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Meeting of the MLA Executive Council

[*Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its May 2005 meeting.*]

The council met on 25–26 February 2005 at the MLA office in New York. President Domna C. Stanton presided. The officers present were First Vice President Marjorie Perloff, Second Vice President Michael Holquist, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were K. Anthony Appiah, Marilyn Gaddis Rose, John Guillory, Mary N. Layoun, Yolanda Martínez–San Miguel, Nancy K. Miller, Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Amada Sandoval, Hortense J. Spillers, Guy Stern, and Priscilla Wald. Executive Council members Michael Bérubé and Rosaura Sánchez (see item 3 below) were absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Foreign Language Programs Nelly Furman, Managing Editor of MLA Publications and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden, Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of English Programs David Laurence, Director of Book Publications David G. Nicholls, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses.

The council began its morning session on 25 February by meeting in executive session to review council members' fiduciary responsibilities. During the executive session, the council established an attendance policy for its members. Following the executive session and for the remainder of the morning, the council convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. After lunch, the council met in subcommittees. The Subcommittee on Administration and Finance reviewed three staff reports, the report from the trustees of the MLA's invested funds, and three corporate resolutions; discussed other agenda items within the subcommittee's purview; and considered appointments to four MLA committees. Attending were Domna Stanton, chair; Anthony Appiah; Marilyn Gaddis Rose; Amada Sandoval; and Hortense Spillers. The Subcommittee on Projects (Marjorie Perloff, chair; Yolanda Martínez–San Miguel; Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi; LaVonne

Ruoff; and Priscilla Wald) met to discuss four staff reports, to review two committee requests and the revised MLA Statement of Professional Ethics, and to consider appointments to six MLA committees. The Subcommittee on Meetings and Publications (Michael Holquist, chair; John Guillory; Mary Layoun; Nancy Miller; and Guy Stern) reviewed four staff reports and one committee report, considered several other agenda items within the subcommittee's purview, and considered appointments to seven MLA committees. After the subcommittee meetings, the full council reconvened to hear the reports and recommendations of its subcommittees and to take action on the various requests before it. At the end of the afternoon, the council discussed MLA media relations. On 26 February, the council first met in executive session to consider staff issues and then met in morning and afternoon regular sessions to continue working through its agenda. Before its final regular session, the council discussed the Academic Bill of Rights. The council adjourned at 3:35 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received the independent auditor's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2004, which showed that the association concluded the fiscal year with a surplus of \$668,319 in the unrestricted fund. The surplus is to be added to the association's cash reserve, which the council had directed the staff to build to cover four months of association expenses (see May 2004 *PMLA* 624). The council noted the auditor's assessment of the association's information technology controls, a periodic assessment that, in 2004, allowed for a review of the staff's implementation of a new financial accounting system. The staff reported that it had made plans to carry out the auditor's recommendations regarding control procedures and that one other item of concern—the need for a staff computer-use policy—would be addressed with the help of the association's attorney. The council will be asked to review the final version of the policy statement when it is completed.

The council also received the Finance Committee's report, which reviewed the budget for the current fiscal year using four-month projections. The committee noted that the projected deficit in the unrestricted fund was larger than the deficit projected in October 2004. Most of the increase in the deficit was attributed to the cost of the survey of tenure requirements that the council approved in October 2004 (see May 2005 *PMLA* 948). Rosemary Feal asked the council to consider the matter of twenty-seven travel grants awarded to graduate students who had planned to attend the 2004 convention but who had not done so and so had not claimed their awards. Since there were thirty-seven eligible grant applicants who had not received awards but who had attended the convention, she suggested that these eligible applicants be funded retroactively, despite the slight additional expense. The

council agreed to this proposal. The staff is to request receipts from the new grant recipients.

The Finance Committee asked the council to consider several matters relating to the preparation of a budget for the fiscal year 2005–06, and the council authorized the staff to prepare a balanced budget.

The council adopted the following two resolutions relating to financial management. [Note: The president certified the council's action by signing the original documents containing the resolutions. These documents were then stamped with the association's corporate seal.]

