

**PNBA Executive Director's September Report to the Board
October 1, 2015**

From: Thom Chambliss

Dear Board Members:

According to the Governance Policies revised by the Board on January 12, 2009, item 2.2a requires that “[The Executive Director will submit the following required periodic reports:] An Executive Director’s Report outlining the progress toward achieving the Association’s ends and any significant shortcomings, presented at each regularly-scheduled board meeting.” Here below is my Report for September, based on the Mission & Ends enumerated in Section 1 of the Governance Policies.

1.a) Provide marketing programs via promotional opportunities

The Holiday Catalog is our only on-going promo/marketing program produced by PNBA specifically to encourage customers to use our member stores. Brian will give you his usual report with the details of this year’s catalog. Our emphasis on regional titles that we know our booksellers can support has really paid off, finally. We started this approach almost ten years ago, and it is paying off in a big way now. Brian has 153 titles in this year’s catalog, the most in at least seven years. Only one other regional association is showing that many titles, and that is New England, with 151. New Atlantic shows 123, and then, down the list, GLIBA has 100, Midwest has 83, and MPIBA has 76. Neither Nor Cal nor Southern Cal provides a list on their websites.

As you will see in Larry’s financial report, PNBA is about \$20,000 in the black right now. I expect our expenses for the fall show to be higher than I estimated, but we should still be about \$10k in the black, I think, at the end of the year. ALL of that “income” will be attributable to the holiday catalog, which is \$20k over projected income, while our expenses so far are pretty much on target. Brian has done a great job with the catalog.

1.b) Provide marketing programs via a public blog

Northwest Book Lovers (NWBL), our public site established to bring attention, more customer traffic, and increased sales to our member stores is slowly doing better, as it has for the last four years. We are no longer hoping to turn the site into a cash cow, as we did earlier in the site’s existence. Now, we use it as an “add on” to our efforts to solicit publisher and author support. We offer free ads, special author interviews, special feature articles, etc., in exchange for a publisher’s or author’s book being included in the holiday catalog, or at the show, or in another advertising program of ours. This “added value” has become a regular and important part of our sales programs.

1.c) Provide marketing programs via bestseller lists

Larry’s weekly lists, updated with new book covers each week, are sent via email to all of our members every Wednesday. PNBA is the only regional book association that provides the list in two formats, the one a simple print version of all of the categories, and the other an enhanced version with color reproductions of some of the key titles each week, and a notation as to which titles are unique to the Northwest Bestseller List.

1.d) Provide marketing programs via book awards

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The Awards went smoothly again in early 2015, and we are in good shape for the 2016 Awards, which will be announced in January. The Committee is also, for the first time this year, offering a short "Preview" of the Awards at this year's show in Portland. Each Committee member will sit in the front of the room on Saturday, Oct 3, from 4:45 – 5:45 pm, just after the close of the exhibits for the day and shortly before the Feast will begin. One at a time the Committee members will each talk briefly about one book that s/he thinks the rest of the Committee should seriously consider for an Award. We expect about 30 people to attend this first year. If it goes well, we will do it again, and hope that it becomes a regular feature.

1.e) Provide marketing programs via literacy organizations

I recommend that we delete this from our list of Ends.

1.f) Provide marketing programs via public book events

I recommend that we cut this from our list of Ends.

2.a) Encourage interactions with the book industry via tradeshows

I under-estimated our room block needs again this year. We ran out of rooms in our hotel block a full five weeks before the show. I scrambled and found a small block of rooms at a nearby La Quinta (\$114/night) and those were booked within twenty-four hours. Then I found another ten rooms at a third nearby hotel. That is when I learned that there is an event in the area of our show attracting 5,000 people from out of town. That is why the hotels are so full. It's hard to plan around that sort of exception.

A much bigger issue for the future of the shows is the fact that a group of more than ten small Canadian publishers purchased a block of seventeen tables at this show. If those pubs do not come back next year, and if our other regular exhibitors do not increase their table space comparably, we will have a much smaller exhibit show in 2016. We have seen good growth this year in non-book exhibitors, but traditionally they exhibit only for a year or two before moving on. Our job with those exhibitors is to find the smaller, newer, somewhat unheard-of manufacturers with new products that have not found placement in the big box stores yet. When they succeed, they don't need us any more. Finding and convincing those new-comers to exhibit at our shows is a hard sell, and probably could never entirely replace the steady decline in book exhibitors. Because the shows are at least the second most important program for the Association and our members' benefit, the continued shrinking of the exhibits could become a serious problem within the next five or six years. Without the exhibits, I fear that our shows could become little more than a back-up fall substitute for the ABA's Winter Institute.

2.c) Encourage interactions with the book industry via networking

Most of our networking efforts are now concentrated on our shows, Footnotes and Northwest Book Lovers. I have no plans to change that emphasis any time soon, but would love to hear your ideas about how we might improve those "platforms."

