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Date: January 31, 2018

To: ALSC Board of Directors

From: Award Manual Revision Task Force: Confidentiality and Promotion in the 21st Century

Subject: Final Report and Recommended Next Steps

Task Force Charge:

Confidentiality and Promotion in the 21st Century

Many questions and issues arise each year in interpreting guidelines in the manual that seem to come into conflict with policy. It is clear, that guidelines around communication and promotion written before the advent of social media may need to be altered. The task force should address, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1) Reconsider the call for members to promote the award, and give clear guidelines on dos and don'ts with social media. The call to promote the awards traditionally referred to pre-internet media. Now, coverage in a local newspaper or experiences shared on a blog or social media, no matter how discreet, may be shared anywhere out of context.
- 2) Provide specific guidelines for appropriate participation in book discussions. Members are encouraged to take part in book discussions and organize local mock award groups. But because mock award groups share information widely online, a committee members' active role in a group may be misleading.
- 3) Government emails may be at risk for FOIA requests; investigate and consider requiring members to use personal email accounts for committee communication.
- 4) Google or other non-ALSC email groups and online storage may permanently archive confidential conversations and documents; investigate and consider recommending practices for clearing these archives effectively or requirement to use ALA-owned communication and data storage only.

Overview of Task Force Work Plan: We met from August through October via several conference calls and by using Google docs. We had a lively discussion for each point we considered and afterward, the chair wrote up minutes of the meetings. We also talked at length about the implications of the opening paragraph of our charge about the questions and issues that arise in interpreting the guidelines in the manual that seem to be in conflict with the policy. Based on the collective experience of the task force members as recent award committee chairs, PGC-Vs, and a former ALSC Executive Director, we agreed that these points were perennial issues that need to be addressed and clarified for committee members. Currently the Chairs, PGC-V, and the ALSC Awards Coordinator spend a lot of time responding to questions related to the following four areas, indicating that greater clarity and/or training is needed.

1. Social Media: What is allowed?
 - a. Applies to blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.
 - b. Creating a list of do's and don'ts for social media
 - i. What are the do's?
 - ii. What are the don'ts?
 - iii. How do we enforce them?
 - iv. Do we need to clarify what happens if someone fails to follow policy?
2. Committee affiliation in signature lines, online profiles, pinned tweets, etc.
 - a. Allow or not?
 - b. If we allow, what guidelines can we give?
3. Reiterating that committee members are under intense public scrutiny
 - a. How to best get this across?
 - b. Timing
 - i. At optional Midwinter meeting
 - ii. At Annual
 - iii. As online training that will need to be developed and implemented
4. Perennial issues/misunderstandings that need clarification
 - a. What is an "eligible book" and what can a committee member say?
 - i. Subjective vs objective
 - ii. YA/age range
 - iii. Not yet published
 - iv. Impact on signed reviews by committee members
 - b. Reviews of eligible books
 - c. Photographs of eligible books
 - d. Inclusion of eligible books on bibliographies

In addition to discussing all of the issues outlined above, our task force was also given the task to update the award committee manuals, according to Board response to our discussion and recommendations, to refresh the examples, and to standardize the language. This part of our task, also quite a big job, we have not yet taken on; however, we did prioritize updating the Wilder Award Committee Manual, since that committee was still working with a manual from the two-year cycle. That revision was completed in August 2017.

We also had a fifth point added to our task list in the summer: to clarify in the Sibert terms that the award should only consider books of information from documented sources, ruling out creative nonfiction and most memoirs. This request came to ALSC from Bob Sibert, who is concerned that the award is veering from his father's original intent. We have not yet discussed this issue, but will make it a priority immediately after Midwinter. We will complete the remaining tasks, including the manual revisions, by Annual conference 2018.

This report, which outlines recommendations for next steps, concludes the confidentiality and promotion in the 21st century work of the task force.

Summary of Task Force Findings:

Our discussions revealed that our task was quite extensive and complicated, so we spent several weeks discussing the issues that come up frequently, breaking down the tasks into manageable chunks, and considering each issue on a deeper level.