WHEREAS, article 4, section E of the constitution of the Modern Language Association provides as follows: "The permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds shall be administered by a board of three trustees, each appointed by the Executive Council for a three-year term, the three terms to be staggered by one year. One of the trustees shall be designated the managing trustee"; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Lindenberger, Malcolm Smith, and Catharine Stimpson have been appointed by the Executive Council as the three trustees with authority to administer the permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds, and Malcolm Smith has been designated the managing trustee of this committee (the "Permanent Fund Committee");

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that, upon the written direction to Rosemary G. Feal, executive director, and Judy Goulding, managing editor of MLA publications and director of publishing operations, of any member of the Permanent Fund Committee to effect the purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition of any security or securities held in the permanent fund or any other endowment funds, the executive director and managing editor of MLA publications and director of publishing operations be and hereby are authorized and directed to take all such steps and to execute and deliver all such documents as they shall deem necessary or appropriate to effect such purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the president of the MLA be and hereby is authorized and directed to certify this resolution to any third party requiring delivery of same in order to substantiate the proper authority for the disposition of the securities of the permanent fund or any other endowment funds.

RESOLVED: That Rosemary G. Feal as executive director of the corporation and Judy Goulding as managing editor of MLA publications and director of publishing operations for the corporation be and hereby are authorized jointly to open a custody account with the United States Trust Company of New York in the name of the corporation and deposit therein such property of the corporation as they may deem advisable.

It is FURTHER RESOLVED: That Rosemary G. Feal and Judy Goulding be and hereby are authorized jointly to direct

all changes of investments and authorize the delivery of any securities or cash, and the property therein shall be subject to such control until further action by this board.

It is FURTHER RESOLVED: That United States Trust Company of New York be and hereby is designated a depository of this corporation and is authorized and directed to pay checks and other orders for the payment of money when signed in the following manner: [manner of signing specified].

The council adopted one additional corporate resolution, from Citibank. By adopting this resolution, the council authorized Rosemary Feal and Judy Goulding to open bank accounts at Citibank in the name of the association and to contract with the bank for additional services relating to these accounts. [Note: A signed copy of this resolution was entered into the minute book of the association.] The council also authorized the following staff members to sign nonpayroll checks over \$1,000: Barbara Chen, Rosemary Feal, Judy Goulding, Maribeth Kraus, and David Laurence.

Finally, the council appointed Anthony Appiah and John Guillory to join the officers of the association on the council's Audit Committee in 2005.

2. *Report of the MLA Trustees.* The council received the trustees' annual report, which showed that at the end of the calendar year 2004, the association's endowment fund and two of the six donor-restricted funds that support a number of association prizes had shown increases in market value. The four donor-restricted funds that decreased slightly in value were invested mainly in United States treasury notes. The trustees noted that the mutual funds in which the MLA endowment was invested were well diversified, and they decided on a strategy for investing approximately \$170,000 that had been released from the security letter of credit required by the MLA's landlord at 26 Broadway. Having considered the council's request to invest some of the endowment in socially responsible mutual funds and having reviewed information on a number of such funds provided by the staff, the trustees decided to invest a portion of the money at their disposal in two of these funds.

In response to the council's question about the trustees' rationale for the 50-50 allocation between fixed-income instruments and equities (see Oct. 2004 *PMLA* 1388), the trustees explained that the investment strategy depended on one's view of the function of the endowment. The trustees considered the endowment a reserve fund that could not be invested in an overly aggressive way, since the association might need to tap it to cover operating expenses in an emergency. If the endowment were viewed differently, then the trustees could pursue a more aggressive strategy in the interest of achieving gains that could be used to support new association projects. The trustees asked the council to clarify its view of the endowment. The council did so and approved a statement on investment policy that called for a small shift in

investment strategy toward a more aggressive approach and a 45-55 allocation between fixed-income instruments and equities. The staff was asked to forward the council's statement to the trustees.

3. *Resignation of a Council Member.* The council received the resignation of a council member, Rosaura Sánchez, and accepted it with regret. The council thanked Sánchez for her service. Council members then considered the constitutional provisions (arts. 8.A.6 and 8.A.5) governing the replacement of a council member. The council decided to replace Sánchez for the remainder of her term and appointed Nicolas Shumway (Univ. of Texas, Austin) to her council seat.

4. *Approval of the October 2004 and December 2004 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its October and December 2004 meetings for publication in the May 2005 issue of *PMLA*.

