

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its October 2013 meeting.]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 16–17 MAY 2013 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Marianne Hirsch presided. The officers present were First Vice President Margaret W. Ferguson, Second Vice President Roland Greene, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Samer M. Ali, Barbara K. Altmann, Jonathan Arac, Lawrence I. Buell, Debra Ann Castillo, Donald E. Hall, Dorothea Heitsch, María Herrera-Sobek, Lanisa Kitchiner, Lutz Koepnick, Paula M. Krebs, and Richard M. Ohmann. Alicia M. de la Torre Falzon and Mecca Jamilah Sullivan were absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Operations Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Scholarly Communication Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director of Programs and ADFL Nelly Furman, Associate Executive Director and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden (16 May only), Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses. Controller Arlene Barnard was present for discussions of the MLA budget (see item 1, below).

In the morning on 16 May, following meetings of the council's Compensation and Benefits Committee and Audit Committee, the council convened in regular session to begin working through the reports and action items on its agenda. After lunch, a regular session for the full council was followed by separate meetings of the council's strategic-planning subcommittees (see item 3, below). At the end of the afternoon, the full council reconvened to hear the reports of the subcommittee chairs. On 17 May, the council first met in executive session for the annual review of the policy documents that pertain to the MLA staff and to the working environment at the MLA headquarters office and for the annual review of the executive director. Following the executive session, the council convened in regular session to continue working through its agenda. After lunch, the council members participated in a demonstration of *MLA Commons* before holding their final regular session. The council adjourned at 3:00 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The Finance Committee presented a midyear report on finances with a summary of association income and expenses in the fiscal year 2012–13 after seven months. The committee reviewed changes in the projections

for the major revenue and expense categories. In general, both revenue and expenses were up slightly.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year 2013–14 that projected a deficit of \$377,120 in the association's unrestricted fund. The budget included funding for a number of infrastructure projects, a small price increase for the *Bibliography*, and higher convention registration fees. After completing its review of the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2013–14, the council voted to approve it.

Finally, the council designated EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the association's fiscal year 2012–13 accounts.

2. *Approval of the February 2013 Council Minutes.* After making two corrections, the council approved the minutes of its February 2013 meeting for publication in the October 2013 issue of *PMLA*.

3. *Strategic-Planning Subcommittees.* The council's three strategic-planning subcommittees underwent a slight reconfiguration due to the council's February 2013 decision to include in its strategic-planning efforts the topic of collaborations with K–12 educators (see Oct. 2013 *PMLA* 1014). The president proposed that the subcommittee on workforce issues and academic work shift its focus to K–16 collaborations and that the full council take up academic work and workforce issues. Because of this shift, some council members' subcommittee assignments changed.

The refocused subcommittee (Margaret Ferguson, chair; Lawrence Buell; Debra Castillo; Donald Hall; Paula Krebs; Richard Ohmann) discussed both its old and its new planning areas during its meeting on Friday afternoon. Addressing workforce issues and taking up the charge it had received from the council—to review Delegate Assembly Motion 2013-1 and the steps proposed in February for implementing it (see Oct. 2013 *PMLA* 1016)—the subcommittee recommended that the association undertake another staffing survey before 2016, the year originally set for a follow-up to the 2006 survey. The council members reviewed the 2006 questionnaire and suggested revisions. The subcommittee also considered the question of terminology and examined the relations between two pairs of terms: *tenured/tenure-track* vs. *non-tenure-track* and *full-time* vs. *part-time*. The subcommittee concluded that there were many nuances to account for and that it would be worthwhile to initiate a discussion of them with MLA members. Turning to its new focus on K–16 education, Ferguson reported that the subcommittee planned to begin by collecting information and past reports on such issues as the Common Core State Standards and the assessments that those standards call for.

The subcommittee on internationalizing the MLA (Roland Greene, chair; Samer Ali; Barbara Altmann; María Herrera-Sobek; Lanisa Kitchiner; Lutz Koepnick) discussed the effects that internationalizing the MLA would have on the publication program, the convention, and the division structure. Subcommittee members also noted the many

benefits that internationalization would bring to the association and its members: new perspectives on the organization of knowledge, membership expansion, exposure to different academic cultures, and cross-fertilizations of many kinds. The subcommittee continued to work on plans for the first MLA international conference.

The subcommittee on the activities of the divisions and discussion groups (Marianne Hirsch, chair; Jonathan Arac; Dorothea Heitsch) concentrated on governance matters, including the implementation of five-year reviews and possible changes to the structure of the executive committees.

4. *Participation in the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL).* Having received a report from Karin C. Ryding, a former council member, on the May 2013 annual meeting of the JNCL and on the initiatives being promoted by the JNCL's new executive director, the council held a preliminary discussion of the directions that the JNCL is taking and of the MLA's continued participation in the organization. The council will return to this subject at a future meeting.

5. *Statement on University Presses.* Marianne Hirsch and a former council member, Jennifer Crewe, submitted to the council the revised statement on university presses that the council had requested at its previous meeting (see Oct. 2013 *PMLA* 1012). The council approved the revised statement and instructed the staff to have it copy-edited and then to post it on the MLA Web site.

6. *Guidelines on Letters of Recommendation.* Margaret Ferguson presented to the council for comment a draft set of guidelines on letters of recommendation for graduate students seeking academic employment. The guidelines were based on responses she received to the article she published in the October 2012 issue of *PMLA*, an issue on the special topic Work. Council members gave their comments. Ferguson said she would revise the guidelines and then seek comments from the membership using *MLA Commons*. She planned to present a final draft of the guidelines to the council in October for approval as an MLA document.

