

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

Topic: Discussion List Policy

Background: As a result of Board discussion at Midwinter 2004 about recent problems on YALSA's discussion lists, such as solicitations from subscribers for intellectual content for books, and postings that contained abusive language, President Audra Caplan appointed an ad hoc committee to investigate the need for establishing guidelines for YALSA's electronic discussion lists and how those guidelines might be implemented. The committee created the guidelines, which were adopted by the Board at Annual 2004. Due to recent concerns relating to the policy that arose from one member's complaint, it would be prudent to revisit it and possibly revise it to clarify any unclear or contradictory language.

Action Required: For Discussion/Decision

Listed below is the current policy, with proposed changes appearing in italics. Changes were made based upon recommendations that appeared in an American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) article on managing electronic discussion lists. ALA's legal counsel reviewed the policy with the proposed changes and saw nothing objectionable to it.

1. All messages should relate to the general topic of the particular list.
2. Only subscribers to a list may post on the list.
3. Solicitations and advertisements for non-YALSA publications/*products* and other commercial purposes are not permitted. *However, a simple statement that offers more information on a service or product is tolerated if it accompanies a substantive message about a subject directly related to the discussion.*
4. Announcements of conferences, workshops, and position openings appropriate to the topic of the list are allowed.
5. Virus warnings (not bug reports) are strongly discouraged, and ONLY official CERT or CIAC advisories are acceptable. In addition, before forwarding any virus information you may wish to check Internet Hoaxes and Virus Hoaxes for hoax information and how to spot hoaxes.
6. Attachments may be included in an email; however, they should not be larger than 40KB.
7. *Posting of defamatory and/or offensive material is strictly prohibited, including but not limited to hate-speech, name-calling and personal insults.*

8. Any messages posted about YALSA committee business must be sent by the appropriate committee chair. List members must not send postings that suggest the message is being sent with the approval or under the auspices of a particular YALSA Committee.
9. All postings must be free of copyright restrictions that limit distribution. For example, posting a significant amount of a copyrighted work verbatim requires the permission of the copyright holder. To verify that such permission was obtained, all postings of this nature must include a statement that this is the case.
10. The YALSA Executive Committee has the right to remove members of the list who fail to participate as required by the policies stated in this document.
11. *YALSA retains the right to use posted materials in other formats.*
12. *YALSA disclaims all warranties, guarantees, and liability for damages.*

Mary K. Chelton submitted this statement about YALSA’s Discussion List Policy:

Comments to YALSA Board Regarding Policy on
Solicitation and Advertising on Division-Sponsored Listservs

Mary K. Chelton, May 2005

After learning about YALSA’s policy of not allowing any solicitations or advertising for publications other than those produced by YALSA to be mentioned on YALSA listservs, I asked the YALSA president to reconsider the policy. It is my understanding that this was done at the spring executive committee meeting where a decision was made to open this discussion the entire board at annual conference. At that point, I asked David Mowery if I might write something for you, since I cannot be in Chicago, and this is it. Please do not construe my absence as lack of, or diminished interest in this issue.

First of all, let me share with you what I sent to YALSA-L that caused me to get first, a phone call from Pam Holley, and subsequently an email of the policy that David says is routinely sent to anyone, including trade authors on YALSA-BK, who violate it.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

***Youth Information Seeking Behaviors:
Contexts, Theories, Models and Issues***

Scarecrow Press has offered us the chance to edit a second contributors book on youth information seeking behavior, and we are now seeking original research or research review articles that cover research that follows or derives from that in the first book, with an anticipated publishing date in 2007. While any type of information seeking topic is welcome, we are particularly interested in public library as well as in school or academic contexts, and in personal information as well as that sought for school assignments. Please note that, by “information seeking behavior,” we are not excluding traditional topics like books and reading, but we would exclude any papers that researched the content of materials to the exclusion of the process of seeking them. “Youth” may be defined as encompassing preschool through college undergraduates. All papers will be read by one outside referee of our choosing, in addition to ourselves. Papers are requested to be no more than 30 pages in length, inclusive, in Chicago Manual of Style format to arrive no later than August 1, 2005.

Questions and requests for detailed author guidelines may be sent to us at the address listed below.

Mary K. Chelton (mchelton@optonline.net) (718) 997-3667

Colleen Cool (cool@forbin.qc.edu) (718) 997-3789

Graduate School of Library and Information Studies

Queens College/CUNY

254 Rosenthal Library

65-30 Kissena Blvd.