5. *Proposal for a Conference on the Humanities and Human Rights.* Judith Butler and Domna Stanton proposed to the council that the MLA cosponsor a conference on the humanities and human rights, a growing field of interest in the academy in general and in language and literature departments in particular. The conference aims to explore the significant role that humanists have to play in examining critically the cultural, social, historical, philosophical, and legal discourses and practices of human rights and in developing a methodology for the study of texts from a human rights perspective. The conference, which would be held at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in October 2005, was modeled after other recent MLA conferences (e.g., the March 2004 Conference on Disability Studies and the University). After discussing the outlines of the proposed conference and reviewing a list of possible speakers, the council voted to approve in principle the MLA's cosponsorship of the conference and asked the staff to prepare a conference budget for the council's review in May.

6. *Participation in the Joint National Committee for Languages / National Council on Languages and International Studies (JNCL/NCLIS).* Rosemary Feal and Domna Stanton reported to the council on their recent interactions with the executive director and the board of JNCL/NCLIS, a coalition of language organizations whose purpose is to advocate for federal funding of language programs in schools and higher education. They explained that the current directions and priorities of JNCL/NCLIS differed significantly from the MLA's mission. In addition, since the MLA is a substantial contributor of money to JNCL/NCLIS, Feal and Stanton expressed concern about the way fiduciary matters are handled by the organization's board. They suggested that the MLA's advocacy dollars would be better directed to organizations whose outlook and activities are more in line with those of the MLA (e.g., National Humanities Alliance, Council on International Education). After lengthy discussion, the council decided to

reduce by half the MLA's 2005 contribution to JNCL/NCLIS and to resign from the organization's board. Stanton was asked to write to JNCL/NCLIS to explain these actions.

7. *MLA Language Map.* Rosemary Feal reported to the council on the impact that the MLA Language Map had had since its launch on 16 June 2004. She noted that news stories about it had appeared in over two hundred newspapers. In addition, the map was listed as a hot site in the *USATODAY.com* Web guide and was chosen for inclusion in *Yahoo! Picks*. Many academic institutions, national language resource centers, public libraries, college and university libraries, and language organizations provide links to the language map from their Web sites. Feal also noted that community organizations are using the map as a resource in support of their missions.

Feal outlined plans for the development of the second phase of the language map, scheduled for 2005 and 2006. In consultation with a national advisory committee, the staff will apply for a grant to support the expansion of the map. She also explained that the MLA Language Map is the association's most visible public contribution to the congressionally designated Year of Languages in 2005.

8. *Migrations from Print Formats to the MLA Web Site.* The council received the staff proposal it had requested in October regarding the migration to the members-only area of the MLA Web site of materials printed in *PMLA* (see May 2005 *PMLA* 950). The staff asked the council to consider the migration of two sections of *PMLA*: Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest (FMC) and Professional Notes and Comment (PNC), both of which appear in the January, March, May, and October issues of the journal. FMC lists conferences in the field, providing dates, subjects, and contact information. PNC includes notes on new journals and special issues of journals, calls for papers for edited volumes, minutes of Executive Council and Delegate Assembly meetings, the In Memoriam section, and other general notices. The staff explained that council and assembly minutes and In Memoriam should remain in the printed version of *PMLA* as a permanent record but that moving the FMC listing and most of the PNC section to the Web site would have two major advantages. Members would be better and more efficiently served, since less lead time would be needed to run notices, and the association would save on the cost of printing. There was also a disadvantage: certain groups—MLA members without Internet access, library subscribers, and library users—would not be able to consult the online listings. The staff also proposed the following timetable for implementation: offer the online listings beginning in September 2005, but delay the discontinuation of the print listings until the beginning of the 2006 calendar year. Council members agreed with the staff proposal to adopt a slow approach to the question of migrations, which would allow the council to assess the effects of the first steps before proceeding with additional migrations.

The council therefore voted to approve the staff proposal and asked to revisit the question of migrations in a year.

9. *Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention.* Among the discussion topics identified by the council at its October 2004 meeting (see May 2005 *PMLA* 946) was one that previous councils had also touched on: the inflexibility of the division structure in the face of the membership's changing intellectual commitments and concerns and the related problem of opening up space at the annual convention for new fields of study and new configurations of established fields (see May 2002 *PMLA* 598). The council had asked the Program Committee to take up these issues. Because of its regular workload, the committee had not been able to do so. The council therefore decided that an ad hoc committee was needed to develop recommendations for changes. It charged a subcommittee of its members (Michael Holquist; Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel; Marjorie Perloff, chair; and Hortense Spillers) to draft a charge for this ad hoc committee for the council's review in May.