In the midst of our deliberations, there was a very public real world example of the pitfalls of social media and award confidentiality, which made our discussions even thornier, but which also drove home the point that more clarity is needed for the ALSC leadership, committee members, and members at large. There is a lot of confusion among members and the general public about how the ALSC Policy for Service on Media Evaluation Committees applies in the real world, especially given rapidly changing social media applications, as well as general attitudes toward social media. The areas of the Policy that cause the most confusion are Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality. In looking at these parts of the policy, it does appear that there is a lot of grey area, something that causes frequent (and, often, repetitive) queries to the Priority Group Consultant V.

What follows is a summary of our general discussion of the points listed above. We will work on the actual related wordsmithing for the manuals after we get the response of the ALSC Board to our recommendations.

1. Reconsider the call for members to promote the award...

This is stated in the current manuals in such a way that members are *encouraged* to give talks, interviews, and programs related to their award committee service in order to give the awards greater visibility within our profession and the public at large. This type of promotion was first recommended by Frederic Melcher in the 1920s in order to publicize the awards back when the children's librarians active in our organization actually performed the function of ALA PAO vis-à-vis awards. They were obviously wildly successful, and now the task for ongoing publicity runs through PAO with input from the ALSC Office. Even before social media, this was a call that had long since become unnecessary, if not obsolete.

Still, we saw value in having members promote their award committee service through their local media and other relevant publications such as alumni magazines. It is an honor to serve on ALSC awards committees, and getting local recognition for this honor can increase the standing of librarians -- and by extension, the library -- within their communities.

The distinction needs to be made between local media and national media, and we need to give committee members clear instructions on what to do if called by a national media outlet (i.e. refer to PAO). We agreed that committee members should be encouraged to promote the role librarians play in selecting the award winners, rather than promoting the award itself.

2. Members are encouraged to take part in book discussions and organize local mock award groups...

We weighed the pros and cons of book discussion and mock award discussions.

Book discussion is a valuable form of professional evaluation, and it can help hone critical skills. It can also offer committee members an opportunity to practice discussing, as well as offering them valuable insights into the books themselves. We agreed that the value of book discussion with colleagues in a professional context has more pros than cons for committee members. In addition, book discussions with children are extremely helpful, especially for the Geisel Award, as they give members direct feedback about how children perceive some of the books that are eligible for the award. They also put the focus on the child, rather than the committee member, giving children some ownership and involvement.

Mock award discussions, which culminate in a vote and a winner, have historically been a common and popular means of promoting the award and how it works. Because they entail book discussion, they also provide the same kind of value for committee members. However, committee members are often closely watched, both locally and nationally, for “hints” as to what is being considered for the awards and what might win, people at the discussion can easily read more into the committee member’s comments and the final results than they warrant. It is also very common for the mock award group to use social media to publicize their final choices.

We agreed that there is value in local discussions and mock awards, but there need to be some guidelines developed for those who participate in them, answering common questions such as: can a committee member organize a mock award discussion and/or select the books for the discussion? Can the results be posted on a library’s website?

In terms of online mock discussions such as Calling Caldecott and Heavy Medal, we felt any current award committee member participation in these blogs is a breach of confidentiality and should not be allowed.

At this point, we spent some time discussing the differences between policy and guidelines, and agreed that ALSC needs fewer rules and more guidelines on these issues. And the rules and policies we do have (or will create in the future) need to stress why they exist. For example, “Award committee members may not initiate or participate in any online book discussions, including mock award discussions, because it constitutes a breach in confidentiality.”

3. Government emails may be at risk for FOIA requests...

Actually all email accounts, including personal accounts, are subject to FOIA requests. We saw no reason to single out government accounts. We also noted that the chances of an FOIA request for an ALA award committee member are very slim, and do not necessitate an official policy. If committee members want to use their school or library address for committee business, there should be no problem, so long as they are the sole person with access to the account. Many members, however, choose to create a personal for their committee work as a way to stay organized and to keep their committee work separate from their day-to-day jobs and personal life.

4. Google or other non-ALSC email groups and online storage may permanently archive confidential conversations and documents

Here we weighed convenience against the chance of a breach on online storage systems such as Google. We determined that, until ALA develops its own online storage system for committee members to use, the convenience of existing systems such as Google Docs and Google Sheets far outweighs the chance of a breach of confidentiality. Using a public system such as GoodReads, however, to keep track of committee reading is not recommended.