7. *Updating the MLA Statement on the Significance of Primary Records.* Prompted by inquiries from members, the staff proposed that the MLA collaborate with library and other appropriate organizations to update the Statement on the Significance of Primary Records, which the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of the Print Record had drafted and the council had approved as an MLA statement in 1995. An update is needed to address the status of born-digital records and the deaccessioning of print collections by libraries. According to the staff proposal, which the council approved, a working group made up of MLA members and representatives of other organizations would meet for a day to begin updating the statement. Collaborative work on the statement would continue online. MLA members would be asked to comment on a draft of the updated statement posted on *MLA Commons*. The final draft would then be submitted to the council.

8. *Further Consideration of a Resolution Approved by the 2013 Delegate Assembly.* In February 2013, the council reviewed the two resolutions approved by the 2013 Delegate Assembly, as required by the MLA constitution (art. 7.B.3). The council members discussed at length then whether constitutional provisions for withholding a resolution from the membership applied to one of the resolutions, which dealt with the City University of New York. Because the council could not resolve the questions raised, it asked Rosemary Feal to consult the association's lawyer about the resolution (see Oct. 2013 *PMLA* 1016). At the present meeting, the council members reviewed the information the lawyer provided about the applicability of the provisions of article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution to the resolution. The council concluded that there was no constitutional basis for withholding the resolution from the membership. It therefore authorized nonsubstantive copyediting changes to the wording of the resolution and instructed the staff to submit it along with the other resolution the assembly had approved to the membership for the required ratification vote.

9. *Document from the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR).* Having addressed the questions raised by the council in February (see Oct. 2013 *PMLA* 1014–16), the staff presented a newly revised version of "Advice to Search Committees and Job Seekers on Entry-Level Faculty Recruitment and Hiring" to the council for approval. After making additional revisions, the council approved the document.

10. *PMLA Editor's Term.* The council exercised its option to extend Simon E. Gikandi's term as editor of *PMLA* by two years. Gikandi was therefore invited to continue serving as editor through June 2016. [Note: Gikandi accepted the term extension.]

11. *Policy on the Initiation of Special Topics in PMLA.* In October 2007, the council, acting on the recommendation of its subcommittee on *PMLA*, voted to limit to two the number of special topics an editor could initiate during his or her initial three-year term, with the possibility of one additional special topic if the editor's term is extended by two years (see May 2008 *PMLA* 826–28). In October 2008, the council made an exception for the then editor, Patricia Yaeger (see May 2009 *PMLA* 1000), but maintained the policy for future editors and stipulated that the policy be reviewed in five years. At the present meeting, the council reviewed the policy and decided to modify it by expanding an editor's prerogative to initiate special topics but reducing the number of topics that a succeeding editor might inherit. According to the modified policy, an editor may initiate up to one special topic a year during his or her three-year term and one more in the fourth or fifth year of an extended term.

12. *Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities.* The council selected John Sayles as the recipient of the 2013 Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities. Sayles is an independent filmmaker,

screenwriter, actor, and author. The award ceremony will be held during the 2014 MLA convention in Chicago.

13. *Nomination of Honorary Members and Fellows.* The council received recommendations from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA) pertaining to the nomination of honorary members and fellows. Acting on the CHA's recommendations of individuals to be honored this year, the council nominated Ottmar Ette for honorary membership in the association and Maryse Condé, Amitav Ghosh, and Suzan-Lori Parks for honorary fellowship. Following the provisions of article 3.D of the MLA constitution, the elections to honorary membership and fellowship will be conducted during the 2014 Delegate Assembly meeting in Chicago.

14. *Recommendations from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA).* The CHA forwarded two recommendations to the council. First, the CHA recommended a change in the eligibility criteria for the MLA convention travel grants for graduate-student members. The existing criteria limit eligibility to students who receive no support for convention attendance from their institutions or other sources. The recommended change was to extend eligibility for an MLA grant to graduate-student members who receive institutional or outside support but to stipulate that priority in awarding grants be given to graduate-student members who have little or no such support. The council adopted the CHA's recommendation and instructed the staff to implement the changes for grant applications for the 2014 convention. Second, the CHA recommended that eligibility for assistance from the Good Neighbor Fund be extended from two years to five years. The council adopted this recommendation and instructed the staff to implement it for the 2014 membership year.

15. *Encouraging Community-College Faculty Members to Attend the MLA Convention.* Presenting a proposal developed in consultation with the Committee on Community Colleges, the staff asked the council to establish a promotional \$95 fee covering convention registration and a year's MLA membership for full-time faculty members at community colleges. The committee and the staff also planned to develop special convention activities for community-college faculty members. The council authorized the staff to implement the promotional fee.

16. *Election of a Council Member to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC).* Debra Ann Castillo, who was elected to the DAOC in February, told the council that her duties as president-elect of the Latin American Studies Association made it difficult for her to serve on the DAOC. The council therefore elected Alicia de la Torre Falzon to the DAOC for a two-year term (2013–Jan. 2015).

17. *Council Meeting Schedule.* The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2016: 26–27 February, 19–20 May, and 28–29 October.

18. *Committee Appointments.* The council made three committee appointments. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear at the MLA Web site.