

Being Connected, Being a Professional: Join NESLA and ALA/AASL by Ann Perham

Most of us are “lone rangers” in our schools, working without colleagues who are “like us”. For certain, we work with each member of our faculty and are on every committee possible, but the fact remains that we work alone. As a singular voice for the school library program, we are not very loud. Here is the logic for joining MSLA and getting the support of our colleagues via the listserv and by attending the conference. It’s the professional thing to do and there is power and comfort in numbers. MSLA works tirelessly on the regional and state level to make you a better library teacher and to elevate the profession within the state of Massachusetts. I take pride in seeing the vitality within MSLA and the active role school libraries are playing within our state.



Extending the logic of professionalism, comfort in numbers and working together to make changes, **every school librarian should also be joining the regional and national organizations.** I admit that before I stepped into the position of president of MSLA, I had never belonged to a national professional organization. I started receiving the ALA magazine, “American Libraries” and the absolutely amazing AASL publication, “Knowledge Quest”. Reading professional publications is an “intravenous drip” of professional development. “I don’t have time to read anything more” isn’t acceptable – you owe it to yourself as a professional.



Joining your national professional organizations – ALA and AASL – joining is in itself is a critical way to support them as they work to better school libraries across this nation. We all watched Senator Reed as he introduced the **Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLS) Act**, with the support of ALA and AASL. Benefits extend beyond lobbying efforts. We’ve all received the new AASL Standards, Learning4Life. Every one of us has used the ALA site to access their “best books” list, or in planning our

Banned Books Week programming. Perhaps you have shopped on the ALA site for posters or professional materials (and missed a discount if you were not a member).

Your dues to ALA and AASL will support their work. A personal membership in ALA will set you back \$65 for the first year, but it’s an investment in YOUR profession. From the ALA site, on the benefits of membership: “*Membership in the American Library Association (ALA) starts to pay you back the moment you join. With discounts on products and services, and members-only access to information through our website and journals, you will benefit right away. Included in many of these benefits are resources to advance your career, your library, and the whole profession.*” Interested in the divisions? Student membership? Retiree rates? Check the ALA website: <http://www.ala.org>

While you are in the joining mode, consider joining **NESLA – the New England School Library Associations**. You may remember them as NEEMA, their name up until a year ago. If you are a member of MSLA, these dues are only \$20. NESLA brings together leaders of the six New England states with the goal of sharing ideas and of furthering the profession. Complete joining information is available on the NESLA website: <http://www.neschoolibraries.org> Watch for details of their January Leadership Conference, just prior to ALA Midwinter.



Because we work alone does not mean we are alone. Joining your state association (MSLA) is the first step towards connecting and supporting the profession. Put it on your “to-do” list....join ALA/AASL as well as NESLA. **Be Connected.**

Ann Perham is a past president of MSLA and has been on the Executive Board for 10 years as webmaster. She was elected “Director-Elect” of Region I for AASL in 2007 and began her 2 year term as Director in July 2009.

Massachusetts Teen Choice Book Award (MCTBA) by Mary Ann Rogers

Co-Chairs: Sue-Ellen Szymanski and Mary Ann Rogers
Secretary: Laurie Cavanaugh
Treasurer: Mary Dunphy
Fundraising Committee chair: Maureen Ambrosino

The Massachusetts Teen Choice Book Award Committee (MCTBA) formed in December 2008 to create an award for teen literature that is nominated and chosen by teens in Massachusetts. The committee has met in person and virtually since December and has finalized by-laws and have 501 (c)(3) status as a non-profit.

Sue-Ellen Szymanski and Maureen Ambrosino were at the Massachusetts Library Association Annual Conference in May to

promote the new award. Many public librarians stopped by the booth to pick up a brochure and a few have signed up to join the committee. Megan Cilley, a school librarian, recruited a student to design a temporary logo to put on the brochure.

The details of the contest will be announced online: <http://massteenchoicebook.wikispaces.com/> The public librarians have promoted the award during their summer reading programs and school librarians will promote the award during the fall. There will be a contest to create a logo that will be used in all publicity materials for the new award; any teen aged 12-18 who lives in Massachusetts is eligible to submit a design.

Look for our table at the MSLA Conference on October 4th & 5th.