information/Consent Only

Online Communities

Scope of Project

ALA's online communities will be available to ALA personal members only on an opt-in basis. ALA membership can be validated from our iMIS database. All ALA personal members have a login and password stored in iMIS that is used with our Web site; the login and password should be the same for their online communities. ALA web policy requires that all applications authenticate against our iMIS database, and after the first successful login, that all applications will share authenticated credentials such that the user log in only once per session.

Access to and the ability to establish communities is based on different membership and appointment combinations. For example, some communities will require a committee appointment and some will require membership to multiple division sections (intra- and inter-divisional).

For establishing communities, individual users may initiate the establishment of communities by completing a form including the community's name, purpose, suggested ALA unit/section sponsorship(s), membership requirements (unit memberships, appointment to groups), interest areas, and access-level (open to all memberships, select units, group-only).

Once a user establishes a community, the user will be asked to complete an online moderator training developed by the Consultant. The sponsoring unit(s) global administrator(s) will be notified of the petition by email. The community will not go live until the global administrator has approved the petition and moderator via an online administrative interface.

The communities' environment will have an active database of moderators. Some moderators will be added as they are approved from a petition to establish a community and global administrators may add others as a pool to specific unit groups unable to moderate.

Features (as described in the original request for proposals):

1. **Threaded Discussion.** Also described as bulletin boards, topics can be created by members and others can reply. Feature-rich discussions should 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 should be able to tag common questions to a dynamic FAQ of the community. ALA will be using Sympa for list management outside of the online communities so integration with or replacement of Sympa is important.
2. **Shared Links.** A section of each community should allow members to share links to other web sites. Each shared link should require and display a URL, site name, and an annotation.
3. **Shared Files.** A section of each community should allow members to share uploaded files. Each shared file should require and display a filename, a document name, and an annotation. ALA will provide the Consultant with a list of acceptable file types. The upload feature should integrate virus scanning software.
4. **Event Calendar.** Each event should be required to display a date, beginning and end time, a name, and an annotation. Users should 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. The ability to add Global events should be available only to Global administrators (see Security).

Users should have the ability to compile and export community calendars to desktop and PDA (both PocketPC and Palm formats preferred).

5. **Chat.** Synchronous discussion system that allows 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 should 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 should not support file sharing or images.
6. **Archives.** Archives of each community should be both searchable by keyword using Boolean logic and browsable by either date or subject (ALA will provide a controlled vocabulary for subjects). The archives should include all threaded discussions, shared files, shared links, and chat transcripts. Users should 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 should be some sort of visual cue or icon displayed to indicate that a search result is unavailable to the person searching.
 7. **Polling.** Simple multiple-choice polls allowing only one vote per member can be created. The moderator should 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 should be allowed to "push" a poll to all communities.
 8. **Member Profile/Business Card.** Each member should have a profile, with the following fields, which should be customized where users can choose which are public to community environment:
 - Username (this is the only required field and should be auto-generated from iMIS)
 - Image (.gif or .jpg)
 - Email address
 - Web URL
 - IM screen names (Yahoo!, AOL, ICQ, etc.), possibly with indicators of online status within each IM application
 - ALA Community online status
 - Unit, section, and group memberships (auto-generated from iMIS)The email address should be pulled from iMIS.
 9. **White Board.** Group members are enabled to work together on a common document using file sharing and software tools.
 10. **Online Status of Members/Who's Online.** Members should 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.
 11. **Help.** On every page of the community, a link to online help should be available. Online help should include contact information for ALA staff as well as documentation for using ALA Online Community features. ALA staff should be able to edit this documentation.
 12. **Ability to Integrate RSS at a Later Date.**

Security:

ALA would like three levels of security available within online communities.

1. A **user** should be able to:
 - Create and participate in threaded discussions
 - Add shared links
 - Add shared documents
 - Add personal and community items to the calendar
 - Initiate, use, and save the white board

- Access and search the archive
 - View a list of who's online
 - Open a private chat or a community-only chat
2. A **moderator** should be able to:
- Do anything a user can do
 - Delete or edit postings to any features
 - Start a community-only poll
 - Open a chat for non-community-member observers
 - Save the log of a chat to the archive
 - Open a moderated chat
 - Create dynamic FAQs
 - Tag, edit, post to FAQ in thread discussions only.
3. A **global administrator** should be able to:
- Do anything a user or moderator can do
 - Push events to the global calendar
 - Push polls to all communities
 - Create and auto-populate communities based on membership and/or sponsoring unit requirements as stored in iMIS.
 - Push community membership invitations via email based on iMIS info and then populate the communities when members opt in.
 - If Sympa is not used, accommodate institutions with multiple outgoing mail servers (which sometimes changes the appearance of sender's email address).