5. Social Media

We didn't really get into specifics of dos and don'ts. Instead, we discussed the importance of training, noting that the practices in place right now aren't enough. Committee members don't always read the manual closely, or don't retain the finer details that they have read, and obviously need more interactive training.

We discussed the possibility of, first, having some sort of virtual Chair training soon after Chairs are appointed, run by the PGC-V and ALSC Awards Coordinator. The Chairs will then have to take and pass an online test before proceeding. After that, the Chair will oversee training for the committee members elected in the spring. This is typically a time when new committee members are very eager to get started. They can be instructed to read their manuals to prepare for a mandatory conference call with the Chair. Elected committee members, (and possibly the PGC-V and ALSC Awards Coordinator; however, we did express the desire to take some of the burden off the people in both of these positions by relying on Chairs to do training). During the conference call, they will cover conflict of interest, confidentiality, and eligibility – the three areas committee members typically have the most questions about. After this training session, committee members will take the online test, and must pass it. The test for Newbery, for example, would have questions such as:

Sample Q 1: Which of the following is okay to tweet?

- a) about a book first published in the U.S. for teens in the award year.
- b) @ the author of an eligible book
- c) about a picture book first published in the U.S. in the award year
- d) "Wow! I just got elected to the Newbery Committee!!"

Sample Question 2: You just received a review copy from a publisher and noticed in the flap copy that the author lives in Canada. What should you do?

- a) Contact the publisher to ask if the author is actually eligible or if the book was sent to you in error.
- b) Contact the Priority Group Consultant to determine eligibility.
- c) Do a little background research on your own, and then contact your chair.
- d) Write to the other members on your committee to see what they all think

The training will be repeated in the fall for the appointed members after all the appointments are made. Courtney will look into the possibility of using Survey Monkey to create the quizzes, with the results of the Chair quizzes going to the PGC-V and for the committee members going to the corresponding chairs. If a Chair or committee member can't pass or refuses to take the quiz, that can be seen as an early warning of future problems and the individual can be replaced early on, if necessary

6. How do we enforce them?

We can't really get into the business of policing the rules with social media. We would prefer to offer training for chairs and members that would cut down on the incidence of breaches. After everyone has had the training, any breaches can lead to immediate dismissal.

i. Do we need a clear policy on what happens if someone fails to follow policy?

After the training sessions outlined above, any breach would lead to immediate dismissal. There would be no warning.

7. Committee affiliation in signature lines, online profiles, pinned tweets, etc.

a. Allow or not?

Yes, on signature lines. Not so sure on things like social media profiles and pinned tweets. We talked about the distinction between professional accounts (generally email) and personal accounts (generally Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the like). Committee members can be advised to leave their committee affiliations off of personal accounts but, if they want to, they can put them on any professional accounts with the disclaimer, so that signature lines are coupled with a disclaimer such as "My opinions are my own and do not reflect those of ALSC or the Caldecott Committee."

8. Reiterating that committee members are under intense public scrutiny

a. How to best get this across?

We need to stress this in the initial online training, again at the first Midwinter meetings, as well as the required meetings. We can stress to committee members that they will need to be aware of this not just online but also in in-person encounters at ALA conferences. People are aware who is on what committees, so they pay special attention to what they say, what books they are carrying or looking at in an exhibit, etc. We also stress this in the "Why we need a policy" part that introduces it in the manual, as mentioned at the very beginning of our notes.

9. Perennial issues/misunderstandings that need clarification

a. What is an “eligible book” and what can a committee member say?

We discussed the fact that all books are eligible until proven otherwise. And if you are talking about it anywhere besides in committee business, you are revealing that the book is under consideration. This needs to be stressed in the manuals and in the training

i. Objective vs subjective

This we recognized as a key way to frame eligibility. There are the objective eligibility questions that have a clear yes/no answer, such as a translated book coming to the Geisel Committee, but even these seemingly objective cases aren't always clear in terms of nationality and publishing history. And they can be in flux. For example, a book originally slated to be published a year after the award year can have its publishing date moved up so that it becomes eligible.

