

# A Trio of Opportunities

President's Program to feature Nobel Peace Prize recipient

by Jim Rettig

In 2006 the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank “for their efforts to create economic and social development from below.” During ALA’s Midwinter Meeting in Denver, attendees will have a special opportunity to hear Yunus speak January 25 at my President’s Program.



**We make microloans—gifts actually—of knowledge by helping people transform their lives, improve their well-being, and contribute to our knowledge-based economy.**

Yunus founded Grameen Bank in Jobra, Bangladesh, in 1983. The bank makes small loans to impoverished women who get by, but can never get ahead, as they build stools, weave, or practice other traditional crafts and tasks. The loans—animated by their borrowers’ talent, ingenuity, and determination—allow these women to break the cycle of buying raw materials, selling their products, and then spending nearly all of their sales revenue on more raw materials, ever-beholden to suppliers.

Microloans have helped millions of women around the world lift themselves and their families out of poverty. The Nobel Committee noted that microlending also “serves to advance democracy and human rights.”

It is easy to see strong similarities in the work of Grameen Bank and the work we do through our libraries. Microloans help people transform their lives, improve their well-being, and

literally develop local economies. We make microloans—gifts actually—of knowledge by helping people transform their lives, improve their well-being, and contribute to our knowledge-based economy.

Both Grameen Bank and libraries make collateral-free loans, both trust those they serve to make decisions for themselves, and both support Yunus’s vision “to see that all information be available to all people

(including the poorest, the most ignorant, and the most powerless) at all times, almost cost-free, irrespective of distance.”

I look forward to hearing Yunus’s ideas on how libraries can be allies in his mission to eliminate poverty in the world.

## Grassroots programs

Unless ALA members serve on a committee or board, it can be very difficult to put on a program during Annual Conference. My Grassroots Programs initiative has addressed this issue as a way to expand opportunities to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to their Association. Members are invited to submit proposals for programs they would like to present during Annual Conference in Chicago in July. Visit [tinyurl.com/6ntadq](http://tinyurl.com/6ntadq) for complete guidelines and the proposal submission form.

The deadline is February 6.

Because I want to engage students in the profession they are preparing to enter, a jury of ALA chapter students from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the University of California at Los Angeles, supplemented by members of my advisory committee, will select the final programs.

Use your imagination and propose a program.

## Quiz the candidates

During every Midwinter Meeting there is an ALA presidential candidates forum. Members who are unable to attend haven’t had an opportunity to ask the candidates questions—until now.

In the spirit of the long-ago YouTube debate for U.S. presidential candidates in which a snowman posed a question about global warming, members are invited to submit questions on YouTube for ALA’s presidential candidates.

Video questions should be posted on YouTube, with the tag `ALAElection09`. The deadline is January 16. Visit [tinyurl.com/59efgg](http://tinyurl.com/59efgg) for complete information.

A jury of past ALA presidents will select questions for the candidates to answer in video responses. Be sure to view the final production before deciding how to cast your vote in the spring.

I hope you will enjoy these three opportunities. ■

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