

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, San Antonio
January 20-25, 2006**

Topic: ALA's Online Communities Update

Background: This new member service went live with a soft launch in fall '05. To access it the URL is <http://communities.ala.org>. Basic information is provided below. This has the potential to be a great communications tool for membe

work of the association between conferences and in-person meetings, and allow them to network with other professionals in an intuitive online environment.

Are ALA Online Communities the same as or replacing the ALA Web site

No. The ALA Online Communities will live as a separate entity from the ALA Web site, operating on separate servers and containing distinct information. In time, a search engine will be implemented that will allow members to search both the Web site and the Communities simultaneously, but the applications themselves will remain separate. That said, the two systems will share common login credentials for all members, so that you will not need to learn a new login and password – and if you log on to one system and then try to visit the other, you will not need to log on again.

Who are eligible to access ALA Online Communities

A limited number of non-members who are actively serving on official ALA or Division committees will be granted access to the Online Communities. By and large, however, ALA Online Communities will be a benefit of membership.

How are Online Communities formed

There are three ways an Online Community can be formed.

1. *an ALA committee or Round Table*

If your committee would like to participate, please let your staff liaison know and she will be sure to make the appropriate arrangements for an online community to be formed

2. *an ALA Division, Round Table, or Special Interest Group*

If you would like an entire division section or Round Table to form a community, please contact someone on staff for your division or for the ALA office that handles your round table

ALA Division, Round Table, or Special Interest Group

If you want to form a community regarding a special interest, activity, or subject area not covered by a particular ALA committee or Round Table, you can request the creation of a brand new community by clicking on the “Request a Community” link. You can specify an area of ALA which you would like to sponsor your new community, and staff from that unit will receive and review your request.

How can I use ALA Online Communities to collaborate with my committee or other ALA groups

The features of an Online Community can include any or all of the following: Discussion Forums, Shared Links, Shared Files, Event Calendar, Chat, Archives, Polling, Member Profile/Business Card, and Online Status of Members/Who’s Online.



Will this replace the electronic discussion list that your committee already uses?

Yes and no. If your committee chooses to join the Online Communities, your discussion list will be converted to Discussion Forums within the Communities system. Your archives will move as well. You can choose to maintain both an electronic list and a Community if you like; this is up to the discretion of each committee.

When will this be ready for everyone to use?

We are still testing the prototype. Depending on the changes that our volunteer groups