10. *Departmental Reports.* The council accepted staff members' annual departmental reports with thanks and asked various staff members to elaborate on some of the information presented in the reports. In conjunction with the report on the Job Information Service, the council commented on the possibility, being investigated by the staff, of extending the six-week period during which job listings in the online *Job Information List* are available for searching.

11. *PMLA Editor's Term.* The council exercised its option to extend Marianne Hirsch's term as editor of *PMLA* by two years. Hirsch was therefore invited to continue serving as editor through June 2008. [Note: Hirsch declined the term extension; she will serve as editor through June 2006.]

12. *Review of the Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Tolerance.* The council received the report of the subcommittee of council members charged in October with reviewing the recommendations in the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Tolerance and outlining how the council might respond to them (see May 2005 *PMLA* 948).

Some of the ad hoc committee's recommendations aimed at encouraging MLA members to remain alert to relevant issues, to inform themselves and their campus administrations about measures to be taken in cases of conflict, and to share information. The subcommittee thought it would be more useful to focus on what the association could do and so recommended that the MLA collect or develop and then disseminate through association publications guidelines for best practices in a number of areas (e.g., professional mentoring of people of color, preparation for teaching in diverse classrooms). The ad hoc committee also wished to encourage the MLA to provide resources (e.g., convention sessions and other convention structures, reports and other documents) that would

allow members to address relevant issues. The subcommittee found that the association was already providing many of these resources. It recommended the following additional initiatives: create a Web-based panel of members of the profession who have experience dealing with sensitive questions, issues, texts, or topics; use the ADE and ADFL summer seminars to talk to chairs about best practices; modify the charge of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities to include explicit reference to issues of bigotry and prejudice that arise in the activities of English and foreign language departments. The subcommittee also advised the council to pass along to the *PMLA* Editorial Board the ad hoc committee's proposal for a special issue of *PMLA* and to publish the ad hoc committee's report in shortened form in *Profession 2005* and at the MLA Web site.

The council accepted the subcommittee's report and asked the staff to pursue the initiatives the subcommittee had identified. The members of the subcommittee agreed to continue assembling documents that present best practices.

13. *Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on MLA Style.* The council received the report of the ad hoc committee it had charged in May 2004 with assessing the principles of citing electronic publications currently embodied in MLA style for adequacy and inclusiveness (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 282). The committee examined the current requirements of MLA style in relation to a number of sample citations and found that MLA style often requires authors to provide information in excess of that needed to find the work cited. For example, the inclusion of a URL is of little use when the source is an article in an archival database such as *JSTOR*. The committee therefore decided to define a basic principle for the citation of sources: a citation should accurately identify the source consulted by an author. Accurate identification relies on the authority of the source, the establishment of the source's accessibility, and the establishment of the context in which the author consulted the source (e.g., date of access). The committee further noted that sufficiency should be a criterion of MLA citation style; that is, citations should offer just enough information to allow for the accurate identification of sources. The committee asked the council to approve the basic principle for citation that it had elaborated and to instruct the staff to adapt MLA style to follow this principle. The council did so.

14. *Revision of the MLA Statement of Professional Ethics.* When the MLA Statement of Professional Ethics was approved by the Delegate Assembly in 1991 and the Executive Council in 1992, provision was made for its periodic review by the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR). The first of these reviews, in 1997, resulted in no changes. The CAFPRR completed its second review in November 2004 and forwarded a revised statement to the council for approval. The com-

mittee noted that it had undertaken to revise the statement in ways that emphasized the activities of teaching, learning, researching, and writing instead of an individual's identity as, for example, a teacher or a student. Council members agreed that the revised statement was very well done and approved it for publication in *Profession 2005* and at the MLA Web site. The council's action will be reported to the Delegate Assembly, and a notice of it will be placed in the *MLA Newsletter*. Finally, the council instructed the staff to thank the committee for its excellent work and to ask the committee to undertake the next revision of the statement in time for submission to the council in 2010.

15. *Request from the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR)*. The CAFPRR had received a request at its November 2004 meeting to address an incident that had just taken place at the Catholic University of America. The university administration had rescinded a department's invitation to a speaker for reasons that went beyond the speaker's professional competence. The CAFPRR decided to write a letter of protest to the president of Catholic University. The committee forwarded that letter to the council and asked for the council's authorization to send the letter. The council discussed this matter at length and did not authorize the committee to send the letter, since association committees cannot speak for the association. The council agreed, however, that it was important for the CAFPRR and other association committees to be able to receive requests for action, so that the committees could monitor trends on campuses and gather relevant documentation for the council to use in developing appropriate responses (e.g., policy statements). The council asked the staff to tell the committee of the council's decision and to suggest to the committee how it might respond both to the member who requested that the committee take action and to those who make similar requests in the future.

