

PNBA Executive Director's Report to the Board
March 21, 2014

According to the Governance Policy revised by the Board on January 25, 2010, item 2.2d instructs that “[The Executive Director will submit the following required periodic reports:] A plan of action expressing the Executive Director’s intentions for implementing the Association’s ends, as soon as possible after the January board meeting, with bimonthly updates provided throughout the year.”

Here is my report on the progress we have made in the first three months of 2014 in achieving the Association’s ends, and my intentions for implementing the ends during the year, in the order last updated by the Board in January 2010:

1. Provide marketing programs via

a) promotional opportunities

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT:

The holiday catalog continues to be our most successful member support program, and is used by a large majority of our stores. I propose no changes at this time. My big fear for the catalog is the reduction of support that we are seeing from our distributors. PartnersWest has traditionally been the biggest supporter, and they have cut back their support as the quantity of bookstore members has fallen, and as more and more stores have been put “on hold” by Partners.

1. Provide marketing programs via

b) a public blog

Northwest Book Lovers (NWBL) continues to exhibit small but steady gains in both readership and ad income. Our having an attractive public venue to promote NW authors and their books is very important to our publishing partners.

1. Provide marketing programs via

c) bestseller lists

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT:

Larry produces an excellent version of the weekly Bestseller List.

1. Provide marketing programs via

d) book awards

We now have a full complement of potential Award Committee members, with the agreements of Michael Coy (manager of Ravenna Third Place Books in Seattle), Tim Hunter (co-owner of Eagle Harbor Book Co. on Bainbridge Island, WA), and Carol Spurling (co-owner of Bookpeople of Moscow, ID) to the list of potential members awaiting the Board’s approval. The ONLY small problem is that none of the Committee members again this year will be on the Board, which is a goal, not a requirement. We thought we had that covered, when the new Chair of the Committee, Billie Bloebaum agreed to serve on the Board, but then her employer said that her service on the Board was not a possibility. Maybe next year we will either have a current Board member agree to join the Committee, or the Committee will choose new chair who will also agree to serve on the Board. As I say, it’s a goal.

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1. Provide marketing programs via

e) literacy organizations

We are not making any direct donations, until our financial situation becomes much more secure. The Board voted in January to re-direct the "literacy badge" moneys collected at the shows to BINC in 2014, so that that money might more directly help our bookstores and their employees. The chair of the Literacy Committee is proposing that the Board disband the Literacy Committee, until such time as a new literacy program that might more directly help our bookstore members is discovered.

1. Provide marketing programs via

f) public book events

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT:

We have discontinued donations to public book shows, and do not intend to re-start them without the Board's specific instructions to do so.

2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

a) tradeshows

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT:

In 2013, we were offered more than 160 authors for the (income-producing) featured spots at our show, but we only had, at most 95 spots in which to accommodate those authors. We turned away a LOT of decent NW authors. Despite that fact, we offer more authors at our shows than all but one other regional book show, the Southeastern, which covers three times as many states as we do, and which puts a lot of authors into their "educational" sessions, which pumps up the number of authors they can accommodate. My approach is to produce as many events in which (especially local) authors mingle with and meet newer authors as possible, because I am told by our booksellers that those are the authors who they NEED to see, to find out if they might work well at an in-store event. That connection with newer regional authors hungry for publicity has become the number one most productive aspect of the shows for many of our booksellers. I intend to increase our efforts to provide those connections at the shows, to increase the number of published authors meeting the booksellers at the shows, and to increase the Association's income from those meetings.

2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

b) staff outreach and membership recruitment

Larry recently exchanged NW membership lists with the ABA, and has gone through the ABA's list, and checked on all of the ABA members in the NW who are NOT PNBA members. Most of them are not brick-and-mortar retailers of new books. Our experience is that pursuit of those "borderline" bookstores is not acceptable to our sales reps and their publishers, and that those type of stores often were the cause of significant theft and loss problems at the shows. We have weeded out some of those members, on purpose, and do not want to waste our time and energy seeking more of them as potential members. The reality is that there are fewer active retail booksellers in the Northwest than there were ten years ago. If a retailer is not going to participate in the holiday catalog, we are reluctant to encourage their membership.

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2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

c) networking

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT

Our shows are our primary tool in this effort, and will remain so until and unless the Board instructs me otherwise.