2.d) Encourage interactions with the book industry via website

Several publishers and authors have complimented us on our new website and the added info that we are providing. Beyond the updated graphics and more sophisticated division of categories on the site, the biggest change has been our

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addition of information specific to particular publicists and authors with whom we deal or might deal. For instance, we now have a full page devoted to authors, with statements about what PNBA can do for them and how they can participate; instructions about exactly what they and their publishers must do for the author to be considered for the show; an article about what a first-time author at the shows might expect and how s/he might best use the opportunity; and then descriptions of exactly what an author can expect at each of the particular author events at the show. Most of these pages can be modestly updated each year, but otherwise remain posted on the site to provide info for authors considering PNBA all year round. We have already noticed a real drop in the number of emails and phone calls from authors and publicists asking us questions about the show and what their authors might expect and how they should prepare. In the long run these postings make a newer author much more comfortable considering our show, and will solidify or increase the interest among authors to use our shows to their advantage.

2.e) Encourage interactions with the book industry via handbook

The handbook is rumbling along as usual, under Larry's capable management.

3.a) Produce educational opportunities via educational programs

We introduced a new Education Committee last year. The Committee's emphasis again this year is Working Together, with many of the educational sessions encouraging booksellers, authors, publishers and librarians to work together to increase the interest in books and, we hope, our stores' book sales. We expect to continue that emphasis in the immediate future.

3.b) Produce educational opportunities via regular communication

Footnotes continues to be our primary means of regular communication. I have no new ideas for improvement of Footnotes, and would love to hear if the Board has any ideas that might improve the way we get info to our members, and the quality of that info.

3.c) Produce educational opportunities via scholarships

We expanded the scholarships to our own shows last year, primarily by offering complete scholarships (like those to the Board) to all Committee members, which now means only the Education Committee and the Awards Committee. If a Committee member participates actively in the work of the Committee (as determined by the Committee chair); AND attends the Committee meeting at the fall show; AND purchases tickets to and attends all of the author meal events at the show; AND submits to the PNBA all appropriate original receipts for expenses by the deadline (one month after the show), then PNBA will reimburse them for ALL COSTS to attend the show.

This policy has multiple advantages for both PNBA and our bookstore members, in that it encourages stores to send more employees to the shows, who might not otherwise be able to afford to go; it rewards those employees who agree to do some work for PNBA; it encourages increased attendance at the author events at the shows, which encourages publishers to offer us better authors, and reveals to authors how much we support them; and (way down the list) it simplifies the PNBA staff's ability to select those who should be most eligible to receive the benefits of the scholarships. We have received no complaints from any members about this policy, which I explained to

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our members in Footnotes two years ago, and to those who attended the General Membership meeting in 2014.

3.d) Produce educational opportunities via BookPros

I recommend that the Board officially disband this program.

4.a) Support public literacy via literacy organizations

I recommend that the Board eliminate this as an End.

4.b) Support public literacy via libraries

Our primary program for such support is the Michael Pritiken Memorial Rural Library program, which is being coordinated by ex-bookseller and PNBA Board member Colin Rea, who is the director of the Fern Ridge Public Library, west of Eugene. This year's recipient is the Amity City Library in Amity, OR, which was sponsored by Third Street Books in McMinnville, OR.

This year I also used some funds from the "Executive Director's Travel budget" to help pay the travel expenses for George Wright, a small press publisher and author in Oregon who produced, organized, coordinated and lead the "Crazy 8s" Oregon Author Tour in 2012. The PNBA donation this year will help pay for George's hotel rooms, but otherwise, his job is strictly volunteer. The concept involves George sending a Call for Authors to Oregon-based authors to join this tour. The one requirement, other than being published and the books available to our members stores through the "usual sources" (read, "distributors"), is that the authors accepted to participate in the Tour must have won some kind of actual Award, for at least one of his/her books. The Tour works through PNBA members stores, and encourages them to work with their local library to attract the largest possible crowds and the best possible space for handling them. After the success of the 2012 Crazy 8s Tour, George was flooded by author requests to join the Tour this year, and several booksellers who had NOT participated in 2012 asked to be included as well. I am hoping to get from George a job description of what he does to make the Tour work and then to post that info with a Call for someone to consider producing a similar annual Tour in WA, MT, ID, and AK. I attended the first Crazy 8s Tour presentation this year, here in Eugene at the Public Library, with the Duck Store selling the authors books, and can report that it was an excellent event, well-attended, and well received by the audience. Very fun.

Some of the documents related to this year's Crazy 8s Tour are posted on the Board page, so that you can read more about it before our meeting.

4.c) Support public literacy via schools

This is currently being done store by store and school by school. If a member store gets involved with a particular school project, we might be able to donate \$100, but we don't have a specific program to fund such requests. If the Board does not want to invent one, you may want to consider deleting this End.

5.a) Promote Free Speech via advocacy

This is an on-going activity, with no new programs to discuss at this time.

5.b) Promote Free Speech via monitoring of censorship issues

We continue to report free speech issues of interest to our members, both in Footnotes and sometimes in NWBL.