ALA's Online Communities
Item #10

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

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).

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