

# **New to MPLA for the First Time! Now Available! Electronic Communities! Sign up Now!**

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## **What is an Electronic Community?**

In MPLA, these are interest groups who will have a virtual space where they can ask each other questions, seek advice, look for best practices, new ideas, and benefit from professional exchange. Our long-standing “sections” that have represented different specializations and interests in the past will now be replaced with electronic communities. Each community will have a moderator who will help plan conference programs in this area, as well as organize and lead online discussion and exchange among the members.

## **How do these work?**

Moderators of electronic communities may choose from some options of how to organize and conduct discussion and exchange among the members. They may announce a topic for discussion and a time frame for members of the community to join an online discussion, such as: The Reference Services Electronic Community is invited to join an online conversation on “Using instant messaging in reference” for three days, May 5-7, at our site on MemberClicks.” Or : The Children’s Services and School Libraries Electronic Community will discuss “New Ideas for Summer Reading,” February 2-8, at our discussion site at Yahoo.”

Moderators may also establish an open forum for members to post questions for the group, such as: “Does anyone use a vendor for cataloging foreign language materials, and can you share your experience and advice about this?” or “I am looking for a good source for how-to manuals for home and car repair in DVD format.”

We are encouraging moderators to experiment with different sites and technology for engaging the community, as long as it is available to all and at no cost beyond the MPLA membership dues. MemberClicks provides some discussion features as does Yahoo and other sites. Whatever the program to be offered and wherever it is available, you will receive the information you will need to participate in an email.

## **What are the choices?**

Many of you participated in our recent survey to determine which electronic communities to initially establish, and with your input we have chosen the following:

Academic Libraries  
Public Libraries  
Library Instruction  
Collection Development  
Technical Services  
State Agencies, Systems & Cooperatives  
Children's Services & School Libraries  
Archives and Special Collections  
Library Administration  
Reference Services  
Intellectual Freedom, Privacy and Censorship issues

Plus:

New Members:

This community will automatically enroll all new members for two years after they join MPLA; Board Choice Award winners will also be members. The purpose will be to help new members understand how MPLA works, how they can get involved, how they can benefit from membership, and help them make connections with other new members. Senior members of MPLA will serve as mentors and moderators for this group.

Hot Topics Discussion

Special interest topics that may not be covered elsewhere will be announced ahead of time and interested members may join an online discussion for a set time period, like a week. Some Hot Topics might be "Marketing ideas for small and rural libraries" or "solutions for working with a student workforce in circulation." MPLA welcomes ideas and volunteer moderators for hot topic discussions; contact Judy Zelenski at [mpla\\_execsecretary@operamail.com](mailto:mpla_execsecretary@operamail.com) if you would like to lead or be part of a hot topic discussion.

### **How do I join an Electronic Community?**

We need all MPLA members to register for the electronic communities they wish to join. This will let us know who to notify about discussion and provide your email so we can contact you. There is no limit on the groups you may join, and no fee beyond your annual MPLA dues.

### **When will the Electronic Communities become active?**

Members should sign up for their choices now. We will identify moderators for the Electronic Communities and you may be contacted about discussions or programs in June or July of this year (2006).

### **What about the Section to which I belong?**

Sections are no longer going to exist after April 15, 2006 and are being transitioned to the Electronic Community with the same or very similar interests. We will no longer have elected Section Chairs.

### **What else should I know?**

Electronic Communities rely on your participation to succeed, so register now and try the new discussion when you are contacted! You will have the opportunity in most cases to suggest discussion topics, or volunteer to serve as a moderator.

If you don't see a group that covers your interest, you can organize a discussion in the "hot topics" zone, or start a new Electronic Community! If you are interested, contact Judy Zelenski for more information.