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***Professional Organization Evaluation***

After looking at the individual websites for the professional organizations ALA, AASL, MLA, AECT, ASCD, I wasn’t convinced of the benefits of joining any of them. One or the other mentioned reasons to join such as: conferences, magazines, newsletters, and even Geico discounts. Truthfully, these webpage introductions didn’t ‘sell’ me. So I then thought I would quiz the members of LM\_Net….a worldwide email group of librarians connected by a moderator and server at Syracuse University. The general consensus was, at the very least, to join my local librarian organization….ours being the Maryland Library Association. These smaller organizations are generally less expensive, provide conferences, are an excellent way to begin being actively involved, and all the national trend topics and issues will spill over into the library media state organizations.

The other organizations mentioned as worthwhile to join were ALA and AASL….even though costly. Those that attended any of the national conventions were inspired immensely by what they learned, what they were exposed to, and the positive networking opportunities. These, my knowledgeable peers on LM\_Net, were believable references to illustrate the benefits that I wasn’t ‘getting’ from the websites.

One LM\_Net member pleaded not to let the costs of the bigger organizations dissuade me from joining. “You get more out of it than you can ever put into it. Sometimes librarians feel isolated in their positions, and having a network of fellow librarians (regardless of the organization) can be just the thing that keeps one focused on the important things. So reach out and join!”

I revisited the Maryland Library Association’s homepage, calculated the reasonable student discount price of $18, and decided that I wanted to take the ‘word of mouth’ advice I received from my colleagues, and join this organization. The site promised continuing opportunities for professional development and that they would be an advocate for issues affecting librarianship in our state. I decided this was a good ‘first step’ for me. I also was made aware of an April conference coming up in Ocean City, Maryland, and decided that I would seek permission to go from my supervisor. I am hoping my county will be supportive, and if so, this will give me a fresh insight into the value of my state library association.