

What it Takes to Succeed on a YA Book Committee: Three Veterans Speak Out
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Librarians LOVE committees! Every time there's an issue to discuss, a booklist to compile, or a challenge to meet, we form a team, give ourselves a name, and then talk, talk, talk. And

The Nomination Process

After the first weeks on the committee, nominations start rolling in and most members have to make a desperate decision. Each day new, beautiful books arrive with intriguing covers and enticing summaries, all crying to be read. Soon it is apparent that not all selections received from publishers are age appropriate or worthy of nomination to The List, but while reading them it is easy to fall behind in the required reading of already nominated titles. Skimming books is not successful since the reader is responsible not only for the plot but also for the voice and overall feel of a book. Each committee member must find the fine margin between being too far behind to catch up and reading widely, searching for books to nominate, since a big part of being on a book committee is using your professional judgment and putting forth books for consideration.

Each member must carefully choose which books deserve nominations. For example, a respected YA author's new book has earned the right to be read, but it may not stand up to the scrutiny of nomination, and the best book of the year could easily be written by a first time author, making it vital that each book be examined

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Conferences ARE fun, but first and foremost, they are the stage upon which you demonstrate your effectiveness as a committee member. Use the non-meeting hours to finish any books you have not read--most committee members hate to see books miss being on the list due to lack of readership. Or, use the time to organize the notes you took during group discussion or during the local teen comment period. You might also consider re-reading a few of those problematic titles or those that really deserve more examination. There is also the possibility of visiting the exhibits to scope out forthcoming titles to nominate; publisher booths often have galleys to give away and booths are staffed by knowledgeable folks who are also on the lookout for the year's best books. Remember, there are people from all over the country vying to get onto some of these prestigious book committees. Make sure you deserve your appointment and utilize your conference time wisely.

Monopoly.

As librarians love to talk and, for the most part, are a fairly opinionated bunch, monopolizing of book discussions is a constant threat to the harmony of meetings. It is very difficult to be passionate about a book, especially if the voting is close, and not interrupt, interject, or scream one's opinion. Reading is a personal and emotional experience. Giving each person an equal chance to voice his or her feelings about a title is a tricky task for a chairperson. The sighs, groans, and eye-rollings of committee members when a long-winded colleague gets started should help, but this is one table where respect, consideration, and resolve must rule. Keep in mind that everyone on the committee has read the books, everyone has teens who've read the books, and everyone wants to share their opinions and expertise. Closing your mouth and opening your ears can make you just as valuable to the committee as the person compelled to speak about every book.

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