Subjective eligibility questions are those that can be determined by the committee through discussion. These include age range, a portion of the book being published earlier, illustrations based on or inspired by earlier works, etc. The most commonly misunderstood of these is the age range. Many committee members feel they are free to discuss YA books, but since our age range goes through 14 for most awards, we can never assume a YA book isn't eligible.

b. Impact on signed reviews by committee members

It seems that every year there are at least a few new committee members who have signed the policy and then contact their chairs saying, “Wait... does this really mean I can't review for *Horn Book*, or publish my upcoming list of recommended new books for *SLJ*?”

We need to make it clearer in the policy that people in these positions can't have it all and have to make choices. For one year, it will be one or the other. They can review books for their year that clearly aren't eligible, such as translated books, books first published in an earlier year in another country, YA novels if on Caldecott, etc.

c. Sharing reviews of eligible books on social media

Committee members should not share or retweet links on social media to reviews they or other people have written.

d. Photographs of eligible books

Committee members should not be photographed, say for the local newspaper, with a stack of eligible books, nor should they post a photo of Facebook of the books they are reading for their committee work.

e. Inclusion of eligible books on bibliographies

i. In-house

We discussed suggestions of how committee members can handle this if it is part of their job to create such bibliographies. They can, for example, leave their own name off of it. We will incorporate these examples into the revised manuals

ii. Broader professional publications

Committee members may not include eligible books on recommended booklists and bibliographies included in publications such as *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book*, or their local newspaper. They will need to stick to books published in previous years for such publications. And, again, as with signed reviews, committee members need to make a choice between serving on the committee or writing about eligible books for publication.

f. Inclusion of eligible books in presentations, book talks, story hours, and other library programming

Committee members may include books in local programs with common sense. For example, it would be okay to use a book that's eligible for the Caldecott Award in a preschool story hour, but it would not be okay to give a library presentation promoted as books the Caldecott Committee is considering.

Task Force Recommendations:

Based on our discussions, we recommend the following:

Recommendation #1: (relevant to 1): Change the call for members to promote the award to a call for promoting the role librarians play in selecting the award winners. Distinguish between local media and national media. Provide clear instructions on what to do if contacted by the national media. Create guidelines, talking points and an FAQ (frequently asked questions by the media) for members to use when talking to a local news outlet.

Recommendation #2: (relevant to 2): Allow members to participate in local book discussions with colleagues and children. Allow award committee members to participate in (but not organize or select books for) local in-person mock award discussions, with the caveat that they let participants know that confidentiality is expected within these discussions, just as it is in the national award committees. In addition, we recommend that results of the mock award discussions not be shared on social media or a library website where it would be known or suspected that a current committee member had participated in the discussion. Develop guidelines for award committees related to participating in book discussions/mock award discussions.

Recommendation #3: (relevant to 3): No action needed. Allow members to decide which email accounts they will use for committee communication.

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Recommendation #4: (relevant to 4): No action needed. Allow members to use Google Docs, Google Sheets, or similar systems that offer secure sharing of information.

Recommendation # 5: (relevant to 5): Institute a required pre-award-year conference call with award committee chairs, elected members, and appointed members to take the place of the sort of training that is typically done at the optional Midwinter meeting. The optional meeting at Midwinter should not include critical exchanges of information, since some members are absent.

Recommendation #6: (relevant to 5): Develop online training for award committee chairs, elected members and appointed members to assure that they understand the basics of confidentiality, conflict of interest, and eligibility, as well as the general procedures. Charge a task force to develop this training.

Action to Be Taken: The Task Force asks the ALSC Board to consider these six (edited from seven) recommendations, so they can be incorporated into the Manual Revisions.

Thank you for your consideration. Member(s) will be present at your Board meeting at Annual Conference.

KT Horning, Chair
Thom Barthelmess
Diane Foote
Caitlin Jacobson
Judy Zuckerman

NOTE: During the 2018 Midwinter Meeting, the ALSC Board voted to accept recommendations one (1) and six (6) as written; two (2) and five (5) as amended; and not action on three (3) and four (4) as requested.

Recommendation #2 amended to allow members to participate in book discussions with children and adults, but may not participate in mock elections.

Notes: This can be evaluated for a year. Member may have to make arrangements with workplace if their organization usually holds a mock election. Need to eliminate ambiguity. Understood members may have to make a choice to give something up that they love, in order to have the privilege to serve on an ALSC award committee.

Recommendation #5 amended “conference call” to “virtual interactive meeting”

Notes: More flexible language required with quickly evolving technology.