Flushing, NY 11367

(718) 997-3790 Main Office

(718) 997-3797 FAX

David also told me that "...our (YALSA) policy is very similar to policies that other non-profits have developed for their discussion lists." I have subsequently discovered that "similar" does not mean "identical," even within ALA itself. LITA's, for example, says "Advertisements are not permitted. However, a simple statement that offers a way to follow-up for more information on a service or product is tolerated if it accompanies a substantive message discussing a subject appropriate to the list."

When you discuss this policy and whether to revise it, please consider several things, both conceptual and procedural. The first is whether ALA as a whole should have an overall, consistent listserv policy on advertising, solicitations, and professional information requests congruent with ALA policies. In that case, YALSA might consider asking the ALA Executive Board to charge either the ALA Publishing Committee or some other venue of their choosing to draft one. Frankly, that would be my first choice of suggested action. It seems ridiculous to have each division reinventing the wheel differently. In my own case, for example, the exact same message was posted on ALSC-L with no problem whatsoever.

If you decide to keep the policy as is, or to revise it, please consider YALSA's mission, ALA's intellectual freedom policies, and ALA's tax exempt status as an educational organization in your discussions. As it now stands, I don't think the policy on advertising and solicitations is congruent with any one of them.

As the YALSA website says, "The mission of the Young Adult Library Services Association is to advocate, promote and strengthen service to young adults as part of the continuum of total library service, and to support those who provide service to this population." If this is true, I don't understand how the division can have a policy that keeps members from knowing about resources in progress that "promote and strengthen service," regardless of where they originate. As Dorothy Broderick said, when I told her about all this, "Is YALSA in the business of promoting YA services, or just in business?" Surely, there is enough room for many voices about young adults to be heard, regardless of source.

The other problem is that, if you identify a "call for contributors" from a non-YALSA publication as a "solicitation," I feel that you are inhibiting communication between the LIS academic and practitioner communities. This is really a call for professional information. Carole Fiore, who was similarly chastised for mentioning non-YALSA publications, told me

that she found the policy amazing, especially since she had done the bulk of her research for her revised summer reading club book on listservs.

Banning protected speech seems to be a pretty basic prohibition deriving from ALA's intellectual freedom policies, so I am at a loss to understand why it is enshrined here. If the idea is to make people advertise to raise money for YALSA, I think it is misdirected toward individual authors who would not be the ones taking ads anyway, instead of toward their corporate publishers. There is no special category of membership for YALSA members who also are now, or who become authors, so why can't they talk on the lists like anyone else? In my own case, if anyone feels that I'm getting rich at YALSA's expense on an academic book not yet produced, I'll be glad to share royalty statements in 2007 when the title for which I was soliciting is actually published.

I will leave lawyers to argue over whether the listserv policy violates the association's IRS status as a tax-exempt 501 (c) 3 organization, although it does seem to me to violate the spirit of the law to promote only your own publications by banning the mention of others, even if it is legal.

Now, having said all that for the sake of argument, I need to point out that many of us who write for other publishers do so for one simple reason—they ask us to. I have never understood why ALA is so passive about going after authors, or why the YALSA Publications Committee isn't routinely contacting people who do great conference presentations to turn them into publications. Why, until recently after I talked to Beth about it, have there been no calls for contributors, RFPs, etc. on YALSA's listservs to get people who will publish with you? I have been pursued by editors from everywhere except ALA to write stuff, until Jana Fine asked me to do a YALS column. In terms of ALA Editions, the stuff I have published there came through the ALA president's office and the division (*Excellence* books) or divisional committees (*Bare Bones*), or review editors (*Booklist*). I have never had an ALA Editions editor ask me to do anything except be an acquisitions editor, which I refused since I was not about to do it for nothing.

I also think you misrepresent professional publishers as crass competitors, given ALA's and YALSA's penchant for depending on them to fund various association activities. I think it is hard to paint Scarecrow, Libraries Unlimited, Neal-Schuman, and Linworth, for example, solely as competitors. They really are as devoted to the profession and its goals as is ALA, and each one has done and continues to do much for the association. I think they consider themselves professional colleagues and friends as much as competitors. In their own ways, too, I think the "commercial" professional publishers are an integral part of the profession and its associations.

I could go on, but in priority order, what I would like to see you do is 1) ask the ALA Executive Board to institute the means of getting an overall association listserv/electronic communications policy; or 2) delete, expand or better define "solicitations," regardless of for which publisher; and 3) institute better procedures within the division and in collaboration with ALA Editions to create more publications that originate with and help support YALSA.