

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

The Executive Council approved these minutes at its October 2023 meeting.

The council met virtually on 18–19 May 2023. President Frieda Ekotto presided. The other officers present were First Vice President Dana A. Williams, Second Vice President Tina Lu, and Executive Director Paula M. Krebs. The Executive Council members present both days were Ama Bemma Adwetewa-Badu, Esther Allen, Brenda Brueggemann, Rebecca Colesworthy, David Damrosch, Stacey Lee Donohue, Erin D. Graff Zivin, Leah S. Marcus, Ifeoma C. Kiddoe Nwankwo, Jahan Ramazani, Virginia Ramos, and Ignacio Sánchez Prado. Council member Lisa Karakaya was present on 18 May only. Council member Samer Mahdy Ali was not present.

The MLA staff members present were Director of Convention and Events Karin L. Bagnall, Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Outreach Anna S. A. Chang, Director of Scholarly Communication Angela L. Gibson, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Publisher of the *MLA international Bibliography* Mary Onorato, Director of Academic Program Services and Professional Development Jason Rhody, Director of Information Systems Thanh Trinh, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Leigh A. Neithardt.

On 18 May, the council first convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. On Thursday afternoon, the council received updates from the strategic planning committee (see item 4 below) and the internationalization task force (see item 5 below). On 19 May, the council convened in regular session and continued working through its agenda. The council adjourned at 1:10 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. Administration and Finance. The council received the Finance Committee's report. Paula Krebs told the council that we are predicting a slight deficit in the proposed 2023–24 budget. She explained that memberships will decline, and so dues income is going to be lower. Online database subscriptions to the *MLA International Bibliography* are expected to exceed our original budget expectations this fiscal year.

Angela Gibson said that we have already reached a half-million subscribers of *MLA Handbook Plus* and are receiving reports of high usage. She said staff members are working on the Spanish-language edition. Council members commented on the high projection of convention attendees in 2024; Karin Bagnall said that people’s concern about traveling is leveling off, and there was a lot of great conversation around the 2023 convention. Krebs said that the Program Committee is working on ways to encourage members to return; among other events, there will be one first-time attendees event. She asked that the council approve the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2023–24. It did so. The council also approved a motion designating EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the fiscal year 2022–23.

2. Approval of the February 2023 Council Minutes. The council approved the minutes of its February 2023 meeting for publication on the association’s website.

3. Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings. The council confirmed seven decisions that it made in between the February and May Executive Council meetings.

In late February, Paula Krebs wrote to the council to share a request from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) that the MLA sign Florida Bill Would Destroy Higher Education as We Know It, a statement drafted by the AAUP, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) condemning the introduction of Florida [HB 999](#), which the organizations say “would effectively silence faculty and students across the ideological spectrum and purge whole fields of study from public universities” and “would destroy academic freedom, tenure, shared governance, and university independence in the state’s public higher education system.” The council approved signing the statement, and it was published on the association’s website in early March

(<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Advocacy/Executive-Council-Actions/2023/Joint-Statement-Denouncing-Florida-HB-999>).

That same week, Paula Krebs alerted the council that since the members had approved signing the AAUP’s statement, she would also add the MLA as a signatory to the ACLS’s statement, The Effort to Undermine Academic Freedom in Florida House Bill 999, which also condemned Florida HB 999. No council members objected, and the statement was published on the association’s website (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Advocacy/Executive-Council-Actions/2023/Joint-Statement-Condemning-the-Effort-to-Undermine-Academic-Freedom-in-Florida-HB-999>).

In March, Paula Krebs forwarded to the council a statement drafted by the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR) that endorsed the Florida Bill Would Destroy Higher Education as We Know It statement drafted by the AAUP, the AFT, and the NCAC. The council approved the endorsement, and it was added to the text of the statement already published on the website (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Advocacy/Executive-Council-Actions/2023/Joint-Statement-Denouncing-Florida-HB-999>).

At its February meeting, the council was asked to approve CAFPRR's proposed revisions to the [MLA Guidelines on Letters of Recommendation](#) and [Guidelines for Search Committees and Job Seekers on Entry-Level Faculty Recruitment and Hiring as well as Postdoctoral Applications](#). The text of the motion that the council approved was incomplete. It only asked the council to approve changes to the first document and not the second. In March, the council was asked to approve the complete motion. The council did so. The revised documents can be found on the website.

In that same request, Paula Krebs also asked the council to approve an appointee and an alternate to a seat on a standing committee for the three-year term beginning on 1 July 2023. The council approved both. Current committee listings can be found on the website.

In May, Paula Krebs asked the council to approve allowing the MLA staff to apply to the Department of Education for funding for Understanding Changing Language Enrollments in the United States: An MLA Research Study. The council approved the request.

4. Update from the Strategic Planning Committee. The council passed a motion approving the publication of a [public-facing document as the outline of the strategic plan](#) and approved including updates to it in the MLA Annual Report.

5. Update from the Internationalization Task Force. Erin Graff Zivin provided the council with an update on the task force's work. It is not interested in continuing (for now) the MLA International Symposium. The task force's most immediate task is to construct a "human network," by identifying a set of "ambassadors" who would be able to represent the MLA and who are knowledgeable about our resources. A second group of ambassadors would include non-US-based members in places where we want to publicize the association and its work.