16. *Request from the Committee on Community Colleges*. Anticipating the expiration of its current charge in June 2005, the Committee on Community Colleges reported to the council on its past accomplishments and current and future projects. It requested that the council renew the committee with a revised charge that would allow the committee to take up an issue it had identified in the course of its work: the encouragement of scholarship about teaching in community colleges. Council members agreed on the need to increase the participation of community college teachers in MLA activities and to identify relevant issues that the council might work on. The council renewed the committee for five years, through June 2010, and approved the revised charge proposed by the committee. The new charge reads as follows:

The Committee on Community Colleges is charged with considering a range of issues that affect modern language teachers in two-year colleges, e.g., conditions of employ-

ment, staffing, curriculum, articulation with secondary schools and four-year institutions, the preparation and recruitment of faculty, and the encouragement of scholarship about teaching in the community college.

The committee should develop convention sessions and propose publications and other projects that will serve the needs of students and current and future teachers at two-year colleges.

17. *Recommendations from the 2004 Delegate Assembly*. The council received and acted on a report on the two motions approved by the Delegate Assembly during the assembly's meeting on 29 December 2004 in Philadelphia. [Note: For a full account of the Delegate Assembly meeting, including the text of each motion, see May 2005 *PMLA* 932–46.]

First, the assembly approved a motion calling on the MLA to work with other groups, including labor unions, in advocating reversal of a 2004 National Labor Relations Board ruling that denied the right to unionize to graduate employees at private universities and in encouraging voluntary recognition of graduate student unions by university administrations. The motion also called on the MLA to promote in various ways (e.g., support financially, send representatives to) a conference on these issues that the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) was planning for 2006. Council members were sympathetic to the issues raised by the motion but had concerns about several of the actions specified in it. The council decided to implement the motion in the following manner. The council reaffirmed a resolution that the Delegate Assembly approved in 1999 and that the membership ratified in 2000; this resolution endorses the right of all academic employees—full- and part-time faculty members, graduate employees, and support staff—to engage in collective bargaining if they choose to do so. The council also instructed the staff to tell COCAL that the MLA would assist with the planning of its 2006 conference and to ask the other organizations named in the motion how the MLA might work with them on these issues. When COCAL provides a conference proposal, the council will consider a conference subvention and how the MLA might be represented at the conference.

Second, the assembly approved a motion that called for the establishment of a new MLA fund to provide partial travel reimbursement to part-time faculty members and contingent non-tenure-track faculty members who attend the annual convention. During its discussion of the motion, the council decided that the unemployed should also be included. The council agreed to implement the motion and asked the staff to develop a detailed proposal covering application requirements and eligibility criteria for the council's consideration in May.

18. *Review of Constitutional Amendments Approved by the 2004 Delegate Assembly*. As required by the MLA constitution (art. 13.D), the council reviewed the constitutional

amendments approved by the 2004 Delegate Assembly and forwarded them to the membership for the required ratification vote.

19. *Election of a Council Member to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC).* The council elected Guy Stern to the DAOC for a two-year term (2005–06).

20. *Appointments to MLA Committees.* The council made fifty-two appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed twelve committee chairs or cochairs. The names of all new and continuing committee members will appear in the September 2005 (Directory) issue of *PMLA* and at the MLA Web site.

21. *Selection of a Site for the 2006 Convention.* The council selected Los Angeles as the site of the 2006 MLA convention, provided that ongoing negotiations involving

hotel-related labor unions in Los Angeles reached a successful conclusion within a reasonable time. If the labor situation remains unresolved and a decision on a convention site is needed before the May council meeting, the council's procedure for making decisions between council meetings will be used (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278).

22. *Request from a Member.* Clara Orban requested that the annual convention not be held in states that had recently approved constitutional bans against same-sex marriages. The council found that it would be more appropriate to treat this matter by means of a motion to be considered by the MLA Delegate Assembly. It asked the staff to so inform Orban and to give her all necessary information on the requirements for submitting a motion to the 2005 assembly.