

PNBA Executive Director's Report to the Board

March 17, 2015

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 2015 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

The holiday catalog continues to be our most successful member support program, and is used by a large majority of our stores. In January the Board asked for, and I plan, no changes in the catalog or our operation of it at this time.

The one concern that we have in the office is related to the Random House purchase of Penguin, and we have no indication at this time whether we are realistic about our concern. Random House is not a large supporter of the catalog, and has not been for 6-8 years. Penguin has been one of the larger supporters in recent years. Previous RH take-overs of other (generally smaller) companies have always resulted in a reduced amount of support from the newly acquired company, implying that the Random House ethic or business model has been extended to the company taken over. If that happens with Penguin, we could see a substantial decline in Penguin support of the catalog. Representatives of both Penguin and RH have publicly stated that they expect no big changes in their operations at this time. We are crossing our fingers, while continuing to expand our out-reach to small, regional publishers to fill the catalog.

1. Provide marketing programs via

b) a public blog

Northwest Book Lovers (NWBL) continues to provide a public forum for sharing info and promotion of our bookstores and NW authors. The Board offered no specific suggestions about NWBL or how we handle it, and I have no new plans at this time. 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

Larry produces an excellent version of the weekly Bestseller List. Most of the other regional book associations merely forward the printed list provided by the ABA directly to their members. Only PNBA and the Northern California Booksellers Association produce a fancier version, which includes a selection of the covers of some of the titles, with an emphasis on titles by regional authors. Because relatively few of our member stores actually print and display our list each week, this is a project that could be scaled back, to save a lot of staff time, if or when that becomes necessary.

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1. Provide marketing programs via

d) book awards

All of the 2015 winning authors sent us unique essays, mostly about receiving their Awards, and they have now all been published in NWBL. In addition, all of the winners, except for Pete Fromm, have now had their Award Presentation Parties at a member store. Pete is having some trouble, because of his schedule, finding a good time to attend a party at Chapter One in Hamilton. We expect that to be settled within a month.

In January, the Board specifically changed the dates of eligibility for the Awards and adopted my recommendations for an Award event at this year's show, and we are working on implementing those changes now. It's a process; we should have more to report in the fall.

1. Provide marketing programs via

e) literacy organizations

I have no plans to change our decision to cease making direct donations to literacy groups, until our finances have improved enough to warrant that consideration.

1. Provide marketing programs via

f) public book events

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

In January the Board heard my detailed description of the emphasis that I have taken in developing the shows. We made the decision to keep the two-day exhibits as long as possible, primarily to benefit the independent reps, without whom the exhibits would die. We also agreed to continue to reach out to as many authors as possible for the shows, especially NW authors, and to provide as many opportunities as possible for our booksellers to meet these authors, not just hear them, and to work with them and their local libraries to bring authors into our member stores and thus sell more books. The Board also affirmed the success of the trial last year of a Raffle on the show floor on the second day of exhibits. This promotion will be produced again this year, and could become a regular part of the show schedules.

2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

b) staff outreach and membership recruitment

This is one of the few areas in which the Board has regularly faulted my performance. Very few of our members respond to the feedback requests that we do send to them, like voting for Board members, or voting for which authors they would most like to see at the shows. I am uncomfortable contacting store owners, unless I have something specific to discuss. I like the idea of Board members taking a more active role in providing our members with these contacts.

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2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

c) networking

Our shows are our primary tool in this effort, and will remain so until and unless the Board instructs me otherwise. At the January meeting, some Board members offered to produce and help monitor a Friends of PNBA Facebook page, which might improve networking. I believe that Becky will report on the progress of that effort at this March meeting.

2. Encourage interactions with the book industry via

d) website

We have already begun receiving inquiries from potential exhibitors at the fall show and from one publisher (Scholastic) interested in sending authors to the show. I am slowly making changes and additions to the website, and recently posted a preliminary one-sheet schedule for the whole show on the front page of the Show section, and have posted a slew of updated docs on the Publicists' page, with info about the schedule, Important Show Deadlines, the Sunday Raffle Promotion, shipping, etc I am still in discussions with the hotel staff about meals and their prices and whether or not they will have the space and staff to handle the changes we will need to accommodate our earlier times for the Feast and our introduction of the new Saturday night, post-Feast autographing party, the Sweet & Greet. As soon as those issues are finalized, I expect to post the registration forms and the Call for Authors, which will then start a wave of submissions for authors who might be featured. On With The Show!

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. The new members-only access password is "ReadMoreBooks."

3. Produce educational opportunities via

a) educational programs

As soon as the board has officially appointed the full 2015 Education Committee, the Chair, new board member Pam Cady, will contact the rest of the Committee, and they will start the process of deciding what they will look for and how they will select the education that will be offered at this year's show. I am confident that this Committee will be a good one.

3. Produce educational opportunities via

b) regular communication

Footnotes is our primary means of regular communication, with our email "Bookseller Blasts" (publisher ads) coming in a distant second, and NWBL a very distant third.

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3. Produce educational opportunities via

c) scholarships

Scholarships are now provided almost exclusively in the form of reimbursements to Board and Committee members, as reward for their/your PNBA work and to enhance the attendance at the shows and the author events.

3. Produce educational opportunities via

d) BookPros

When the Board decides to update the Governance Policies, I expect this will be a deleted from our list of programs.

4. Support public literacy via

a) literacy organizations

We have no direct program in place to donate to literacy organizations, but I am amenable to discussing possibilities with our member booksellers, should an opportunity arise which might benefit the store as well as the literacy group.

4. Support public literacy via

b) libraries

We feature a librarian on our Education Committee and will continue offering librarian-directed education at our shows. We also enhanced our invitation to librarians on our website, specifically for their participation at the shows, and hope to see continued increases in the number of librarians at the shows.

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.

5. Promote Free Speech via

a) advocacy

This is an on-going activity, to which we respond as issues arise. I expect no new programs in the immediate future, and will notify the Board of any activity for which our involvement is solicited.

5. Promote Free Speech via

b) monitoring of censorship issues

This is an on-going activity, with most of our efforts being directed towards.