6. Discussion of Opportunities Raised during the 2023 Delegate Assembly Open Discussion. At its February 2023 meeting, the council asked the staff to review the list of

opportunities suggested by delegates during the 2023 Delegate Assembly open discussion, “Labor Organizing and Unions: Challenges, Strategies, and Opportunities,” and make clear which are possible for the association to do. The staff presented the list to the council; some of the suggestions are ones that the association already engages in, which we need to publicize more. Krebs told the council that the staff is collecting data and constructing a narrative about the benefits of unionization. The staff is also continuing to work on the list of [resources on collective action](#). Krebs said that we could circulate policy documents and engage relevant committees to assist with this work.

7. Report on Press Coverage and Social Media Presence. The council received the Report on Press Coverage and Social Media Presence, which details mentions of the MLA in the news. Krebs encouraged any council members who have *LinkedIn* accounts to share the association’s posts. Dana A. Williams said that we can encourage department chairs who are members of ADE and ALD to think about public communications and get them involved in publicizing the association’s work. Rebecca Colesworthy suggested promoting our members’ work. Krebs said that she and Anna Chang can talk about how to do that. Council members raised the suggestion of providing training in media outreach; Krebs said that the staff could think about including related sessions on the convention program.

8. Review of Proposed Updated Charge for the Committee on Honors and Awards. The council received a request from the staff liaisons to the Committee on Honors and Awards, who asked that the council consider two suggested changes to the charge:

1. Explicitly state that the committee fills vacancies on the association’s prize committees.
2. State that the committee meets multiple times virtually during the year, rather than once in person.

The council approved the suggestions. The updated charge is as follows:

The Committee on Honors and Awards appoints prize selection committee members, oversees the procedures that result in the nomination and determination of those receiving MLA honors and awards, and reviews proposals for new honorary members and fellows. The committee will normally meet several times a year virtually and will review, at least once every three years, its procedures and the procedures used by its subcommittees. It will report annually to the council

indicating the recipients of all honors and awards. It will report periodically to the council regarding significant changes in procedures or the nature of the honors and awards.

9. Request from the Committee on Honors and Awards. The Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA) met in March 2023 to discuss feedback from the two most recent MLA Prize for Collaborative, Bibliographical, and Archival Scholarship selection committees. Established in 1998 for bibliographies, the prize was redefined in 2012 to include archives and digital projects, and expanded in 2019 to recognize collaborative research.

Selection committee members conveyed to staff members their struggles to judge the different types of scholarship submitted for this prize. The CHA agreed that the current prize structure includes a group too disparate to be judged within one category. The CHA recommended that collaborative research projects belong in a different category. The CHA suggested that broader collaborative projects should not be included in the prize for archival or bibliographical scholarship and might better fit with the MLA Prize for an Edited Collection, which was established in 2019 to recognize a particular type of collaborative work.

The council approved the Committee on Honors and Awards' suggested changes to the MLA Prize for Collaborative, Bibliographical, and Archival Scholarship: Collaborative projects will now be included with work that is considered for the MLA Prize for an Edited Collection.

The council approved renaming the MLA Prize for Collaborative, Bibliographical, and Archival Scholarship to the MLA Prize for Bibliographical and Archival Scholarship.

10. Review of Proposed Updated Charge for the Lifetime Scholarly Achievement Review Committee. The staff proposed two changes to the charge of the MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement Review Committee for the council to consider: (1) removing the requirement that the committee submit letters of recommendation for each of the candidates whose names it forwards to the council and (2) not giving the award the same year that the Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities is given. Krebs said that the staff felt it was an imposition to ask for letters of recommendation for the candidates. She was also concerned about giving the award when the Phyllis Franklin Award is given, because that is a high-profile award, and she worried that it will overshadow the recipient of the Lifetime Scholarly Achievement award that year. Krebs also asked the council to think about a potential

structure for getting numerous suggestions so that the committee has a good amount of work to do in making choices.

The council approved removing the requirement of letters of support for the MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement, but it did not approve a motion to give the award only in years when the Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Humanities was not given.

11. Recommendations from the Program Committee. The council received two recommendations from the Program Committee:

The first followed a request from the LSL Germanic Philology and Linguistics forum that it be permitted to disband. The Program Committee recommended that the forum be disbanded. The council approved the recommendation.

The second was the Program Committee’s recommendation that the American Trust for the British Library be approved for allied organization status. The council approved the recommendation.

12. Discussion of Review Schedule for Professional-Issues Committees. At its February 2023 meeting, the Executive Council passed a motion asking the staff to create a calendar for professional-issues committees to be reviewed every five years. Four of the professional-issues committees currently undergo council reviews. The council reviewed and approved the following calendar, which lists the schedule for the five-year reviews of all the association’s professional-issues committees:

Committees	Date of Next Review
Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada	2024
Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee on Community Colleges	2025
Committee on Women, Gender, and Sexuality in the Profession	2026
Committee on Information Technology Committee on K–16 Alliances	2027
Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Humanities	2028

Council members also decided that committees should submit the minutes of their most recent meeting as part of their review documents.

13. PMLA Editor's Term. The council exercised its option to extend Brent Hayes Edwards's term as editor of *PMLA* by two years. Edwards was therefore invited to continue serving as editor through June 2026. [Note: Edwards accepted the term extension.]

14. Appointment of Chairs to MLA Committees. Following up on additional business from the February meeting, the council appointed two committee chairs (Committee on Information Technology and Committee on K-16 Alliances). They will be invited to accept their appointments, which will begin on 1 July 2023. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear on the MLA website.

15. Council Meeting Schedule. The council approved the proposed February and May dates for 2026: 27–28 February and 21–22 May. It approved holding the October 2026 council meeting the penultimate Friday and Saturday of the month, 23 and 24 October.