2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

d) website

As I write this, we are awaiting a proposal from the lady who produces the art and set-ups for the holiday catalog to send us a proposal to have her re-design our business site, pnba.org, which is aimed at our members and others who might attend the shows. If her proposal is not too expensive, we will hire her to do it, and hope to have a new look in place this summer. If the proposal is too much money, we will decline her offer and make whatever changes we want and can reasonably do ourselves. The biggest problem is the platform, which needs to be replaced, and the upsides vs. the downsides of each option. Larry is working on solving that issue, and is now looking at the probability of our using a Weebly structure. The prime advantage that it has over our previous first choice is that updates to the site will be accessible from any computer, instead of only from one in-house computer. We will, of course, report to the Board whatever final decision is made and the progress on the new site look, when it is ready. The more important work, however, will be the updates to the content, which will need to be made in April and May, in time for rollout before the heavy lifting for the fall show starts in July.

2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

e) handbook

Larry has completed this year's formal update of the Handbook, and has sent the access info to all members, who are asked to bookmark it, so that they can access it year-round without checking with us.

3. Produce educational opportunities via

a) educational programs

The Board approved my proposal at the January Retreat that we disband the Education Committee and produce a new set of Guidelines for the Education Committee which would require that the Committee members take a more active roll in deciding on the specific sessions that PNBA would produce and in actually producing those events. That has been done, and I solicited our members for volunteers to join the new Committee, offering a reimbursement for all show expenses to all Committee members who complete their assignments on time. Only one bookseller volunteered. So, I got more aggressive and sent solicitations to specific stores and members who had previously worked on our educational programming. That was more successful, and we now have enough interested members to form a valid Committee. I am asking the Board to approve their appointment, so that they may begin working on proposals for education at this year's show.

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3. Produce educational opportunities via

b) regular communication

Footnotes is our primary means of regular communication, with our email "Bookseller Blasts" coming in a distant second. The hardest problem is getting people to actually read the *Footnotes*. For instance, I talked to a previous board member and bookstore owner yesterday who complained that she did not know that we had discontinued the Matching Literacy Grant program this year. She had not seen our notices in *Footnotes*, neither last year's encouraging her to USE the program then, nor this year's to explain that the program would not be available this year due to lack of support.

3. Produce educational opportunities via

c) scholarships

With the Board's approval of a new Education Committee structure and rewards, and an expansion of our rewards to members of the Awards Committee, we will be increasing the number of "scholarships" to the shows tremendously, which I hope will result in at least maintenance of turnout at the show's author events, if not increases in those numbers.

3. Produce educational opportunities via

d) BookPros

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT:

When the Board decides to update the Governance Policies, I expect this will be a good candidate for deletion.

4. Support public literacy via

a) literacy organizations

The Board voted in January to divert the funds collected at the shows through our "Literacy Badge" program to be donated in 2014 to BINC, a national non-profit that provides monetary and legal support to retail booksellers and their employees. Without a new specific program involving literacy, we have no current need for a Literacy Committee. The Chair of the Literacy Committee has recommended that the Board dissolve the Literacy Committee. If that is done, I will notify the current Committee members and invite them to become involved in other PNBA activities or Committees. The collection and donation of books from vendors at the fall show will be our only direct donation to a "literacy organization" this year. I do not expect PNBA to make any monetary donations to any literacy program this year.

4. Support public literacy via

b) libraries

NO CHANGE FROM MY JANUARY REPORT:

I am recommending that the Board approve the appointment of a librarian to the new Education Committee. Our main efforts to support libraries has become our going out of the way to encourage librarians to attend and participate in the fall shows.

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4. Support public literacy via

c) schools

Again, with the re-direction of our "Literacy Badge" funds to BINC, we have no specific funds available to support local schools, but will be happy to entertain suggestions that are brought to our attention by member stores. If I receive any such suggestions, I will notify the Board.

5. Promote Free Speech via

a) advocacy

In February, I received a request from ABFFE and the Media Coalition that we become a signatory on a Writ of Certiorari to the US. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. They were seeking support of a lawsuit to allow booksellers (for instance) to ask and receive, if applicable, a stay of enforcement for any law that MIGHT cause a bookseller to withhold legally published material from being sold, if such selling might result in the bookseller being arrested or sued for selling such material. After receiving a brief explanation of the issue and trusting ABFFE and the Media Coalition to represent our members' best interest, I agreed to the use of PNBA as a signatory to the Writ. I have two copies of the Writ and will bring them to the Board meeting, for anyone of you who would like to review it. Both the text of the brief and an explanation of it is posted on the Board page, and links to them are provided in the packet for your consideration before the meeting.

5. Promote Free Speech via

b) monitoring of censorship issues

PNBA's participation in the lawsuit mentioned above is a prime example of our on-going efforts on behalf of our members.